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SPORTS 11

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



Polls on platter, all eyes on Wayanad



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RANCHI/WAYANAD

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

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

bypolls are being held due to death of the representatives. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is making her electoral debut from Wayanad vacated by her sibling Rahul Gandhi who also won from the Rae Bareilly parliamentary constituency. Voting will be held in seven seats in Rajasthan, six in West Bengal, five in Assam, four seats in Bihar, three in Karnataka, two seats in Madhya Pradesh, and one seat each in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala and Meghalaya. Votes will be counted on November 23. Though polling was also scheduled for two seats in Sikkim, Soreng-Chakung and Namchi-Singhithang, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) nominees Aditya Golay and Satish Chandra Rai have already been declared unopposed after their rivals withdrew from the race. In Rajasthan, bypolls will be held in Jhunjhunu, Dausa, Deoli-Uniara, Khinvsar, Chaurasi, Salumbar and Ramgarh. In Salumbar and Ramgarh, the bye-elections were necessitated due to the demise of the sitting MLAs, Amritlal Meena (Bharatiya Janata Party) and Zubair Khan (Congress) respectively. The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal had won five of the six seats, Taldangra, Sitai-SC, Naihathi, Haroa, Medinipur, and Madarihat - in the 2021 Assembly polls. The Madarihat seat was held by the BJP.

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ED raids multiple locations in Jharkhand, WB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday raided multiple locations in poll-bound Jharkhand apart from West Bengal in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals, official sources said. A total of 17 places are being covered in the two neighbouring states by the Ranchi office of the federal probe agency, a day before the first phase of polling in Jharkhand. Visuals of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel positioned outside a hotel located on Bariatu Road in Ranchi and a resort in the city were captured by press teams as ED teams scoured for documents, ledger entries and financial records inside. The ED in September filed a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe an instance of alleged infiltration and trafficking of some Bangladeshi women into Jharkhand leading to the generation of alleged slush funds. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have accused the State Government of aiding such infiltration leading to the altering of the demographic landscape of the tribal-dominated areas of Santhal Pargana and Kolhan regions during the recent poll campaign. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday accused the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led coalition of converting Jharkhand into a 'dharmshala' for Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators.

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Overaged vehicles choking NCR

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

As there is no letup in worsening air pollution in Delhi and its neighbouring region as the air quality index here remains in the 'very poor' category for the past 13 days, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) directed to launch actions to remove highly polluting end-of-life (EoL) vehicles (petrol vehicles older than 15 years and diesel vehicles older than 10 years) still reported to be plying in Delhi. The National Capital Region (NCR) still has over one 1.06 Crore 'overage' vehicles (End of Life (EoL) running on the roads illegally and adding to the pollution. Of them, only 26,064 vehicles have been seized in 2023 and 6011 till September 2024. In Delhi, the transport sector is the most significant contributor at 15.496 per cent, as per the Decision Support System data by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The PM2.5 concentration is currently 40.4 times the World Health Organization (WHO) annual PM2.5 guideline value. Data shows there are 60,14,493 such vehicles in Delhi. Of them, only 24,706 have been impounded so far. A survey by the Delhi government in October estimates there are 15,00,000-2,00,000 EoL vehicles still on roads. An estimated 1.1 million vehicles enter and exit Delhi daily, further worsening the air quality. The traffic congestion caused by this vehicle influx also intensifies pollution, particularly nitrogen oxides (NOx), which account for 81 per cent of NOx pollution in Delhi. Data shows that during peak traffic hours (5 pm - 9 pm), when average traffic speed drops to 15 km/h, NO2 levels are 2.3 times higher than noon levels (12 pm - 4 pm) when traffic speed averages 21 km/h.

These congestion-related emissions worsen air quality, especially during winter when inversion layers trap pollutants close to the ground. According to the Ministry of Road and Transport, Haryana has over 27.50 lakh while Uttar Pradesh has over 12.38 lakh such vehicles. Rajasthan has 6.06 lakh such vehicles. Transport department Officials said that there are a large number of EoL vehicles plying on the roads, causing traffic snarls here. In an order to Delhi, the Commission has directed that EoL vehicles should be denied fuel at petrol pumps and more importantly, immediate legal action should be taken against such vehicles, including impounding and further disposal in accordance with RVSF Rules, 2021 and other extant policies of the respective State Governments and the GNCT Delhi. "As a deterrent measure, all such EoL vehicles are identified through the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera systems at petrol pumps. Delhi has piloted one such innovative and effective solution which envisages Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera systems which are in the process of being installed at all 500+

fueling stations in the capital city". "These cameras, besides capturing and displaying the registration details of all the vehicles that enter the premises of the fueling station, also have a provision of integration with VAHAN database and thus the status of "EoL" vehicles or vehicles without valid Pollution Under Control Certificate "PUCC" can be readily captured by the system. The system further has a provision for an audio message which is relayed in respect of such non-compliant vehicles entering the premises of the fueling station," it said. "In view of the high polluting nature of EoL vehicles and considering that such a large fleet, while de-registered, is still reported to be plying, NCR States / GNCT of Delhi, there is an urgent need to launch / intensify drives against such vehicles. While much more intensified "on-road" drives should be taken up to guard against such overage vehicles plying on roads or parked in public spaces, suitable technological interventions and intelligent solutions also need to be employed towards identification / detection of such EoL vehicles still running in the NCR," it said.

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Canada temple cancels event amid protest threats

PTI ■ OTTAWA

The Brampton Triveni temple in Canada has cancelled a consular event after the Canadian police warned them of an "extremely high and imminent" threat level of violent protests. The Life Certificate event, organised by the Consulate General of India, Toronto, was scheduled for November 17 at the temple premises. It was part of the consulate's many camps for issuing Life Certificates for pension purposes. On Monday, the temple authorities said the event was cancelled due to "official intelligence from Peel Regional Police, stating that there is an Extremely High and Imminent Threat Level of violent protests". "...We must make the appropriate decision to cancel to ensure the safety of Brampton Triveni Mandir devotees, community visitors, and the general public," the temple authorities said in a statement. "We are deeply saddened that Canadians now feel unsafe coming to Hindu Temples in Canada," it added. Temple authorities called on Peel Police to address the threats being circulated against the temple and provide security guarantees to the Canadian Hindu community and the general public. The cancellation came almost a week after protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with devotees at a Hindu Sabha temple and disrupted an event co-organised by the temple authorities and the Indian Consulate at Brampton. Last week, the Consulate General of India in Toronto said it was cancelling some of its scheduled consular camps after the Canadian security authorities conveyed their inability to provide minimum security protection to its organisers. After the protests at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton on November 3, the Ministry of External Affairs said that New Delhi remains "deeply concerned" about the safety and security of Indian nationals in Canada. India condemned the attack with an expectation that those indulging in violence "will be prosecuted". The relations between India and Canada have come under severe strain following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd." Nijjar, a Canadian citizen, was designated a terrorist by India.

Bodies of two Meitei men recovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ IMPHAL

Bodies of two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community were recovered on Tuesday morning in Manipur's Jiribam district where a gunfight between suspected militants and security forces broke out a day before, police said. Operations are underway to trace three women and three children, who have been reported missing since the violence erupted in Jiribam on Monday. IGP (operations) I K Muivah said. The bodies of the two men, Laishram Balen and Maibam Kesho, were found lying in debris during a search operation in the Jakuradhor Karong area where a few shops were set on fire by suspected militants on Monday, another senior officer said. "The two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community died after the insurgents torched a few shops in the Jakuradhor Karong area," he said. The Jiribam district administration imposed prohibitory orders to avoid any untoward incident in the area, the officer said. A



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

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New entrance exam series in January

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday announced that the Centre is introducing various reforms in the entrance examinations in the country beginning January and appealed to the state governments to extend their support for zero-entrance tests. Pradhan said the Radhakrishnan panel has submitted its report outlining reforms in the National Testing Agency (NTA) and to

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

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

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Retail inflation rises to 6.21 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation rose to 6.21 per cent in October from 5.49 per cent in the preceding month mainly due to higher food prices, breaching the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) upper tolerance level, according to official data released on Tuesday. The consumer price index-based inflation was 4.87 per cent in October 2023. The National Statistics Office data showed that inflation in the food basket rose to 10.87 per cent in October from 9.24 per cent in September and 6.61 per cent in the year-ago month. The RBI, which kept the key short-term lending rate unchanged earlier this month, has been tasked by the government to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

LET IT SNOW...



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

Band, baaja, baraat and... traffic jams

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

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Be ready to encounter loud music, people dancing on the streets, and a general euphoria amongst the masses as wedding season officially began on Tuesday, which marked the auspicious occasion of Dev Uthani Ekadashi, when around 50,000 weddings were celebrated in the National Capital. However, what is 'party mode' for some will be a major headache for the commuters traversing through the roads of Delhi, especially through South Delhi and East Delhi. The sounds of celebration will continue until December 16 with the city witnessing around 4.5 lakh weddings across the different venues in Delhi in a

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



Many a time vehicles parked around these wedding venues also leave the roads narrower, and normal traffic has to wade through the cramped spaces. Shopping related to wedding events will also create a jam around key market areas. According to Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT)

estimates, this wedding season is expected to generate over Rs 6 lakh Crore in trade. In light of these issues, Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Ajay Chaudhary spoke about the special arrangements made to avoid any hassles, and keep the load off of the city roads. He said that in addition to the already existing force of about 4,500 traffic personnel, the police department has deployed an additional staff of 250. Addl/CP (Traffic) Satyaveer Singh Katara added that with a special focus on the traffic congestion resulting from the extra flow due to the ceremonies, they have adjusted the duty timings of the staff in a way that the maximum number of police is on the ground, and managing

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

Maharashtra Assembly polls: SOPs being followed, says ECI over Uddhav bag check row

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A controversy broke out on Tuesday in Maharashtra over the checking of the helicopter of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, with his son and party leader Aaditya Thackeray accusing the "entirely compromised" Election Commission of India (ECI) for delaying the campaign schedule of the Sena (UBT) president. After a video showing Uddhav talking to election officials who had come search Uddhav's helicopter went viral on social media, a miffed Aaditya charged that the ECI

was shamelessly trying to delay the rallies of the Sena (UBT) by undertaking such searches and demanded to know why Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other central ministers were not being "frisked". "While the Entirely Compromised commission shamelessly carries on trying to delay Uddhav Thackeray ji to his sabhas by frisking, the question is, why isn't the PM or other ministers visiting Maharashtra to promote BJP's loot being frisked this way? What a disgrace it's turning out to be - this institution," Aaditya wrote on micro-blogging site "X". The video, which Uddhav

himself shared it on social media after arriving at Yavatmal in eastern Maharashtra for campaigning, showed the Sena (UBT) chief talking to the election officials who had come to search his election officials, and seeking their identification and appointment letters. "How many politicians have you searched so far?", he asked the officials. After being told that his was the first helicopter that was being searched, Uddhav said: "Am I the first person to be searched? How come that I am always the first politician to be searched? Modi is coming today. Will you be searching for the helicopter of



Modi? I demand Modi's helicopter should be searched" The video clip shows Uddhav letting search his bags in the helicopter. "I have nothing against you people. What I am

shown telling the election officials in the video. On his part, Shiv Sena spokesperson and MP alleged that chief minister Eknath Shinde and his deputies Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar were distributing money in the run-up to the November 20 Assembly elections. "We have no objection to the Election Commission doing its work. But, Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar have sent Rs 25 crore each for distribution among the people... Does the Election Commission check the luggage and helicopters of Mahayuti leaders? Do Mahayuti leaders have only underwear in their bags?"

Raut asked. Meanwhile, a report put out by a national news agency quoted "sources" in the ECI as clarifying that the aircraft and helicopters of top leaders across the political spectrum are checked as part of standard operating procedure (SOP). The sources, as quoted by the news agency, claimed that in the previous polls too, the planes and helicopters of BJP President JP Nadda and Home Minister Amit Shah were checked. "There have been strict SOPs followed by enforcement agencies for a level-playing field. During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a similar issue was raised in Bihar and

it was clarified that the helicopters of prominent leaders, including Nadda, was checked in Bhagalpur district on April 24 while Shah's chopper was frisked in Kathiwar district on April 21 as per the SOP," the news agency quoted sources in the ECI as saying. The sources quoted by the news agency also recalled the statement of Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar as having already announced during the ongoing Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 that he had given directions to the enforcement agencies to check the helicopters of all political leaders to ensure a level-playing field.

Tight security ahead of by-elections to six Assembly seats in West Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India has made a massive security bandobast for the high-voltage by-elections to the six Assembly seats on Wednesday. The Commission has deployed a total 108 companies of Central Armed Police Force -- about 20 companies more than what was earmarked initially. The CAPF will comprise 40 companies of Border Security Force (BSF), 14 companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), 12 companies of Indo-Tibetan Police Force (ITBP), 14 companies of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and 13 companies of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), sources said adding the State police would man the outer ring of the security system. "All the booths will be manned by the central forces and covered by CCTV camera so there should not be any chance of any malpractices," said an EC official.



The six Assembly seats that are up for the grab are Sitai and Madarihat seats in Coochbehar and Alipurduar districts of North Bengal, Taldangra and Medinipur in Bankura and West Midnapore districts of Jangalmahal and Haroa and Naihati in North 24 Parganas district north of Kolkata. All but the Madarihat seat was clinched by the Trinamool Congress in 2021 Assembly elections when there was a considerable wave for the BJP which had won 78 out of 294 seats in that year. Though the main fight is like-

Now Mithun gets threat from Pakistani don for Kolkata speech

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A Pakistani don has issued threats to Mumbai star-turned-BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty asking him to withdraw and apologise for a statement that he made recently at a party meeting in Kolkata. Releasing two videos and referring to a statement made by the veteran actor, Sahjad Bhatti a don based in Dubai asked Chakraborty to "apologise within 10-15 days" and warned him against entering into a battle and cause his own "embarrassment." "You have hurt the sentiments of the Muslims by your statement ... Remember that the Muslims too have supported and respected you by watching many of your flopped films, ... though at your age, people sometimes make of-the-cuff remarks only to repent subsequently," Bhatti said in his video apparently prepared from a plush apartment.

Relentless operation underway to avenge the killing of para trooper and VDG members in Kishtwar

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The foot soldiers of the Indian Army are relentlessly combing the dense forest areas of Kishtwar to avenge the killing of an elite para commando and two members of the village Defence Group (VDG) targeted last week. The terrorists on the run made the last contact with the security forces on Sunday. The Indian army has deployed special forces equipped with the latest weapons, drones, and night vision devices to flush them out of their safe hideouts. Tracker dogs, other electronic surveillance equipment, and helicopters have also been pressed to detect the presence of terrorists hiding in the area. The anti-terrorist operation was launched in the area on Thursday after the dead bodies of two VDG members were found lying in a pool of blood in the Kuntwara forest area of Kishtwar. A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO), Naib Subedar Rakesh



Kumar of the Army's 2 Para, was martyred and three other soldiers injured in a gunfight with the terrorists in Keshwan forest on Sunday, while two VDGs - Nazir Ahmed and Kuldeep Kumar - were abducted and shot dead in nearby Kuntwara forest on Thursday evening. On Tuesday GoC-in-C of the Udhampur-based Northern Command headquarters Lt Gen M V Sudhindra Kumar visited the White Knight Corps here to review the ongoing operations in the region to flush out the foreign terrorists holed up in the area. In a post on X, Army's Northern Command said Lt

"There was no fresh contact with the terrorists despite the intensified search operation," an official said. According to security officials, terror attacks have killed 44 people, including 18 security personnel, in Jammu this year with the strikes spreading from the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch to six other areas in the troubled region. In Kashmir, a firefight was raging between terrorists and the security forces in the Nagmarg forest area of Bandipora. According to a Srinagar-based Chinara Corps, "On 12 Nov 24, based on specific intelligence input regarding presence of terrorists, a Joint Operation launched by the Indian Army & Jammu and Kashmir police in general area Nagmarg, Bandipora. Suspicious activity was observed by vigilant troops and on being challenged terrorists opened indiscriminate fire." The army said that its troops effectively retaliated. The operation was still in progress at the time of filing this report.

Adhikari, Sadhus walk against atrocities on Bangladeshi Hindus

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Within a fortnight of his party launching the membership drive fixing a target of one crore members from the State Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday

warned that the atrocities against the minority Hindus in Bangladesh could lead to "bipartit pratikriya (opposite reaction)" in times to come if things were not brought under control on that side of the border immediately. Taking part in a rally of sad-

hus which had plans to walk up to the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission to submit a deputation, Adhikari said, "the way the minority Hindus are being targeted and tortured in Bangladesh is not unacceptable to us ... these atrocities must stop immediately ...

considering the fact that every action has an opposite reaction." Adhikari also warned that if the atrocities on the Hindus would not stop then the same rally would march to the Petrapole border along Bangladesh.

"The Hindus are under attack on both sides of the border ... on that side they are being attacked and massacred and in this side too, the men of Mamata Banerjee are doing the same thing ... the Hindus are not being allowed to organize Durga Pujas at many

places and the Government is siding with the mischief mongers," he said. The Wednesday's march was taken out by a charitable trust in protest of the current situation in Bangladesh. While the Kolkata Police had initially denied permission to the rally

the Calcutta High Court allowed a march with 1000 men. The rally was directed to be stopped at Beck Bagan about a km from the Bangladesh High Commission at Park Circus area. Meanwhile in curious development the Union Home

Ministry has upgraded Adhikari's security to Z category --- all over the country --- following an updated threat assessment by the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Earlier he used to get 'Y' category security only in Bengal and 'X' category security outside the state

Overaged vehicles...

From page 1

It further said that the NCR States may consider to study and adopt the technological systems like the one developed by the NCT of Delhi viz., installation of ANPR Camera systems at fuelling stations. "Traffic surveillance cameras installed on major roads which facilitate traffic police to challan vehicles for traffic violations, may also be used for supplementing action against EoL vehicles found plying on roads. The Integrated Command and Control Centres for traffic management in some cities could also help identification of EOL vehicles, using camera feeds from strategic traffic points/ intersections,"

Polls on platter, all eyes on...

From page 1

A total of 34 candidates are in the fray in Assam in the five seats going to bypolls - Dholai, Behali, Samaguri, Bongaigaon and Sidi. In Bihar, bypolls will be held in the Ramgarh, Tarari, Imamganj and Belaganj seats. While in Karnataka, JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy is contesting from Channapatna, a seat vacated by his father and Union minister HD Kumaraswamy after being elected to Lok Sabha. The BJP has fielded former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's son, Bharath Bommai, from Shiggaon. He will face Congress candidate Yasir Ahmed Khan Pathan. Bypolls will also be held in Sandur in the state. Voting will also be held in

Budhni and Vijaypur Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh. The bypoll to Vijaypur seat in Sheopur district was necessitated after sitting Congress MLA Ramniwas Rawat joined the BJP and was made minister in the Mohan Yadav cabinet. The bypoll to Budhni seat is being held since MLA and former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was elected to the Lok Sabha and is now Union agriculture minister. The other seats going to bypolls are Chelakkara in Kerala, Vav in Gujarat, Raipur City South in Chhattisgarh and Gambegre (ST) in Meghalaya. Though voting was initially scheduled on Wednesday for nine seats in Uttar Pradesh, four in Punjab and one more seat in Kerala, the Election

Commission rescheduled it to November 20 in view of festivals. The first phase of polling in Jharkhand covering 43 seats with 685 candidates in the fray, is seen as a direct contest between the BJP led NDA and the Congress-JMM led INDIA bloc. Jamshepur West will see the highest number of candidates including high profile seats where contestants are former MP Ajoy Kumar from Congress, former State Minister Saryu Rai from Janata Dal (United), and daughter in law of former CM of Jharkhand Raghubar Das who is now Governor of Odisha, with 28 nominees, while Jagannathpur has the lowest, with only eight candidates filing nominations. Prime Minister Modi and

Home Minister Amit Shah led the NDA, conducting numerous rallies and roadshows over the past two weeks. Chief minister Hemant Soren and his MLA wife Kalpana intensified their campaigning for JMM and alliance partners, including Congress, through extensive tours. Rahul Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge also visited the state twice each to engage with voters. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma is the incharge of the polls who raked up the infiltration issue in the State. The state has a total of 2.6 crore voters, comprising 1.31 crore men and 1.29 crore women. Voters aged between 20 and 29 number 66.84 lakh, with 11.84 lakh first-time voters aged 18 and 19.

Modi waives big bizmen's ₹16 lakh crore worth loans, ignores farmers: Rahul

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Tearing into Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "pro-Adan-Ambani" approach, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday demanded to know from Modi as to why the BJP-led government had waived the loans of a single farmer, while it had written off the Rs 16 lakh crore loans of a handful of industrialists. Addressing an election rally at Gondia in Vidarbha region, Rahul also came down heavily on the Modi government for failing fair prices to farmers for rice, soybeans, and cotton in Maharashtra and had all ignored the farmers across the country. "On one hand, Modi waived Rs 16 lakh crore worth loans taken by a handful of industrialists, while on the other he has not waived the loans of a single farmer more than ten years of his rule," Rahul said. Alluding to the manner in which three agriculture laws came to be withdrawn in November 2021 after the nation-wide protests by the farmers, the leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha said: "The Prime Minister claims that the three erstwhile agriculture laws were enacted for the benefit of the farmers. If those black laws were indeed in the farmers' interest, then why did the farmers take to the streets?" "Modi belongs to Adani and Ambani. He attended Ambani's wedding, but I didn't attend the wedding because I belong to you," Rahul said. Rahul -- whose first election rally scheduled to be held at Chikhli in Buldhana district came to be cancelled after his flight from Delhi faced a technical glitch -- Rahul charged that the ruling BJP and RSS were working round-the-clock to finish off the Constitution.



"The Constitution of the country embodies values that have stood for thousands of years, representing the thoughts of Lord Buddha, Sant Basaveshwara, Mahatma Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Ambedkar, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This Constitution represents equality, love, and respect for all religions. When I show the red-book of the Constitution is shown, Prime Minister Modi criticizes it and me," Rahul said. Accusing Modi of having not read the constitution, Rahul said: "Nowhere in this Constitution allows the government to kill people or oppress the poor and farmers. Prime Minister Modi has not even read this Constitution. The BJP, RSS, and Narendra Modi continuously attack and attempt to dismantle the Constitution drafted by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, while the Congress fights to protect it." Dwelling upon the issue of reservations, Rahul said that Modi often claimed that belonged to the OBC community, "yet he consistently disrespects the community." "Despite OBCs constituting 50% of the population, the Modi government allocates only 5% of funds to them, which is a true insult to the community. This is the reason the Congress is determined to conduct a caste-based census and remove the 50% cap on reservations," he said.

New entrance exam series in January

From page 1

In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination NEET National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) and PhD entrance NET (National Eligibility Test), the Centre had in June set up the panel headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by the NTA. While NEET was under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam had been compromised. Both matters are being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Two other exams - CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG - were cancelled at the last moment as a pre-emptive step. The panel also includes

former AIIMS Delhi director Randeep Guleria, Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor B J Rao, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras K Ramamurthy, People Strong co-founder and Karmayogi Bharat board member Pankaj Bansal, IIT Delhi Dean of Student Affairs Aditya Mittal and MoE Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal. The committee was also tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for various examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system. "The report mainly focuses on strengthening the NTA. There are recommendations to make the examination centre selection process foolproof, addressing previous loopholes in the system. Recommendations

have also been made regarding the type of examination to be conducted and the necessary dos and don'ts to ensure effectiveness," Pradhan said. The committee proposed a gradual transition to online tests, a hybrid model with digitally transmitted question papers, and a multi-stage NEET-UG format to lessen students' stress and improve evaluation accuracy. It also recommended streamlining subject options in Common University Entrance Test (CUET) to emphasise general aptitude and core subjects and increasing permanent staffing at NTA to ensure consistent, secure exam processes. Meanwhile, inaugurating the national workshop, Pradhan said education infrastructure is a multi-dimensional concept that is beyond just developing brick-and-mortar structures.

ED raids multiple locations... Bodies of...

From page 1

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced in Seraikela on Monday that a committee would be formed, if BJP is voted to power in Jharkhand, to identify and drive out infiltrators from the state besides reclaiming land grabbed by them. The first phase of the Assembly polls is slated for 43 constituencies on Wednesday, while the second for 38 seats will be held on November 20. The ECIR (enforcement case information report) filed by the federal agency under various sections of the PMLA stems from a Jharkhand Police FIR filed at the Bariatu police station in the state capital Ranchi in June. The police FIR, filed on the complaint of a Bangladeshi woman who allegedly infiltrated into the country from along the India-Bangladesh border with the help of touts to find work, has named around six women as accused who were arrested following a raid at a local resort.

The FIR quoted the woman complainant saying they were trafficked into India from Bangladesh allegedly for prostitution by luring them in the name of getting a job in beauty salons. Earlier, ED sources had said the agency will investigate the "entire gamut" of infiltration from across the eastern borders, including Bangladesh, into Jharkhand including in the tribal districts of Santhal Pargana and Kolhan. Prime Minister Modi, while addressing a poll rally a few months ago, accused the Jharkhand government of encouraging Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration for vote bank politics and criticised it for "rampant corruption". The Union Government had informed the Jharkhand High Court that illegal Bangladeshi immigrants are living in the state. Reacting to the affidavit, JMM central spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said if there was infiltration in Jharkhand, the Union home and defence ministries should take responsibility for it.

Two CRPF personnel also sustained injuries during the heavy exchange of fire at Borobekra, and the condition of one of them was stated to be critical, another officer said. The situation in Jiribam remained calm but tense on Tuesday morning with policemen patrolling at vulnerable points, he said. Following the incident, fresh violence was reported from multiple places in Imphal Valley where armed groups from the two warring sides engaged in exchanges of fire, the state police said. Locals and security forces recovered several improvised mortar shells in two villages of Imphal West district this morning, another officer said. Operations were continuing to flush out militants, and reinforcement teams, consisting of Assam Rifles, and CRPF, have been deployed in disturbed areas, he added.

Polling for high-stake Raipur South bypoll today

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Voting in the by-election to the Raipur South Assembly constituency in Chhattisgarh will take place on Wednesday. Leaders from the ruling BJP and the Congress wooed voters on Tuesday during door-to-door campaigns.

BJP's Sunil Soni, a former Lok Sabha MP and a former Raipur Mayor, is locked in a virtual direct contest against Congress nominee Akash Sharma,



The election was necessitated after sitting BJP state president of the party's youth wing.

MLA and former state minister Brijmohan Agrawal resigned following his election to the Lok Sabha from Raipur.

The BJP highlighted pro-women and pro-farmers measures taken by the Vishnu Deo Sai government.

The Congress accused Soni of being inactive during his tenure as the Raipur MP. It also targeted the Sai government, which assumed office in December, over allegedly deteriorating law and order. On Monday, Chief

Minister Sai held a road show in the constituency.

Though there are 30 candidates in the fray, the main fight is between the Congress and BJP.

There are 2,71,169 voters in the constituency including 1,33,800 men, 1,37,317 women and 52 transgenders.

A total of 253 polling booths have been set up and five companies of security personnel have been deployed for the election, officials said.

The vote count will take place on November 23.

Lawyer nabbed for death threat to SRK

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Mumbai Police on Tuesday arrested a lawyer from Raipur over a death threat made to and a ransom of Rs 50 lakh sought from Bollywood star Shahrukh Khan.

The police on Tuesday morning arrested Faizan Khan from Pandri area, Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police (Urban) Lakhan Pawar Patle said.

He was produced before the Fifth Civil Judge Junior Division Dharini Rana. The court granted his transit remand to Mumbai Police till November 15.

Khan's lawyer sought his re-medical examination which was denied by the court. The threat and extortion



call was made using a phone registered in the name of Khan. He had told investigators that he lost his mobile phone on November 2 and had lodged a complaint with the police.

Faizan Khan had earlier complained to the Mumbai Police against the actor over a dialogue in his movie 'Anjaam' (1994).

"I hail from Rajasthan. The Bishnoi community (whose members mainly reside in Rajasthan) is my friend. It is

in their religion to protect deer. So, if a Muslim says something like this about deer, it is condemnable. Therefore, I raised an objection," he had said.

On November 5, the Bandra police station in Mumbai received a call. The caller threatened to kill the actor and demanded Rs 50 lakh. The threat to the 59-year-old superstar follows a series of similar phone calls targeting fellow actor Salman Khan.

AIIMS-R hosts medicine update for specialists

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Department of General Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences - Raipur (AIIMS-R) successfully organized a 'Medicine Update 2024', focused on 'Addressing Challenges across Specialties'.

The event attracted over 200 delegates across India and featured distinguished speakers who shared invaluable insights into various medical disciplines.

The chief guest, Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd.), Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Raipur, emphasized the significance of an integrated approach across different medical disciplines to enhance patient care.

He encouraged medical residents to adopt a holistic, patient-centered perspective and underscored the importance of collaboration among different fields of medicine to achieve comprehensive healthcare outcomes.

Prof. Dr. Alok C. Agrawal, Dean of Academics, stressed the necessity of practicing evidence-based medicine,



especially given the rapid advancements in the field.

Prof. Dr. Sarita Agrawal, Dean Research, highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary research and collaboration, emphasizing how these elements are vital for advancing medical knowledge and improving patient care.

Prominent persons in attendance

included Prof. Dr. Renu Rajguru, Medical Superintendent, and Prof. Dr. Eli Mohapatra, Dean of Examinations.

Prof. Dr. Vinay R. Pandit, Head of the Department of General Medicine and Organizing Chairperson, spoke about the critical need for physicians to stay current with medical advancements.

1.38 Cr benefit from Ayushman Arogya Mandirs annually

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The 400 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs in Chhattisgarh serve as many as 1.38 crore people annually, the government said on Tuesday.

They teach people the basic principles of ayurveda, home remedies and natural medicines for diseases and inspire them to practice yoga daily for both physical and mental health.

The main health services include pregnancy and child healthcare, screening, prevention, control and management of non-communicable diseases, eye care as well as ENT problems.

The government said efforts were on to improve healthcare services at all levels.

Dantewada moves to prevent child sexual abuse

STAFF REPORTER ■ DANTEWADA

Authorities in Chhattisgarh's tribal-dominated Dantewada and NGO Arpan Sanstha are training teachers to tackle child sexual abuse, an official communique said on Tuesday.

A total of 1,684 teachers took part in the programme.

With this training, the teachers will hold sessions with parents and guardians to educate and prepare children to handle unsafe situations and provide them support.



Arpan is India's largest NGO that provides child sexual abuse prevention and intervention training services for both adults and children since 2000.

The communique said the State Council of

Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in Raipur played a key role in this campaign.

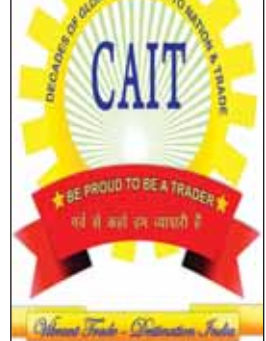
People can also visit www.arpaneam.com to teach personal safety to children.



Raipur welcomed tribal artists from across the country on Tuesday for the Tribal Pride Day celebrations. They will perform at a grand state-level programme at the Science College Ground on November 14 and 15.

Business worth Rs 3K crore estimated for wedding season

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR



The Confederation of All India Traders has estimated business of about Rs 3,000 crore in Chhattisgarh for the wedding season until December 16.

CAIT National Senior Vice President Amar Parwani and Chhattisgarh President Jitendra Doshi said a surge in weddings will

significantly boost economic activity and benefit all trading sectors.

The upswing in trade in sectors like clothing, jewellery, decorations, electronics gifts and catering will generate numerous employment opportunities, they said.

About 80 percent of wedding expenditures go to service providers that contribute significantly to maintaining liquidity in the market, they said.

Smart snacking grows 1.2 times faster than traditional snacks in India

AGENCIES ■

As urban consumers increasingly seek health-oriented products, smart snacking in India has grown 1.2 times faster than traditional snacks, according to a report on Tuesday. About 63 per cent of surveyed consumers seek innovative and healthy snacking options while 50 per cent read ingredient labels to understand nutritional value, according to the report by consumer intelligence company NielsenIQ (NIQ).

One in five snacks now has a health connotation in the country. "This segment is growing 1.2 times faster than traditional snacks in terms of value, presenting opportunities for brands to innovate in health-focused products and leverage the consumption trend," said Sonika Gupta, Executive Director, Customer Success-India at NIQ. In consumer tech, the trend toward health-focused products is evident. Fitness wearables experienced a 59 per cent volume growth, while hot



air fryers grew by more than 100 per cent, signalling broader health-conscious behaviour.

India's snack and confectionery

industry ranks second in market size across Asia-Pacific, is transforming as urban consumers increasingly seek health-oriented products. The rise in

lifestyle diseases has driven Indian consumers to opt for snacks that align with their health goals. Study showed that 84 per cent of surveyed urban Indian consumers exercise daily or regularly to keep fit and 48 per cent use a fitness or exercise app. Smaller, emerging players are challenging established players with competitive offerings, with single-serve packs driving demand and growing 60 per cent faster in smart snacking due to mainstream pricing strategies.

The smart snacking segment's growth is fuelled by consumption rates twice that of the general snacks market. The consumption preference is driven by small convenient pack sizes that have demonstrated 60 per cent higher growth compared to traditional small packs in the snacking space. Notably, Smart Snacking has been growing at 16 per cent in terms of value, but recent trends show a slowdown in count of new innovations and product launches, said the report.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai - 600031.
Tel: +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax : +91 44 4564 4022

APPENDIX IV [Rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE (For immovable property)
Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with [rule 3] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notices calling upon the Borrower/ Co-borrowers and Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the demand notice appended below within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice together with further interest and other charges from the date of demand notice till payment/realization.
The Borrower/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this notice.

Loan Account Number	Borrower/s/ Co-borrower/s & Guarantors Name	Description of The Mortgaged Properties	Demand Notice		Date and Type of Possession Taken
			Date	Outstanding Amount (Rs.)	
62229244	1. Narendra Kumar Mahanande, 2. Purnima Bai Mahanande	All That Piece And Parcel Of Property Area 1176 Sq. Ft., Abadi Land Part Of Khasra No. 402, Situated At Mouja: Amlidih, P.H. No. 22, Rnm: Bhakhara, Tahsil & District: Dhamtar, Chhattisgarh-493770, And Bounded As: East: House Of Ram Avtar West: House Of Indu Bai North: Road South: House Of Chandrashekar	12.06.2024	Rs. 3,26,585.67/-	08-11-2024 Symbolic Possession
106216180	1. Hemsagar Kashyap, 2. Bedmoli Kashyap, 3. Shyamal Kashyap	All That Piece And Parcel Of Plot No. 11, Part Of Khasra No.100, Plot Area 264 Sq. Mtrs., Situated At Village: Barpelhadih, P.H.no. 28, Old Ric- Basna, New Ric- Bhukel, Tahsil: Basna, District: Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh-493554, And Bounded As: East: Vacant Plot West: Vacant Plot North: Nimankar South: Gali	31.07.2024	RS. 9,41,284.42/-	08-11-2024 Symbolic Possession

The Borrower/ Co-borrowers/ Guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount mentioned in the demand notice together with further interest and other charges from the date of demand notice till payment/realization.

Sd/-
Authorised Officer
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
Date: 08-11-2024
Place: CHHATTISGARH
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
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Loan Account Number	Borrower/s/ Co-borrower/s & Guarantors Name	Description of The Mortgaged Properties	Demand Notice		Date and Type of Possession Taken
			Date	Outstanding Amount (Rs.)	
82355717, 38772702 & 63129950	1. Shashi Kumar Sahu, 2. Nihali Ram Sahu, 3. Devki Sahu,	Item-1:- All That Piece And Parcel Of Plot No 171, Admeasuring 232.59 Sq. Mtr., Abadi Land Part Of Khasra No. 612, Situated At Mouja: Parsadakala, Old P.H. No. 08, New P.H. No. 10, Ric-fingshwar, Tahsil: Rajim, District: Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh-493992, And Bounded As: East : Shashi Kumar, West : Bandhu, North : Bandhu South: Gali Item-2:- All That Piece And Parcel Of Plot No 170, Admeasuring 109.18 Sq. Mtr., Abadi Land Part Of Khasra No. 612, Situated At Mouja: Parsadakala, Old P.H. No. 08, New P.H. No. 10, Ric & Tahsil: Rajim, District: Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh-493992, And Bounded As: East : Chunuram, West : Nihali, North : Bandhu, South: Gali	31.07.2024	Rs. 13,93,317.16/-	07.11.2024 Symbolic Possession
78835996 & 134827415	1. Saiyyad Sahid Husain, 2. Tarannum Begam	All That Piece And Parcel Of Property Area 0.03% Acre / 0.014 Hec., Khasra No. 367/3k, Land Situated At Mouja Gram: Katghora, P.H.No. 08 (New P.H.No 10), Ward No. 11, Rahmaniya Ward, RNM & Tahsil: Katghora Vikaskhand, Nagar Panchayat: Katghora, District: Korba, Chhattisgarh - 495445, And Bounded As: East : Way To Radhasagar, West : Land Of Ashraf Memon, North : Land Of Fatma Bano, South: House Of Amir Ali	27.07.2024	Rs. 11,12,619.99/-	06.11.2024 Symbolic Possession

The Borrower/ Co-borrowers/ Guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount mentioned in the demand notice together with further interest and other charges from the date of demand notice till payment/realization.

Sd/-
Authorised Officer
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
Date : 06 & 07.11.2024
Place : Chhattisgarh
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday alleged that the Congress party was conspiring with divisive elements in the Muslim community, sensing defeat in the upcoming Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls.



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

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

trying to take away the rights of the poor OBCs to give them to Muslims. BJP will oppose every attempt to strip the marginalised and backward OBCs of their rights," Prasad said. The BJP had on Saturday claimed that the Maharashtra unit of Congress assured a Muslim body that it would take steps to fulfil its demand of a 10 per cent quota for the community in jobs and education. Prasad said the BJP would like to ask the Congress and INDIA bloc whether the benefits given to Scheduled Castes will also be extended to the Muslims. "It contradicts the principles of the Constitution, we will oppose it completely," he added.

Odisha police tighten security along Jharkhand border ahead of Assembly elections

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ahead of the first phase of polling for the assembly elections in Jharkhand on Wednesday, the Odisha police have tightened security in the districts sharing the border with the neighbouring state to ensure peaceful voting there, a senior police officer said. Security has been tightened in the borders of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts close to Jharkhand. Check posts have been installed and armed personnel deployed round the clock to prevent entry of unwanted people and materials to the poll-bound state, said Odisha's ADG Law and Order Sanjay Kumar. "The measures were taken after a meeting with the Election Commission of India (ECI). Odisha has already established 29 check posts in the border districts and intensified patrolling in all the sensitive



areas," the ADG said. Meanwhile, a report from Rourkela said that the Sundargarh police were in touch with the West Singhbhum district police. The objective of the coordination is to ensure that any attempt by Maoists to disrupt the elections is prevented. Sundargarh has 75 km border with Jharkhand and most of the places are forested areas. The security arrangements were made in the wake of Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) outfit asking Jharkhand voters to boycott the election through posters and banners.

Indian Army's Project Akashteer takes flight

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The phased induction of control and reporting systems under 'Project Akashteer' of the Indian Army is currently underway and out of a total requirement of 455 systems, 107 have been delivered, official sources said on Tuesday. The project aims to deliver a situational awareness and control for the force to ensure safety of friendly aircraft and engage hostile aircraft in contested airspace. Through this project, a cutting-edge initiative designed to automate air defence control and reporting processes by digitising them, the Indian Army is positioning itself at the forefront of air defence technology, ensuring a secure and vigilant airspace over India, a source said. Project Akashteer's phased induction is already underway. Out of a total requirement of 455 systems, 107 have been delivered, with an additional 105 expected by March 2025. The remaining units will be delivered by March 2027, ensuring comprehensive coverage across the Indian Army's defence units and formations, the source added. This significant achievement underscores the commitment of India's defence forces to innovate and enhance capabilities in response to "ever-evolving security dynamics", the sources said. Recently, a "real-time validation" of Project Akashteer was carried out simulating scenarios as expected in future wars. A senior officer from military hierarchy witnessed the validation and

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr. PK Mishra, on Tuesday highlighted mitigating risks associated with glacial lakes in order to ensure a safer future for our communities. Mishra was speaking on the occasion of 4th Workshop of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR) on Strategies for GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood) Risk Reduction here today. Complimenting the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Department of Water Resources for organizing the workshop, he focused on international perspectives and experiences, pertinently India's experiences, gaps and challenges in

mitigating the risks and related aspects. Mishra said that the discussions on Sikkim glacial lake outburst flood disaster has brought to focus the enormity of the challenge. Indeed, the South Lhonak GLOF was a wake-up call for all of us. He underscored the urgent need for effective strategies to address risks associated with glacial lakes. Quoting Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's words, "Disaster risk reduction is not just about responding to disasters but also about building resilience." Dr Mishra reiterated PM's emphasis that "the best way to deal with disasters is to prevent them,"

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



distinct and independent part of the governance system. The Constitution trusts upon us the role of constitutional guardian, protector of fundamental rights, and responsibility to fulfil the important task of being a service provider of justice," the CJI had said in his first statement on Monday. He said, "The justice delivery framework in terms of providing equal treatment necessitates fair opportunity to succeed to all, regardless of status, wealth or power, and a just and unbiased adjudication. These mark our core principles." "The responsibility entrusted upon us affirms our commitment as protectors of citizens' rights and as dispute resolvers. It is our constitutional duty to ensure easy access to

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

PM Modi to lay foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga



PTI ■ PATNA

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

The growth in bilateral trade is now estimated at USD 66 billion and it is impressive," he said. "Our goal is that it needs to be more balanced and that would require addressing current constraints and undertaking greater facilitative efforts. Making it easier to do trade should be accompanied by progress in the negotiations on the India-Eurasian Economic Union FTA," he said. Jaishankar said India has noted Russia's growing interest in the Make in India

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

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

Students protest against UPPSC decision escalates

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The uproar over the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's (UPPSC) decision shows no signs of dying down, as students staged an intense overnight protest. The aspirants, steadfast in their demands, have coined a slogan, "Na Batenge Na Hatenge" (We won't split, we won't leave), which has become the rallying cry of the movement. Thousands of leaflets bearing this slogan were distributed among the protesters, reflecting their determination. Former Inspector General Amitabh Thakur, who had arrived at Prayag station via Prayagraj Intercity to support the protesting students, was taken into custody by the police and brought to Katra outpost. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party



chief Akhilesh Yadav criticized the BJP government for its handling of the protest. He tweeted, "The BJP's agenda is only 'elections,' while candidates are left with nothing but 'stress' under BJP rule. The youth say, no more BJP! When BJP leaves, jobs will come." Former UP Chief Minister Mayawati also voiced her support for the students on social media, criticizing the

police action against protesters and UPPSC's failure to organize the PCS and RO-ARO preliminary exams for 2024 on the same day. She noted that it is natural for the news of students' anger and police action to draw widespread attention. The protesting students, through their slogan, are demanding that UPPSC hold the exams over two days and rescind the normalization process. They have vowed not to leave the protest site until an official notice is issued meeting these demands. Many students held placards voicing their dissatisfaction with UPPSC's decision. Throughout the night, students maintained a peaceful protest. Notably, no banners from student organizations or political parties were visible—only the Indian tricolor was

seen. Demonstrators also waved pictures of freedom fighters like Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, and Mahatma Gandhi, symbolizing their commitment to a peaceful protest. Late at night, Police Commissioner Tarun Gaba and District Magistrate Ravindra Mandar visited the protest site to try to mediate with the demonstrators. However, the talks did not succeed, as students remained firm in their demands. Despite the authorities' assurances, the students showed no inclination to back down. The protest underscores the growing discontent among young aspirants in Uttar Pradesh, highlighting a disconnect between the government and the youth over employment concerns and examination fairness.

Thousands flock to Shree Jagannath temple for Panchuka celebration amidst tight security

PTI ■ PURI/ODISHA

Thousands of devotees on Tuesday visited the Shree Jagannath temple here on the occasion of 'Panchuka', the last five days of the holy month of Kartik, amidst tight security measures, officials said. While at least 30 platoons (1 platoon comprise 30 personnel) of security forces were deployed to man the crowd, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration was allowing the devotees to enter the 12th-century shrine only through the 'Singhadwar' (Lion's Gate), they said. "As there is a huge rush of devotees on the occasion of Panchuka, the last five days of the holy month of Kartik, the administration allowed

entry into the shrine only through the Singhadwar and exit by three other gates. We seek the cooperation of servitors and devotees for smooth conduct of Panchuka," SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee said. Puri Collector Sidharth Shankar Swain said that the administration has also raised barricades and 'Bada Danda' (grand road in front of the temple) has been declared a no-vehicle zone from municipal market square. The collector said lifeguards and fire services personnel have been deployed on the five km stretch of sea from Chakratirtha to Swargadwar to prevent any drowning incident on the beach as a large number of devotees take holy dip in the sea on

the occasion of Panchuka. Though Panchuka is celebrated for five days every year, this time it is confined to four days as per the almanac. The people of Odisha usually refrain from eating non-vegetarian food during Kartik month. During the Panchuka, the devotees worship Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Narayan. Married women also worship Goddess Vrundavati, the wife of the demon Jalandhara, in the form of the sacred tulsi plant, praying for the long life of their husbands. During the Panchuka, Lord Jagannath is adorned in different Beshas (attires). Lord Jagannath is adorned in Laxmi-Narayan Bhesa on the first day of the Panchuka (Tuesday).

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah's position weak, Congress Government's lifespan ending: BJP leader R Ashoka

PTI ■ CHITRADURG/KARNATAKA

Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Tuesday said the position of the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has become weak and the lifespan of the Congress government led by him is coming to an end. The BJP leader said repeated assertions of Siddaramaiah that he would continue as CM suggest that his position is no longer strong, raising questions about the stability of the Government, which assumed power in May last year. "D K Shivakumar (Deputy CM) is claiming during the Channapatna by-poll campaigning that he will become the Chief Minister. What is the guarantee that the Congress party will be there (in power). Last time also during the JD(S)-Congress coalition government they (Congress) had claimed no one can shake them for five years, but 14 MLAs quit Congress (resulting in the govt



collapse)," Ashoka said. Speaking to reporters here, he claimed that Congress MLAs themselves have not got a single paisa for development in the last 17 months. "They have started thinking that if they are with Siddaramaiah, they will not even get peanuts." Recently, state BJP President B Y Vijayendra too had claimed that the Chief Minister, facing probe in the MUDA site allotment case, will resign soon. Both Shivakumar and Congress national President M Mallikarjun Kharge are also aware as to when Siddaramaiah will quit, he had said. Ashoka said speculations regarding the stability of any government should have arisen in normal course during the fag end of its tenure. "But, this government has just come, and already every day there are claimants for the Chief Minister seat, there are allegations of corruption, there are prophecies that the government will collapse. Despite all this, Siddaramaiah is saying that he will remain the CM," he said. Citing that Siddaramaiah has on numerous occasions asserted that he will remain the CM, Ashoka, a former Deputy

Chief Minister, said: "What is the need for it? If strong, no one will keep on saying it (I will remain CM), only when weak, one has to keep on asserting his position." "If strong, no one will question (the stability of the government), neither the media, nor opposition. As his (Siddaramaiah) position is weak, everyone keeps asking about stability. The life span of Siddaramaiah's government is coming to an end," he added. The opposition has been demanding Siddaramaiah's resignation, following charges against him in the MUDA site allotment case. There were also behind-the-scenes political activities within the ruling Congress earlier this year, with a few Ministers in the Siddaramaiah Cabinet holding closed door meetings, fueling speculation about leadership change. But such interactions came to a halt following instructions from the party high command, which sought to crack the whip.

BJP's Kewal Singh Dhillon exudes confidence in winning Barnala bypoll, citing BJP's development track record

PTI ■ BARNALA/PUNJAB

BJP rule is synonymous with development and people are well aware of this, Kewal Singh Dhillon, the party's candidate from the Barnala assembly segment, said, confident he will win the bypoll. Dhillon, a former MLA, said the Bhagwant Mann government in Punjab had "failed" on all fronts and the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress were "hand-in-glove" with each other. The Barnala assembly seat fell vacant after Gurmeet Singh Hayer, the local MLA from the AAP, was elected from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat. Hayer won the Barnala seat in 2017 and 2022 assembly polls. Dhillon is facing Congress's Kuldeep Singh Kaka Dhillon, AAP's Harinder Singh Dhaliwal, Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) nominee Govind Singh Mann and AAP rebel and Independent candidate Gurdeep Singh Bath in the bypoll. The 74-year-old became an



MLA from Barnala in 2007 and 2012 on Congress tickets. He joined the BJP in 2022. He lost the Sangrur Lok Sabha bypoll in 2022 and was at the fourth spot. Campaigning for the November 20 bypoll, Dhillon gave himself the credit for the creation of Barnala as a district in 2006. It was because of his efforts, a road from Barnala to Ludhiana was rebuilt to facilitate the people of Barnala, he also claimed. "A railway underbridge and a network of roads were built.

We carried out several development projects in villages," Dhillon told PTI. The BJP candidate alleged the ruling AAP had lost its credibility in the state. "People are already against the AAP government. They also know that the Congress and AAP are hand in glove. People know that wherever the BJP comes to power, be it Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, development takes place there. "People have made up their mind this time to give votes to the BJP in the bypolls. The Lotus (BJP's poll symbol) will bloom in Barnala on November 23," he said. The BJP nominee said the Mann government failed to rein in law and order in the state. "The law and order has collapsed. The financial situation of the state is bad. I have been meeting people who are completely disappointed with the Bhagwant Mann regime," he claimed.

Dhillon blamed the state government for hardships faced by farmers in grain markets because of "tardy" paddy procurement. Farmers also complained of shortage of DAP fertiliser, he said. "They (the AAP government) did not place any order for DAP fertiliser. Farmers could not get it for wheat sowing," said Dhillon. He said he raised the issue with Union Minister J P Nadda, following which the fertiliser was supplied to meet the shortage. Dhillon said the AAP could not run the government, alleging that it remained "ineffective" on all fronts. "There is no section in the society which is satisfied with the AAP government," claimed Dhillon. The bypolls to the four assembly seats - Gidderbaha, Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbewal and Barnala - will take place on November 20 and counting of votes will be held on November 23.

Two drivers killed in freak accident on airport road after verbal altercation



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Drivers of a truck and a car were killed in a freak accident on Airport road here, police said on Tuesday. The concrete mixer truck hit the car - a sports utility vehicle (SUV) - following which the drivers of the two vehicles got down and engaged in a verbal altercation over the minor mishap on Monday night. In the meantime, a Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport

Corporation (BMTC) bus heading towards the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) From Rajarajeshwari Nagar rucked into the stationary truck on the right side of a flyover, and ran over the two drivers. The truck driver Kuldip Kumar (42) died on the spot while the car driver Jagadish (40) succumbed to injuries at a hospital, a senior police officer said. A case has been registered at Yelahanka traffic

station and further investigation is underway, he said. In a statement, the BMTC said as the bus was approaching the GKKV (Gandhi Krishi Vigyana Kendra) flyover on the airport road, it encountered the previously crashed vehicles parked "dangerously and in an unscientific manner", with their drivers engaged in a verbal altercation. "At this moment, the Volvo bus driver, unable to react in time due to low visibility in the dark in the downhill road of the flyover, could not avoid the collision, resulting in a chain accident," it said. The bus driver, Puttaswamy sustained minor injuries, and the only passenger travelling in the bus escaped unhurt, the BMTC said.

55 held for attacking officials in Vikarabad land acquisition protest

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

As many as 55 people were on Tuesday taken into custody for allegedly attacking officials during a protest in a village against the acquisition of their lands for proposed pharmaceutical companies in Vikarabad district, police said. Three officials—an Additional Collector, Kodangal Area Development Authority (KADA) chairman and a DSP rank police official—were injured after some villagers in Lagacharla village of Dudyala mandal allegedly attacked them on Monday. While a public hearing was proposed to be conducted by the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation and (TGIIIC) on the village outskirts, a BRS youth wing leader approached district Collector Prateek Jain requesting him to visit the village, where farmers would give their opinion. The

Collector accepted the request and visited the village along with other officials to listen to the farmers' views, where they were confronted by a mob, police said. The protesters jostled Prateek Jain besides pelting stones on his vehicle and other district authorities vehicles. "Fifty-five people were on Tuesday taken into custody in connection with the incident and police are investigating how many of them were involved in the attack," a senior police official said. A BRS youth wing leader who allegedly instigated the "pre-planned" attack was on the run, the official said. Three FIRs were registered over the incident, and authorities also suspended internet services in Dudyala mandal. The situation is now under control and additional police personnel have been deployed. Further investigation is on.

Home Minister Shah alleges Waqf Board land grabbing, urges reforms and Uniform Civil Code

PTI ■ BAGHMARA/JHARKHAND

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused the Waqf Board of grabbing land of temples, villagers and others in Karnataka and asserted that it was time to make changes in the body and amend the related Act. He also claimed that no one can stop the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which is "needed to check infiltrators", and assured tribals that they would be kept out of its ambit. "The Waqf Board is in the habit of grabbing land. In Karnataka, it has devoured the assets of villagers...It has grabbed land parcels of temples, farmers and villagers...Tell me whether changes are required in Waqf Board or not. Hemant Babu and Rahul Gandhi say no. I tell you let them oppose it, the BJP will pass the Bill to



amend the Waqf Act. No one can stop us," Shah said while addressing a poll rally in Jharkhand's Baghmara. He also accused the JMM-led coalition of making infiltrators its vote bank and claimed that "trainloads of illegal immigrants will be sent to Bangladesh if the BJP is voted to power in Jharkhand". "No one can stop implementation of Uniform Civil Code aimed at preventing infiltration in Jharkhand, and tribals will be kept out of its ambit," he claimed. Shah alleged that the

Congress was opposed to OBC reservation. "Rahul Gandhi's four generations can't touch your reservation," Shah alleged while addressing the rally. The BJP leader also accused "JMM-Rahul baba of dividing the country on the basis of castes" and claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made only four categories - poor, farmers, youths and women - for the welfare of people. The union home minister promised that if the BJP is voted to power, it would make Jharkhand the most prosperous state in the country in the next five years and "each paisa looted by JMM-Congress leaders will be returned to its treasury." "We will set up mineral-based industries in Jharkhand and create an environment in which no one will migrate to other states," he added.

Indian Army's motorcycle expedition covers 550 km in Arunachal Pradesh to Commemorate Battle of Walong

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

The Indian Army's motorcycle expedition team completed a three-day journey covering 550 km across the scenic and rugged terrain of eastern Arunachal Pradesh to commemorate the Battle of Walong, an official said on Tuesday. The expedition was flagged in at the Walong War Memorial on Monday, where riders paid tribute to the courage and sacrifices of soldiers who fought in the 1962 Battle of Walong, the defence spokesperson said. The expedition, including 20 riders from the Indian Army and local adventure enthusiasts, began from Dibang Valley in the northeastern state on November 9 and traversed through Roing, Tezu, vibrant village of Hayuliang



and finally reached their destination at Walong in Anjaw district. Along the rugged and challenging route, participants navigated mountainous trails and endured varying weather conditions, embodying the resilience of the soldiers who once defended India's northeastern frontier. The expedition was

organised to honour the soldiers who fought for the nation during the 1962 Sino-India conflict and commemorate the Battle of Walong, the spokesperson said. The fierce Battle of Walong unfolded in the unforgiving terrain of Kibithu, Nanti Tri Junction (famously known as Tiger's Mouth), Walong and adjoining

features in the easternmost parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Army spokesperson said. The route, tracing a historic path through the beautiful landscapes of Arunachal Pradesh, symbolises the Indian Army's commitment to fostering unity and promoting adventure tourism in border areas, the spokesperson said. Each halt was an opportunity for the riders to connect with the local communities, highlighting the strength, resilience and solidarity that define the spirit of the region, and promote national integration, he said. The motorcycle expedition is a part of the month-long celebrations that started on October 17 to mark the 62nd anniversary of the Battle of Walong fought during the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

Omar Abdullah stunned to see the progress of new Assembly complex in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was on Monday taken aback by the poor pace of work when he visited the under-construction Assembly complex after resuming work at the civil secretariat here in Jammu. After attending the brief ceremony in the portico of the civil secretariat building Omar went around the power corridors and interacted with his ministerial colleagues as they resumed working in their offices. Later Omar stepped out of his office chamber and walked on foot to the project site. The security officials hurriedly covered him in different layers of protection as they marched on foot outside the civil secretariat complex. The foundation stone of the multi-floor Assembly complex was laid by Omar himself on July 1, 2011. In the



last over 13 years the successive governments failed to complete the project. Omar toured the complex, where officials from the Public Works Department (PWD) Roads & Buildings (R&B) Division provided a detailed briefing on the project's various stages, timeline, and next steps. During the inspection visit to the project site, Omar asked pointed queries to the senior officers of the project

executing agency to learn more about the reasons behind the delay and the current status of the progress. As Omar went around the assembly complex along with Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary and other cabinet colleagues he was informed by the officers that the new assembly complex may take at least two more years to get ready. Omar when enquired about the reasons behind the delay

of the project was informed by the senior officials that the non-availability of the funds was the primary reason. Due to prolonged delay the original cost of the project initially pegged at around 110 crores has already exceeded 200 crores. On ground zero, the construction work was started in August 2011. Initially, the project was estimated to be built at a cost of around 113 crores in a stipulated period. According to the project engineers, who remained in charge from time to time the work on the project was going on smoothly till 2015 but the same hit the roadblock during the BJP-PDP alliance government in office. The alliance government raised certain specific queries related to the administrative and financial approval before giving their formal nod to the revised estimates.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Deliver tangible results

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

Domestic tensions add to Oli's predicament

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



ASHOK K MEHTA

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



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



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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHADRACHUD'S IMPACTFUL TENURE

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

PRIORITISE MENTAL WELLBEING

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

A boost to women entrepreneurs



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

from Bengaluru. She urged the bank to develop technology-driven, cluster-based schemes specifically tailored to support women, aiming to empower female entrepreneurs and strengthen financial inclusion for women across the country. Furthermore, she encouraged women entrepreneurs to make use of these schemes and contribute to job creation. The Nari Shakti operates with a focus on extending credit to women entrepreneurs. In addition to financing women-owned manufacturing and service units, the bank will also focus on advisory services, workshops on start-ups, skill development programs, mentorship, networking, and collaborations. Union Bank of India has opened Nari Shakti branches in Bengaluru, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Jaipur. It is a right step in the right direction. Akhilesh Krishnan | Mumbai

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

SMOKING BAN

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

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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Organic farming: Cultivating a climate-conscious future

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

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

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



because of the organic matter used." Healthier soil retains more moisture and serves as a carbon sink, effectively capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Organic farming promotes a rich variety of life forms. The importance of biodiversity cannot be overstated when it comes to creating resilient ecosystems. Traditional monoculture farming strips the soil of essential nutrients, reduces the diversity of habitats, and leaves crops vulnerable to numerous pests and diseases. Organic farming often embraces a variety of crops, fosters the growth of wild plants in and around the farm, and supports pollinators like bees and butterflies. Organic farms can have as much as 30 per cent greater

species richness than conventional farms, allowing for a greater diversity of birds, insects, and other wildlife to flourish alongside agricultural activities. This is similarly true regarding the conservation of water. Organic farms utilise techniques such as mulching and crop rotation to effectively conserve water. These methods enhance the soil's composition and increase its ability to retain moisture. This is why the organic farm is more adept at managing droughts, as numerous regions impacted by climate change are grappling with this issue. Through organic farming, we're cultivating more than just crops; we're fostering a sustainable water cycle. While there are several advantages to consider, some contend that relying solely on organic farming may not suffice to nourish the global population, as it tends to produce lower yields compared to traditional practices. Incorporating organic practices, such as crop rotation and minimising reliance on chemicals, into extensive agricultural operations significantly impacts the fight against climate change. Organic farming may not be a perfect solution, yet its environmental advantages are clear: reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and boosting biodiversity are integral components of a comprehensive strategy in sustainable agriculture. As consumers, we can contribute by opting for organic products whenever we have the chance. Together, we can achieve significant strides towards a more sustainable world. The path to achieving climate resilience is intricate; nonetheless, by embracing organic farming, we can certainly sow the seeds for a greener future. (The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

BLESSINGS OVER BILLIONS

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



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



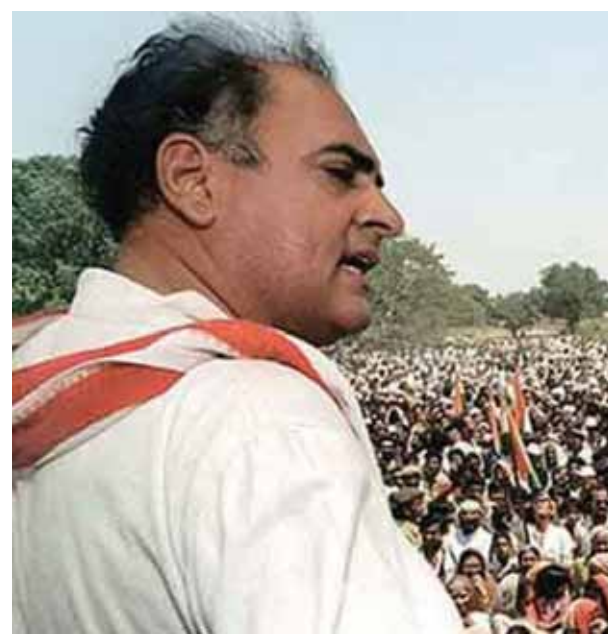
MANOJ RAGHUVANSHI

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

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

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

Sabherwal likened the situation to 1947, predicting that the riots would continue indefinitely. The journalist respectfully intervened, sharing what he had observed in RK Puram: a Gurdwara under attack, granthis being rescued by the army, looters scattering when a single soldier raised his hand, and a crowd dispersing with just a shout. He explained to his seniors that the violence was being stoked by the Congress government, with rioters emboldened by police assurances of impunity. The journalist conveyed that the riots were far from uncontrollable and could be stopped whenever the government chose. And he was proven right; the violence



ceased once the government decided it had gone too far. The lasting lesson? Whether a politician or a journalist, detachment from reality clouds judgment. Without a connection to the ground, even the most obvious forces at play can go unseen.

The 1984 election and subsequent events taught a vital lesson about staying connected to the grassroots. Rajiv Gandhi's landslide victory, which swept aside prominent leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chandra Shekhar, highlighted how even seasoned politicians could lose touch with public sentiment.

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

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

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

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

Trump taps Rubio as Secretary of State

US President-elect Donald Trump has tapped Florida Senator Marco Rubio as his Secretary of State and Congressman Mike Waltz as his National Security Advisor.

ly in Latin America, as he represents the United States with dignity and courage!" Florida Senator Rick Scott said.

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

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



lined three priorities essential to achieving climate goals, particularly stressing the role of developed nations in ensuring that developing countries have the necessary resources to adapt and transition to cleaner energy.

reach \$359 billion annually by 2030, and urged developed countries to fulfil promises to double adaptation funding by 2025.

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

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Statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter/Half Year Ended 30/09/2024. Table with columns: Sr. No., Particulars, Quarter Ended (30.09.2024, 30.06.2024, 30.09.2023), Half Year Ended (30.09.2024, 30.09.2023), Year Ended (31.03.2024, 31.03.2023).

EXTRACT OF STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30.09.2024. Table with columns: Sr. No., Particulars, 6 Months Ended on (30.09.2024, 30.09.2023, 31.03.2024, 31.03.2023), Year Ended (31.03.2024, 31.03.2023).

Statement of Standalone Un-audited Financial Result For The Quarter And Half Year Ended 30th September, 2024. Table with columns: Particulars, Quarter Ended (30/09/2024), Half Year Ended (30/09/2024), Corresponding 3 Months Ended in the previous year (30/09/2023), Previous Year Ended (31/03/2024).

EXTRACT OF STATEMENT OF STANDALONE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30.09.2024. Table with columns: Sr. No., Particulars, 6 Months Ended on (30.09.2024, 30.09.2023, 31.03.2024, 31.03.2023), Year Ended (31.03.2024, 31.03.2023).

Amsterdam police warn of fresh unrest a day after rioters torch tram

AP ■ THE HAGUE
A senior police officer warned Tuesday of calls for more rioting in Amsterdam, after dozens of people armed with sticks and firecrackers set a tram on fire Monday night as the city faces tensions following violence last week targeting fans of an Israeli soccer club. Olivier Dutilh, of the Amsterdam police force, told a court hearing that "we have signals that there are calls for similar" unrest in the west of the city. Police said the fire Monday was quickly extinguished and riot officers cleared the square. Images online showed people damaging property and setting firecrackers. There were no reports of any injuries. Police said it was not clear who started the unrest and whether it was related to what happened last week. Some rioters could be heard on video shared on social media using slurs against Jewish people. Police noted the tense atmosphere since five people were treated in the hospital and dozens detained Thursday following a Maccabi Tel Aviv-Ajax match. Youths on scooters and on foot went in search of Israeli fans, punching and kicking them and then fleeing to evade



In this image taken from video, police officers patrol in riot gear on the streets of Amsterdam as the city is facing tensions following violence last week. AP/PTI

police, according to Amsterdam's mayor. Pro-Palestinian demonstrators were banned by local authorities from gathering outside the stadium. Before the match, Maccabi fans also tore a Palestinian flag off a building in Amsterdam and chanted anti-Arab slogans on their way to the stadium. There were also reports of Maccabi fans starting fights. Dutch police announced five new arrests Monday in their investigation into that earlier violence. The suspects are men aged 18 to 37 and are from Amsterdam or surrounding cities. Four are still in custody; the fifth has been released but remains a suspect. Earlier, police said that four other men who had been

arrested last week would remain in custody while the investigation continues. Two of those are minors, a 16-year old and a 17-year old from Amsterdam. The other two men are from Amsterdam and a nearby city. Police said they have identified over 170 witnesses and have taken forensic evidence from dozens. Prime Minister Dick Schoof said they were also examining videos posted to social media. Schoof was meeting with community leaders Tuesday afternoon to discuss antisemitism. Reports of antisemitic speech, vandalism and violence have been on the rise in Europe since the start of the war in Gaza, and tensions mounted in Amsterdam ahead of Thursday night's match. The mayor has banned all demonstrations in the city and declared several parts of Amsterdam risk zones where police can stop and check anyone. Dozens were detained on Sunday for taking part in a pro-Palestinian demonstration in central Amsterdam that had been outlawed. A small demonstration was ended by police Tuesday outside Amsterdam City Hall during a debate about the unrest, Dutch broadcaster NOS reported.

UK supports India for permanent UNSC seat

PTI ■ LONDON
The UK has reiterated its support for permanent membership for India in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as part of an expansion of the international panel to ensure it can continue to rise to the pressing challenges faced by the world. In an address to a UN General Assembly plenary in New York on Monday, UK Ambassador to the General Assembly Archie Young reflected upon Prime Minister Keir Starmer's statement at the UNGA back in September calling for UNSC reforms to ensure the global multilateral system is "more representative and more responsive". Besides India, Young stressed that the UK wants permanent representation for Africa, Brazil, Germany and Japan. "The UK believes that a reformed Council, coupled with a collective, renewed commitment to the UN Charter, would strengthen the Council, so it can continue to rise to the challenges the world is facing; that is why we remain a strong supporter of UN Security Council Reform. The Council must be expanded, to better reflect the world today," said Young.

"We continue to support an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership to a total in the mid-twenties. We want to see permanent African representation, and permanent seats for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan," he said. Reflecting on the 2023 Security Council reform agenda at the UN General Assembly, Britain's UN representative recalled the perilous and dangerous state of the world at the time and the challenge this posed to the multilateral system. He noted: "A year later, the situation is even more acute, and the need to strengthen our multilateral system through reform, ever more pressing." "During his address to the UN General Assembly in September, my Prime Minister reflected on the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges the world, and our multilateral system, are facing," he said. "Conflict touches more countries now than at any time in the history of the United Nations, exacting a terrible human toll in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and elsewhere in the world. The Security Council's role - and its responsibility for international peace and security - is as important now as it has ever been," he added. Young admitted that agreeing on a model of reform for the Security Council will be "difficult" but asserted the importance of tackling the issue. "It is incumbent on all of us to work together, in the spirit of compromise, to deliver the change we know is needed. The UK is committed to doing just that, and we look forward to detailed and constructive discussions in the intergovernmental negotiations, which we hope will move us forward towards text-based negotiations," he added. The UK's intervention came as India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish also focused his address at the plenary session on urgent UNSC reform. "As we begin this year's deliberations, we note that the reform of the UN Security Council was once again identified as a critical and immediate priority at the summit of the future discussions by our leaders. However, in spite of several decades of collective reiteration of this sentiment, it is disheartening that we have had no results to show in this regard since 1965 when the Council was last expanded in the non-permanent category alone," he said.

Haiti's main airport shuts down as gang violence surges

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE
Haiti's international airport shut down on Monday after gangs opened fire at a commercial flight landing in Port-Au-Prince, prompting some airlines to temporarily suspend operations as the country swore in a new interim prime minister who promised to restore peace. The Spirit Airlines flight headed from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to Port-Au-Prince was just hundreds of feet from landing in Haiti's capital when gangs shot at the plane striking a flight attendant, who suffered minor injuries, according to the airline, the US Embassy and flight tracking data. The flight was diverted and landed in the Dominican Republic. Photos and videos obtained by The Associated Press show bullet holes dotting the interior of a plane. The shooting appeared to be part of what the US Embassy called "gang-led efforts to block travel to and from Port-

au-Prince which may include armed violence, and disruptions to roads, ports, and airports." Spirit, JetBlue and American Airlines said Monday they were cancelling flights to and from Haiti. In other parts of Haiti's capital, firefights between gangs and police broke out. Rounds of gunfire echoed through the streets as heavily armed officers ducked behind walls and civilians ran in terror. In other upper-class areas, gangs set fire to homes. Schools closed as panic spread in a number of areas. The turmoil comes a day after a council meant to reestablish democratic order in the Caribbean nation fired the interim prime minister Garry Conille, replacing him with businessman Alix Didier Fils-Aimé. The council has been marked by infighting and three members were recently accused of corruption. As he was sworn in, Fils-Aimé said his top priorities were to restore peace to the crisis-

35 killed as man rams car into crowd in China

PTI ■ BEIJING
Thirty-five people were killed and 43 others injured when a 62-year old man rammed his car into a crowd in China's Zhuhai City on Monday, official media reported on Tuesday. Zhuhai is currently hosting China's prestigious airshow. The 62-year-old driver, a divorced man identified as Fan, rammed his car at around 7:48 pm Monday, when citizens were exercising at the sports centre in Zhuhai City, about 2,200 kms south of Beijing, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Zhuhai public security bureau as saying. He was detained soon after the incident, Xinhua said. It was, however, not immediately clear whether it was an accident or an attack. Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to treat the people injured in the car ramming case and also demanded punishing the perpetrator in accordance with the law, the Xinhua added.

Mauritius Opposition gets landslide win in polls

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG
Mauritius' opposition coalition has won the country's election by a landslide, taking all seats in the country's 21 constituencies. The Alliance for Change coalition's win will see the return of Navin Ramgoolam as the country's prime minister. He served as prime minister from 1995 to 2000 and again from 2005 to 2014. Jugnauth, in office since 2017, had been seeking another five-year term in the Indian Ocean island nation, but his govern-

ment faced corruption allegations after recordings of politicians and business people were leaked online. "The population has decided to choose another team. I wish good luck to the country," Jugnauth said on Monday. Official results that will include two seats from Rodrigues Island are expected to be released Tuesday, but the opposition has already won all 60 seats that have been announced. Another eight lawmakers will be nominated by the Electoral Supervisory Council to make it

a total of 70 parliamentary seats. At least 1 million people were registered to vote on Sunday in the 12th election since Mauritius gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1968. Mauritius, which sits about 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) off Africa's east coast, is recognized as one of the continent's most stable democracies and has developed a successful economy underpinned by its finance, tourism and agricultural sectors since gaining independence.

सार्वजनिक सूचना
सर्वसम्पत्त को सुनिश्चित किया जा रहा है कि निच निच अन्वय कार्ड नं 991010259338 पर राबेरी प्रदाय वार्ड पर को विनिर्देशन प्राप्त है- 203 अन्वय को अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड पर ए-7 सेक्टर 50 नोड्डा गौतम बुद्ध नगर उत्तर प्रदेश 201301 नम निधि 07.08.1949 अन्वय को विनिर्देशन से पासपोर्ट नं L 9542337 (13.06.2014 से 12.06.2024 तक) में निच निच अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड को विनिर्देशन प्राप्त है- 203 अन्वय को अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड पर ए-7 सेक्टर 50 नोड्डा गौतम बुद्ध नगर उत्तर प्रदेश 201301 नम निधि 07.08.1949 नम A-203 Antriksh Green Appt. Sector 50, Noida Gautambudh Nagar Pin 201301, Uttar Pradesh, India अन्वय को विनिर्देशन प्राप्त है- 203 अन्वय को अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड पर ए-7 सेक्टर 50 नोड्डा गौतम बुद्ध नगर उत्तर प्रदेश 201301 नम निधि 07.08.1949 अन्वय को विनिर्देशन से पासपोर्ट नं M 1427403 (27.8.2024 से 26.8.2024 तक) में निच निच अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड को विनिर्देशन प्राप्त है- 203 अन्वय को अन्वय प्रदाय वार्ड पर ए-7 सेक्टर 50 नोड्डा गौतम बुद्ध नगर उत्तर प्रदेश 201301 नम निधि 07.08.1949 नम A-203 Antriksh Green Appt. 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Vistara flies final journey as it merges with Air India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After operating for nearly 10 years, full service carrier Vistara flew into the sunset on Tuesday early morning operating its last flight from the national capital to Singapore. Vistara a joint venture between Tata and Singapore Airlines has now merged with Air India, creating an enlarged entity that is now the country's largest international carrier and second-largest domestic carrier.

UK115 flight from Delhi to Singapore was the last flight of Vistara with the code 'UK' while UK986 from Mumbai to Delhi was the carrier's last domestic flight.

Starting a new chapter in India's fast-growing civil aviation space, the merged entity operated its first flight with the code 'AI2286' from



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

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

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

Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in the integrated entity, which will operate more than 5,500 weekly flights on local and international routes. A formal announcement about the merger is expected later in the day, as the group has led the consolidation wave in Indian aviation with two major mergers in less than two months. AIX Connect was integrated with Air India Express on October 1 and now the merger of Vistara with Air India. Air India, Vistara and AIX Connect together had a domestic market share of little over 29 per cent in September, as per latest official data. Together, the Air India group has an operational fleet of 298 aircraft around 208 with Air India and about 90 with Air India Express.

Nirmala Sitharaman to meet state FMs for pre-Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

of common items from 12 per cent to 5 per cent as per the recommendations of a panel of state ministers. The two-day meeting is slated to take place in Rajasthan, either in Jaipur or Jodhpur, the official added. Last month, the group of ministers (GoM) on health and life insurance GST broadly agreed on exempting insurance premiums paid for term life insurance policies, and senior citizens' health insurance from GST. Also, GST on premiums paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh is proposed to be exempted. However, 18 per cent GST will continue on premiums paid for policies with health insurance cover of over Rs 5 lakh.

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spotlighting a critical vulnerability in the country's cybersecurity landscape, a recent report has said while Indian businesses are actively looking to capitalise on AI and investments are rising, only 39 per cent of them are prepared to survive a prolonged ransomware attack. Cybersecurity firm Sophos on Tuesday unveiled the "Cybersecurity Playbook for Partners in Asia Pacific and Japan", which stressed the urgent need for enhanced security measures as organisations increasingly face sophisticated cyber threats, especially those augmented by artificial intelligence (AI). The findings revealed that while 70 per cent of Indian organisations have implemented cloud security strategies and over half of the respondents surveyed are investing in AI-driven security measures, a significant gap remains in overall preparedness. "Only 49 per cent have established security maturity frameworks and 44 per cent report meeting security standards. Additionally, just 39 per cent feel prepared to withstand a prolonged ransomware attack, underscoring the ongoing need for robust cybersecurity advancements," the report said. While Indian businesses are embracing AI to enhance operations, they also recognise its dual nature both

as an asset and as a potential security risk, it added. The research, conducted in July 2024, surveyed 900 companies across India, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, of which 200 were from India. Commenting on the dual nature of AI in cybersecurity, Sunil Sharma, Vice President of Sales for Sophos in India, said enterprises are taking AI seriously, both as a powerful ally and a potential threat. "The fact that organisations are significantly boosting their cybersecurity budgets is a great sign that the country is committed to protecting its digital infrastructure. The growing investment in key areas such as threat detection, incident recovery, and data protection not only reflects the proactive stance of Indian businesses but also highlights their readiness to tackle the complex challenges posed by AI-driven cyber risks," he said. Further, the survey revealed that only 5 per cent of Indian firms depend on a single security vendor, while 71 per cent utilise three or more to handle their cybersecurity demands. Multi-vendor setups are anticipated to increase as businesses look for specialised, adaptable solutions. The increasing investments in cybersecurity and the preference towards multiple expert vendors present a significant opportunity for MSPs to help enterprises improve their customers' defences with a customised approach, Sharma said.

IndiGo seeks extension of Boeing 777 lease amid rising international demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is working with the civil aviation ministry to explore the possibility of extending the wet lease of wide-body Boeing 777 planes from Turkish Airlines, as the existing lease period is ending this week. Currently, IndiGo is operating two wet-leased Boeing 777 planes for flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Istanbul. These are also the only two wide-body aircraft that are in the fleet of the airline, which is India's largest carrier with a domestic market share of over 62 per cent. These aircraft were wet-leased to cater to the rising demand for international travel from

India. IndiGo started operating its first wide-body Boeing 777 aircraft on the Delhi-Istanbul route from February 1, 2023, and began operating the Boeing 777 plane on the Mumbai-Istanbul route from May 17, 2023. Sources in the know said the airline has not received an extension for continuing with the wet lease of the aircraft. When contacted, an IndiGo spokesperson on Monday told PTI that the airline is "working with the ministry to explore solutions to extend the wet lease as our AOG (Aircraft On Ground) related capacity constraints, while improving, are not entirely behind us". The two Boeing 777 planes will be operated by IndiGo till



November 14 for the flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Istanbul. From November 15, the airline will be deploying A321 aircraft for operating these flights, according to information available on

flight tracking website Flightradar24.Com. Wet lease of an aircraft by an Indian carrier involves the leasing of foreign aircraft, along with crew, maintenance and insurance. The plane is also under the

operational control of the foreign operator (lessor) and subject to regulatory requirements of the foreign civil aviation authority concerned. The safety oversight of such operations is also under the purview of the foreign authority concerned, and the role of Indian carriers is limited to commercial aspects of operations. While announcing the induction of the second Boeing 777 plane into its fleet in May 2023, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said the new aircraft will not only increase capacity on the route but also help keep the fares affordable. The Boeing 777 aircraft has a seating capacity of 400 passengers in a dual-class configuration with 24

business and 376 economy class seats, the airline said. In the wake of Pratt & Whitney engine issues, the airline has grounded many aircraft, impacting its capacity. Last month, IndiGo, which also became India's first airline to have more than 400 aircraft, said the number of grounded aircraft has reduced to the high 60s from the mid-70s and will further come down to the sub-60 level by the year-end. At the end of September, the carrier had a fleet of 410 planes. As part of expanding its international network to long-haul destinations, IndiGo, in May this year, placed a firm order for 30 Airbus A350-900 aircraft.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) on Tuesday said it has inked a pact with online food delivery platform Zomato to promote financial literacy and investor awareness programmes among the gig economy workers. This partnership aims to launch an extensive financial literacy and investor awareness drive, specifically designed for Zomato's delivery partners, impacting the lives of over 50,000 gig workers across the country, NSE said in a statement. As a part of the pact, fundamental aspects of personal finance management and the basics of investing will be covered. Topics will include budgeting, saving, investing, debt management, and insurance, among others. To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, the programme will be conducted in multiple regional languages, catering to a diverse audience among the gig workforce. "This partnership with Zomato is a significant step in expanding our outreach to a



critical segment of the workforce that drives the digital economy. By equipping delivery partners with financial skills, we aim to contribute to their financial independence and overall financial well-being," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer, NSE, said. Rakesh Ranjan, CEO, Food Delivery, Zomato, said, this programme has been curated to suit delivery partners' needs to equip them with the right knowledge and skill-set to become financially independent. "Over 2,000 delivery partners have already taken a step toward financial literacy, and we're looking forward to scaling this further in the next few months."

Rupee closes all-time low against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee fell 1 paise to a new lifetime low of 84.39 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and a strengthening greenback against major crosses overseas dented investor sentiments. Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade between 83.80 and 84.50 in the medium term, with the Reserve Bank of India likely limiting any significant downside, aided by its robust foreign exchange reserves. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.39 against the US dollar. During the session, the local currency touched a high of 84.39 and a low of 84.41. It finally settled at 84.40 (provisional), a decline of just 1 paise against the US currency, registering a loss for the fifth straight session. On Monday, the rupee dropped 1 paise to hit a new lifetime low of 84.38 against the US dollar. In the last five sessions, the local unit has lost 32 paise against the greenback. "The rupee traded weaker as foreign funds continued their selling spree in the Indian market. However, the rupee received some relief from



falling crude and gold prices, as the reduced pace of decline could potentially improve India's import bill in the coming months," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities. Despite this, the dollar index's continued strength above 105 is expected to maintain pressure on the rupee, limiting any significant recovery in the near term. "With resistance near the 84.25-84.30 zone and support is seen lower at 84.55. This week's focus will be on the US CPI data release, which could influence the dollar's trajectory. Additionally, US Fed Chairperson Jerome Powell's upcoming speech is expected to provide insights

that may drive price action in the dollar, currently trading at a four-month high of 105.75," Trivedi said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent higher at 105.60. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.60 per cent to USD 72.26 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 820.97 points, or 1.03 per cent, to close at 78,675.18 points, while Nifty fell 257.85 points, or 1.07 per cent, to settle at 23,883.45 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,306.88 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, an SBI research report on Monday said that the rupee may depreciate 8-10 per cent against the US dollar during the Trump 2.0 regime. The report, titled US Presidential Election 2024: How Trump 2.0 Impacts India's and Global Economy, emphasised that the rupee can have a brief spell of depreciation against the US dollar, followed by appreciation.

Sensex, Nifty slump one per cent



Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty slumped 1 per cent each on Tuesday due to widespread selling pressure amid uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and sluggish global trends. The BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 820.97 points or 1.03 per cent to settle at 78,675.18. During the day, it plunged 948.31 points or 1.19 per cent to 78,547.84. Falling for the third day running, the NSE Nifty tanked 257.85 points or 1.07 per cent to 23,883.45. From the 30-share Sensex pack, NTPC, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Maruti and Power Grid were among the major laggards. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Infosys and ICICI Bank were the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,306.88 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) infused Rs 2,026.63 crore in shares, according to exchange data. "Two strong factors have been at play in this consolidating market. One, the relentless selling by FIIs has been favouring the bears and pulling the market down. Two, the sustained buying by DIIs has been supporting the market preventing a crash in the market. How the market will trend in the coming days will depend on the relative strength of these two factors," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European equity markets were also trading in the red. Wall Street ended higher on Monday.

SEBI extends deadline for comments on proposed specified digital platform

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday extended the deadline for public comments till November 26 on the proposal concerning requirements for recognition as specified digital platforms (SDPs). Earlier, the comments from the public were sought till November 12. "Based on the representations received by Sebi from some of the entities/organisations, it has been decided to extend the timeline to submit the public comments on the consultation paper till November 26, 2024," the regulator said in a statement. In its consultation paper, Sebi proposed requirements for recognition as specified digital platforms whereby such platforms should proactively prevent fraud, impersonation, unauthorised claims, and unregistered



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

The platform should ensure that genuine investor education content is allowed and content does not redirect users to other media such as WhatsApp or Telegram for unauthorised activities, Sebi stated. Also, the platform should share data with the regulator when requested and act on its inputs. It should provide badges to

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

penalise offenders. On October 22, Sebi provided a three-month window to entities registered with it, and their agents, to terminate their existing contracts with unregistered financial advisors. This was part of Sebi's move to curb unauthorised financial advice and performance claims in the securities market. The rule restrains intermediaries, their agents, or associated persons from having direct or indirect ties with any entity that provides investment advice or recommendations without being registered or permitted by Sebi or makes performance or return-related claims unless specifically authorised by the regulator to do so. However, if these interactions occur through specified digital platforms, they will not be subject to these restrictions.



Industrial output up in September: Government data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production expanded by 3.1 per cent in September, mainly due to improvement in the manufacturing sector, according to official data released on Tuesday. The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a growth of 6.4 per cent in September 2023. However, it was in the negative territory in August 2024 at (-) 0.1 per cent. "The IIP growth rate for the

month of September 2024 is 3.1 per cent which was (-) 0.1 per cent in the month of August 2024," an official statement said. The data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that the growth in mining, manufacturing and electricity for September 2024 stood at 0.2 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively. In April-September this fiscal, the IIP grew 4 per cent against 6.2 per cent in the year-ago period.

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

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Striker Deepika converted a penalty stroke three minutes from the final hooter to lead India to a tense 3-2 win over South Korea in the women's Asian Champions Trophy, here Tuesday.

India raced to a 2-0 lead in the first half through goals from Sangita Kumari (3rd minute) and Deepika (20th, 57th) before Korea mounted a strong comeback in the third quarter and drew parity with goals from Yuri Lee (34th) and skipper Eunbi Cheon (38th).

The match headed for an exciting finish with both teams pushing for that deciding goal and it was Deepika, who scored from the spot to seal India's second consecutive victory in the tournament.

India had defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament-opener on Monday. The hosts will next play Thailand on Thursday.

In the first match of the day, minnows Thailand held Japan to a 1-1 draw, while reigning Olympic silver medalist China defeated Malaysia 5-0 to register their second consecutive win.

The Indians started from where they left on Monday and continued to play attacking hockey from the onset.

India's dominance can be gauged by the fact that the Koreans didn't have a single shot at the Indian goal in the first two quarters.

India, on the other hand, attacked the Korean defence relentlessly and created chances which resulted in two field goals.

It didn't take long for the Indians to surge ahead as they opened the scoring in the third minute through Sangita.



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

fruit in the 20th minute when Deepika slammed one home from close range from Beauty Dung Dung's pass from the right flank.

A minute later Preeti Dubey's reverse hit was saved by an outstretched right leg of Korean goalkeeper Seoyeon Lee. In the 24th minute, Sangita came tantalisingly close to scoring her second goal of the day, but her push from a Deepika pass went just wide of the post.

If the first half belonged to India, Korea came out all guns blazing after the change of ends and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 34th minute and Lee pulled one back for her side from a rebound.

Motivated by the goal, the Koreans put pressure on the Indian defence and four minutes later secured a penalty stroke after an Indian defender unnecessarily brought a Korean striker inside the circle. Skipper Cheon stepped up and made no mistake to level the scores. Penalty corner conversion continued to haunt the Indians as they failed to make use of the eight set pieces they secured in the match -- four consecutively in the 39th minute. In the last match also India earned as many as 11 penalty corners but converted just three.

Held to a 2-2 draw, the Indians decided to throw numbers upfront and mounted raids after raids on the Korean citadel and in the process secured penalty corners in quick succession but they lacked variation from the set pieces and the efforts were mostly one dimensional.

But the Indians got a chance in the 57th minute in the form of a penalty stroke, which Deepika converted with ease.



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

PTI ■ LEH (LADAKH)

The world's first high-altitude para sports centre will be established in Leh, Ladakh, aiming to advance the skills and confidence of athletes ahead of the 2028 Paralympics.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, and the Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF).

"It is a very proud feeling for us that Leh will be establishing the world's first-ever high-altitude centre for para sports. Indian para-athletes have won 29 medals, including seven gold, in the 2024 Paralympics in Paris and it is a testament of the talent we have in our country," said Advocate Tashi Gyalson, Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) of LAHDC.

Till the time the centre is getting completed, the AMF

will identify 15 Children with Special Needs (CWSN) from the Leh-Ladakh UT region and they will undergo screening, counselling and training at their Infinity Parasports Academy and Rehabilitation Centre in Hyderabad.

"The opening of Leh Ladakh as a hub for para sports marks a new era not just for the region, but for India's future in international competitions," said Aditya Mehta, Founder, AMF.

List of Sports to be included: Para Sports: Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Blind Football; Boccia; Canoeing; Cycling; Equestrian; Goalball; Judo; Powerlifting; Rowing; Shooting; Volleyball; Swimming; Table Tennis, Taekwondo; Triathlon; Wheelchair Basketball; Wheelchair Fencing; Wheelchair Rugby and Wheelchair Tennis.

Winter Games: Para Alpine Skiing; Para Biathlon; Para Cross-Country Skiing; Para Ice Hockey; Para Snowboard and Wheelchair Curling.

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



AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Carlos Alcaraz struggled with a stomach issue and looked far from the player who won two Grand Slams this year while losing to Casper Ruud 6-1, 7-5 at the ATP Finals. It marked Ruud's first victory over Alcaraz in five career meetings, and the result could make it difficult for Alcaraz to advance from the round-robin stage at the season-ending event for the top eight players.

"I didn't feel well on court," Alcaraz said. "A few days before coming here, I got sick at home. ... This morning, I feel uncomfortable in the stomach."

In the same group, Alexander Zverev began his bid for a third ATP Finals title by beating Andrey

Rublev 6-4, 6-4. The top two finishers from each group advance to the semifinals.

On Sunday, top-ranked Jannik Sinner and U.S. Open finalist Taylor Fritz beat Alex de Minaur and Daniil Medvedev, respectively, in the other group.

Alcaraz won the French Open and Wimbledon to boost his career total to four Grand Slam titles. But he also struggled at the Paris Masters recently and dropped behind Zverev to No. 3 in the rankings this week.

"I have no experience playing on indoor courts," Alcaraz said. "I'll be a really good player on indoor courts, I'm sure about it. But I think it's about time, about getting experience. ... A lot of players are better than me on indoor court."

Ruud reached the 2021 semifinals and 2022 final in his first two appearances at the finals. But he has struggled recently, too, losing his first or second match in his last seven events.

"I'm not full of confidence," Ruud said. "A match like today might be able to change it." Alcaraz was broken when he served for the second set at 5-4. Alcaraz led 25-16 in winners but committed 26 unforced errors to Ruud's 10. Ruud converted all four of his break points while Alcaraz was just one of six in that category.

"I'm tired mentally," Alcaraz said. "Obviously a lot of matches, really tight schedule, really demanding year with not too many days off." ZVEREV ROLLING AFTER

PARIS MASTERS TITLE

Zverev, who won the finals in 2018 in London and 2021 in Turin, extended his winning streak to six matches following a title run at the Paris Masters. Rublev is making his fifth consecutive appearance at the finals but hasn't won a match at the event since 2022.

Zverev served nine aces and dropped only 10 points on his serve in 10 service games.

"He served wide 220 (kph) on the deuce side," Rublev said. "Normally everybody serves slice and it's 190. He find(s) a way to serve 220 wide on the deuce side. It's not easy."

"Even if you catch the direction, when the flat serve comes 227, slice serve comes 219, 215, it's tough to just see the ball."

SINNER RECEIVES NO. 1 TROPHY

Before the Zverev-Rublev match, Sinner received the trophy for finishing the year at No. 1 in the rankings.

"There's no place better to celebrate this trophy," Sinner said as his mom, Siglinde, looked on in tears. "Thanks for all of your support."

Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year.

A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September.



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

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Jannik Sinner was awarded the trophy for finishing the year at No. 1 in the rankings before his home fans at the ATP Finals.

Sinner beat Alex de Minaur in his opening match on Sunday at the year-ending event for the top eight players and meets Taylor Fritz on Tuesday in a rematch of the U.S. Open final.

Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year.

A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September.

"I think he's the man to beat for a long time," said former No. 1 Boris Becker, who took part in the trophy presentation.

Sinner beat Alex de Minaur in his opening match on Sunday at the year-ending event for the top eight players and meets Taylor Fritz on Tuesday in a rematch of the U.S. Open final.

Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year.

A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September.

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

AP ■ DUBAI

Matteo Manassero quit golf five years ago at the age of 26, tormented by a sport that gave him so many highs but was no longer making him feel happy.

On Sunday, he could punch a ticket to play across the Atlantic on the lucrative PGA Tour and be back in the big time, where so many think his game belongs.

The 31-year-old Italian will look to cap his career revival this week by becoming one of 10 players from the European tour to be eligible to claim dual membership and a PGA Tour card for the 2025 season. The season-ending World Tour Championship starts on Thursday in Dubai and only an unlikely turn of events will deny Rory McIlroy from being crowned as the European tour's best player for a sixth time, leaving him two off Colin Montgomerie's record haul.

There will be more suspense elsewhere, though, notably in that race for those PGA Tour cards — a structural tweak created in 2022 in the wake of the so-called strategic alliance between the European tour and PGA Tour in the face of mounting pressure from the breakaway LIV Golf series.

The presence of Manassero in the 10-man list, as it stands, only elevates the interest levels.

Blessed with a smooth swing and a deft touch, Manassero was a golfing prodigy, winning the British Amateur in 2009, the silver medal at the British Open for low amateur the same year, and also becoming the No. 1 amateur in the world.

By 2013, he'd won four events on the European tour — including the BMW PGA Championship, the flagship event on the tour, to move into the world's top 25. Then came the career dip, which plunged him into self-

doubt and ultimately retirement — albeit for only a few months while he assessed where to go with his life.

He eventually decided to give golf another go, beginning his rebuild on the lowly Nordic Golf League and the Alps Tour, which is on the third tier of European golf.

His talent shone through and last year he sealed a return to the European tour with a win at the Jonsson Workwear Open in March being universally celebrated in the golf fraternity.

That helped to put him in a strong position to claim the end-of-season bonus of a PGA Tour card, and he headed to Dubai in fifth place among non-exempt players, behind Thriston Lawrence, Rasmus Hojgaard, Paul Waring — the winner in Abu Dhabi last week — and Niklas Norgaard.

Jesper Svensson, Thorbjørn Olesen, Rikuya Hoshino, Sebastian Söderberg and



Jordan Smith make up the list, though the tour says any non-exempt player in the 50-man field can, statistically, break into the top 10.

Robert MacIntyre is living proof of how life-changing that can be. He was one of the 10 to claim a PGA Tour card after last year's World Tour

Championship and he has blossomed, winning two big PGA events — the Canadian Open and the Scottish Open — and rising to a career-high

15th in the world in August. He is No. 16.

"Career-changing, 100%," MacIntyre said on Tuesday. "I've now got to the top level of professional golf, the top 25% of professional golfers."

"You can then pick your schedule and you're in all the major events and you're in all the top events you can play in and you can pick and choose, and that's where you want to be."

"I think," MacIntyre added, "the majority of golfers out here have got that dream, as well."

If Hojgaard secures his PGA Tour card, he will join his twin brother Nicolai in the United States.

McIlroy on brink Lawrence leads that list of PGA Tour hopefuls but has other things on his mind. The South African is the only player who can prevent McIlroy from winning the Race to Dubai title — formerly the Order of Merit

— and join the late Seve Ballesteros on six.

Lawrence has to win — nothing less is good enough — and then needs McIlroy to finish tied for 11th or lower.

"Rory has been an idol for me since growing up as a youngster," the 27-year-old Lawrence said, "and being able to clinch it this week would be the cherry on the cake for myself."

The smart money, however, is on McIlroy, who has shown extraordinary consistency in collecting a win — at the Dubai Desert Classic in January — as well as four runner-up finishes and three more top fives in his 12 European tour events this season.

"Rory is held to a higher standard than pretty much everybody else in the world of golf," Tommy Fleetwood said. "But, I think he's shown amazing golf again this year, and he's shown why he's one of the best to ever do it."

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

PTI ■ CENTURION

Indian batting line-up needs to get its mojo back against a resurgent South Africa to regain the lost ground on rather unfamiliar SuperSport Park conditions when the two teams clash the third T20I here Wednesday. Since 2009, India have played only one T20I at this venue, which they lost by six wickets in 2018 and have only one survivor from that squad in this side -- Hardik Pandya.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Australian opener McSweeney braces for 'unique' Bumrah challenge

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

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

McSweeney was drafted into the Australia squad after a slew of impressive performances in the Sheffield Shield tournament and in the recent 'A' series against India. The 25-year-old South Australian will partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the series opener in Perth and during the upcoming five-Test series.

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



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

"I'll definitely dive a lot deeper into it when I get to Perth. I've looked at a few

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

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

really well," he added.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ PERTH

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

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

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

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

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



first Test against Pakistan in December last year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mohammad Nabi to retire from ODIs after 2025 Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SHARJAH

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

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

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



broadcaster after being adjudged the Player-of-the-Series. Nabi has featured in 167

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

With the ball in hand, he has bagged 172 wickets in 161 innings at an average of 32.47 and an economy of 4.27, including four four-wicket hauls and a fiver (5/17). Afghanistan qualified for the Champions Trophy, thanks to their sixth-place finish during last year's World Cup.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/KARACHI

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

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

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

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



for next year's Champions Trophy. The BCCI sent a mail to the International Cricket Council to that effect, leaving the future of the marquee event in limbo.

Meanwhile, Shailender Yadav, General

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

"The team has been training in

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

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

The Indian senior men's national team began its training camp ahead of the friendly match against Malaysia on November 18 in Hyderabad.

With the Indian Super League going into a break with the start of the November FIFA international window, the Blue Tigers checked into the city on Monday and will have a total of six days of training sessions before the match.

"We were supposed to play two games last month but due to external reasons, Lebanon couldn't come. For people,

more games is better. But it's difficult to train the day before and after the match. We need to train tactically as well.

"I feel it's necessary to prepare for not just the game against Malaysia but the official matches which will come in March," Márquez said.

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

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

The Spaniard has continued the trend of calling up new players in each FIFA window so far. This time, Hmingthanmawia Ralte, Vibin Mohanan, Irfan Yadwad and Thoiba Singh Moirangthem



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

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

March 2025.

"It's true that we want to check some new players. But obviously it's impossible to change the whole group and call 40 players in March. It's true that we are finding the group. It means that we have maybe 14, 15, 16 players who will be there, but we don't know exactly. And there are a lot of players who can get there," the coach said.

"Obviously, it's still four

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

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

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

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

NMDC Steel Limited
(A Government of India Enterprise)
Nagarnar, Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh - 494001
CIN: U27310CT2015GOI001618

Extract of Un-audited Financial Results for the Quarter and Half-Year Ended 30th September 2024

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter Ended		Half Year Ended		Year Ended	
		30-Sep-2024	30-Jun-2024	30-Sep-2024	30-Sep-2023	31-Mar-2024	
		Un-Audited	Un-Audited	Un-Audited	Un-Audited	Audited	
1	Total Revenue from Operations	1,522.35	2,022.91	277.41	3,545.26	277.41	3,048.99
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items, discontinued operations)	(828.93)	(772.01)	(174.66)	(1,600.94)	(174.66)	(2,201.02)
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items, discontinued operations)	(828.93)	(772.01)	(174.66)	(1,600.94)	(174.66)	(2,201.02)
4	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(595.37)	(547.25)	(131.10)	(1,142.62)	(131.10)	(1,560.32)
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	(595.37)	(547.25)	(131.10)	(1,142.62)	(131.10)	(1,560.32)
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face value Re.10/- each)	2,930.61	2,930.61	2,930.61	2,930.61	2,930.61	2,930.61
7	Other Equity (excluding Revaluation Reserve as per Balance Sheet)	11,415.04	12,010.41	13,986.87	11,415.04	13,986.87	12,557.65
8	Net Worth	14,345.65	14,941.02	16,917.48	14,345.65	16,917.48	15,488.26
9	Earnings Per Share (of Re. 10/- each)						
	Basic (in Rs.)	(2.03)	(1.87)	(0.45)	(3.90)	(0.45)	(5.32)
	Diluted (in Rs.)	(2.03)	(1.87)	(0.45)	(3.90)	(0.45)	(5.32)

Notes:

- The Company has Started its Commercial Production w.e.f. 31.08.2023.
- The above is an extract of the detailed formats of Quarterly and Half-Yearly Results filed with Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 and 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full formats of Quarterly and Half-Yearly Ended Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites (www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com) and Company's website www.nmdcsteel.nmdc.co.in.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors of
NMDC Steel Limited
Sd/-
(Amitava Mukherjee)
Chairman-Cum-Managing Director
(Addl. Charge) & Director (Finance)
DIN No. 08265207

Place : New Delhi
Dated : 12th November 2024