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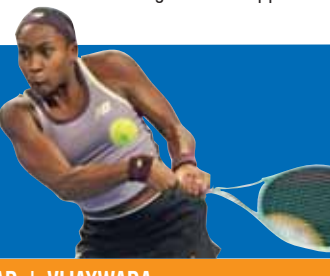
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PATAAKHA BAN EXPLODES, SC REACTS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Monday demanded answers from the Delhi Government and Police Commissioner on how its ban on bursting firecrackers to curb pollution was flouted during Diwali celebrations in the National Capital. The Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih took a serious view of newspaper reports that indicated a total non-compliance with the Government's restrictions on bursting firecrackers. The Court said that the affidavit, which has to be filed in a week, should also detail the steps that will be taken to ensure that firecracker-related pollution does not arise again during Diwali celebrations next year.

"We want the Delhi Government to immediately respond as to why this has happened. We will simultaneously issue notice to Delhi Police Commissioner as to why there is non-compliance. We have to hear this immediately. The real problem is that this is all under the Air Prevention Act, 1981, which after amendment this year, has only penalty provisions," the SC remarked during the hearing of a plea concerning air pollution in and around the National Capital Region. The Bench also asked the Delhi Government to consider implementing a perpetual firecracker ban in the national capital. The Court further said that these steps should include measures to conduct a public campaign to sensitise the public against such pollution.



FILE PHOTO: PIONEER

"The affidavit by Delhi Government and Police Commissioner to be filed in one week ... In the meanwhile, Delhi Government and other authorities must also take call on perpetual ban of these firecrackers," the Court's order said. The Court will consider this aspect of Diwali-related pollution again on November 14. "There cannot be any dispute that the ban on firecrackers was

hardly implemented. The ban on firecrackers being non-complied is very well clear from the report which amicus cited, which is that this time pollution level was at an all time high. Even a report suggested farm fire was also at a high time rise" the Court further observed in its order. The Court also gave the States of Punjab and Haryana one week's time to submit details of stubble burning incidents in the last ten days. Due to deteriorating air quality in Delhi, the State government had recently banned the production, sale, and use of various types of firecrackers in the national capital till January 1, 2025. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Archana Pathak Dave agreed that there was absolute non-compliance with these restrictions during Diwali this year. Amicus Curiae Aparajita Singh

added that there is a report suggesting a huge increase in air pollution on the day of Diwali, with the pollution percentage rising from 10 per cent to 27 per cent. The Court observed that something needs to be done to address this issue. "Something has to be done. Either the ones who are selling crackers despite the ban, their premises must be sealed. We will look into this. Amicus Curiae points out that a report suggested that there was a huge increase in the pollution on the day of Diwali. Pollution percentage goes from 10 per cent to 27 percent... This has to be responded to immediately," the Court said. The Judges also flagged concern over people bringing in firecrackers from other States into Delhi to defy the firecracker ban. **Continued on page 2**



EC reschedules 14 Assembly bypolls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
With less than 10 days remaining, the Election Commission (EC) on Monday rescheduled bypolls in 14 Assembly constituencies across Kerala, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh from November 13 to November 20 after requests from political parties. Bypolls to 14 constituencies will be held with Maharashtra Assembly elections, and the second phase of Jharkhand polls. Sources in the poll panel said political parties had requested for a change in the polling date, citing festivals such as Kalpathi Rastholsavam (November 13-15), Kartik Purnima (November 15) and Prakash Parv of Sri Guru Nanak Dev (November 15). The parties said the festivals may impact voter turnout in these states. "Representations have been received in the Commission from various recognised national and state political parties (including BJP, INC, BSP, RLD) and some social organisations for change of date for poll in some Assembly constituencies having by-elections on 13th November, 2024, considering large scale social, cultural and religious engagements on that day which may cause inconvenience to large number of people, give rise to various logistic issues and may lead to reduced voters participating during the poll," the EC said. **Continued on page 2**



Rescue and relief work underway after a passenger bus fell into a gorge in Kupri area, in Almora, Uttarakhand PTI

Packed bus falls in Almora gorge, 36 dead

PURNIMA BISHT ■ DEHRADUN
At least 36 people were killed and 27 injured when a 42-seater private bus carrying 63 passengers plunged into a 200-metre-deep gorge near Marchula in Almora district of Uttarakhand around 7.30 am on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep grief and condoled the bereaved family members. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has ordered the suspension of the Assistant Regional Transport Officers (ARTOs) of Pauri and Almora districts while also directing the Kumaon commissioner for a magisterial probe into the accident. According to officials, the bus, owned by Garhwal Motor Owners Union Limited (GMOU), was en route from Naini Danda in Pauri district to Ramnagar in Nainital district when it reportedly lost control around 7.30 am near Sarad Bend and plunged into the gorge along a stream. The force of the fall ejected some passengers, while others managed to escape on their own. Those who climbed to safety alerted authorities, prompting immediate

Deeply concerned about safety of Indians in Canada: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE / PTI ■ NEW DELHI/OTTAWA
Taking strong exception to an attack on a Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton in the Canadian province of Ontario, India on Monday condemned the "acts of violence perpetrated by extremists and separatists". New Delhi also urged the Justin Trudeau Government to ensure that all places of worship in the country are adequately protected. "We call on the Government of Canada to ensure that all places of worship are protected from such attacks. We also expect that those indulging in violence will be prosecuted," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said here. Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at

Brampton's Hindu Sabha Temple on Sunday, prompting the High Commission of India in Ottawa to issue a strong statement, condemning the attack by "anti-India" elements. Jaiswal also pointed out that it remains "deeply concerned" about the safety and security of its citizens in that country, asserting that the diplomatic officers providing consular services to Indians "will not be deterred by intimidation, harassment and violence". "We remain deeply concerned about the safety and security of Indian nationals in Canada. The outreach of our Consular officers to provide services to Indians and Canadian citizens alike will not be deterred by intimidation, harassment and violence," he said. According to a PTI report from Ottawa, protestors



Indians at a consular camp in Brampton, Ontario, Sunday, November 3, 2024. The consular camp witnessed "violent disruptions" on Sunday as per Indian High Commission in Canada PTI

Strongly condemn deliberate attack on Hindu temple in Canada; equally appalling are cowardly attempts to intimidate our diplomats. Such acts will never weaken India's resolve; we expect the Canadian government to ensure justice, uphold rule of law: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at a Hindu temple in Brampton, triggering condemnation by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who said every Canadian has the right to practise their faith freely and safely. On Sunday, Peel Regional Police said that a protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the Hindu Sabha Mandir temple, the report added. **Continued on page 2**

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly breaks six-year hiatus

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU
The portals of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly were thrown open after a gap of more than six years allowing newly elected members to attend the maiden address of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to the first-ever legislative Assembly of the Union Territory after the abrogation of articles 370 and 35-A on Monday. The last Budget session of the Mehbooba Mufti-led Peoples Democratic Party-Bharatiya Janata Party (PDP-BJP) alliance government was adjourned sine die by the speaker on February 13, 2018. The alliance government later collapsed in June 2018 leading to the Governor's rule. On August 5, 2019, the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganised into two Union territories. Meanwhile, a ruckus broke out on the floor of the Assembly soon after the unanimous election of veteran National Conference leader Abdul Rahim Rather as speaker of the house. Waheed ur Rehman Para, a PDP MLA, tried to grab the limelight by bringing in a resolution against the abrogation of Article 370 without giving any advance notice to the chair. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reacted on the spur of the moment calling out the act as a mere photo exercise. It was also 'vociferously'



CM Omar Abdullah, Speaker pro-tem Mubarak Gul with Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather PTI

opposed by the BJP MLAs. Speaker Rather while trying to calm down the tempers of BJP members stated, "This is my domain, let me examine this and accordingly I will decide on the resolution." Rather said while pacifying the opposition. However, the 28 BJP legislators refused to sit and continued to oppose the PDP MLAs move. In his brief remark, Omar Abdullah said in the Assembly that a single MLA's private resolution during remarks over the Speaker's election carries no meaning. "How the House will reflect and discuss this will not be decided by any one member. The resolution brought today has no importance but it is only for the cameras. If there was a purpose behind it, then they would have discussed this with us before..." During the ruckus, the Speaker, Abdul Rahim Rather adjourned the house for 15 minutes. **Continued on page 2**

Who created the 'Mallu Hindu Officers' WhatsApp group?

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
A WhatsApp Group of Hindu Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Kerala has sent shock waves across the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the state and a high level probe is on to find out the brains behind the "mischief". P Rajeev, Kerala Minister for Law and Industries, who is also the Chief-Minister-in-waiting, told the media at Kochi on Monday that the government has noted the development with all seriousness and a probe is on to bring to light all factors behind the formation of the group. The group was created on October 31 from the phone used by K Gopalakrishnan, an IAS officer in the state. News about the formation of the 'Mallu Hindu Officers' WA group spread like wildfire across Kerala, and it was taken off cyberspace within 24 hours. However, Gopalakrishnan said that his phone was hacked and he was not aware of the existence of such a group. "It was only when colleagues told me about the WA group that I came to know about it. Multiple Groups were formed using the contact numbers in my phone and I do not know anything more than this," Gopalakrishnan said. He has filed a police complaint about the hacking of his phone. Dr MG Gireeshan, cyber expert who is a leading hackathon specialist, told The Pioneer that it was possible to hack the phone of anybody who is not aware of the potential of the internet, and mobile phones. **Continued on page 2**



Sensex tanks, investors lose ₹5.99 lakh Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 5.99 lakh crore on Monday due to heavy sell-off in stock markets with the BSE Sensex tumbling more than one per cent. Markets were dragged down by Reliance Industries, banking shares and unabated selling by foreign investors. Investors also turned cautious ahead of the US presidential elections and Federal Reserve interest rate decision scheduled to be announced later this week. The BSE benchmark tumbled 941.88 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 78,782.24, the lowest closing level since August 6. During the day, it slumped 1,491.52 points or 1.87 per cent to 78,232.60. In line with a weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 5,99,539.5 crore to Rs 4,42,11,068.05 crore (USD 5.26 trillion). "Markets witnessed broader sell-off as investors turned risk-averse ahead of key US election outcome and Federal Reserve's policy decision in the next few days time. While stretched valuation concerns have been weighing for sometime, the persistent foreign fund outflows have created a lot of uncertainty amongst the investors resulting in a steep correction. Also, corporate earnings have failed to meet expectations, which has further dampened investors' sentiment," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. **Continued on page 2**

Honouring the Sun, Chhath Puja greetings

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI
As people gear up to celebrate the revered four days Chhath Puja starting from Tuesday, there is visible enthusiasm among the devotees, especially those from the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand with markets around the country bustling with shoppers splurging on the items related to the sacred festival. In the national Capital, such excitement is visible in different markets across Delhi as people from Purvanchal constitute a sizable and significant fraction of the total population. Amid the palpable enthusiasm, trade related to the auspicious festival, worshipping the God Surya, is expected to be approximately ₹12,000 crores across the country, making it one of India's most culturally significant festivals. The first day of Chhath Puja, Nahay Khay, signifies the start of the rituals with about 150 million devotees,

particularly women, participating to cleanse themselves by taking a holy dip in rivers, especially the Ganga, symbolising spiritual purification. On Wednesday, the second day, Kharna, is marked by a rigorous day-long fast, during which devotees abstain from food and even water from sunrise until sunset. In the evening, the fast is broken with a traditional meal (prasad) offered to Lord Surya, which typically includes rice pudding (kheer) and chapatis. The third day is the main day of Chhath Puja, characterised by a complete fast without water as devotees gather at riverbanks or other water bodies to offer the first Arghya (a traditional offering) to the setting sun. On the last day on Friday, devotees will observe the final day, known as Usha Arghya. This day is marked by offering prayers and Arghya to the rising sun in the early morning. With the

completion of this ritual, the 36-hour fast concludes, and devotees celebrate the end of their Chhath Puja observance sharing a festive meal with family and friends. The festival, which worships both the rising and setting sun, is not just a mere celebration for the devotees, it also brings happiness to the traders who benefit from the sales of the products related to it. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), which has been tracking festive sales this year, on Monday released data on expected sales during the sacred festival, estimating that it will generate approximately ₹12,000 crores in trade across India. Even in the national capital, the Purvanchal population celebrates Chhath Puja on a grand scale. Markets across the city, including Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Model Town, Ashok Vihar, Shalimar Bagh, Pitampura, Rani Bagh, Uttam Nagar and Tilak



PHOTO: PTI

Nagar, are bustling with people purchasing traditional Chhath Puja items. According to CAIT National President BC Bhartiya, that in addition to Bihar and Jharkhand, Chhath Puja is celebrated with great fervour in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, and Madhya Pradesh. "Many Purvanchalis reside in these states, contributing significantly to the local economy. The festival, which involves worshipping both the setting and rising sun, symbolises the inclusive nature of Indian culture," Bhartiya said.

According to CAIT, essential Chhath Puja items like bamboo baskets, banana leaves, sugarcane, sweets, fruits, and vegetables (particularly coconuts, apples, bananas, and green vegetables) have seen a high demand this year. The association also added that traditional attire, including sarees, lehenga-chunni, salwar-kurta for women, and kurta-pyjama, dhoti for men, are being purchased in large quantities, benefiting local traders and small-scale industries. "Handmade items produced on a small scale are also witnessing significant sales," it said. CAIT secretary general and Chandni Chowk Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) MP Praveen Khandelwal, emphasised that "Chhath Puja is not just a religious festival but an integral part of Indian culture, reflecting social unity and dedication." It also boosts trade and directly benefits local producers, reinforcing Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's 'Vocal for Local' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) vision," he added. Amid the celebration, it is often observed that the majority of products used during the festival are crafted by local artisans and craftspeople, generating new employment opportunities and supporting cottage industries. Upon this, Bhartiya highlighted that Chhath Puja, beyond its spiritual significance, has emerged as a major opportunity for trade and employment, bringing renewed economic energy to Indian markets including the sale of items such as vermilion used by married women. "For women observing Chhath Puja, applying a long streak of vermilion from the nose to the hairline is an auspicious gesture, symbolising their prayers for the health and longevity of their husbands and families," the trader said.

Maratha quota crusader Jarange-Patil withdraws from poll fray

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

After indulging in pro-reservation posturing for several months, Maratha reservation crusader Manoj Jarange-Patil on Monday withdrew from the fray of the State Assembly polls. After he withdrew organisation Shivba Sangathana from the poll fray, Jarange-Patil repeatedly clarified that he was not doing a U-turn nor had he taken the decision under any pressure. Talking to media persons his village Antarwali Sarati in the Jalna district in Marathwada region, Jarange-

Patil said: "We held meeting till 0330 hrs in the morning. Ultimately we decided not to contest the Assembly polls...People may use their own discretion --whom to defeat, whom to elect. But, we want the people to remember those who had worked against our cause," Jarange-Patil said that his campaign demanding reservations for Maratha community would continue. On Sunday, Jarange-Patil shortlisted eight seats for contesting and half a dozen seats for attempting defeat of sitting MLAs, but in 24 hours changed the decision. Jarange-Patil said that it was



impossible to win elections depending on the votes of one community. "However, without the help of Maratha community no one can win elections...I told the Maratha community that this is not our family business, we might be misled," he said Jarange-Patil also admitted that his other allies, comprising Muslims and Dalit communities did not submit their lists of candidates as another reason for his unexpected retreat. Jarange-Patil said that he would not extend support to any independent candidate or political parties, nor would direct the Maratha commu-

nity to defeat candidates. "I do not want to direct the Maratha community to defeat any candidates. The community has to take a decision in this regard," he said. Jarange-Patil's decision to withdraw from the election is expected to benefit the MVA comprising Congress, Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena (UBT) as it would prevent the division of anti-BJP votes. It may be recalled that the BJP-led ND had suffered badly due to lack of adequate support from the Marathas in the recent Lok Sabha polls, in which the Opposition put up

an impressive performance in the state. During the recent weeks, Jarange-Patil was approached for support by Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi founder Prakash Ambedkar and Parivartan Mahashakti - which includes Swaraj founder Yuvraj Sambhaji Rajee Chhatrapati, a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Bacchu Kadu, the founder of Prahar Janshakti and Raju Shetti of Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana. However, Jarange-Patil did not lend his organisation's support.

LoP Gupta seeks immediate monthly aid of Rs 1000 for women in Delhi from CM Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Vijender Gupta on Monday wrote to Chief Minister Atishi, demanding immediate monthly financial aid of Rs 1000 for women in Delhi under the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojna' launched by the ruling party. In his letter, he reminded Atishi that former Chief Minister and AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal announced in March 2024 that a scheme in the name of 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojna' would soon be launched to provide Rs 1000 monthly financial aid to women in Delhi. "Eight months have passed since the announcement, but Kejriwal has not fulfilled his promise, and women in Delhi are still waiting for this financial assistance. Kejriwal's announcement has turned



out to be as empty as many of his other promises," he claimed. Gupta wrote that women in BJP-governed states have been receiving financial assistance for several years. According to Gupta, under the 'Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana' in Madhya Pradesh, the state government provides monthly financial aid of Rs 1250, under the 'Mahitri Vandan Yojana' in

Chhattisgarh, women receive Rs 1000 per month and, under the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahna Yojana' in Maharashtra, women are offered Rs 1500 per month. "Additionally, on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday, it was announced that women in Odisha would receive Rs 5000 in financial assistance every six months for five years, and in Haryana, preparations are

in place to provide women with monthly aid of Rs 2100. Women in these two states are expected to start receiving assistance soon," Gupta claimed. He accused Kejriwal and his party of making pre-election announcements for applause but abandoning them after winning elections. "Before the Punjab elections, Kejriwal had made a high-profile announcement that women in Punjab would receive Rs 1,000 per month. However, the situation has now deteriorated to the point where women in Punjab are making rounds of government offices, asking officials when they will receive financial aid from the 'Maan' government," he said. He added that in Delhi, Kejriwal similarly garnered women's support with his announcement in March, but eight months later, there is still no sign of Kejriwal's promise being fulfilled.

Congress nominee Madhurima Rajee withdraws from Kolhapur North fray

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

In a dramatic turn of events, the Congress' official royal nominee Madhurima Rajee Chhatrapati on Monday withdrew her nomination from the Kolhapur North Assembly seat at the last-minute, because of lack of cooperation from a section of local Congress party workers. Madhurima Rajee is the wife of former MLA Maloji Rajee Chhatrapati, who is the son of Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaj, the Congress MP from Kolhapur. The Kolhapur royal family members are descendants of iconic Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and legendary social reformer Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj.

Mayoral polls to be held at MCD meeting on November 14

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After seven months, the elections to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be held in the ordinary meeting of Municipal Corporation of Delhi on November 14. An order to this effect has been issued by Mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi on Monday. This year, it is reserved for a councillor from the Scheduled Caste community after Oberoi's term ended on March 31, but elections to the posts of mayor and deputy mayor were postponed due to the non-appointment of the presiding officer, as per an official statement released by the civic body on April 25. The tenure for the Dalit candidate, however, will be truncated to just five months due to a seven-month delay caused by a political deadlock between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The delay led to repeated protests and disruptions in the MCD House by opposition councillors. The polls to the posts of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are held every year. The Mayor's post is rotated among members from different social groups. The mayor's election is held through a secret ballot and councillors are free to vote for any candidate. The mayoral polls have been

pending since April. According to MCD rules, elections for the mayor are held annually in April, with a five-year tenure comprising five single-year terms on a rotation basis. The first year is reserved for women, the second for the open category, the third for the reserved category, and the final two years again for the open category. The AAP had announced Devnagar ward councillor Mahesh Kichhi as its candidate for the mayoral position and Aman Vihar councillor Ravinder Bhardwaj as the candidate for deputy mayor. The BJP named Shakurpur councillor Kishan Lal as its mayoral candidate, with Sadatpur councillor Nita Bisht as its choice for deputy mayor. The delay in elections stemmed from the lack of a presiding officer's appointment by the Lieutenant Governor, who said the procedure required consultation with the Chief Minister. The process stalled as then-Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal was in judicial custody, which prevented the necessary sign-off. South Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri criticised the AAP government for deliberately postponing the Mayoral elections for the past seven months. "These elections should have been held seven months ago but AAP leader-

ship delayed the process," he said. Oberoi is the first mayor of the reunified MCD and has been in the post since February 2023. In the February 2023 polls, Oberoi received 150 votes against BJP's Rekha Gupta, who received 116 votes. After a two-month tenure, elections were held afresh in April 2023, in which Oberoi was elected unopposed — BJP candidate Shika Roy withdrew her nomination at the last moment. The electoral college for electing a mayor comprises Delhi's 250 councillors, 10 parliamentarians (seven Lok Sabha, three Rajya Sabha), 14 MLAs nominated by the state assembly speaker, and 10 aldermen who do not have voting powers in the house proceedings. For the elections, the AAP has the support of 134 councillors from its party, along with another independent councillor. In addition, the party also has the support of three Rajya Sabha MPs (all AAP) and 13 MLAs. The BJP, on the other hand, claims the support of 104 councillors, along with another independent councillor, as well as seven Lok Sabha members and one MLA. Meanwhile, the Congress has nine councillors, along with the support of another independent councillor.

CM Atishi inspects ITO Chhath Ghat, slams BJP for obstructing preparations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Atishi on Monday inspected the Chhath ghat at ITO in central Delhi while slamming the BJP for 'obstructing preparations' for the celebrations of the festival in the national capital and labelled the party 'anti-Purvanchal'. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP hit back at the ruling party and said that it is laughable that Atishi is asking officials to not leave work at the last minute a day before the celebrations. After inspecting the ghats, the senior AAP leader also accused the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which functions under the Centre, of halting Chhath preparations in a south Delhi locality. "The halting of Chhath puja by the BJP's DDA in Chirag Delhi illustrates its anti-Purvanchal mentality," she said.

Emphasising the importance of the festival for the national capital's Purvanchal community, Atishi said the AAP government in Delhi had been celebrating the festival in a grand manner for the past 10 years. "Chhath is of utmost importance to the brothers and sisters of Purvanchal and we have been celebrating it with great pomp and show all over Delhi for the last 10 years." "Ten years ago, Chhath was celebrated by the government at only 60 locations in Delhi. Today, the Delhi government has prepared more than 1,000 magnificent Chhath ghats where everyone can properly worship Chhathi Maiya," she added. The Delhi government has declared a public holiday on November 7 for Chhath celebrations. During the inspection, Atishi directed officials, "All Chhath Ghats should be prepared swiftly so that no work is

left for the last minute, ensuring that devotees do not face any inconvenience." Hitting back at the AAP over the preparations for the devotees, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva stated that while Chhath Puja is set to begin on Tuesday, November 5, Atishi's instructions to the officials are 'laughable'. He pointed out the irony of the Chief Minister's statement on November 4, telling officials not to leave work until the last minute, when the four-day Chhath Puja will actually begin on November 5 afternoon. "This indicates that the Chief Minister may not even be aware of the start date of Chhath Puja," he said. "Today, just a day before the start of Chhath Puja, even if Chief Minister Atishi makes statements, it's evident to both the Purvanchal community and

other residents of Delhi how the negligence of the AAP government has left the ghats along the Yamuna unprepared," Sachdeva alleged. He claimed that out of the 1,060 temporary Chhath ghats, work on more than 800 is still incomplete, with even basic arrangements like water and pit-digging unfinished as of this evening. "When the Chief Minister was inspecting today, most ghats still lacked electricity connections," he said. The Delhi BJP chief said that the way AAP MLAs, particularly Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj, tried to politically take over the Chhath Puja ghats, while the Yamuna remains as polluted as it was ten days ago from Wazirabad to Kalindi Kunj, has led the public to lose trust in Arvind Kejriwal Party's Delhi government. It has also hurt their sentiments.

Pataakha ban explodes, SC...

From page 1

"People are bringing firecrackers from other States. There has to be a public campaign before Diwali, lack of public understanding," the Bench remarked. The case before the Court also concerns pollution due to stubble burning in neighbouring States such as Punjab, which is said to be a major factor to air pollution in Delhi. The Supreme Court had earlier pulled up the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for

failing to take adequate steps to tackle such pollution. It had even summoned the Chief Secretaries of Punjab and Haryana after noting that not a single prosecution had taken place against stubble burning incidents. In October, the Court had taken a prima facie view that the Union government was not taking any penal action to curb stubble burning. It had directed the Central Government to amend the law so as to increase the fines levied on farmers who indulge in the same.

EC reschedules 14 Assembly bypolls

From page 1

In Kerala, the byelection to Palakkad assembly seat has been rescheduled while that for Chelakkara Assembly and Wayanad Lok Sabha seats will be held as scheduled earlier on November 13. According to the Congress, a significant portion of the electorate in the Palakkad assembly seat in Kerala will celebrate the festival of Kalpathi Rastholsavam from

November 13 to 15. In Punjab, the 555th Prakash Parv of Sri Guru Nanak Dev will be celebrated on November 15 and an \akhand path\ will be organised from November 13 onwards. The four Punjab assembly seats where bypolls are being held are Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbawal, Gidderbaha and Barnala. The Bharatiya Janata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal had said

that in Uttar Pradesh, people travel for three to four days ahead of Kartik Purnima, which will be celebrated on November 15. Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh where bypolls are due include Meerapur, Kundarki, Ghaziabad, Khair, Karhal, Sishamau, Phulpur, Katehari, Majhawan. The EC had fixed November 13 as the date for bypolls in 48 Assembly constituencies and two Lok Sabha seats.

Deeply concerned about safety of Indians in Canada: MEA

From page 1

Taking to social media, Trudeau thanked the local authorities for the swift response to protect the community and probe this incident. "The acts of violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today are unacceptable. Every Canadian has the right to practise their faith freely and safely. Thank you to the Peel Regional Police for swiftly responding to protect the community and investigate this incident," Trudeau said in a post on Monday. Meanwhile, the High Commission of India in Ottawa also issued a strong statement on Monday condemning the recent attack on Brampton's Hindu Sabha temple by "anti-India" elements. This incident disrupted a

consular event co-organised by the Hindu Sabha Mandir and the Indian consulate. In its statement, the High Commission remarked, "We have seen violent disruption today (November 3), orchestrated by anti-India elements outside the consular camp co-organised with the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, near Toronto." Peel Regional Police said in a social media post on Sunday afternoon that they were aware of the protest taking place at the Hindu Sabha Mandir, and had increased its presence at the temple to maintain public order and safety. "We respect the right to protest in a peaceful and safe manner but will not tolerate violence and criminal acts," Chief Nishan Duraipappah posted on social media on Sunday after the videos began circulating. "Those that do participate in this activity will be pursued,

arrested and charged." Peel police told CBC Toronto no arrests were made at the temple Sunday. Police did not provide further details about the social media videos, what happened or whether any complaints were filed. Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown condemned the violence on social media on Sunday afternoon, saying those responsible should be punished to the greatest extent of the law. "I am disappointed to hear about acts of violence outside of the Hindu Sabha," he said. "Religious freedom is a foundational value in Canada. Everyone should feel safe in their place of worship." The recent attack on the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton witnessed widespread condemnation by Canadian politicians, including opposition leader Pierre Poilievre.

"Completely unacceptable to see violence targeting worshippers at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today. All Canadians should be free to practise their faith in peace. Conservatives condemn this violence unequivocally. I will unite our people and end the chaos," Poilievre said in a social media post. Premier Doug Ford praised police for their "quick response," adding that the incident is "completely unacceptable and must be condemned. "No one should feel unsafe at their place of worship," he said in a post. The Indian High Commission remarked, "We have seen violent disruption today (November 3), orchestrated by anti-India elements outside the consular camp co-organised with the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, near Toronto."

The statement further added, "We also remain very concerned for the safety of applicants, including Indian nationals, on whose demand such events are organised in the first place. Despite these efforts by anti-India elements, our Consulate was able to issue more than 1000 life certificates to the Indian and Canadian applicants..." The relations between India and Canada came under severe strain following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd." 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.

Who created the 'Mallu Hindu Officers'...

From page 1

"Generally, there are two easy methods. We can hack the phone details through WhatsApp web and also when we install certain applications. If we click on unwanted links, we are handing over the permission to make use of our phone to the person who has uploaded the application. Though the

new generation officers are cautious about the dangers involved in installing some strange applications, the older generation people are not aware of the trap," Gireeshan said. He is one of the top contributors of the Hackathon of Kerala Police Cyberdom, and is a defence technologist working as research head of Edgeforce Solutions, a Hyderabad-based

company. This is not the first time WA groups based on communal lines hog the limelight in Kerala. There was 'Green Light', a WA group meant for Muslim community officers in Kerala Police which allegedly leaked information and intelligence data to leaders of extremist organisations operating from the state.

Sensex tanks, investors...

From page 1

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Motors, Axis Bank and Titan were among the major laggards. Mahindra & Mahindra, Tech Mahindra, State Bank of India, HCL Technologies, Infosys and IndusInd Bank were the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 211.93 crore on

Friday, according to exchange data. Foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 94,000 crore (around USD 11.2 billion) from the Indian stock market in October, making it the worst-ever month in terms of outflows, triggered by the elevated valuation of domestic equities and attractive valuations of Chinese stocks. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher. European markets were trading higher. The United States markets ended in positive territory on

Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 3 per cent to USD 75.29 a barrel. Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a one-hour special \Muhurat Trading\ session on the occasion of Diwali on November 1, marking the start of the new Samvat 2081. The BSE benchmark climbed 335.06 points or 0.42 per cent to settle at 79,724.12 in the special Muhurat trading session on Friday. The Nifty advanced 99 points or 0.41 per cent to 24,304.35.

Double engine govt in CG, MP are on path of devpt: Mohan Yadav



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday said that the double engine-run governments are taking Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh (MP) on the path of rapid development.

He was addressing the three-day inaugural function of the 24th state foundation anniversary of Chhattisgarh.

Yadav hailed the public welfare schemes in Chhattisgarh under the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai.

Appreciating the fight against Naxal menace, Yadav said that the Maoism in Chhattisgarh is on the verge of extinction.

Madhya Pradesh CM further said that Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have a common culture and common ideas. He said, "The people of

Chhattisgarh are known for their simplicity, bowl of rice and natural resources. A new dimension of development has been established from Raipur to Bastar. The double engine-run government is moving very fast on the path of development."

Lord Shri Ram has spent a lot of his time in Chhattisgarh, Yadav said, adding that the incident of eating the leftover berries of Mata Shabri is also from Chhattisgarh.

Yadav said that our government will work to preserve the glorious past of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna.

We (BJP) are also working to promote religious tourism at the places where Lord Shri Krishna's Leelas took place, Yadav added.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that the state is entering its 25th year now. We have seen the development journey of these 24 years.

During Raman Singh's tenure as Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh witnessed development in every field. Institutions like IIT, IIM, AIIMS and Law University were established here. A strong system of paddy procurement and PDS was established.

The Chief Minister said that our government has fulfilled most of the guarantees of Prime Minister Narendra Modi within the short span of ten months after the 2023 assembly polls.

The BJP government in Chhattisgarh purchased 21 quintals of paddy per acre at the rate of Rs 3100 per quintal, gave Rs 1,000 each to mothers and sisters, Ramlala Darshan Yojana, PSC examination has been done in ten months.

The Chief Minister said that we have to fulfill the concept of developing Chhattisgarh as per the vision document.

Raipur's first co-working centre launched



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

As part of the initiative to strengthen Chhattisgarh's startup ecosystem, Raipur's first co-working centre was launched on Monday.

Innov8, in collaboration with the Raipur Municipal Corporation, launched the co-working space at the Inter State Bus Terminus (ISBT).

The centre is built in an area of 10,000 sq ft, has a seating capacity of 100 and is equipped with modern facilities.

Innov8 founder Dr. Ritesh Malik said: "Our partnership with the Chhattisgarh government is a significant step towards transforming the state into a thriving startup destination."

Business Head Pankhuri

Innov8, in collaboration with the Raipur Municipal Corporation, launched the co-working space at the Inter State Bus Terminus (ISBT).

Sakhuja said this will boost the startup ecosystem by creating jobs and providing opportunities.

Man shot at outside jail, injured



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

A 22-year-old man was shot and injured on Monday over an old enmity in the Chhattisgarh capital.

The incident took place when Sheikh Sahil and his family had gone to the Central Jail in Raipur to meet his brother who is lodged in a narcotics case, Raipur

Additional Superintendent of Police (Urban) Lakhman Pawar Patle said. When Sahil came out of the jail premises, two men, identified as Shahrulkh and Sarfaraz alias Sanu, opened fire after a verbal spat with him.

He was rushed to a government-run hospital with a bullet injury in his neck. Efforts are on to nab the attackers.

District level Rajotsava celebrations today

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Authorities will hold celebrations across the state on Tuesday to commemorate the 24th anniversary of Chhattisgarh's foundation day.

Ministers, MLAs and public representatives will attend.

The rich folk culture of Chhattisgarh will be flaunted through colourful presentation of songs, music and dance. Renowned artists, along with students, will perform. The events will also provide an



The events will also provide an insight into the government's development efforts through exhibitions.

insight into the government's development efforts through exhibitions.



A glimpse of the mesmerising cultural performances at the inaugural of the Chhattisgarh Foundation Day 'Rajyotsava' celebrations in Raipur on Monday. The event saw spectacular presentations themed on Teeja-Pora, Hareli, Gauri-Gaura Puja and Suva-Karma.

Three killed in road accident



STAFF REPORTER ■ MUNGELI

A father and son were among three persons killed and four others were injured after a Bolero overturned in Mungeli district in Chhattisgarh.

The incident took place near Sargaon on National Highway 130 when seven people including the driver were headed to Sakri

in Bilaspur from Hirmi village in Balodabazar, Mungeli Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel said.

The vehicle overturned as one of the tyres burst, resulting in the death of Bisru Sahu (55), his son Chhabhal (20) and Indrapal alias Motu (35). The four others were rushed to a hospital where their condition was said to be critical.

Devendra Yadav's judicial custody extended till Nov 11



STAFF REPORTER ■ BALODABAZAR

A court here on Monday extended the judicial remand of Congress legislator Devendra Yadav till November 11 in the Balodabazar arson case in Chhattisgarh.

Civil Judge Class-I and Chief Judicial Magistrate Ajay Kumar Xaxa passed the order via video conferencing, Balodabazar Superintendent of Police Vijay Agrawal said.

The Bhilai MLA was presented before the judge after the expiry of his judicial

The Bhilai MLA was presented before the judge after the expiry of his judicial custody. He was arrested on August 17.

custody. He was arrested on August 17. Yadav was booked for promoting enmity between different groups, criminal conspiracy, rioting, obstructing public servants from performing duty and assault.

'Hidden' form of leprosy can silently affect brain, spinal cord: AIIMS Bhubaneswar study

AGENCIES ■

A new study by researchers at AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Monday showed a 'hidden' form of leprosy can silently affect the brain and spinal cord.

While leprosy is an ancient disease that often leads to disfiguring skin sores, a lesser-known form of leprosy -- pure neuritic leprosy (PNL) -- can inflict significant damage without any visible skin changes.

This "hidden" form of leprosy primarily affects peripheral nerves, and is often undiagnosed.

Not being diagnosed on time can lead to delayed treatment and potential disabilities.

The study, published in the medical journal Acta Neurologica Belgica, challenges the conventional understanding of PNL as solely a peripheral nerve disease.

It highlights the importance of assessing central nervous system involvement for early detection and treatment, a finding that can lead to new therapies and treatments that can boost outcomes.

A majority of PNL cases have subclinical involvement of the central nervous system, said Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Bhoi, Head of the Neurology Department, AIIMS Bhubaneswar.

"This means the disease can silently affect the brain and spinal cord even without causing noticeable skin lesions -- a hallmark of leprosy," the doctor explained.

The new finding will have significant implications for leprosy diagnosis and management. It will also pave the way for earlier diagnosis and targeted interventions.

"Our study shows that PNL can subtly affect the central nervous system. Such leprosy cases are often left undiagnosed due to the absence of skin-related symptoms," Bhoi said.

He stressed the need to test "both peripheral and central nervous involvement" to accelerate early detection of PNL, "allowing for treatment to reduce disability risks."

Funded by the Odisha government, the study involved a comprehensive analysis of 76 patients suspected of having PNL.

Using nerve biopsies, the team confirmed the diagnosis in 49 patients aged between 14 and 72.

Most patients were men, a unilateral foot drop and claw hand was the most common symptom, said the researchers. The team also suggested new approaches to PNL diagnosis such as Nerve Conduction Studies, and Central Nervous System tests.

Nerve Conduction Studies should be done for patients with nerve-related symptoms like sensory loss or muscle weakness without skin lesions.

For a more comprehensive diagnosis, tests like VEP (for vision nerve pathways), SSEP (for sensory pathways), and BAEP (for auditory pathways) should be considered, the study said.

Can Air Pollution Lead To obesity?

AGENCIES ■

Poor air quality may not only spike respiratory, cardiac, and mental health issues but can also lead to weight gain and obesity -- a precursor to several diseases, said doctors on Monday, even as the national capital saw worse pollution levels.

On Monday, Delhi's air quality further plummeted with the Air Quality Index (AQI) surpassing 400 in multiple parts of the national capital, placing it in the 'severe' category.

Areas including Anand Vihar (433), Ashok Vihar (410), Rohini (411), and Vivek Vihar (426) registered AQI levels above 400, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Other regions like Dwarka, Patparganj, Jahangirpuri, and Punjabi Bagh also recorded 'severe' AQI levels.

Different studies have proven that an increase in PM10 & PM2.5 leads to an increase in Body Mass Index (BMI). Long-term exposure to toxic air -- consisting of particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, and carbon monoxide -- can drive systemic inflammation and metabolic disturbances. These factors are crucial in weight gain and obesity.

Besides causing damage to the lungs, liver, and kidneys, PM2.5 can also influence metabolism rates.

The health experts noted that poor air quality can force people to stay indoors and decrease physical activity levels -- leading to obesity.

"People of Delhi are getting scared to go out of their homes. The outdoor activity of younger children who are in the growing phase of their lives, are severely restricted due to which they engage themselves in indoor activities such as playing games on the phone or watching television. Lack of physical exercise in this group of patients and overeating leads to the problem of obesity," Dr (prof) Bobby Bhalotra, Vice Chairman, Department of Respiratory Medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, told IANS.



He added that patients suffering from hypertension and diabetes are also at risk of weight gain.

"These patients have to do the walking as part of their treatment and they are used to walking every day to burn extra calories and keep their muscles active. Due to air pollution, they are locked inside their home and hence are gaining weight. Obesity in both of these groups of patients is mentally as physically very harmful," Bhalotra added.

According to a recent meta-analysis published in the journal BMC Public Health, air pollution can impair metabolic function by influencing inflammation in fat tissue, increasing oxidative stress, and altering individual dietary habits, with a "negative effect on glucose metabolism" -- leading to weight gain.

Different studies have proven that an increase in PM 10 and PM 2.5 leads to an increase in body mass index (BMI). This effect is more pronounced in adolescence where rise in obesity is related to increase in air pollution," Dr. Vivek Bindal, Director & Head -- Max Institute of Minimal Access, Bariatric & Robotic Surgery, Max Super Speciality Hospital, told IANS.

Union Minister Ravneet slams Canadian PM over attack on Hindu temple in Brampton

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Monday condemned the attack on a Hindu temple in Canada's Brampton and accused Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of dividing the Indian diaspora for his "dirty politics." Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at a Hindu temple in Brampton on Sunday.

The BJP and its government have always taken "tough steps" whenever it comes to the persecution of Hindus or infringement of their rights, the ruling party said here on Monday as India condemned the acts of violence perpetrated by extremists and separatists at a temple in Canada.

Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at Brampton's Hindu Sabha Temple on Sunday, prompting the High Commission of India in Ottawa to issue a strong statement condemning the attack by the "anti-India" elements.



"We have seen how strongly and clearly a firm reply has been given to Canada while displaying India's strength," BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said at a press conference at the party headquarters in Delhi when asked about the incident. He said the BJP and its government take "tough steps" whenever it comes to persecution of Hindus or infringement of their rights. "I think taking cognisance of this case also, India will put forth its stand very firmly and take steps whatever is necessary," he added. Peel Regional Police said a

protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the Hindu Sabha Mandir, the report added. Union minister Bittu in a social media post said, "Justin Trudeau has successfully divided the Indian Diaspora

in Canada for his dirty politics. Sikhs and Hindus live together in harmony in India but they are being pitched against each other in Canada. I highly condemn the attack on the temple or any religious place of worship by Trudeau's khalistani elements."

In a video message, Bittu said, "The news which is appearing in the past few days, (that) the situation that has developed in Canada, it is not about one particular religion. Be it Hindu or Sikh, Justin Trudeau has divided in such a way there."

He alleged that the Canadian police were standing in support of the Khalistani elements.

"Temples were being attacked. And nobody is ready to stop them. How they were chanting slogans and openly speaking about Khalistan. It will not be tolerated," he said. "These are some people (Khalistani elements) whom you are using. They are on your payroll," Bittu said.

"After this incident, no image of your country (Canada) and your PM (Trudeau) has left,"

he further said. After the incident in Canada, the High Commission of India in Ottawa issued a strong statement on Monday condemning the recent attack on Brampton's Hindu Sabha temple by "anti-India" elements.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Monday said the "attack" on a Hindu temple in Canada was a cause of concern and alleged that the Indian consulate's prior request to the Canadian administration for providing security was "intentionally" ignored.

Reacting to the incident, VHP international president Alok Kumar said the attack was a cause of concern, more so because a consular camp had been organised by the Indian consulate at the temple.

The Indian consulate had informed the police about the event three days ago and had specifically said that in view of the security environment in Canada, adequate protection was required for the camp and the temple, he said.

Election Commission orders transfer of Maharashtra DGP Rashmi Shukla

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Against the Opposition she was facing, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday ordered the removal of controversial IPS officer Rashmi Shukla from her position as the Maharashtra Director General Police ahead of the State Assembly polls scheduled for November 20.

More than five weeks after the Opposition Congress rooted for Rashmi Shukla's removal from the DGP's post to ensure a "free, fair and transparent" State Assembly polls, the ECI asked State Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik to hand over Shukla's charge to the next senior-most IPS officer with immediate effect.

The ECI also asked the chief secretary to send a panel of three IPS officers by Tuesday afternoon for appointment as DGP.

Shukla is a 1988-batch IPS officer. There are three contenders who can replace Rashmi Shukla, a 1989-batch IPS officer Vivek Phansalkar, who is now the Mumbai Police Commissioner and is due for retirement in April 2025.

The other senior officers include National Investigation Agency (NIA) chief Sadanand Date, a 1990-batch officer who retires in December 2026. He is followed by his batchmate Bipin Kumar Singh, who retires in October next year, and Sanjay Kumar Verma, who retires in April 2028.

Welcoming the decision, the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) said the ECI's decision to shunt Rashmi Shukla as the DGP was better late than never.

On September 24, 2024,



Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole had - in a letter to the ECI - flagged the issue of the continuance of Rashmi Shukla, and said: "Rashmi Shukla was due to retire on June 30 2024, upon reaching the age of superannuation... However, she has been illegally granted an extension until January 2026, in a direct violation of the Maharashtra Police Act, which stipulates that the DGP of the state shall have a term of two years or until their retirement, whichever is earlier."

Patole had among other things stated: "Given the instances of her alleged political bias, misuse of government machinery, and illegal activities, it is impossible to ensure a fair and impartial environment for the upcoming elections in Maharashtra while Rashmi Shukla continues to hold power over the state police... Her removal is crucial to safeguard the democratic process and ensure that the forthcoming elections are conducted in a fair, free, and transparent manner."

Patole had written two letters to the ECI on September 24 2024 and 4 October 4 2024 on this issue.

It may be recalled that Rashmi Shukla had come under rough

weather during the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government over the alleged tapping of Opposition leaders' phones during the Devendra Fadnavis-led government between 2014 and 2019.

Two FIRs had been registered against Shukla for allegedly tapping the Opposition leaders. In the first FIR in Mumbai, Shukla had been accused of illegally tapping phones of Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Uddhav Thackeray, Sanjay Raut and Nationalist Congress Party leader Eknath Khadse, while she faced the charge of Congress leader Nana Patole's telephone in the second FIR registered in Pune.

However, a HC division bench of justice AS Gadkari and justice Sharmila Deshmukh quashed the two FIRs, a HC division bench of Justices AS Gadkari and Sharmila Deshmukh quashed the two FIRs September 9, 2023, after the Prosecution counsel Mahesh Jethmalani told the high court that in the Pune FIR, the police had submitted a C-Summary report (case is neither false nor true) seeking to close it and in the Mumbai case, the state government refused to grant sanction to prosecute Shukla.

India-Vietnam joint military exercise 'VINBAX 2024' gets underway in Ambala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A joint exercise by the militaries of India and Vietnam aimed at enhancing capabilities for deployment of engineering and medical teams to undertake tasks as part of a UN contingent in peacekeeping operations got underway in Haryana on Monday.

The fifth edition of 'VINBAX 2024', which will conclude on November 23 at Ambala and Chandimandir, marks a significant increase in scope with bi-service level participation for the first time by personnel of the army and the air force from both countries, the defence ministry said.

The exercise is a sequel to the bilateral exercise in Vietnam in 2023 and a major milestone in strengthening the bilateral relations between India and Vietnam.

"The aim of 'VINBAX 2024' is to enhance joint military capability of both sides in employment and deployment of Engineer Company and Medical Teams to undertake engineering tasks as part of a United Nation contingent in



peacekeeping operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The Indian Army contingent comprising 47 personnel is being represented by a regiment of the Corps of Engineers along with personnel from other arms and services. The Vietnamese contingent comprising of similar strength will be represented by the troops Vietnam People's Army, it said.

The conduct of 'VINBAX 2024' as a field training exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, and interoperability and enable

sharing of best practices between the Indian Army and Vietnam People's Army, the statement said.

A 48-hour validation exercise with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief demonstration and equipment display is also part of the schedule to assess the standards achieved by both contingents while executing technical military operations under similar scenarios in UN missions. "The joint exercise will also provide an opportunity to the troops of both the contingents to learn about the social and cultural heritage of each other," the ministry said.

Rajya Sabha Dy Chairman Harivansh to lead Indian delegation at G20 Parliamentary Summit in Brazil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh will lead the Indian delegation at the 10th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) in Brasilia, Brazil to be held from November six to eight, according to a Rajya Sabha statement on Monday.

The 10th P20 Summit will promote debates and exchanges under the motto "Parliaments for a just world and a sustainable planet". Currently India is looked upon as one of the most active partners of the G20 group of nations.

Parliamentarians of the G20 will debate and discuss on many issues including 'The contribution of parliaments to the fight against hunger, poverty, and inequality; 'The role of parliaments in promoting sustainable development' and 'Parliaments in the construction of global governance adapted to the challenges of the 21st century'. The delegation is accompanied by Rajya Sabha



member Manoj Kumar Jha along with P C Mody, Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha and Utpal Kumar Singh Secretary General Lok Sabha among others.

Since parliaments can make a substantial contribution to fulfilling the G20's mandate, the P20 was set up at the 2018 Summit. It is a platform for Speakers of Parliament to discuss and explore avenues to provide a parliamentary contribution to the implementation of G20 decisions.

The 10th P20 Summit will promote debates and exchanges under the motto "Parliaments for a just world and a sustainable planet". Currently India is looked upon as one of the most active partners of the G20 group of nations.

Congress in habit of lying: Dharmendra Pradhan on teachers' right of reservation in universities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday attacked the Congress for alleging that right of reservation of teachers in central universities was being snatched.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday accused the Centre of taking away the right of reservation of teachers in central universities and claimed that the "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" slogan mocked

the fight for social justice. Kharge said an RTI query had revealed that of the 18,940 sanctioned posts in 46 central universities, 27 per cent teaching posts were lying vacant.

"Congress party is in habit of lying. When one lie does not last, they come up with another lie. Whereas, the truth is crystal clear. In 2014, during the Congress UPA government, there were 16,217 sanctioned posts in central universities out of which 6,042 posts -- 37 per cent posts -- were vacant. 57 per cent, 63 per

cent and 60 per cent posts of SCs, STs and OBCs were vacant," Pradhan said in a social media post.

The minister said the Narendra Modi government was rapidly filling all vacant posts by taking a every section along. "This is the reason that despite the increase in the number of sanctioned posts (18,940) in 2024 as compared to 2014, the total number of vacant posts has decreased from 37 to 26.8 per cent today. During the last two years, more than 6,890 teaching posts have been recruited on mission mode, in which 939

(13.6 per cent) are from SC, 464 (6.7 per cent) ST, 1,535 (22.27 per cent) OBC and 348 (5.05 per cent) are from EWS," he further said.

"Recruitment to vacant posts in central universities is a continuous process which is going on at an unprecedented pace," he added.

Alleging that Kharge had followed the footsteps of former party chief Rahul Gandhi to spread confusion regarding central universities, Pradhan claimed that the Congress should explain why it kept the Dalits, oppressed and

the backward classes deprived of their rights despite ruling the country for 60 years.

"What was the reason that they did not get representation in various educational institutions of the country? Congress party has no right to talk about backward classes. Because for decades you have worked to snatch the rights of SCs, STs and OBCs and it is only the government of the honourable Prime Minister Modi ji that has worked to give rights not only to SCs, STs and OBCs but also to the economically weaker EWS class," he said.

Opposition MPs say they may disassociate with Waqf committee, protest Chair's 'unilateral' decisions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs in the parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill are likely to meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday over its chairperson Jagdambika Pal's alleged unilateral decisions and attempts to "bulldoze" proceedings without giving them reasonable time to prepare.

Claiming that they have been "stonewalled" during the committee's proceedings, opposition MPs have written in their letter, which they circulated among themselves on Monday, to Birla that they may be forced to disassociate with the panel.

Opposition sources said they are likely to meet Birla on Tuesday and put forward their grievances.



Opposition members, including DMK's A Raja, Congress's Mohammad Jawed and Imran Masood, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, AAP's Sanjay Singh and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee among others, have written the joint letter addressed to the Speaker.

They accused Pal, a seasoned BJP MP, of taking "unilateral decisions" on fixing the dates of sittings and at times for three consecutive days, and whom to call witnesses. They

said it is not practically possible for MPs to interact without preparation.

Asserting that the joint committee of Parliament examining the Bill is like a mini Parliament, they said it should not be treated as a mere "ventilating chamber" to get the proposed legislation passed as desired by the government ignoring the due process.

The committee's proceedings have been marred by frequent protests from opposition members over a host of issues, while the BJP members have accused them of deliberately trying to scuttle its work.

Pal has rejected the charge that he has not allowed opposition members to air their views, asserting that he has ensured that everybody is heard.

IRF urges Modi Government for installation of crash barriers on Char Dham routes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned at increasing road accidents, global road safety body International Road Federation (IRF) urged the Modi government and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway for installation of crash barriers and parapets on most of the hill roads in Uttarakhand including Char Dham Yatra route, to curb accidents and make the hill roads safer is welcome.

The IRF further stressed for separate driving license for hill drivers and stricter fitness and overloading norms for vehicles. This comes after at least 36 people died after a bus carrying 42 passengers lost control and fell into a gorge near Marchula in Uttarakhand's Almora Monday morning.

The hill roads in the country are prone to regular road



accident a lot needs to be done to ensure road safety, especially in higher areas in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal, Jammu and Kashmir, and North East states in the country the government should plan to incorporate the latest technologies and safety features, including installation of soil and slope stabilization and roadside safety in the hilly terrain infrastructure, crash barriers,

intelligent traffic plans, rumble strips, use of speed governors and proper signage," said K K Kapila, President, Emeritus, International Road Federation (IRF) expressing concern in a statement on Monday.

"Installation of crash barriers, special separate tough driving license for hill drivers, use of vehicle tracking system, tough vehicle fitness norms and

certification and development of safety code for hills should also be adhered to make road travel safe and sustainable on hills" said Kapila.

"The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways as well as confirmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for installation of crash barriers and parapets on most of the hill roads in Uttarakhand including Char Dham Yatra route, to curb accidents and make the hill roads safer is welcome. Road crash barrier systems are used worldwide on highways, especially on hill roads, to physically prevent vehicles from running off the roadway or falling down a steep slope and protect vehicle hitting a road side object. Similar crash barriers should be installed in all hill roads" Said Biju Muthu, CEO India chapter of

International Road Federation. During the year 2023 about 1.55 lakh people died in road accidents in the country.

"At present, most of the hill roads in the country have been constructed around hill slopes, which remain cut off during heavy rains due to landslides. Construction of well-engineered safe tunnels and long bridges will help in movement of traffic round the year. The Ministry of Road and State PWDs should focus on engineering safe roads rather than more roads as rectifying faulty designed roads with black spots is more expensive than building safe roads. Similarly, the stress should also be on safe vehicles with higher visibility features, including ABS brakes, reflective tapes on commercial vehicles and mandatory fog lamps on all vehicles," said Kapila.

In Jharkhand, JMM, Congress, RJD have crossed all limits says PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the JMM-led coalition in Jharkhand, labeling it a "Ghuspaithiya Bandhan" (infiltrators' alliance) and "Mafia Ka Ghulam" (mafia's slave) for allegedly supporting Bangladeshi infiltrators.

announcement of assembly elections scheduled on November 13 and November 20 with counting of votes on November 23. It was also any prime minister's maiden visit to Garhwa. "Termites of corruption make the country hollow. In Jharkhand, the JMM, Congress and RJD have crossed all limits as far as corruption is concerned. This has impacted the poor, dalits, tribals and the backward communities. Jharkhand CM, MLAs and MPs of JMM-led coalition are neck-deep in corruption," the PM said, asserting that only the BJP can

during festivals like Durga Puja have become common. The Prime Minister said Jharkhand has become a hub for sand smuggling and claimed that rumour-mongering has turned into an industry in the state, with "one family active in Delhi and another in Jharkhand." He criticised the Congress for spreading falsehoods since Independence, alleging that it has devastated states like Himachal, Telangana, and Karnataka. Modi said AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge admitted that the party makes false guarantees. "I am surprised how Kharge ji spoke the truth that Congress's irrelevant announcements will bankrupt states," Modi remarked, asserting that Congress and its partners can never be relied upon. He also pointed out that the JMM-led coalition spread rumours discouraging farmers from accepting funds under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, leading them to believe the money would be taken away.

Promises made to people by BJP, Congress not being fulfilled: Mayawati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW



BSP supremo Mayawati on Monday said at a time when crores of people are troubled by inflation and unemployment, the BJP and Congress are busy hurling allegations at each other and announcing freebies in the poll campaigns for Maharashtra and Jharkhand elections. Instead of focusing their attention on public issues, these parties are busy in "negative politics" with their false propaganda and promises ahead of the elections, she added. In a social media post, the BSP chief said, "The promises made to the people by these two parties are not being fulfilled honestly because they (promises) are made only to mislead the people and are forgotten after forming the government."

including UP, are seen engaging in 'jugaad politics' to divert attention from the burning issues after forming the government," she added. Mayawati said the BSP does not issue any manifesto to mislead people during elections, but considers doing honest work for crores of poor, oppressed and unemployed people following its constitutional responsibility and "political religion". "At a time when the lives of crores of people are suffering due to widespread poverty, unemployment, inflation and acute lack of basic necessities like agriculture, education, health, roads, electricity, clean water and law and order, the BJP and Congress and their governments are busy making allegations and counter-allegations in view of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand state assembly general elections, and announcing freebies and promises," her post read. She said people are in "dire need of employment" to get rid of their troubles. The BSP president claimed that the number of jobs provided by her government is more than the combined employment provided by the subsequent SP and BJP governments in the state. Maharashtra Assembly Elections will take place on November 20, 2024. Jharkhand Assembly Elections will take place in two phases November 13 and 20. The counting of votes will be held on November 23.

Karnataka CM accuses BJP of opposing welfare schemes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

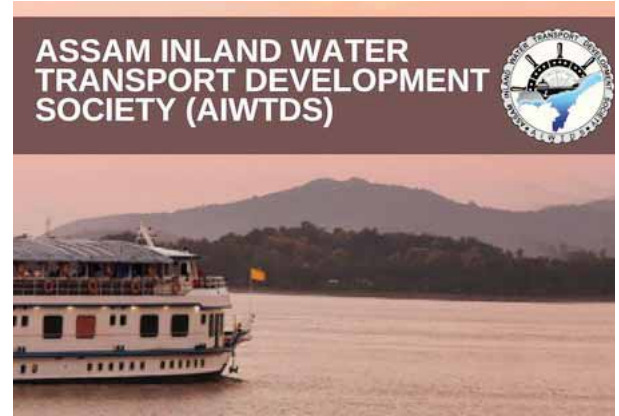


Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday alleged that the BJP was opposed to guarantee schemes of the Congress government as they give economic and social strength to all sections of the society. He said BJP wants the poor and weaker sections to remain as they are so that it can "misuse" them. "BJP is opposed to guarantee schemes, it is because the government is economically and socially giving to all sections of the society through guarantee schemes. We want to empower people through social justice to ensure that backward communities come to the mainstream," Siddaramaiah said. Speaking to media, the CM said: "BJP doesn't want equality, they want inequality and the poor to remain as they are. So we call them anti-poor. BJP misuses poor and people who don't have strength in the society. When you get strength, how can they misuse you? So BJP doesn't want people to get strength economically and socially."

Noting that the 16th finance commission that has been constituted had recently visited Karnataka, he said, "We (Karnataka) faced injustice from the 15th finance commission. We (state) are giving more than Rs 4.50 lakh crore as tax per year, what we get back is Rs 55,000-Rs 65,000 crore. Is that right?" No BJP leader is speaking against injustice happening to Karnataka, he claimed. "Has Pralhad Joshi (union minister), Basavaraj Bommai and Jagadish Shettar (both MPs and former CM) ever spoken on injustice happening to Karnataka? What should we say, if talking about injustice happening to Karnataka is called political?" He, however, noted that despite injustice to Karnataka by the 15th finance commission, it had recommended special grants of Rs 5,495 crore, Rs 3,000 crore each for peripheral ring road and for development of lakes, totaling Rs 11,495 crore. "Did the central government give it? Did Joshi (Pralhad Joshi) ask about it? Let him say if the Centre has given, if given I will quit politics, if not will Joshi quit?" the Chief Minister said.

Assam Government to revitalise waterways with safety and infrastructure upgrades

PTI ■ GUWAHATI



Assam government is actively working to revitalise the state's waterways by enhancing safety, modernising infrastructure and improving connectivity, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on Monday. The Assam Inland Water Transport Development Society (AIWTDS) is undertaking these initiatives, the CMO said in a post on X. AIWTDS is modernising Assam's waterways by enhancing safety, infrastructure and connectivity, focusing on key advancements such as establishing new regulatory bodies, implementing night navigation, and upgrading the fleet with 20 steel catamarans, the CMO said. The Jibondinga Scheme has also been introduced to

provide boat operators with marine engines and safety gear," it said. "As per the directives of HCM Dr @himantabiswa, @CSAssam, Dr. Ravi Kota held a meeting recently with AIWTDS to review the progress of these initiatives," the CMO added. The AIWTDS aims to enhance passenger ferry services and infrastructure while strengthening the state's inland water transport framework, it said. A key aspect of this initiative involves institutional and safety improvements, leading to the setting up of the Assam Inland Water Transport Regulatory

Authority and Assam Inland Waterways Company Ltd. Night navigation has been initiated, which has benefited over 8.5 lakh passengers, the CMO said. For modernising infrastructure, 20 advanced steel catamarans have been added to the fleet, which also includes three search and rescue vessels, three tugboats, and three survey boats. A total of 840 marine engines and life-saving gear have been provided to country boat operations under Jibondinga scheme, the CMO said. As part of efforts to improve terminals, a fixed terminal has been constructed in Guwahati, and modular terminals have been established at North Guwahati, Umananda, Neamati, and Aphalamukh, it added.

Sanitary workers' bodies retrieved from Bharathapuzha river

PNS ■ KOCHI

The body of Lakshmanan, the sanitary worker who fell into Bharathapuzha River at Shoranur from the Ernakulam Bridge on Saturday was retrieved late Sunday evening by the scuba divers deployed by the Fire Brigade. With this, bodies of all the four sanitary workers engaged by the private contractor to clean the tracks have been retrieved. According to a media release by Southern Railway, steps were on to initiate legal proceedings against the private contractor based at Malappuram for throwing to the winds the security protocol which resulted in the mishap. The Railways was in the dark about the contractor shepherding the workers over the bridge despite the fact that there was no work allocated to clean this stretch. Three workers in the group were ran over by the speeding New Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram Super Fast Express at 3 pm on Saturday while the fourth person jumped into the river to save himself from the train. According to a release by Southern Railway, actions have been initiated to terminate the contract and a criminal case is being filed against the contractor for failing to ensure the safety of the workers. The workers were in the dark about the arrival of the super-fast Kerala Express and they were left clueless about what to do to escape to safety. But Kerala minister for sports Abdul Rehman has come out demanding a thorough probe before any action is taken against the contractor M/s Munawar Thonikkadavat with its head quarters at Malappuram.



Three arrested for torturing minor boy in MP

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Three persons were arrested in Madhya Pradesh's Pandhurna district after a video of them hanging a minor boy upside down and placing hot coal near his head surfaced on social media, police said on Monday. The incident occurred on Sunday in Mohgaon, around 30 km from the district headquarters, they said. The viral video shows a boy hanging upside down with hands tied with a rope and crying loudly, and later, a tray of hot coal is placed near his head. A man is also seen tying another boy in the video. In the video, people are heard accusing the boy of stealing a watch and other items. Pandhurna's Superintendent of Police (SP) Sundar Singh Kanesh said the police arrested three persons allegedly involved in the incident and booked them under sections 137(2) (kidnapping), 127(2) (wrongful confinement), 115 (causing hurt), 296 (obscene act) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS). Meanwhile, former chief minister Kamal Nath condemned the incident. In a social media post, Nath wrote, "A video has surfaced of a small child being hung upside down and beaten and then two children being forced to inhale chilli smoke. This incident is highly condemnable. There is no place for such acts in a civilized society. I demand the local administration to take strict action against all the culprits in this case."

Poland paraglider stranded in Dhauladhar after collision

PTI ■ DHARAMSHALA

A paraglider from Poland was stranded in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh after a mid-air collision with another paraglider, officials said on Monday. Efforts to airlift the paraglider, who was identified as Andrew Babinski, failed due to tough terrain on Monday, they said. Babinski got stranded in Dhauladhar hills on Sunday after colliding with another paraglider mid-air, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Baijnath, D C Thakur told PTI. An attempt to rescue him on Monday using a chopper failed due to tough terrain. The land search party will soon reach

the spot, the officer said. Babinski is in touch with paragliding organisers and the local administration, according to the officials. Meanwhile, an Australian paraglider participating in the Paragliding World Cup 2024 in Kangra's Bir Billing suffered a sprain in his leg before takeoff on Sunday. "Australian paraglider David Snowden had a sprain in his leg before takeoff and did not fly. He was rushed to the hospital for an X-ray and is fine now," Billing Paragliding Association president Anurag Sharma told PTI. The eight-day Paragliding World Cup 2024 commenced on November 2 and 94 paragliders, including seven women, from 26 countries are participating in the event. As part of safety measures, two helicopters, seven health teams with ambulances, and six rescue and retrieval teams led by experts from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Mountaineering Institute in Manali are on standby for the event, Sharma said. Last week, two foreign paragliders crashed to death in Himachal Pradesh. On Tuesday, a Belgian paraglider died after colliding mid-air with another paraglider in Bir Billing as his parachute failed to open after the collision. On Wednesday, solo paraglider Dita Misurcova (43) crashed into the mountains near Marhi in Manali after she lost control of the glider due to strong winds.

Goa CM urges job scam victims to report fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Monday appealed to people who have been cheated on the promise of government jobs to lodge police complaints and said the culprits won't be spared. The opposition Goa Forward Party (GFP), however, demanded that all current recruitments be suspended immediately and a special investigation team be set up to probe the scam. The Goa police have arrested half a dozen people for their alleged involvement in the cash-for-government jobs scam, recently exposed following a series of cases registered at various police stations in the state. Talking to the media, Sawant asked the victims to come

forward without fear and lodge police complaints against the culprits. "No one would be spared. We have taken the cases very seriously," the chief minister said. In a letter to the chief minister on Monday, GFP president and Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai said he had pointed out the corruption in the selection process of government jobs during the last assembly session. He said since people have come forward with their complaints, the state government should form a special investigation team (SIT) to probe these recruitment scams without delay. "The SIT should comprise professionals from outside the Goa administration to ensure an impartial and thorough investigation. The probe team should have unrestricted access to records, documents and personnel necessary to uncover the full extent of this scam," he wrote. Sardesai also demanded immediate suspension of all the recruitment processes until the SIT completes its investigation. He also urged the state government to implement the recommendations issued by the committee that reviewed the 2021 Public Works Department (PWD) recruitment scam. Last month, the Ponda police arrested a woman named Puja Naik for allegedly cheating people after promising them government jobs. Sawant had said action would be initiated against two government officials for helping her in the job racket.

Patna illuminates landmarks in blue for Chhath festival

PTI ■ PATNA



The historic Darbhanga House, the newly-built complex of the district collectorate and 'Sabhaya Dwar' are among the several public buildings located along the banks of Ganga in Patna which have been illuminated in blue hue ahead of the Chhath festival. The night-time illumination of these structures, some of which face popular old ghats in the city such as the Collectorate Ghat and Kali Ghat, have been done as part of a 'Go Blue' campaign of the Patna district administration. "Recently, we issued a public appeal to individuals and private entities who have properties located along the ghats of Ganga, to also illuminate those buildings with blue-colour lights, the theme for illumination during

the Bihar Diwas celebrations here every year, to mark Chhath festivities," a senior official told PTI. The four-day Chhath festival, celebrated as a 'Mahaparv' in Bihar, will be held this year from November 5-8. On the last two days, devotees offer 'arghya', first to the setting sun and the next day to the rising sun. On Sunday, after dark, the over 120-year-old Darbhanga House, a palace built by the erstwhile Darbhanga Raj estate that currently houses the PG department of the Patna University, stood out on the city skyline. The palatial building, known for its iconic architecture and aesthetic grandeur, faces the Kali Ghat along the river, which draws huge number of devotees during the Chhath celebrations. The building also houses an old Kali temple. Traditionally, people gather along the banks of Ganga to observe this ancient festival, but due to impact of rapid urbanisation on the river and other constraints, many now prefer to either do rituals in nearby water bodies or on rooftops using makeshift arrangements. The Collectorate Ghat is one such example where the river water has receded, but only to come back during the monsoon season. The new high-rise complex which is expected to be inaugurated soon after the Chhath Puja, has been decorated with blue lights and

commuters using the Ganga Drive built along the riverfront can catch a glimpse of the illumination. A huge neon signage 'Samharanalay Patna' mounted on its rooftop, glows in vibrant red at night, adding to its aura. "This illumination of the new Collectorate complex began around Diwali," the official said. The old Collectorate was a cluster of heritage buildings from Dutch era and British period, which were demolished in the second half of 2022 to make way for the new complex, despite protests from several quarters. Till recent years, devotees from far-off places in the state used to gather in the old Collectorate campus and some used to even camp there for four days to observe Chhath as the eponymous ghat is located right next to the site.

Four children die of suffocation locked in car in Gujarat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMEDABAD



Four children died of suffocation after getting locked inside a car while playing in Gujarat's Amreli district, police said Monday. The incident took place at

the farm of one Bharat Mandani at around 7.30 am, leaving their seven children behind. Four of the children entered the car of the farm owner parked near their house," he said. The four victims, in the age group of 2 to 7 years, got locked from inside. They died due to suffocation, the official said. When their parents and the car owner returned on Saturday evening, they found the bodies, he said. A case of accidental death was registered at Amreli (taluka) police station, the official said, adding that further investigation was underway.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Smogged capital!

Delhi's air has taken a hazardous turn with the city enveloped in a thick blanket of smog and the AQI reaching alarming levels

Delhi's pollution levels have once again reached alarming highs, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) crossing the 400 mark just two days after Diwali. As of Sunday morning, the city witnessed hazardous air conditions, recording AQI values that are 65 times above the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended limits. The city's air quality entered the "hazardous" category as a thick blanket of smog descended. For context, an AQI level above 450 is classified as 'severe-plus,' posing serious health risks, especially for vulnerable populations like children, the elderly and individuals with respiratory issues. On Saturday night, Delhi's AQI stood at 327, but within just 12 hours, it shot up to 447, marking a significant spike. This worsening air quality is not limited to isolated pockets of the city; regions across Delhi-NCR, including Jahangirpuri, Mundka, Narela and Sonia Vihar, also recorded dangerously high levels. Many people reported respiratory issues due to the poor air quality and eye irritation, a direct effect of the dense smog. These symptoms highlight the immediate health repercussions of Delhi's worsening air quality, especially after Diwali. Firecrackers during Diwali celebrations have a substantial impact on Delhi's air quality. The smoke and particulate matter released from fireworks contain pollutants like sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and heavy metals that remain suspended in the air, exacerbating pollution levels. The annual agricultural practice of stubble burning in neighbouring states, including Punjab and Haryana, contributes to Delhi's smog. Its persistence remains a critical factor in the air quality crisis. During winter, Delhi's colder temperatures and lack of strong winds trap pollutants close to the ground. This natural 'trapping effect' worsens in the days following Diwali as pollutants from firecrackers and stubble burning accumulate in the air, creating hazardous conditions. In an effort to tackle this recurring issue, the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-II) was implemented in Delhi-NCR starting October 21, following the dip in air quality to the 'Very Poor' category. This plan mandates restrictions on activities that contribute to pollution, such as construction and industrial operations. However, despite GRAP-II's implementation, the AQI remains alarmingly high, showing the need for stricter enforcement and possibly, more robust solutions to address the city's persistent air quality issues. Delhi's post-Diwali pollution crisis is a reminder of the complex and multifaceted nature of air quality management. Efforts to control pollution through initiatives like GRAP and public awareness campaigns have had limited success, underscoring the need for more effective and sustained interventions. A multi-pronged approach involving stricter restrictions on firecrackers, better stubble management practices, and real-time pollution control is essential to bring lasting improvement to Delhi's air quality. As Delhi faces yet another winter of hazardous air, urgent, long-term solutions are crucial to protect the health and wellbeing of its citizens.



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PICTALK



People purchase bamboo baskets and other items ahead of the 'Chhath Puja,' in Gurugram

PTI

Finding strength in the face of life's deepest sorrows

Adversities are integral to our lives. However, we possess a wellspring of strength that enables us to recover and move on

First read about resilience in my physics classes in school as the ability of a material to absorb energy and release back that energy as it springs back to its original shape.

Later, I understood a third element, the ability to spring back without creating a permanent distortion. Human resilience is no different. I have met many people who bounced back. I then understood its meaning in daily life. It was about humans and their strength to face adversities and move forward with renewed vigour. I remember an incident from almost four decades back. I was only 26-years-old. My colleague was 56. His only child, a son around my age, died in a boat accident while on vacation with his friends in the Sundarbans. I went with my wife to console and realised that words were superfluous. What do you tell an old couple who had just lost their only child? I had tears in my eyes, and I found the gentleman consoling me instead. He sought solace



and strength from the scriptures. Another colleague lost her 41-year-old son. She wanted to write about it, had even tried multiple times, but could not bring herself to articulate her feelings. I encouraged her to write. She shared her innermost thoughts, 'A woman goes through severest of physical pains and mental suffering through labour pain at the time of her child's birth. This is the natural cycle of life. But what is unnatural is when this cycle of life breaks due to the untimely death of the younger per-

son, whom the woman had given birth to, and nurtured, to become a good and strong human being to face the world.'

The lady now lives through her son's memories. She also expresses her emotions by writing poetry or short stories. This is her way of coming out of her traumatic experience and honouring her son's life. Another lady that I recently interviewed for an episode of a virtual show lost her young son of 22 a few years back. She 'transcended' her grief cherishing the fond memories of a limited time spent together. She helps others transform their grief into growth. The loss of a child is probably the most difficult form of adversity. We face challenges and find the inner strength to deal with them. There are a few, who unfortunately are not able to cope, and sometimes take extreme steps. There are also a few people who may require additional medical help to deal with feelings of depression. Above all, they require love

and support from the near and dear ones. Each human is a wellspring of resilience. All that is needed is to tap within and for others to help. We may adopt a few lessons from the lives of resilient persons. They believe they are masters of their destiny, they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they adapt to situations, they do not obsess over factors over which they do not have control, they are optimists and many more. However, resilience does not require us to present a brave facade at all times. It is also important to create a social environment and not hesitate to seek help. I close the article, with a prayer that all of us find the courage to be resilient, and with a quote from Emil Dorian, a Romanian poet, prose writer, and physician, "Strong people alone know how to organise their suffering so as to bear only the most necessary pain."

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



SANJAY CHANDRA

Providing a fulcrum for the new global order

The Indo-US partnership stands out as a stabilising force, rooted in shared democratic values and a commitment to security, peace and technological progress



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The global power structure has undergone profound changes, shifting from the Cold War's rigid bipolarity to an era of unipolar dominance, and now, to a complex multipolar framework. This transition has amplified the voices of countries that were once sidelined, making their contributions essential to shaping international relations. For a stable and cooperative world, active participation from all nations is necessary in this evolving paradigm of global politics. A key relationship in this multipolar world is the strengthening bond between India and the United States, founded on shared respect and strategic interests. Over the past decade, their alliance has evolved significantly, propelled by a common vision for regional stability and global security. Regions like West Asia and conflicts like Russia-Ukraine illustrate how global geopolitical tensions are often rooted in complex interplays of power, ideology, and rivalry. Maintaining peace requires transparent diplomacy, cooperation, and trust-based dialogue among nations. To sustain global stability, countries must collaborate on critical fronts such as climate action, renewable energy, and technological innovation.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an example of how emerging powers are asserting influence, sparking responses from other nations. India's growing partnership with the US stands as a stabilising counterforce in this landscape. Key agreements like the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) have enhanced defense and data-sharing capabilities, primarily to counter security threats in the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, India and the US have institutionalised their cooperation through strategic initiatives like the 2+2 Dialogue, a platform that enables regular high-level discussions and reinforces a multi-layered security partnership. These collaborations reflect the importance of joint efforts in combating modern challenges, from chemical weapons control to

counter-terrorism initiatives, underscoring the need for stringent international regulations. The role of smaller nations is also evolving within this multipolar order. These countries are adapting to shifting global dynamics, often requiring support from larger nations for economic, strategic and cultural integration. India's growing recognition as a mediator in international disputes, as seen in its balanced stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, reflects its increasing diplomatic stature. This approach not only underlines India's commitment to global peace but also highlights its ability to bridge divides as a neutral party. With an evolving international landscape, new security frameworks and collaborative information-sharing networks have become critical for countering emerging threats. India's active role in tackling these challenges showcases the potential of soft diplomacy. This diplomatic approach resonates with India's cultural philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (One Earth, One Family), which advocates for inclusive governance and unity. This ethos aligns well with the India-US partnership, which is also rooted in shared democratic values and mutual respect for sov-



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With an evolving international landscape, new security frameworks and collaborative information-sharing networks have become critical for countering emerging threats. India's active role in tackling these challenges showcases the potential of soft diplomacy. This diplomatic approach resonates with India's cultural philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (One Earth, One Family), which advocates for inclusive governance and unity. This ethos aligns well with the India-US partnership, which is also rooted in shared democratic values and mutual respect for sov-



IN AN ERA WHERE POWER IS INCREASINGLY DISPERSED, THE INDO-US RELATIONSHIP REFLECTS A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY MULTIPOLARITY

eighty. Recent technological agreements, including the US support for the production of F414 engines, advanced drones, and fighter jet components in India, symbolise the strides both countries are making toward a robust defense alliance. Such agreements not only solidify defense cooperation but also pave the way for smoother technology transfers. Beyond defense, India and the US are deepening cooperation in areas like artificial intelligence (AI) and information technology (IT), underscoring India's expanding role in global tech markets. Indian companies, particularly in the IT sector, have successfully established a presence in international markets, creating jobs, fostering trade, and contributing to the US economy. With an Indian diaspora of about 5.6 million living, working, and studying in the US, these contributions further strengthen the economic ties and cultural connections between the two democracies. This vibrant Indian-American community enhances mutual understanding and shared aspirations between the two nations, fostering a unique bond that complements strategic cooperation.

The Indo-US partnership holds strategic importance not only for bilateral benefits but also as a pillar for building broader international coalitions to address global security threats. As two of the world's largest democracies, India and the US are in a unique position to lead efforts against transnational terrorism and other pressing security issues. By jointly developing a forward-looking security framework, both countries can drive global initiatives for peace and stability. Through shared commitments, this alliance has the potential to shape a diplomatic roadmap that champions prosperity, security, and harmony on a global scale. In an era where power is increasingly dispersed, the Indo-US relationship reflects a proactive response to the challenges and opportunities presented by multipolarity. As both nations continue to strengthen their alliance, they contribute not only to their own security but also to a collective effort aimed at promoting peace, economic stability, and shared progress. This partnership is more than just a bilateral relationship; it embodies the hope for a cooperative, resilient global order that values inclusive growth and sustainable peace. (The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a professor and expert in strategic affairs; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDUCATION SYSTEM REVAMP

Madam — The article 'Reforming India's education...' (November 2) presents suggestions that could be considered positively. The education system we had for long could produce creative brains and talents that have been absorbed by the knowledge and talent seeking institutions all over the world. Most of the scientists and technocrats contributing to most inventions and developments in various countries are Indians, who had their basic education in India. The country is caught in the grip of confusion over the type of education we need to provide to our students.

The act of leaving education to market forces dominated by avaricious private players has converted the essence of education from learning to just scoring high marks, which helps in gaining seats in educational institutions and nothing more. The cream is able to gain placement in the IT sector, and the rest are left to be satisfied with a degree that cannot fetch them a job. It is all the more a serious concern that now the system is made to suffer the onslaughts of the communal flare ignited in every sphere of life. As a result, those who have a degree but no employable skill are taken up for infusing skill in them to make them employable. We need to wait and see how this is going to yield the desired result. It is time to leave education to the States to compete themselves in creating skilled and knowledgeable forces for mutual benefit.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

INDIA-CANADA TENSIONS

Madam — Apropos of 'MEA summons Canadian diplomat' (November 3), Canada's baseless and unsubstantiated allegations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah under pressure from Khalistani extremists, have taken Indo-Canadian diplomatic relations to a new low. The surveillance of the Indian diplomats in Canada is beyond all diplomatic norms and is illegal. Even earlier, Canada failed and refused to provide any proof or congenial evidence of India's involvement in Canada-based Khalistani extremist Nijjar's murder.

Toxic work culture



The recent tragic death of a 26-year-old Chartered Accountant from Kerala working in a MNC in Pune has reignited discussions about exploitative work conditions prevalent in many Indian organisations. In fact, her mother wrote a letter to the chairman of the company, blaming the toxic work environment as the reason for her daughter's death. The woman's case is not an isolat-

No terrorist or extremist organisation activates itself or indulges in separatist, destructive or terrorist activities without state support and sponsorship. Pakistan is the best example of such state-sponsored terrorist organisations. Justin Trudeau is facing fierce opposition within its ranks and in the country while the parliamentary elections are approaching fast. Khalistani extremists do have some political support in India, but such political parties and leaders miserably lost elections in recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. It is very strange that anti-India Khalistani extremists have no support in India and are not relevant for Canada too, so Justin Trudeau's support for them is highly undiplomatic and unbecoming of his Government. The large Indian diaspora in Canada may not be favourable of their Khalistani support.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

NEW ZEALAND'S CLEAN SWEEP

Madam — This is one of the most humiliating defeats for team India at home and Skipper Rohit Sharma can't have any

excuse for this shocking performance of the players and especially the batters. Full credit goes to New Zealand for their absolute commitment and application in all departments of the game and Captain Latham led by example with his cool strategies to record 3-0 by cleanly whitewashed India. The Indian batters who have taken their place for granted so far played miserably throughout the series.

The performances of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were crestfallen and we don't see any kind of seriousness from them in the middle to realise the match situation. After their dismal outcome at Bengaluru and Pune, when the fans expected a turnaround at Mumbai by expecting the captain to stay in the middle for longer, the post-match press conference for Rohit became longer than the time he spent at the wicket, which was a very sorry affair and a huge disappointment for the Indian fans across the nation.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Urapakkam

excuse for this shocking performance of the players and especially the batters. Full credit goes to New Zealand for their absolute commitment and application in all departments of the game and Captain Latham led by example with his cool strategies to record 3-0 by cleanly whitewashed India. The Indian batters who have taken their place for granted so far played miserably throughout the series. The performances of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were crestfallen and we don't see any kind of seriousness from them in the middle to realise the match situation. After their dismal outcome at Bengaluru and Pune, when the fans expected a turnaround at Mumbai by expecting the captain to stay in the middle for longer, the post-match press conference for Rohit became longer than the time he spent at the wicket, which was a very sorry affair and a huge disappointment for the Indian fans across the nation.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN
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WORKPLACE RESILIENCE

Resilience is more than just bouncing back from setbacks; it's about adapting and staying steady



SAKSHI SETHI

Quite often we come up with research studies that state that employees with access to mental health resources, such as counselling and stress management programmes, reported higher resilience levels while those who received mindfulness training and stress-reduction workshops were better equipped to handle workplace challenges, leading to lower absenteeism and higher engagement. But the question arises are we workplace resilient? In today's fast-paced and often unpredictable business environment, resilience has become a critical quality for both organisations as well as individuals.

The term resilience usually refers to something more than just the ability to bounce back. It is the ability to adapt to challenges, recover from setbacks and maintain a steady course even in times of uncertainty. It is an adaptive skill that enables employees to handle stress and maintain productivity under pressure. Effective resilience management helps businesses not only survive but thrive during challenging periods by fostering a resilient workforce that can navigate complex and shifting landscapes.

The need for resilience, in recent years, has undoubtedly become increasingly evident due to factors such as economic fluctuations, organisational restructuring and external crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to manage resilience allows organisations to build a workforce that can handle continuous change without compromising the wellbe-



ing of employees or the quality of work. Resilient employees contribute to a positive workplace culture by handling stress effectively and collaborating with others to solve problems. They also tend to show higher levels of job satisfaction, reduced burnout and a greater sense of purpose in their roles. These attributes are beneficial not only to the individual but to the organisation, as resilient employees contribute to a stronger, more cohesive team dynamic.

Several approaches such as encouraging a positive work culture; providing access to training and development; promoting work-life balance and encouraging team cohesion and collaboration can help organisations promote resilience at both individual as well as organisational levels. Only when employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and purpose. An environment where employees feel safe to express concerns and seek help when needed promotes emotional resilience. Additionally, professional development opportunities build confidence, thereby helping employees feel more competent and ready to face obstacles.

Leadership plays a crucial role in resilience management. On the other hand, leaders too, who show resilience, especially during challenging times, inspire confidence in their teams can also provide the necessary guidance, recognise stress signs early on, and take action to support struggling employees. Resilient leaders foster a growth mindset within their teams, viewing setbacks as learning opportunities rather than failures.

Only fostering a team-based environment where collaboration and mutual support are encouraged enables employees to rely on one another in times of need. When employees trust their teammates, they are more likely to share concerns, ask for help and aid others, which collectively contributes to a resilient workforce. In conclusion, managing resilience in the workplace is essential for creating a thriving, adaptable, and supportive work environment. Investing in resilience is ultimately an investment in organisational success and individual wellbeing. By prioritising resilience, businesses will be better prepared to face future challenges, ensuring a sustainable and positive work environment.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

India's gold repatriation:
Safeguarding India's wealth

SHIVAJI SARKAR

India has taken a bold step by repatriating 214 tonnes of gold from the Bank of England, signalling a strategic move to protect national wealth against global shock



In a striking move to safeguard national wealth, India has repatriated 214 tonnes of gold from the vaults of England, a signal of heightened concern over escalating geopolitical tensions and looming sanctions. This shift reflects a broader trend, with central banks globally ramping up their gold purchases. In May alone, India recalled 100 tonnes from the Bank of England, reinforcing a strategy to shield assets amid global uncertainty. Now, as global gold prices soar toward a potential \$3,000 per ounce, the world is watching closely, with India emerging as a key player in the race to secure precious metals in these volatile times. The government of India has decided to prioritise protecting its assets in the face of global geopolitical unrest. About 100 tonnes were returned from the Bank of England in May.

A total of 324.01 metric tonnes of gold were held in the custody of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and the Bank of England, while 510.46 metric tonnes were retained domestically. Additionally, 20.26 metric tonnes of gold were stored as deposits. The gold in the world market is projected to rise to \$3000 per ounce, according to Goldman Sachs. The Diwali 2024 market sparkle appears subdued for several reasons despite cracker sales going back almost to the fuzzy pre-ban eras of the National Green Tribunal. The traditional gold sales could not touch previous years' highs as the metal was priced at around Rs 78,430, almost 30 per cent higher than last year. "Silver sales rose 33 per cent, while gold volume fell by 15 per cent," according to the Indian Bullion and Jewellers Association. The market is stated to be as dizzy as it was in 2015 or 2019, marked by slowdown. In its report titled "43rd Half Yearly Report on Management of Foreign Exchange



GOLD HAS RISEN TO MULTIPLE ALL-TIME HIGHS THIS YEAR. SIZABLE CENTRAL BANK PURCHASES OF GOLD BARS HAVE RESET THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RATE AND PRICE LEVELS SINCE 2022

Reserves: April - September 2024," the RBI stated that it had a total of 854.73 metric tonnes of gold in both domestic and foreign repository facilities.

The RBI has been buying gold to diversify its forex reserves and hedge against external risks. In 2024, the RBI added 54.7 tons of gold to its reserves, the highest acquisition in three years. After the Ukraine war, \$ 300 billion worth of Russian currency and other assets, kept as reserves in the US dollar, Euro and sterling pound, were seized by the US and the G7 countries. The assets are being used to bolster funding arms and other supplies to Ukraine. India has since acted cautiously even in deals with the purchase of Russian crude. The recent spat with Canada and the US-Israel escalation of the war to Lebanon and Iran has added to the caution.

This forced the repatriation of gold by RBI, which has been purchasing gold and stocking it abroad for payments in terms of gold instead of dollars. The RBI saves huge amounts in terms of vault rents as well. Robust demand in the world's second-biggest gold consumer could further push up global prices, which hit record highs last week. Rising demand for imports of gold could also widen India's trade deficit and put pressure on the rupee. Yes, India's gold purchases have contributed to rising global gold prices.

India's gold demand in 2024 is likely to fall to its lowest in four years as a rally in prices to a record high is seen denting purchases during the peak festival season, the World Gold Council

(WGC) said on Wednesday. Gold demand in the world's second-biggest consumer of the precious metal could stand around 700 and 750 metric tonnes in 2024, the lowest since 2020 and down from last year's 761 tonnes, according to Sachin Jain, CEO of WGC's Indian operations. This Dhanteras, gold sales dipped in India to 35 tonnes, down from last year's 42 tons.

Gold has risen to multiple all-time highs this year. Sizable central bank purchases of gold bars have reset the relationship between rate and price levels since 2022. Goldman Sachs Research estimates that 100 tonnes of physical demand lifts gold prices by at least 2.4 per cent. Credit card usage also hit new highs, with card spending reaching Rs 80,000 crore in September, a 57 per cent increase from last year. The retail mom-and-pop shops have problems as the footfall was subdued due to many turning to online shopping. Both Amazon and Flipkart reported a strong Diwali season, with Flipkart leading with a 64 per cent market share during the initial October sales.

Sales from online platforms saw year-on-year growth of 23 per cent, with goods worth Rs 32,000 crore sold. More are BNPL or Buy Now Pay Later customers, or paying in instalments helped by credit cards, indicating a cash shortage among the people.

This trend was especially pronounced among new shoppers from tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Car sales have suffered during most of the year before just margin-

ally picking up during the Dussehra and Diwali festive seasons. Maruti profits lowered to Rs 3102 crore in September, by 18 per cent, as against Rs 3762 crore a year ago. Maruti CEO RC Bhargava says "Affordability is a concern". The demand for cars below Rs 10 lakh is in demand. Small cars inventory levels hit a "historic high" of 80-85 days, leaving dealers with a stock of 790,000 vehicles worth 800 billion rupees, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations says.

Despite high inflation, Indian consumers opened their wallets wide this Diwali season, pushing festival-related spending to about Rs 1.25 lakh crore, claimed Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) general secretary Pravin Khandelwal. Delhi alone saw spending of Rs 25,000 crore, including FMCG goods, consumer durables and home décor earthen lamps and electronic goods, traditional and modern products, he says. Mobile phones in the below Rs 20,000 range had brisk sales. Mobile phones were among the hottest sellers this season, with a 12-15 per cent rise in the average selling price, driven partly by a shortage in device availability. This scarcity led to consumers grabbing whatever stock was available, increasing the average price of phones sold. Rising gold and commodity prices, a fall in rupee value, crunch in income and manufacturing are concerns amid a global unstable war-like situation.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

India and Israel: A Bond forged in intelligence and shared threats

From R&AW's inception in 1968 to today's advanced defence collaborations, the Indo-Israeli alliance has quietly strengthened in the face of shared security challenges

It was three years after the Indo-Pakistan war. The year was 1968. India's external intelligence agency, The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) was formed and its director was firmly advised by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to develop deep ties with Mossad; Israel's formidable intelligence agency. The two have been working closely together to eliminate potential threats and impending security challenges. The interests of both agencies aligned; obliterating the similar nature of terror emanating from their borders. As Israel confronts Iran's proxies in the region, Indian security forces battle Pakistan's proxies, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-



ISHAAN SAXENA

Taiba, daily in the restive state of Jammu and Kashmir; which also happens to be one of the world's most heavily militarised zones. Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country, also happens to be the epicentre of global terrorism. Fast-forward to the year 1999 when India was engaged in the Kargil conflict with Pakistan. It was then that Israel provid-

ed India with drones to monitor the treacherous Himalayan terrain. Now, as Israel is entangled in its battles, India's Adani group has delivered several Hermes 900 drones which are also capable of aerial bombardment. They have been deployed in Gaza. This, of course, is beyond the ambit of the Indian Government's control since it's a joint venture between Adani Defence and Aerospace and Israel's Elbit systems. Besides, allegedly India sent two shiploads of arms to Israel early this year. Over the past few years, Mossad has conducted a series of assassinations. These have included top Iranian nuclear physicists, professors and the head of

Iran's nuclear programme. Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that Israel will not tolerate a nuclear Iran. So, in the foreseeable future, it is very likely that Israel will strike Iran's nuclear facilities because Iran is going to relentlessly pursue the nuclear path. This is irrefutable.

In recent times, the agency in collaboration with the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has assassinated the top leadership of Hamas and Hezbollah; Ismael Haniyeh-the Hamas political leader in Tehran, Hassan Nasrallah-the Hezbollah leader and Yahya Sinwar who was the chief architect of the 7th October 2023 attacks on Israel. The very recent precision



strikes in and around Tehran would have sent shockwaves in the power corridors of Iran. The reverberations of these calculated strikes would have sent Iran's security cabinet scrambling to fathom how Israel could pursue such an accurate military operation. One will have to wait and watch Iran's reaction. Will it retaliate and escalate the exacerbated situation in the West Asia or

will it choose to mitigate the situation and let its proxies corner Israel? But this outcome was almost certain. Israel had to engage in a limited military response. But what captured the imagination of the world was how Hezbollah paggers and walkie-talkies exploded simultaneously. Contentious debates regarding such a deadly operation were circulating to the centre stage. The vociferous debates focus on the morality and ethics of such an unprecedented operation.

After all, it does set a precedent for future attacks anywhere in the world. But as Israel's Ambassador to New Delhi put it; you have to surprise your enemy in a manner that does not involve the

conventional use of force. They say necessity is the mother of all inventions. Israel's campaign epitomises it perfectly. They say that offence is not the best form of defence but in Israel's case, this chain of thought is unconvincing. The state exists in a precarious security zone. Israel may find itself alienated from the rest of the world as the valiant men and women of the IDF battle on various fronts, but the war and Israel's meticulous planning must continue.

Iran's proxies must be annihilated. Its relentless campaign to eliminate groups like Hamas and Hezbollah must not end anytime soon. Political parties or not, these actors harbour a twisted,

malicious and hostile ideology. There is no space for such entities to exist in a modern world. Israel must never forget that the long-lasting ties between the two nations will continue and India's explicit support will not fade anytime soon. The Indo-Israeli ties will be a durable bond in the years to come. This relationship which hinges on mutual respect and specific interests will bloom and crystallise in the years to come. Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, articulated it quite clearly; 'peace will only usher in when Arabs love their children more than they despise us.'

(The writer is a socio-economic commentator; views expressed are personal)

Should not have left WH after 2020 poll: Trump Harris vs Trump goes down to the wire: Polls

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US will on Tuesday vote to elect its 47th President in a fierce race between Republican nominee Donald Trump and Democratic leader Kamala Harris that is set to go down in history as one of the tightest fights for the White House in decades.

As the countdown for election day began, Former President Trump raked up the bitter memories of the 2020 election as said he "shouldn't have left" the White House, triggering apprehensions that he was preparing the ground to not accept the outcome of the November 5 voting if he loses the contest.

"I shouldn't have left. I mean, honestly, because...we did so well," the former President said at a rally in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

Following the election that brought Joe Biden to power, Trump alleged fraud in the voting process and challenged the outcome in courts which rejected his claims.

In her closing remarks in the key battleground state of Michigan, Harris said she would be a president for all Americans and spoke about the need to turn the page on "hate and division" while Trump continued his tirade against his Democratic rival.

ers of 'fake news.' "I have this piece of glass here. But all we have really over here is the fake news, right? And to get me, somebody would have to shoot through the fake news," Trump said.

"And I don't mind that so much. I don't mind," he said.

Trump also targeted Harris and accused the Democratic Party of being a "corrupt machine." "It's all corrupt. She is corrupt. She is a corrupt person. I am running against a totally corrupt person," he alleged.



"I am really not running against her. I am running against a corrupt machine called the Democrat Party."

Pennsylvania has emerged as the most crucial of the seven battleground states having 19 electoral college votes followed by 16 each in North Carolina and Georgia, 15 in Michigan and 11 in Arizona. In other battleground states, Wisconsin has 10 and Nevada has six.

In the rally in Pennsylvania, Trump promised to usher in "a new golden age" in the US if he becomes the president and that he will "fix" the misdeeds of the Biden-Harris administration. Trump is also holding rallies in North Carolina and Georgia while Harris is touring Michigan.

In her address at an event in Detroit, Harris said it is incumbent on the American people to decide the future course the United States takes, suggesting that Trump would be detrimental to the country.

Election Day offers voters the chance to reject "chaos, fear and hate," she said.

"In two days, we have the power to decide the fate of our nation for generations to come," she said.

"I see a nation determined to turn the page on hate and division and chart a new way forward. As I travel, I see Americans from so-called red states and so-called blue states who are ready to bend the arc of history toward justice," Harris added.

The Democratic Party leader also invoked God and said his plan was to "heal us and bring us together as one nation," but that it was not enough, adding that "we must act" to realise the plan.

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The electoral battle between Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump appears to have gone to the wire, according to latest opinion polls.

Harris, 60, is the nominee of the Democratic Party and Trump, 78, is the Republican nominee. Their party members and support bases are united with their respective parties, and independent voters might decide who would be the next occupant of the White House.

To win the elections, a candidates needs 270 of the electoral college votes. Latest opinion polls indicate that the

elections will be decided by the results in seven battleground states of Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia.

Of these, Michigan and Pennsylvania play key role to them reaching the 270-mark.

The presidential race appears to be hurtling toward a photo finish, with the final set of polls by The New York Times and Siena College finding Harris gaining new strength in North Carolina and Georgia even as Trump erases her lead in Pennsylvania and maintains his advantage in Arizona, the daily reported Sunday.

According to The New York Times, Harris is now narrowly ahead in Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin, the polls show, while Trump leads in Arizona.

"The polls show them locked in close races in Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania. But the results in all seven states are within the margin of sampling error, meaning neither candidate has a definitive lead in any of them," the daily reported. The Real Clear Politics, which tracks all the major national and battleground polls, said it's a tie between Trump and Harris. In the national polls, Trump leads by 0.1 percentage points, and in battleground states the former

president has an edge of 0.9 percentage points. In the battleground states, as per Real Clear Politics, Trump has a lead, though within the margin of error, in Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Arizona; while Harris has an edge in Michigan and Wisconsin.

"The presidential race is tight, and neither candidate has a clear lead," The Hill said.

In its final poll, the NBC News said the poll shows Harris getting support from 49 per cent of registered voters in a head-to-head matchup, while Trump gets an identical 49 per cent. "Just two percent of voters say they're unsure about the choice," the news channel said.

Donald Trump calls for mandatory voter ID Bengali only Indian language on New York's ballot papers

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Republican presidential candidate and former president Donald Trump on Sunday expressed frustration over the current voting pattern as he urged his fellow countrymen to vote for him in this final battle and called for a mandatory voter ID.

The Democrats are opposing voter ID so that they can cheat, he alleged.

"I don't know why the hell we can't have a voter ID. The real Democrats want to have things like voter ID. They know it's crooked. There's only one reason you don't want a voter ID. There's only one reason, and that's to cheat. There is no other reason. There's no other reason. And they do cheat," Trump told his supporters at a rally in Pennsylvania, a battleground state.

He said it's "damn shame" that nobody seems to talk about it. "I'm the only one that talks about it because everyone's afraid to damn talk about it. Then they accuse you of being a conspiracy-theorist... and they want to lock you up." "They want to put you in jail. The ones that should be locked up are the ones that cheat on these horrible elections that we go through in our country," Trump said.

He also called for returning to the ballot paper system.

"You ought to damn well go to paper ballots. You ought to go to voter ID. You ought to have the election over by 9 o'clock. I'm hearing now they're going to take weeks. Can you imagine? They spend all this money, all this money on machines, and they're going to say, we

may take an extra 12 days to determine. What do you think happens during that 12 days? What do you think happens? These elections have to be, they have to be decided by 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock on Tuesday night. Bunch of crooked people. These are crooked people," he said.

"In California, they just signed a bill that if you're an official or anybody, you're not even allowed to ask anybody for their voter ID. If you do, you've created a criminal act or something. I mean, they only do that because they want to cheat. What the hell are they doing? The whole world is laughing at us," Trump said. "They're laughing at us. If nothing comes out of this whole thing, it's going to teach you damn well better get a different system. These bloodsuckers up there, they do nothing about it. What a shame. That's why the world laughs at us," he said.

"At 9 o'clock in the evening, they called the winner. They called the loser. Everyone home. Everybody was fine. They had voter ID. They had paper ballots. They had one-day election. At 9 o'clock, it was over. They called the winner. They called the loser... they say, we'll wait till the next time. We got to get smart as a country. This is just one thing. It's all corrupt," Trump said.

He also took on his Democratic rival Kamala Harris.

"She is corrupt. She's a corrupt person. I'm running against a totally corrupt person. I'm really not running against her. I'm running against a corrupt machine called the Democratic Party. It's totally a corrupt party," he said.

PTI ■ NEW YORK

More than 200 languages are spoken in New York, according to the Department of City Planning, backing the claim of it being the melting pot of America. However, the ballot papers in the US presidential elections will have only four other languages apart from English.

And guess what? Bengali represents the Indian languages in this list.

The US will on Tuesday vote to elect its 47th President.

"We are required to service four other languages besides English. It is Chinese, Spanish, Korean and Bengali as the Asian languages," says Michael J Ryan, Executive Director, Board of Elections, NYC.

Subhshesh, who works as a sales agent in a store in Times Square, has Bengali roots. He is happy that his father living in the Queens area will get linguistic assistance when he goes to cast his vote.

"People like me know English but there are many in our community who are comfortable in the native language. This helps them at the polling station. I am sure my father will like the idea of seeing a Bengali language ballot paper," says Subhshesh. The inclusion of Bengali on ballot papers is not just a courtesy but a legal requirement.

By law, New York City is obligated to provide voting materials in Bengali at certain poll sites. This mandate extends beyond just ballot papers to include other essential voting materials, ensuring comprehensive language support for Bengali-speaking voters.

Ryan explains the reason why Bengali is among the list of languages the Board of Elections serves.

"There was a lawsuit about language access and as you know the country of India has a lot of different languages within it. The settlement of that lawsuit required within a certain population density to have an Asian Indian language. Then through some negotiations, they settled on Bengali. I understand the limitations of Bengali being the choice but it came out of a lawsuit."

The first time the South Asian community in the Queen's locality of New York found ballots translated into Bengali was in 2013.

The addition of Bengali-language ballots came nearly two years after the federal government ordered the city to provide language assistance to South Asian minorities under a provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The Bengali-speaking population includes people coming from Asian countries like India and Bangladesh. While it does not represent the whole gamut of languages spoken in the region, the inclusion of this language is expected to have a significant impact on voter participation within the Bengali-speaking community.

Dr Avinash Gupta, President, of the Federation of Indian Association says it helps the Indian community.

"It will help the Indian population to go out and vote. That is how we can get our voices heard. We are a sizable population. It is heartening to see how Indians go out and vote and even contest elections," says Dr Avinash Gupta.

Philippine military drills to seize island in South China Sea

AP ■ MANILA

The Philippine military opened two weeks of combat drills on Monday that would include seizing an island in the disputed South China Sea and likely be frowned upon by China.

More than 3,000 Filipino army, navy and air force personnel will take part in the maneuvers, which Philippine military officials said were not directed against any country.

China has rapidly expanded its military and has become increasingly assertive in pursuing territorial claims in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. The tensions have led to more

frequent confrontations, primarily with the Philippines and Vietnam, though the long-time territorial disputes also involve Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Last month, Indonesia said its patrol ships drove away a Chinese coast guard ship that disrupted a survey being undertaken by a state-owned energy company in a part of the South China Sea disputed by both countries.

"Our mission today is very clear, to prepare ourselves comprehensively to respond to any external threats that might challenge our sovereignty," Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said in the opening

ceremony of the exercises. The maneuvers will include live-fire drills using artillery and assault rifles and beach landing drills. In the South China Sea, Filipino forces would simulate taking control of an island, Philippine army Col. Michael Logico told reporters without elaborating. Asked how China may react, Logico said he expected Chinese forces to undertake surveillance from a distance but added they would not likely make any hostile move.

"They have a front seat to the exercise. They'll watch and we don't mind," Logico said.

China has opposed such combat drills in the South China Sea, particularly if American

and allied forces were involved. The outgoing Biden administration has moved to strengthen an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan.

America's moves dovetail with Philippine efforts to shore up its territorial defense amid a long-seething dispute mainly with China in the South China Sea.

Next year, US and Philippines forces plan to stage their largest annual combat drills called Balikatan, Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder, that are also expected to include maneuvers in contested South China Sea areas.

Iranian General dies in mishap

AP ■ TEHRAN

An Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander and his pilot were killed on Monday in an autogiro accident during an operation near the Pakistani border, state TV reported.

The report said that Gen. Hamid Mazandarani died during a military operation in the Sirkan border area, located in Sistan and Baluchistan province.

The semi-official Tasnim news agency said that the crash occurred during a drill. An autogiro, resembling a helicopter in rotor design but simpler and smaller, is typically used in Iran for pilot training and border monitoring. It is capable of carrying two people.

Israel ends agreement with UN agency providing aid in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel said on Monday it had terminated the agreement facilitating the work of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the main aid provider in Gaza, in what appeared to be a step to implement legislation passed last month that would sever ties with the agency and prevent it from operating in Israel.

Israel says the agency, known as UNRWA, has been infiltrated by Hamas. UNRWA denies the allegations and says it takes measures to ensure its neutrality.

On Sunday, Israel said its troops had carried out a

ground raid into Syria to seize a Syrian it accuses of working with Iran. It was the first time in the current war that Israel announced its troops operated in Syrian territory.

Despite growing pressure from the United States and others in the international community for a cease-fire in Gaza and Lebanon, intensified Israeli strikes against the Hezbollah militant group are expanding beyond Lebanon's border areas. Israel is also fighting a seemingly endless war against Hamas in northern Gaza.

Since the conflict erupted Israel and Hezbollah erupted last year, at least 2,900 people

have been killed and 13,150 wounded in Lebanon, the Health Ministry reports, not including Friday's toll. Health authorities say that a quarter of those killed were women and children.

More than a year of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 people, Palestinian health officials say. They do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, but say more than half of those killed were women and children. The war began after Palestinian militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others.

Ukraine girds for impact of US election on war

AP ■ KYIV

Germany's top diplomat arrived on Monday in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on an unannounced visit, in what appeared to be a show of European support for Ukraine on the eve of a US presidential election that could bring far-reaching changes in Washington's policy toward Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbour.

Germany is Ukraine's second biggest weapons supplier after the US, and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock vowed that Berlin's backing would remain steadfast.

"Together with many partners around the world, Germany stands firmly by Ukraine's side," she said, German news agency dpa reported. "We will support the Ukrainians for as long as they need us so that they can continue on their path to a just peace."

The war is at a critical moment for Ukraine, with the Russian army making creeping gains on the battlefield and another hard winter ahead after Russia relentlessly battered the Ukrainian power grid.

With his army under severe Russian pressure in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday that Western military aid deliveries have accelerated, including for artillery.

The grinding attritional warfare being fought in Ukraine requires large amounts of ammunition, and Ukrainian officials have long grumbled that Western pledges of support take too long to arrive.

Ahead of the US election, Zelenskyy attempted to lock Ukraine's Western supporters into a long-term "victory plan," including a formal invitation for Ukraine to join NATO and permission to use Western long-range missiles to strike military targets in Russia, but the response was disappointing for Kyiv officials.

Russia is using its superior numbers to heap pressure on Ukrainian positions along the front line. Ukraine's top commander, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said on Saturday his troops are struggling to hold back "one of the most powerful (Russian) offensives" of the war. Russia is now adding to its offensive push what Western intelligence sources say is a force of about 10,000 North Korean combat troops sent by Pyongyang under a pact with Moscow.

Volcanic eruption burns houses in Indonesia; at least 10 dead

AP ■ MAUMERE (INDONESIA)

Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency said on Monday that at least 10 people have died as a series of volcanic eruptions widens on the remote island of Flores.

The eruption at Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki around midnight spewed thick brownish ash as high as 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) into the air and hot ashes hit several villages, burning down houses including a convent of Catholic nuns, said Firman Yosef, an official at the Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki monitoring post.

He said volcanic material was thrown up to 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from its crater, blanketing nearby villages and towns with tons of volcanic debris and forcing residents to flee.

Rescuers were still searching for more bodies buried under collapsed houses, said Abdul Muhari, the National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson. Muhari said all the bodies, including a child, were found with a 4-kilometer (2.4 mile) radius of the crater. He said at least 10,000 people have been affected by the eruption in six villages of



Wulunggitang District, and four villages in Ile Bura district. Some have fled to relatives' houses while the local government is readying schools to use as temporary shelters.

The country's volcano monitoring agency increased the volcano's alert status to the highest level and more than doubled the exclusion zone to a 7-kilometer (4.3-mile) radius after midnight on Monday as eruptions became more frequent. A nun in Hokeng village died and another was missing, said Agustina Palma, the head of the Saint Gabriel Foundation that oversees convents on the majority-Catholic island. "Our nuns ran out in panic under a rain of volcanic ash in the darkness," Palma said.

Photos and videos circulated on social media showed tons of volcanic debris covering houses up to their rooftops in villages like Hokeng, where hot volcanic material set fire to houses. Lewotobi Laki-laki is one of a pair of stratovolcanoes in the East Flores district of East Nusa Tenggara province known locally as the husband — "Laki-laki" means man — and wife mountains. Its mate is Lewotobi Perempuan, or woman.

About 6,500 people were evacuated in January after Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki began erupting, spewing thick clouds and forcing the government to close the island's Frans Seda Airport. No casualties or major damage were reported, but the airport has remained closed

since then due to seismic activity. In a video conference on Monday, Muhammad Wafid, the head of Geology Agency at the Energy and Mineral Resources ministry said there was a different character between January's eruption and Monday's eruption due to a blockage of magma in the crater, which reduced detectible seismic activity while building up pressure.

"The eruptions that occurred since Friday were due to the accumulation of hidden energy," Wafid said.

It's Indonesia's second volcanic eruption in as many weeks. West Sumatra province's Mount Marapi, one of the country's most active volcanoes, erupted on October 27, spewing thick columns of ash at least three times and blanketing nearby villages with debris, but no casualties were reported.

Lewotobi Laki-laki is one of the 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, an archipelago of 280 million people. The country is prone to earthquakes, landslides and volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

Pak blames India for worsening air quality

PTI ■ LAHORE

Ministers in Pakistan's Punjab province on Monday blamed winds from India for worsening smog here, urging the Indian authorities to take up the matter seriously, after the air quality index in the capital city hit a record high over the weekend.

Toxic grey smog has sickened tens of thousands of people, mainly children and elderly people, since last month when the air quality started worsening in Lahore, the city bordering India. The concentration of PM 2.5, or tiny particulate matter, in the air, approached 450, considered hazardous, the Punjab Environment Protection Department said.

"The wind direction brings air from India into Pakistan, yet India does not seem to be taking this problem as seriously as it should," Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari told the media here. She urged the Indian side of Punjab state to take this matter seriously.

"Delhi ranks first in smog levels today, with Lahore following closely in second place. Delhi's air quality index is around 393, while Lahore's is close to 280," she said, adding that China has been battling

smog for the past 26 years. Earlier, Punjab senior minister Marriyung Aurangzeb said the province was going to request the Pakistan Foreign Office to take up the issue of cross-border pollution with India.

"The easterly winds from Amritsar and Chandigarh are spiking the air quality index in Lahore to over 1,000 for the past two days," she said.

"The wind from India towards Lahore taking the smog to dangerous levels and the wind is likely to sustain its direction for at least next week. The people should take care of themselves by avoiding unnecessarily coming out of their houses. The elderly and children should be particularly careful," Aurangzeb said.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also called for climate diplomacy with India and said she would soon write to the chief minister of the Indian side of Punjab to jointly address the issue of smog.

Meanwhile, the Punjab government has closed primary schools in Lahore for a week in the wake of rising smog. The government has already closed schools for specially-abled children for three months.

People-smuggling gangs to be treated like terrorists: Starmer

AP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Keir Starmer says he will double funding for Britain's border security agency and treat people-smuggling gangs like terror networks in an attempt to stop migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats.

with other countries and unspecified 'enhanced' powers for law-enforcement. Starmer plans to increase the UK Border Security Command's two-year budget from 75 million pounds (\$97 million) to 150 million pounds (\$194 million). The money will be used to fund high-tech surveillance equipment and 100 specialist investigators.

the attempts this year, according to French officials, making 2024 the deadliest since the number of channel crossings began surging in 2018. Starmer leads a center-left government, and has raised some eyebrows in September when he visited Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni and praised her nationalist conservative government's "remarkable" progress in reducing the number of migrants reaching Italy's shores by boat.

proposal say it would act as a deterrent. Human rights groups and many lawyers say it is unethical and unlawful to send migrants thousands of miles to a country they don't want to live in. Starmer called the plan a "gimmick" and canceled it soon after he was elected in July. Britain paid Rwanda hundreds of millions of pounds for the plan under a deal signed by the two countries in 2022, without any deportations taking place.

Chinese astronauts return safely after six months in space station

PTI ■ BEIJING

Three Chinese astronauts who spent six months developing China's low orbit space station returned to Earth safely early Monday, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said.

first Chinese astronaut with an accumulative spaceflight time of more than a year, setting a new record for the longest duration of stay in orbit by a Chinese astronaut. He served as a crew member in the Shenzhou-13 mission from October 2021 to April 2022.

good cheer to our busy work," Li was quoted by state-run Xinhua news agency. China launched the Shenzhou-18 manned spaceship in April this year.

after it was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army, (PLA).

Japan successfully launches defence satellite carried by new H3 rocket

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan launched a defence satellite aimed at speedier communication and military operations on a new flagship H3 rocket on Monday and successfully placed it into orbit, as the country seeks to build up its military capability amid growing tension in the region.

Joint Staff Systems Department chief, told an online joint news conference from Tanegashima that the triple X-band communication satellite system would enable high-speed, large-capacity data transmission and communication across Japan's Ground, Maritime and Air Self Defence Forces, as well as with units deployed overseas on peacekeeping missions or exercises.

planned for October 20 and came after four postponements due to a technical glitch and bad weather. Kato said the delay had no impact on Japan's security and defence activity. JAXA President Hiroshi Yamakawa said he felt "relieved" that the H3 rocket was able to successfully deliver the satellite to its planned location after the two-week delay.

Moldova's pro-Western President Maia Sandu has won a second term in a pivotal presidential runoff against a Russia-friendly opponent, in a race that was overshadowed by claims of Russian interference, voter fraud, and intimidation in the European Union candidate country.

Iran executes Jewish citizen

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran on Monday executed a Jewish citizen convicted of murdering another man in 2022 following a person dispute, reports said. It was a rare case of an execution of member of a religious minority in the predominantly Muslim nation.

failed to convince the victim's family to abstain from qisas — an act under Islamic penal code that calls for similar punishment, or an "eye for an eye" — and effectively pardon his killer. The victim's name was not provided.

Bushra Bibi breaks down during court proceedings

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A court in Pakistan on Monday witnessed emotional scenes when jailed former premier Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi burst into tears, expressing her utter helplessness against the inefficient justice system and her husband's "unjust sentencing."

S Korea, EU condemn N Korea's reported troop dispatch to Russia

AP ■ SEOUL

Top South Korean and European Union officials on Monday strongly condemned North Korea's reported troop dispatch to aid Russia's war against Ukraine and agreed to work together to try to block deepening military cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang.

The two agreed to work together with the international community to try to obstruct Russian-North Korean security cooperation, the statement said. The US government said Thursday that about 8,000 North Korean soldiers were in Russia near Ukraine's border and preparing to join Russia's fight against Ukraine in the coming days.

ation with Russia in the face of an intensifying US-led pressure campaign against his advancing nuclear program. The US, South Korea and others accuse North Korea of having already exported artillery shells, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia.

of the border and the other on the eastern section. Details of the briefing were shared with The Associated Press. The structure at the eastern part of the border was assessed to be 160 meters (524 feet) long while the one at the western part of the border was about 120 meters (393 feet) long, according to the South Korean military briefing.

Turkiye ousts 3 pro-Kurdish mayors from office; replaces them with state officials

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkiye on Monday removed three elected pro-Kurdish mayors from office over terrorism-related charges and replaced them with state-appointed officials, the Interior Ministry said. The move, which comes days after the arrest and ouster from office of a mayor from the country's main opposition party for his alleged links to a banned Kurdish militant group, is seen as a hardening of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government's policies toward the opposition.

allied with Erdogan had raised the possibility that the PKK's imprisoned leader could be granted parole if he renounces violence and disbands his organisation. His comments had sparked discussion and speculation about a potential peace effort.

Turkiye's main opposition party, CHP, branded the mayors' removal from office as a "a coup" and accused Erdogan of seizing "municipalities" he could not win in the elections.

PKK, which is considered a terror organisation by Turkiye, the US and the European Union. Legislators have been stripped of their parliamentary seats and mayors removed from office. Several lawmakers as well as thousands of party members have been jailed on terror-related charges since 2016.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Information is given to general public at large that Shyam Singh S/o Rameshchander who is/are purchasing Prop. No. RZ-483A/2 Gali No. 13 land area measuring 100 sq. yds. Kharsa No. 504 Tughlakabad Extn New Delhi from Vijay Rani Goyal W/o Ram Rattan Goyal who was the owner by virtue of Regd. Will (Document No. 25743), SPA & ATS dated 19.06.1991 executed by Prem Nath Kataria S/o T.R. Kataria. Intend to mortgage the same against the financial assistance from Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited. Original Regd. Will (Document No. 25743) & ATS dated 19.06.1991 is not available with seller i.e. Vijay Rani Goyal W/o Ram Rattan Goyal. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person/s having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days at below address.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the public at large that my client Sh. Naqee Khan S/o Late Mohd. Ishaque R/o S-5/7-a, Nafis Road, Jogaabai Extension, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025 has disowned and disinherited his wife Farhat Bano and all four children (one daughter and three sons) from all his movable and immovable properties assets and deposits in all respects including property / properties in Delhi or native place at Bihar and had also ended / severed all relations and social affairs as the said wife along with four children had left my clients company in the intervening night of 15/16.09.2024 and joined the company of Shob Khan, the brother-in-law of my client with whom my client has seen some objectionable photos with him which is Haram in Islam and they totally became unfaithful, disrespectful and disobedient and out of control and if she or any her children does any wrongful act/ acts my client is not responsible for their wrong acts / misdeeds and illegal activities.

ISHAN INTERNATIONAL LIMITED
CIN : L74899DL1995PLC069144
Regd. Off: 607, Chiranjiv Tower 43 Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019
Email: marketing@ishangroup.co.in
Contact No. 120-4211766

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Mihlesh Kumari had acquired Property No. E-11/2, measuring 30 Sq. yds., Kharsa no.21, village Bhatpur, Gali no.3, Near Radha Swami Satsang Vyas, Pusta no.5, Sonia Vihar, Delhi vide GPA DL 14.01.2019 along with ATS & Will executed by Mr. Jagdish Chand Pal and Now Mrs. Mihlesh Kumari is the undisputed owner of the said property.

Ashwin Textile Mills Ltd.
Regd. Office : Behrampur Road, Village Khandasa, District Gurugram, Haryana-122001
E-mail: atml.deli@yahoo.com
Phone: 91 0124 4809756
CIN: L17226HR1984PLC033384

NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
Dear Shareholders,
Notice is hereby given that the Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of Ishan International Limited (the "Company") will be held on Thursday, November 28, 2024, at 02:30 p.m. through Video Conferencing ("VC") and Other Audio-Visual Means ("OAVM"), to transact the following business: Special Business: To consider and, if thought fit, to pass a resolution regarding partial variation and deviation of Initial Public Offer ("IPO") proceeds from "General Corporate Expenses" to "Working Capital" as specified in the agenda of the meeting.

PUBLIC NOTICE
I am Aliza Irshad, a resident of A-135, Sector-27, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar (UP). My mother Shagufta Irshad wife Mohd Irshad and father Mohd Irshad son of Shri M.N. Khan resident of A-135, Sector-27, Noida district Gautam Budh Nagar UP. I declare that my name address, mother's and father's name are correct.

NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given, pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, intra-aio, to consider and approve Unaudited Financial Results of the company for the Second Quarter ended September 30, 2024.

The detailed EGM Notice is dispatched electronically to all members at their registered email addresses and is also available on the Company's website at www.ishanglobal.com. Members are encouraged to attend and participate in the EGM via VC/OAVM.
For Ishan International Limited
Shantanu Srivastava
Managing Director
Date: 05.11.2024
Place: New Delhi

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi
TENDER NOTICE Date: 05.11.2024
Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-

NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/24-25/FK/PR/FH/1227	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF END TERMINATION & STRAIGHT THROUGH CABLE JOINTING KITS OF VARIOUS SIZES OF CABLE SIZES 33 & 66KV	11.73 Cr.	11.73 Lakhs	25.11.2024 15:00 HRS	25.11.2024 15:30 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-
For any query call on 011-49107235 or e-mail on Bpl.Eauction@relianceada.com
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission and tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com
Head (Contracts & Materials)
Regd. Off. : BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 | Corporate Identification No.: U40109DL2001PLC11527
Telephone No. : +91 11 4910 7235 | Website : www.bsesdelhi.com

punjab national bank
...the name you can BANK upon!
CIRCLE OFFICE - SOUTH DELHI, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPT.
UGF, BHIKAJI CAMA PLACE
BREAK OPEN NOTICE FOR LOCKERS
The Punjab National Bank had rented Safe Deposit Vaults (Lockers) through its different Branches to the respective locker hirers as mentioned in the table below. The rent has not been paid by hirers for more than three years and there are arrears of rent against amount has still not been deposited.

Sl. No.	Locker No.	Customer Name	Sl. No.	Locker No.	Customer Name	Sl. No.	Locker No.	Customer Name
BRANCH NAME - 015900- GREEN PARK			BRANCH NAME - 198800- BHIKAJI CAMA PLACE			BRANCH NAME - 411400- VASANT KUNJ		
1.	A000875	GIRISH KHEMANI	1.	AC00624	VINOD KUMAR & NEELAM BHATIA	1.	AF00471	RUPA BASU
2.	AP01087	NIDHI BHASIN & HARDEEP SINGH	2.	AP00757	JASBIR KAUR	2.	AID0883	VIJAY
BRANCH NAME - 150900- MAHARANI BAGH			BRANCH NAME - 152900- NEHRU PLACE			BRANCH NAME - 153000- VASANT VIHAR D BLOCK		
1.	ND00037	K L GERA & A GERA	1.	AI00654	SADANAND	1.	AH00022	RAMESH TANDON & CHANCHAL TANDON
BRANCH NAME - 153600- KOTLA MUBARAKPUR			BRANCH NAME - 154600- GEETANJALI ENCLAVE			BRANCH NAME - 308700- VSC ALAKNANDA		
1.	AE01082	GAURAV MOHINDER & CHRISHNA MAHENDER	1.	AJ00828	NUTAN KHOSLA	1.	AK00075	TARUN ARORA & SHWETAARORA

The notice is hereby given to the locker hirers that if the rent in above mentioned lockers is not received by the Bank within 3 months of this notice, then the lockers will be broken open at the risk and cost of the respective locker hirer in accordance with clauses of the rent deed and the Bank will realize its dues by the public or private sale of a part or the whole of the contents of the locker. Any amount and/or contents of the locker remaining after the Bank's dues have been satisfied will be held by the Bank at the entire risk, responsibility and cost of the respective locker hirer. In case, the proceeds of such sale be insufficient to recover the Bank's dues, the locker hirer will be liable for the deficiency.
Date : 05.11.2024
Place : New Delhi
CO : South Delhi

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
Tender Notice Reference No.GNDU/Gen/73/2024
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:
Sr. No.1
Item: Printing of 32 Pages Answer Book, 16 Pages Answer Book and 08 Pages Practical Answer Book
Quantity: 06 Lac
Closing date & time: 14-11-2024 at 5:00 p.m.
For details log onto www.eproc.punjab.gov.in
Note: Any corrigendum/s to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.
NA/12/26097/2023/38727
Dated CHD : 11/4/2024

India's manufacturing sector regains growth momentum



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector growth recovered from September's eight-month low to 57.5 in October fuelled by faster increases in total new orders and international sales, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from September's eight-month low of 56.5 to 57.5 in October, indicating a substantial and accelerated improvement in operating conditions.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "India's headline manufacturing PMI picked up substantially in October as the economy's operating conditions continue to broadly improve. Rapidly expanding new orders and international sales reflect strong demand growth for India's manufacturing sector," Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said. The upturn in performance was boosted by stronger

demand for Indian goods. Moreover, the introduction of new products and successful marketing initiatives helped enhance sales performance. New export orders also exhibited stronger growth, following the weakest uptick in a year-and-a-half during September. Panel members reported gains in new contracts from Asia, Europe, Latin America and the US. On the prices front, the October data signalled stronger inflationary pressures across India's manufacturing sector. Goods producers were also

more willing to take on additional staff, which coupled with rising material costs, added to business expenses. Both input prices and selling charges increased at stronger rates. "Input and output prices are both increasing as a result of persistent inflationary pressures in materials, labour and transportation costs," Bhandari added. On the employment front, not only did manufacturers hire extra staff at the start of the third fiscal quarter, but also to a greater degree than in September. Around one in ten panellists reported an increase in employment, while 1 per cent shed jobs. Going ahead, Indian manufacturers became more optimistic regarding future output volumes. "To start the third fiscal quarter, business confidence is also very high due to expectations of continued strong consumer demand, new product releases and sales pending approval," Bhandari said. The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.

India re-elected as President of International Solar Alliance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said India has been re-elected as the President of Indian Solar Alliance (ISA) from 2024 to 2026. Addressing the press conference at 7th General Assembly of the ISA, Joshi informed that France has been re-elected as Vice-President of the ISA. India's election to the President post is a testament to the impactful work the country, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been doing over the years for the global good in advancing solar energy adoption across the globe and boosting investment in essential solar projects, including mini-grids and healthcare solutions, Joshi opined. Eight Vice Presidents of the Standing Committee, two from each of the four ISA geographical regions, were also selected by the Assembly. From the Africa Region, Ghana and Seychelles have been selected as the Vice Presidents, while South Sudan and the Comoros will support the Vice Presidents as Vice-Chairs of Africa. From the Asia and the Pacific Region, Australia and Sri



Lanka have been selected as Vice Presidents, with the United Arab Emirates and Papua New Guinea as the Vice-Chairs, he informed. Germany and Italy have been selected as Vice Presidents from the Europe and the Others Region, along with Greece and Norway as Vice-Chair. Leading the Regional Committee of the Latin America and the Caribbean region will be Grenada and Suriname, Jamaica and Haiti as Vice-Chairs, he said. ISA Member Countries have also selected the third Director General of the Alliance. Ashish Khanna is the Director General Designate and will assume office in March 2025, when the tenure of the incumbent Director General, Ajay

Mathur, comes to a close, he informed. ISA initiated Demonstration Projects in 2020 to meet the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Development States (SIDS). The aim was to exhibit solar technology applications that can be scaled up and build the capacity of member countries to replicate these solar-powered solutions. Joshi noted that 11 of these projects were dedicated to the people of the respective countries: Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cuba, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Samoa, Senegal, The Gambia, and Tonga. ISA remains committed to supporting governments in their efforts to scale up solar

energy projects and improve the lives of their people, he stated. An important topic of discussion will be the guidelines for the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme, which provides for 10 per cent to 35 per cent of the total solar project cost to be given as a grant for developing solar projects in LDCs and SIDS identified by the countries themselves, provided 90 per cent of the project cost is locked in, he said. The ISA Assembly will also consider a proposal for promotion of greater involvement of women in ISA's initiatives, programs, and support activities, wherever feasible, across member countries, he said.

China's Haier Group plans JV with JSW Group envisaging ₹ 1K Crore investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Haier Group, a leading Chinese appliances manufacturer, has plans to set up a joint venture with India's JSW Group envisaging a proposed investment of Rs 1,000 crore, sources said. The proposal of Shandong-based Haier Group has been submitted to the government as it attracts Press Note 3 of 2020, under which all firms in countries that share land borders with India need mandatory government approval. The source said the proposal was put up before the committee that scrutinises such applications. There is an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Home Secretary to consider applications under the press note. Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan. An email query sent to both companies remained unanswered. Last year in November, the USD 24-billion JSW Group signed a JV with China's auto major SAIC Motor to acquire a 35 per cent stake in MG Motor India. The JV was named JSW MG Motor India Private Ltd. Around 51 per cent of the company's shares are with Indian entities, including JSW, which has a 35 per cent stake.



Haier Group is operating here through its subsidiary Haier Appliances India, which was established in 2003. Headquartered in Greater Noida, the India unit is a subsidiary of Haier Singapore Investment Holding Pte. It is one of the leading brands in the home appliances and consumer electronics market and operates two manufacturing units - Pune, Maharashtra and Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Haier, which has over Rs 8,000 crore business in India, is constantly expanding its manufacturing capacity to meet the growing demand for appliances from rural and smaller towns and the Indian

middle class from urban markets with its affordable options. India is the third largest market for Haier Group globally after China and the US, where it has invested Rs 3,500 crore so far. It has a consolidated manufacturing capacity to roll out 9 million units annually combined from both plants. Earlier this year, Haier, which competes in the Indian market with brands such as Samsung, Whirlpool of India, and Bosch besides some homegrown manufacturers such as Godrej Appliances, Bajaj Electricals, Voltas etc, said it has lined up a "huge expansion plan".

CIL should prioritise augmenting coal production, supplies to reduce import



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL's priorities should be to ramp up production of coal and scale up supplies to reduce imports, Union Minister G Kishan Reddy has said. Coal India Ltd (CIL) accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output. Speaking at CIL's 50th Foundation Day on Sunday, the minister stressed upon the importance of miners' welfare and the rehabilitation of communities affected by mine closures. "Contractual workers play a significant role in Coal India's output, and I applaud the management's decision to implement Performance Linked Incentives for them, effective FY 2023-24," he was quoted as saying in a coal ministry statement. The launch of commercial coal mining has led to transparency, ease of doing business and investment opportunities, helping open the coal sector. Exuding confidence in CIL, he stated that the company has the competency and commitment to compete in the current open market scenario.

While coal will remain a central component of the country's energy landscape for the coming decades, India is also heavily investing in renewable energy and addressing climate change, the coal minister explained. He commended CIL's diversification efforts, including setting up of a thermal power plant and foraying into critical mineral acquisition. "In the Viksit Bharat initiative, Coal India has a vital role to play and it needs to shoulder this responsibility," he emphasised. Coal Secretary Vikram Dev Dutt highlighted that CIL provides coal to Indian consumers at competitive rates compared to imported coal. He added that coal stocks at power plants reached 31.6 MT as on October 28, 2024, as compared to 18.8 MT a year ago. This growth of 68 per cent is largely attributed to the contribution of CIL. Coal India, he said, should recalibrate its processes, operational and cost efficiency in accordance to the changing business dynamics.



Women playing key role in various areas in India's civil aviation: Droupadi Murmu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said women are playing a key role in various operational and technical areas in the country's civil aviation sector. Interacting with a group of women achievers in the Indian aviation sector at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, she emphasised that along with increasing the participation of women in the aviation industry, equal opportunities moving forward in this field are also necessary, an official statement said. Murmu said apart from education and proper training, the support of family members is also important, it said. "It is often seen that many women are not able to fulfil their dreams even after receiving higher education due to a lack of support from the family," the president was quoted as having said in the statement issued by her office. She urged the women achievers to become guides for other women and encourage them to choose

their careers and realise their dreams, the statement said. According to the president, women are playing a key role in various operational and technical areas in India's civil aviation sector. The meeting took place under the 'President with the People' initiative which aims to establish a deeper connect with people and recognise their contributions, the statement said. Murmu said, "Fifteen per cent of Air Traffic Controllers are women, 11 per cent of flight dispatchers are women, and 9 per cent of aerospace engineers are women". She also noted that 18 per cent of pilots who received commercial licenses last year were women. The president appreciated all women achievers who think innovatively and dare to tread new paths. She said that the inclusive efforts of the government have given a boost to the progress of women in the civil aviation sector. "More and more women are now choosing aviation as their career," the president said.

MoA signed between Municipal Corporation and NTPC

PNS ■ RAIPUR

In the presence of Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary, a Memorandum of Agreement of Rs 42.56 crore was signed between Raigarh Municipal Corporation and NTPC for the construction of Nalanda campus in Raigarh. Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary said that this Nalanda campus will prove to be a milestone in the development of our new generation and making Raigarh an education hub. Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary said that it is the dream of all of us to take Raigarh to new heights of development. In which the coming generation will actively contribute and Nalanda campus will work to prepare a strong foundation for it. Nalanda campus will be built with the cooperation of NTPC. The tender for this has been approved. Emphasizing on the creation of a knowledge-based society, he said that the coming time will be based on knowledge. India has become an economy of 3 thousand 700 billion dollars in 2024 from 266 billion dollars in 1991. Its size will increase even faster in the future. Everyone in the country benefits from the strengthening of the economy, but those who prepare themselves by acquiring knowledge over time, get more benefit from it.

Air purifier sales spike over 50 per cent as air quality worsens

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Demand for air purifiers has witnessed a surge as air quality, especially in Delhi-NCR, dropped to hazardous levels, according to manufacturers of the product. Companies, including Kent RO Systems, Xiaomi, and LG Electronics India, said in the festive season, air purifiers sales grew up to 50 per cent as the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi and the adjoining moved towards an alarming level. Like the previous year, the appliance makers have witnessed growth in the last 2-3 weeks in sales and enquiries for air-purifiers and expect a further uptick with the increase in the AQI index in the coming weeks. Air purifier is a very small segment of the appliances market and its sales generally peaks in October and November, when the pollution level in North India, particularly Delhi NCR, and some other parts worsens due to stubble burning and Diwali celebrations. LG Electronics India Senior VP-Home Appliances Sanjay

Chitkara said: "As Delhi battles one of its worst pollution seasons yet, suddenly the demand for air purifiers has surged in Delhi NCR". The city's AQI has crossed hazardous levels, with pollutants that are much smaller than the common PM2.5 particles, making them extremely dangerous and hard to filter out, he said. Kent RO Systems CMD Mahesh Gupta said sales of air purifiers and filters witnessed a significant surge during the winter months in India, coinciding with the deterioration in air quality. The alarming levels of pollution, especially in the northern regions, create a sense of urgency among consumers to protect their health, he said. "During the festive season, we observe a noticeable increase in sales of about 20-25 per cent as consumers become more conscious of indoor air quality and their overall well-being," he said. Xiaomi said amid rising pollution levels, particularly in the North region, there has been a noticeable shift in consumer



behaviour, with a growing focus on health and cleaner indoor environments. "This has driven a sharp rise in Xiaomi's air purifier

purifier filter sales, with numbers climbing over 50 per cent higher than usual in the past month," said a Xiaomi spokesperson. According to a report from EMR,

the India air purifier market size attained a value of Rs 777.75 crore in 2023. The market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16.30 per cent between 2024 and

2032, it said. Some of the makers such as Panasonic and Daikin have either scaled down their presence in the segment or have exited due to below-expectation growth and seasonal sales. British tech firm Dyson, a global market leader in the premium range of air purifiers said, "With the continued spike in pollution, it's important for people to take proactive measures to protect their family members from the harmful effects of smog and pollutants. To safeguard themselves from the AQI outside, many restrict their movement and prefer to stay indoors." Last month, Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi had criticised air purifier manufacturers for making false claims about their products, and called for increased consumer awareness ahead of winter when air pollution worsens in Delhi due to crop stubble burning in neighbouring states. He had expressed concern over misleading marketing tactics adopted by some air purifier companies.

INBRIEF

MORE FESTIVE SPECIAL TRAINS BY N. F. RAILWAY TO CLEAR RUSH

MALIGAON: N. F. Railway has decided to operate few more festive special trains to meet the rising demand of passengers and ensure comfortable travel during the ongoing festive season. The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available in IRCTC website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of N. F. Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

GNDU EXTENDS LAST DATE FOR ODL AND ONLINE COURSES

AMRITSAR: Guru Nanak Dev University has extended the last date for admission to courses offered under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online mode until 15th November 2024 as per the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission-Distance Education Bureau (UGC-DEB) Notification. These online programs have been specifically designed to benefit not only the Punjabi diaspora in regions like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Africa and Europe but also anyone from India or across the globe seeking flexible higher education options.

MAN UNITED MAKES ITS WORST LEAGUE START IN ALMOST 40 YEARS

AP ■ MANCHESTER
A tumultuous week for Manchester United ended with a 1-1 draw against Chelsea and the unwanted statistic that the club has made its worst league start for almost 40 years. Moises Caicedo's stunning long-range volley secured a point for Chelsea and left United on 12 points which Opta, the Premier League's stats supplier, said was its lowest after 10 games since the 1986-87 season. That was the year Alex Ferguson was hired and went on to lead the club to a period of unprecedented success, winning 13 Premier League titles and two Champions Leagues. United fans will have to hope that is a good omen after Erik ten Hag was fired this week and replaced by Ruben Amorim. "Whenever you see a manager go you have to take some of the blame on yourself, it is because the team is not doing so well," United captain Bruno Fernandes said Sunday. "I spoke to the manager (Ten Hag) and apologized to him. I was disappointed he has gone and I tried to help him." Fernandes fired United ahead from the penalty spot in the 70th minute against Chelsea as interim head coach Ruud van

Nistelrooy looked to win back-to-back games during his temporary reign, having beaten Leicester 5-2 in the League Cup on Wednesday. But in front of the watching Olivia Rodrigo, Caicedo's strike from the edge of the box four minutes later ensured the points were shared. "I think we did the most difficult thing in this stadium against this team ... We were down and we came back immediately," Chelsea head coach Enzo Maresca said. Chelsea moved up to fourth in the standings, ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, while United is six points behind in 13th and playing catchup in the race for Champions League qualification. Tottenham beat Aston Villa 4-1 earlier in the day. Ten Hag was fired on Monday and while Amorim has been confirmed as his replacement, he does not take charge until Nov. 11. Van Nistelrooy is holding the reins until then and for a short while was making top-flight management look relatively simple. Fernandes' penalty put United in sight of a win that would have moved it to within four points of the top four. That was until Caicedo's strike. "I am disappointed we didn't win, we had the better of the chances in the game but overall



the performance was fantastic. They left their all out there on the pitch," Van Nistelrooy said. The Dutchman's future is unclear once Amorim takes over. But he has two games - against PAOK Salonika in the Europa League and Leicester in

the league - until he hands over to the new head coach. "We'll be backing him (Amorim) and helping them to get Manchester United to where we want it to be," Van Nistelrooy said. **SPURS THRASH VILLA:**

Dominic Solanke scored twice as Tottenham thrashed Aston Villa 4-1. The forward struck two goals in the space of four second-half minutes at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium after Villa had led at the break. Solanke scored in the 75th and 79th as Spurs produced a stunning second-half performance to follow up its victory against Manchester City in the League Cup on Wednesday. Morgan Rogers had given

Champions League-chasing Villa the lead in the 32nd minute, but Brennan Johnson leveled the game four minutes after the break. Solanke's double put Spurs 3-1 ahead and James Maddison curled a free kick into the top

corner in the sixth minute of added time. Solanke is now on five goals for the season. Tottenham is up to seventh in the standings, while sixth-place Villa missed out on the chance to move into the top three. **GRUDGE MATCH:** AFC Wimbledon beat MK Dons 2-0 in the first round of the FA Cup and took bragging rights in one of English soccer's fiercest grudge matches. Matty Stevens and Omar Bugiel scored either side of halftime at Stadium MK in a competition that holds deep ties for fans of both clubs. Wimbledon was a shock winner of the Cup in 1988 when beating the mighty Liverpool 1-0. The team relocated to Milton Keynes in 2002 and was renamed MK Dons, which prompted disgruntled fans to create a phoenix club called AFC Wimbledon. And it was the traveling AFC Wimbledon fans who were left celebrating Sunday after securing its place in the next round of the Cup. **WREXHAM LOSES:** There will be no Cup run for Wrexham this season after losing 1-0 at Harrogate Town. Jack Muldoon's goal in the 24th was enough to seal victory for Harrogate, which plays in the fourth tier of English soccer, one division below Wrexham.



Gauff beats Pegula at WTA Finals while Swiatek prevails in her first match in two months

AP ■ RIYADH
Coco Gauff enjoyed a successful start by beating Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-2 in an American matchup at the WTA Finals. Second-seeded Iga Swiatek rallied to beat Barbora Krejickova 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 in her first match in two months. Gauff converted five of her eight break-point opportunities to win her opening match at the year-ending tournament for the top eight ranked players. "I thought we both were playing high level," Gauff said. "I just think I was able to break through on the more important points." Gauff will face Swiatek on Tuesday with the winner taking control of the Orange Group. Pegula will next face Wimbledon champion Krejickova. Swiatek, who arrived at the WTA Finals with a new coach, hadn't played a match since losing to Pegula in

straight sets in the U.S. Open quarterfinals in September. "Even though I played a lot of those (practice) matches, I kind of forgot for a while how it is to feel all those things, a bit different stress and emotions," Swiatek said. "For sure, I needed some time to adapt. The most important thing was that even though it happened, I managed to fight through that. And was patient enough to wait to get better." Swiatek rallied from 3-0 down in the second set to turn it around against Krejickova, who has been hit by injuries and had played only 29 matches coming into the finals. Seven of them were victories at Wimbledon. On Saturday, top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka eased to a straight-set victory over Zheng Qinwen in the opening match of the finals in Saudi Arabia. Fourth-seeded Jasmine Paolini of Italy beat fifth-seeded Elena Rybakina in the other Purple Group match.

Dani Olmo leads Barcelona to city derby win over Espanyol

AP ■ MADRID
Dani Olmo made the most out of his return as a starter with Barcelona, scoring twice to lead the Catalan club to a 3-1 win over Espanyol in the city derby on Sunday in the Spanish league. Raphinha also scored for Barcelona, which a week ago had routed Real Madrid 4-0 in the clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Barcelona is now nine points ahead of Madrid, whose game at Valencia on Saturday was postponed because of the deadly floods that killed more than 200 people in southern Spain last week. The game between Villarreal and Rayo Vallecano also was postponed, as were three second-division games scheduled to be played in the region this weekend. The victory extended Barcelona's 27-match unbeaten streak against Espanyol in the league. Espanyol, sitting in 17th place, has lost six of its last seven league matches. Olmo scored his double in his return as a starter after hurting his right hamstring on Sept. 15 against Girona. He had come off the bench in the team's wins



against Bayern Munich in the Champions League and Madrid in the Spanish league. "I was excited about coming back," Olmo said. "I'm feeling well. It was important to keep winning." He put Barcelona ahead in the 12th minute from close range after a neat cross by Lamine Yamal with the outside of his left foot. Olmo's second goal came with a strike from outside the area in the 31st. In his first season with Barcelona, Olmo now has five goals in five matches. Raphinha added to the lead in the 23rd by redirecting the ball into the net with one touch after Marc Casado's long cross into the area.

Barcelona has outscored its league opponents 40-11 in 12 matches. Madrid has the second-best attack with 21 goals scored. "We are a team that can score a lot, not only with our strikers but also with the players in the second line," Olmo said. "We play very direct and create many opportunities." Espanyol thought it had moved closer in the 27th but Jofre Carrera's goal was called off after video review because of offside. It also had a goal by Alvaro Tejero disallowed for offside in the 58th, then Javi Puado finally scored a goal that counted in the 63rd. Barcelona also had a goal called off in stoppage time.

Before the match, Barcelona honored those who received awards at the Ballon d'Or ceremony last week, including Yamal, who earned the Kopa Trophy award for best Under-21 player, and Aitana Bonmati, who won the award for the world's best woman soccer player. Barcelona also won the best women's team prize. There was also a moment of silence in honor of the flood victims, which has taken place at all league matches this weekend. **SIMEONE'S SON SCORES:** Giuliano Simeone, son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone, scored his first goal with the club in the team's 2-0 win against Las Palmas. The goal came more than 20 years after Simeone's last league goal with the club as a player. Alexander Sorloth netted Atletico's second goal on Sunday, helping move the club back to third place, 10 points behind Barcelona. **OTHER RESULTS:** Sixth-place Athletic Bilbao drew 1-1 against Real Betis, while 10th-place Real Sociedad won 2-0 at Sevilla with goals from Takefusa Kubo and Mikel Oyarzabal.



Delhi SG Pipers sign Australian Olympian Jacob Whetton

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi SG Pipers on Monday announced the signing of three-time Olympian Jacob 'Jake' Whetton of Australia for the upcoming Hockey India League season. The 33-year-old midfielder will be replacing Dutchman Jorrit Croon, who has pulled out due to an ankle injury. "It's never easy to replace a player of Jorrit Croon's calibre. Unfortunately, his recovery from the ankle injury isn't progressing as hoped, which has led us to make this difficult decision," Delhi's head coach Graham Reid stated in a release. "On a brighter note, I am thrilled to welcome Jacob Whetton to the SG Delhi Pipers for the 2024 season. Jacob's experience and skill set will be invaluable in filling the void left by Jorrit. "His ability to control the midfield aligns perfectly with our game strategy, and I have known Jacob since 2009, so he

is well-acquainted with my coaching style. I'm excited about the energy and expertise he will bring to our team." Whetton has a wealth of experience with him, featuring in 253 games for the Kookaburras, netting 75 goals, and also helping the side win the silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics. Besides, the Queenslander also won the World Cup in 2014 and helped his team finish third four years later. He also helped his side win gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014, Gold Coast 2018 and Birmingham 2022. Whetton has also won Champions Trophy twice (2012 and 2018) and a bronze in 2014. He also has four Oceania Cup titles and an FIH Pro League gold (2019). The HIL is returning after a seven-year hiatus and will run from December 28-February 1.

IPL auction set to be held in Riyadh at end of November

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Indian Premier League's high-profile auction will be held in the Saudi Arabian capital city of Riyadh in the last week of this month, sources in the BCCI confirmed on Monday. "The IPL auctions will be held in Riyadh and it has been



notified to the franchises. The likely dates are November 24 and 25," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. This year's auction is a mega one with high profile India stars like Rishabh Pant, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer and Arshdeep Singh are going to go under the hammer.

The 10 franchises will collectively have around Rs 641.5 crore to spend for 204 slots that are available. Out of those 204 slots, 70 are earmarked for overseas players. As of now, 46 players have been retained by the 10 franchises with cumulative expenditure of Rs 558.5 crore.

Red Bull's Verstappen nears 4th straight F1 title

AP ■ SAO PAULO
Red Bull driver Max Verstappen took a major step toward securing his fourth straight F1 title by winning the Brazilian Grand Prix, despite starting 17th, and increasing his lead over McLaren's Lando Norris with three more races remaining. The Dutchman could secure the trophy in Las Vegas later this month. All he needs to do is to finish ahead of the McLaren driver. Other combinations could also secure the title for the 27-year-old. In one of the best drives of his career, Verstappen overcame punishments before the race as well as the wet weather at Interlagos to earn his first victory since June, and his eighth Grand Prix win of the year. He won by almost 20 seconds and also clocked the fastest lap at Interlagos 17 times during the race to receive an extra point. The Dutchman increased his

lead from 44 to 62 points over Norris, who won Saturday's sprint race. Norris started in pole position but finished in a disappointing sixth position. He avoided losing more points in an investigation by stewards, who fined him and Mercedes' George Russell 5,000 euros (\$5,440) for breaching the FIA's start procedure. Verstappen had been on course for a tough weekend in Sao Paulo. He received a five-place grid punishment after changing his engine for the sixth time in the season - the maximum allowed is four. He lost one point in Saturday's sprint race because of another penalty. And then his qualifying session earlier on Sunday was interrupted when he was 12th and trying to clock a fast lap to reach the final part of the session. "My emotions today were a roller coaster," Verstappen said after the race. "We stayed out of trouble, we made the right calls and we were flying." Verstappen said later at a press

conference that winning in Brazil was "incredibly important" in his bid for a fourth title and that he had been expecting to see his overall lead reduced. "It felt like I was driving a boat," Verstappen joked. When asked about what he expects next, he said: "I just want clean races, that's all. I am not thinking about clinching the championship in Vegas or whatever." After the Las Vegas GP on Nov. 23, there are races in Qatar (Dec. 1) and Abu Dhabi (Dec. 8), with a combined total of 86 points available. The two Alpine drivers, Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly, completed the podium. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who started the race with a long shot at the drivers' title, finished fifth. F1 governing body FIA had rescheduled the qualifying session for 7:30 a.m. Local time (10:30 GMT) Sunday after heavy rain on Saturday. The start of the Grand Prix was



brought forward from 2 p.m. To 12:30 p.m. (15:30 GMT), while many in the paddock still wondered whether the drivers would take their cockpits at all during the morning.

The tense race under rain in Sao Paulo had an aborted start when Aston Martin's Lance Stroll went off the formation lap. Norris could not hold his first position in the

first turn, losing it to Russell. The McLaren driver struggled until the end of the race to find his line under the rain, which Verstappen clearly managed to do from the start, finding grip

where others couldn't in the inside of the track. The big boost for Verstappen, and possibly a key moment in the drivers' championship, came when Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg spun off in the 27th of 69 laps. A virtual safety car came in and many drivers chose to go to their pit lanes but Verstappen, Ocon and Gasly opted not to stop and the gamble paid off. Five laps later, to the huge disappointment of about 10,000 Argentinian fans at Interlagos, Williams driver Franco Colapinto crashed. That meant a red flag, only minutes after leaders Russell and Norris had pitted. Ocon, Verstappen and Gasly changed their tires without losing their places, putting Norris under even bigger pressure to deliver. "It was the right time to box," Norris said after the race. "We were just unlucky." "I did all I could today. That's all. Max won the race. Good on him, well done but it doesn't

change anything for me," he added. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, who finished 10th, also praised Verstappen's performance under rain in Sao Paulo. "An amazing drive, congrats," the seven-time champion said on Instagram. Hulkenberg was disqualified after receiving a rare black flag before the restart because he had gotten assistance from marshals to return to the track. The bumpy track at Interlagos was under fire from drivers, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso receiving treatment for back pains after the race. Earlier, in the most emotional moment of the weekend at Interlagos, many fans on the stands cried when Hamilton drove the late Ayrton Senna's title-winning car ahead of the race. The seven-time champion took some laps under falling rain in the historic McLaren MP4/5B that Senna drove during his 1990 title campaign, in which he beat Ferrari's Alain Prost.

Series defeat against NZ will impact India's performance against Aussies: Gilchrist, Warner

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian legends Adam Gilchrist and David Warner have little doubt that Indian players' psyche would have been scarred after the recent whitewash at home by New Zealand, but they said it will be naive to consider Rohit Sharma's side "easy beats" in the five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy, beginning at Perth from November 22.

The Tom Latham-led Kiwis blanked India 3-0, marking one of the lowest points in their Test history, also denting the chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) final next year.

"It does (series defeat has an impact), more for the Indian players and the Indian team internally. They have to be asking themselves pretty hard questions," former wicketkeeper batter Gilchrist told Fox Sports.

"But I'm not expecting them to come out and be easy beats,

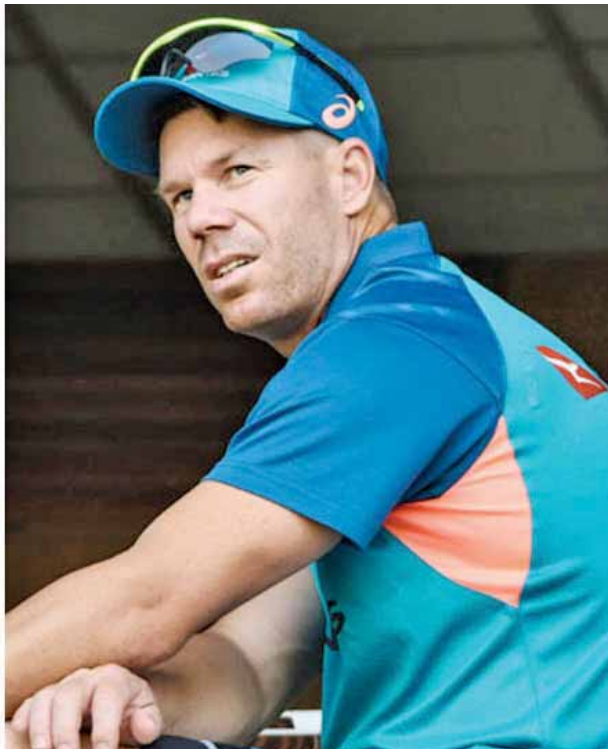
but I do think on the back of that loss and the fact that it was a clean sweep - I cannot remember when that's happened to them, just losing a series, let alone a clean sweep - I think that will raise some questions internally.

"The pressure and the expectation and the desire from a passionate cricketing nation to see that change around, that'll ride heavily on those shoulders of all those players."

Gilchrist said India has the wherewithal to regroup after the heavy setback.

"There are a few ageing players (with the Indian team) who may start to even second guess themselves a little bit. There're some high-class cricketers in that Indian squad. It's going to be fascinating to see how they rebound from that challenge," he added.

WE NEED RUNS AGAINST BUMRAH, SIRAJ; WARNER: Former opener Warner said the series defeat



against the Black Caps will certainly be playing in Indian cricketers' minds.

"It (the series defeat) helps the Australian guys. They're coming here after being beaten at home 3-0 for five Tests against the Australian boys, (who have) three world class quicks and a world class spin bowler, and I'd be nervous if I'm in their batting order. I would be nervous," said Warner.

The left-hander felt that countering pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj would be key to Australia's success in the upcoming series.

"The Australian top order needs to make runs against Bumrah and Siraj who are their spearheads. I think if Australia can get through those two gentlemen, there could be some big runs put on the board.

"But we're going to have to come out with our chest out against India. We have lost our

last two series here against India (and) they have got a lot to play for."

Warner also did not read too much into the modest form of Indian veterans like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

"You have got Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ashwin, Jadeja. You got these guys there who are in the back end of their careers. So, there's a lot to play for there, and whether or not they finish their careers this year or next year, they will want to finish on a high.

"I know those guys very, very well, and they will be so determined to come out here and score big runs."

Former Australian batter Mark Waugh said India will miss the services of seamer Mohammed Shami, who is still recuperating from a surgery.

"If Mohammed Shami is not on the tour, that is a huge blow for India because I think their pace attack would worry us with Shami in there. He is a big loss," reckoned Waugh.



So proud of you: Ravindra reveals rare message from dad after NZ historic series win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra revealed a rare text message he received from his father, expressing pride in the batter's achievements after the Black Caps notched a "special" Test series win in his parents' place of birth.

New Zealand wrapped up a memorable tour of India, becoming the first team in history to register a 3-0 Test series sweep against the Asian giants in their own backyard.

The 24-year-old, who was the star of the first Test, was born and brought up in Wellington but his familial roots are firmly entrenched in Bengaluru.

"I haven't heard my dad say to me, 'so proud of you' often in my life, so it was nice to get that message when we won," Ravindra said on Sen Radio.

The stylish left-hander's parents Ravi Krishnamurthy and Deepa hail from Bengaluru, while his grandparents T. Balakrishna Adiga, a noted educationist, and Poornima still stay in the Indian city.

He revealed that his father was present to witness Ravindra's match-winning exploits first-hand in Bengaluru where he scored a century and an unbeaten 39 in his two innings to fashion New Zealand's eight-wicket win in the series opener.



up cricket, waking him up at 5 a.m. Each day for throwdowns in the driveway.

"Obviously I'm just very grateful for everyone in my inner circle. I was making him get up and he'd come and throw balls for me two hours before school.

"Mum getting me ready every day for school, training and games - that unconditional love, which I'll never forget. That's stuff I'll never take for granted."

New Zealand ended India's 12-year unbeaten home run in Tests by winning the first two matches. It is also their first-ever series victory in India since they started touring the country in 1955-56 under Harry Cave. The Black Caps also scripted history by becoming the first team to notch a 3-0 series win in India, winning the third Test by 25 runs in Mumbai on Sunday.

"It was unbelievable. On the field, it was a different feeling. I think it's nothing like I've quite experienced before.

"Just seeing everyone's elation, running towards each other. Ajaz's sixth wicket, and being in Mumbai and seeing all the boys together in a huddle jumping around.

"It's hard to quite quantify, but it's pretty special," Ravindra said.

I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well: Will Young

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Replacing a player of Kane Williamson's stature can be a daunting task but Will Young, who played a pivotal role in New Zealand's historic 3-0 Test series win in India, saw it as an opportunity to create his own mark after "running the drinks" as a reserve batter for four years.

If New Zealand's batting appeared thin with Williamson not making it to India for the first Test in Bengaluru due to injury, the 31-year-old Young banished any such doubts with his unbeaten 48 as the Kiwis hammered the hosts by eight wickets.

As it became evident that Williamson would not make it to India in time to help New Zealand clear trials by spin at Pune and Mumbai, Young had given enough indications that he was ready for the challenge.

"Since my debut about four years ago, I've been in and out through form (or) through selection. "I've been a reserve batter for a number of years now so I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well," Young told media here after New Zealand's historic win, insinuating that

he was always ready.

"When I do get an opportunity to play, I'm more excited to go out and do my own thing in my own way and not try to replace Kane or whoever it might be, just play my own game and see it as a great opportunity rather than big boots to fill," he added.

Young acknowledged the role Williamson played in New Zealand's training camps back home and also during his presence on the earlier assignments in the Indian subcontinent.

"Unfortunately Kane's not here and if he was, he'd be a great person to lean into and to ask what he thinks in certain situations. We also had three really good camps leading into the series back home and he was at those camps.

"But it's great at the moment because we've got fantastic batters all throughout our line-up and they've all got slightly different methods and on the day you've just got to pick what method you think will work and you've got to have the courage to back that and show your skills.

"Yeah, I try not to bat like Kane, I try to bat like me and do it my own way," he added.

For New Zealand to beat India at their own game on spinning wickets was as special as their series win in this part of the world, and Young conceded scoring runs on turning tracks in Pune and Mumbai was more satisfying.

"If you look at all three matches, there was different challenges in each. In Bangalore, a lot of wickets fell to spin and then (in) Pune and Mumbai it was a lot more challenging against spin."

"As a New Zealander coming over here and playing in Indian conditions, it's always going to be slightly more satisfaction of scoring runs against spin, so I'd suppose scoring runs in Pune or Mumbai felt more special," said Young, who ended the series as the third highest run-getter.

With 244 runs at 48.80 across three Tests, Young finished behind India's Rishabh Pant (261 runs) and compatriot Rachin Ravindra (256 runs). However, his biggest contributions came in the third Test at Mumbai when Young's 71 and 51 across the two innings helped New Zealand become the first team ever to beat India 3-0 in their own backyard.

"I had Dad watch the first Test in Bangalore in his hometown, which was nice, and I'm sure Mum was biting her nails in front of the TV, not moving an inch back home.

"It's very special and to be able to do it in the country of (my parents') birth is amazing," Ravindra admitted.

"Although I've always maintained I'm

100 percent Kiwi born and brought up, it's nice to get that reminder every now and again," he added.

Ravindra ended the series as New Zealand's leading run-getter, collecting 256 runs at an average of 51.20.

It was his father's passion for the game that inspired a young Ravindra to take

Shami's return to competitive cricket delayed

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mohammed Shami's return to competitive cricket has been further pushed back after the veteran pacer was not named in the Bengal squad for the next two rounds of the Ranji Trophy against Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

Bengal will take on Karnataka at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here from Wednesday, before travelling to Indore to take on MP from November 13.

Shami was expected to play the fixture against Karnataka to test his fitness in a real-match situation as he bowled at full tilt at nets after India's recent Test match against New

Zealand here, though with bandage on his operated leg.

On that occasion, he was also monitored by India's bowling coach Morne Morkel.

Later Shami said during a promotional event that he was feeling "100%" at nets.

"I had been bowling with half a run-up on and off since I can't put too much stress on my body. So, we decided that I would bowl properly, and I gave my 100%.

"It felt great, and the results are good. Hopefully, I'll be back on track soon," he had said.

India skipper Rohit Sharma had also opined against taking an undercooked Shami to Australia.

"We don't want to bring undercooked Shami to

Not to play for Bengal against Karnataka, MP



Australia. We are keeping our fingers crossed," Rohit had said in Bengaluru recently.

Other than Shami, Bengal will also miss the services of prolific opener Abhimanyu Easwaran, wicketkeeper batter Abhishek Porel and pacer Mukesh Kumar, who are with India A squad in Australia.

Pacer Akash Deep, who was part of the Indian team for the

recent series against New Zealand, was also not named in the state squad.

However, veteran wicketkeeper batter Wriddhiman Saha, who has announced his retirement from cricket after the ongoing domestic season, has been named for the two matches.

Bengal squad against Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh: Anustup Majumdar (capt), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Sudip Chatterjee, Sudip Gharami, Shahbaz Ahmed, Wriddick Chatterjee, Avilinn Ghosh, Shuvam Dey, Shakir Habib Gandhi, Pradipta Pramanik, Aamir Gani, Ishan Porel, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, Mohammed Kaif, Rohit Kumar, Rishav Vivek.

'Superman' Wriddhiman, one of India's finest keeper-batter to retire

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spectacular with the big gloves, quietly assured with the willow and yet happy to be in the shadows, Wriddhiman Saha, in his 40 Test matches for India, has certainly been more than the sum total of all his parts.

But having been out of India reckoning for over three years now, the 40-year-old has decided to call it quits from the game at the end of his team Bengal's ongoing Ranji Trophy campaign. The announcement was made on his social media page late last night.

"After a cherished journey in cricket, this season will be my last. I am honoured to represent Bengal one final time, playing only in the Ranji Trophy before I retire," Saha said.

"Let's make this season one to remember," he added in a post that went up late on Sunday night, typically unambiguous from the unassuming player.

He never had the aura of a Mahendra Singh Dhoni or the insane daredevilry of a talented Rishabh Pant but Saha, with his hands as safe as a house, was more than a mere hyphen between the two powerhouse performers of

Indian cricket.

The 104 dismissals behind the stumps, including 92 catches in Tests, some of them absolutely splendid, Saha's three centuries and six fifties aren't always spoken about for their effectiveness.

Neither the eight six-laden century in a losing cause for erstwhile Kings XI Punjab in the 2014 IPL final.

But Saha, for the better part of the 17 years since his Ranji debut in 2007, was happy to stay out of the spotlight.

Patience came easy to him as he had to wait nearly two years between his debut and second Test and nearly three years between his second and third Tests.

He was always that ever present understudy to Dhoni, knowing well that he will have to wait till the great man called time in whites.

Saha was an old fashioned Indian keeper like Syed Kirmani or Nayan Mongia -- brilliant behind the stumps and a safe batter, who could be used as a floater in the middle order.

Whether keeping up to R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja on perennially under-prepared Indian tracks or gauging the



wobbly seam movement of Ishant Sharma's deliveries, between 2015 and 2018, Saha was undoubtedly one of the world's best glovemen at work.

And one can say that with assurance despite his contemporaries being Matthew Wade, BJ Watling, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Jonny Bairstow.

There were moments behind the stumps that one simply cannot forget.

A flying catch to pouch South Africa's Faf du Plessis off Ashwin's delivery in front of silly point, which earned him the moniker of 'Superman WriddhiMan', was a moment of sheer brilliance.

His keeping was so exceptional that despite an IPL hundred, three Test tons and a brilliant Irani Cup double ton in a tricky chase, his batting never got the due it deserved. And when Pant burst into the scene with his 'X-factor' batting, he was again confined to being the second keeper.

Once Gabba happened, the writing was on the wall for Saha and Rahul Dravid, the new coach, in a frank discussion during the tour of South Africa decided to show him the mirror that at 38, it makes no sense to be a second

keeper behind a 20-something.

Having scored a fifty (vs New Zealand) in a preceding series and probably misunderstanding former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly's generic encouragement as an assurance, his impregnable patient "defence" was breached as he fired some verbal salvos.

A spat with a Cricket Association of Bengal office-bearer saw him leave for Tripura for a couple of years before coming back home for a final hurrah. His attitude towards life remained the same.

From the time he was a 16-year-old, who came from North Bengal's Siliguri and stayed at a dingy PG in central Kolkata's Koley Market area, to the time he became a known figure with a posh South Kolkata apartment and a luxury car, all he wanted to do was complete his tasks and answer only in mono-syllables.

Trust Virat Kohli to find that enduring.

"You particularly feel happy when a team-man like Saha does well. Such a nice person, never cribs about anything, does not have a bad word to say about anybody, ready to bat at Nos 8, 9, or 10," the skipper had once said about his teammate.