



# the pioneer

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## SC demolishes 'bulldozer justice'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

rendering women, children and aged persons homeless overnight. The 95-page judgement written by Justice Gavai started with the famous lines of Hindi poet 'Pradeep'. "Apna ghar ho, apna aangan

ho, is khawab mein har koi jeeta hai; Insaan ke dil ki ye chahat hai ki ek ghar ka sapna kabhi naa choote' (To have one's own home, one's own courtyard - is a dream that lives in every heart. It's a longing that never fades, to never lose the dream of a home)." "This is how the importance of shelter has been described by the famous Hindi poet 'Pradeep', the Bench said. The SC warned that if these directions are flouted, the officials responsible will be liable for contempt of Court and prosecution. Such officers shall be held liable to retribute the demolished property at their own cost and also pay compensation, the top court said. The Court further made it clear that these directions do not impact action taken against illegal buildings or structures on roads, river banks etc. The Bench reiterated that such high-handed and arbitrary actions have no place in the Constitution, which rests on the foundation of the rule of law. Passing a slew of directions, the Bench made clear that they will not be applicable if there is an unauthorised structure in a public place such as road, street, footpath, abutting railway line or any river or water bodies and also in cases where there is an order for demolition made by a court of law.



## Season's signature smog has arrived

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



## Age of marriage discussion to resume soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

## Impressive voter turnout in Jharkhand, Wayanad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

## No more false advertising, CCPA tells coaching centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

## Trade Fair's unfair traffic scene

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

## Government doctor stabbed in Chennai by patient's son

PTI ■ CHENNAI

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



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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

## JHUKI JHUKI SI NAZAR...



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



# 64.86 pc voting in 43 constituencies in first phase in State

## Urban areas show low voting percentage, rural areas witness bumper voting

PNS : RANCHI

Forty-three Assembly constituencies in Jharkhand saw an estimated voter turnout of 64.86 per cent by 5 PM on Tuesday in the first phase of elections.

According to Jharkhand's Additional Chief Electoral Officer, Dr. Neha Arora, Kharsawan constituency recorded the highest turnout at 77.32 per cent, followed by Baharagora at 76.15 per cent, Lohardaga at 73.21 per cent, Potka at 72.29 per cent, and Manadar at 72.13 per cent.

The lowest turnout was in Ranchi with 51.5 per cent, followed by Jamshedpur West with 55.95 per cent, Jamshedpur East at 56.72 per cent, Hazaribag at 57.65 per cent, and Kanke at 57.89 per cent.

Dr. Arora further said that a total of 179 ballot units, 161 control units, and 420 VVPATs were replaced throughout the day. She also noted that the final voting percentage might increase as data continued to come in from various constituencies.



Voters stand in a long queue to cast their votes at a polling station during the first phase of Jharkhand State Assembly elections in Ranchi Jharkhand on Wednesday. Pix by Ratan Lal



Chief Electoral Officer Jharkhand K Ravi Kumar and Police Nodal Officer AV Homekar during a press conference in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS



Young voter showing their inked finger after casting their vote in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

In some of the state's Naxal-affected areas, voter enthusiasm overshadowed fears of violence. As polling opened, voters showed confidence in the democratic process, leaving their homes to line up at polling stations.

At polling booth numbers 254 (Primary School Kolbanga) and 255 (Utkramit Vidyalaya Rabanga) under the Manoharpur Assembly constituency in West Singhbhum district, security forces removed Naxalite posters that threatened voters

and called for a boycott of the election. Voting proceeded peacefully, with voters casting ballots securely in the presence of security personnel.

For the first time since Jharkhand's formation, voting took place at seven polling stations in Kurumgarh, Gumla district, which had previously been too affected by extremism for safe voting.

Even in Budha Pahad, a region known as a Naxalite stronghold, residents came out to vote. In a significant

show of democratic participation, voters there exercised their rights despite a history of fear stemming from Maoist activity.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Electoral Officer, K Ravi Kumar said that voting in the first phase was completely peaceful. He said that the voting in urban areas has been slightly less than in rural areas. Less than one per cent of EVMS and VVPATs have been changed during the mock poll and voting.

He said that during the

voting process, there was information about influencing the voting from some places, which was resolved in time. In response to a question, he said that a complaint was received regarding the release of the election manifesto by a political party during the silence period, which has been brought to the notice of the Election Commission of India. At the same time, a complaint has also been received about a press conference during the silence period, for which a report

has been sought from the District Election Officer.

State Police Nodal Officer AV Homkar said that in the first phase of polling, 2249 booths were critical (Naxal affected), where conducting peaceful elections was a big challenge. Extensive security arrangements were made for this. He said that for this, 600 companies of paramilitary forces, 60 companies of state armed forces, 15291 state police personnel and about 14000 home guard personnel were deployed.

In this phase, 286 booths

were in shadow areas, where separate arrangements for communication had to be made. Polling personnel were delivered to 225 booths through heli dropping. Despite this, Naxalites had tried to influence the polling in Chaibasa district, but their intentions were foiled in time. On the other hand, a CRPF Jawan was injured in Latehar district. He was shot in the hand. He has been sent to Delhi by air ambulance for better treatment. The circumstances under which he was shot are

being investigated. He said that six cases have been registered on the charges of creating chaos during voting.

He said that the polling personnel have started returning from most of the polling stations after voting. The Superintendents of Police of the concerned district have been instructed to constantly monitor the arrangements for the safe return of the polling personnel. The polling personnel who were held dropped will be brought back by helicopter on Thursday.

## Hemant Soren resolves to uproot BJP from State



PNS : RANCHI

In an election meeting held in Sindri, Chief Minister Hemant Soren took a pledge to uproot BJP and said that Mahagathbandhan will become a strong alliance and uproot Bharatiya Janata Party from the State.

Soren further said that these feudal people and those who spread poison in the society will be driven out of the State. Ideas against tribal, Dalit, labourers and farmers will not work in Jharkhand. In 20 years of its rule, BJP pushed Jharkhand in the wrong direction and made it sink in the mud.

Soren further said that during their tenure, people died of hunger, farmers committed suicide and people were

forced to migrate. Now due to the policies of the central government, people are forced to migrate from the country.

The CM said that the Mahagathbandhan government has completed its five-year term while battling all the challenges. In the two-year transition period, we saved life and livelihood whereas before 2019, without any crisis or epidemic, people here died eating rice with ration cards in their hands. This is a group of traders and they have no concern for the poor.

The CM appealed to the people to free Sindri from the clutches of BJP and form a Mahagathbandhan government to work. "Make us strong so that work can be done for you. The Mahagathbandhan government has worked to reduce the burden imposed on you. Waiver of outstanding electricity bills, pension to all, respect to women, free electricity up to 200 units are examples of this," said the CM. In an election meeting organised in favour of the Congress candidate in Bagmara, Soren said that in 2015, the Sangh chief had told the Prime Minister about ending reservation. Soren said that "These people say that we will end reservation, but who had said that reservation will be ended. These people are saying that they will change the constitution. If these people come to power, then by imple-

menting delimitation in Jharkhand, they will end our rights. BJP people only know how to loot and nothing else." The CM said that Jharkhand is giving pension to its State employees. The central government does not give pension to its employees, their pension money is invested in the market.

Soren said that before 2019, during the BJP rule, only a few people of the village used to get pension as at that time, there was a rule to give pension to a limited number. After our government was formed, this practice was ended and a rule was made to give pension to everyone. Today there is no village where anyone is untouched by pension.

Questioning the BJP, Soren asked that the BJP should tell how many women of the State have they empowered before 2019 and why they did not come forward for the uplift of women. Today when we are giving respect to women, why are their stomachs hurting? The CM said that this is the first time in 20 years that a non-BJP government in the State has successfully completed a five-year term. These people are scared by the success of the Mahagathbandhan government and conducted the elections before time. But they do not know that the Mahagathbandhan government will be formed again in Jharkhand.

## Voters defy Naxals call to boycott polls in State

PNS : RANCHI

Voting passed peacefully in 43 assembly constituencies of Jharkhand on Wednesday. In the most Naxal-affected areas of the state, voters exercised their franchise by reaching the polling booths. Or it can be said that the fear of Naxalites is not dominating the voters. As soon as the voting started, the voters came out of their homes with full enthusiasm and reached the polling booths and were seen queuing up to vote.

In polling booth number 254 (Primary School Kolbanga) and 255 (Upgraded School Rabanga) of Manoharpur Assembly constituency of West Singhbhum, Naxalites put up posters and threatened the voters to boycott the vote. However, the security forces removed the posters. After this, expressing confidence in the security forces, the voters are fearlessly reaching the booths to vote.

There are 7 polling booths



Women stand in a long queue to cast their votes at a polling booth in Lohardaga on Wednesday. PNS

in Kurumgarh of Gumla district, where voting took place for the first time after the formation of Jharkhand state. Due to being highly affected by insurgency, the voters were deprived of their franchise. But this time voters are exercising their franchise at all the polling booths. A different kind of enthusiasm is

being seen among the voters for voting for the first time.

Voters of Budha Pahad, which is considered to be the stronghold of Naxalites, are showing their faith in democracy. Where there was a time when people did not step out of their homes due to fear of Naxalites, today a large number of people are enthusiastically

exercising their franchise.

A voter turnout of 64.86 per cent was recorded in the 43 assembly constituencies in Jharkhand where polling was held in the first phase on Wednesday, officials said.

Lohardaga district topped the list with 73.21 per cent polling while Hazaribag district recorded the lowest at 59.13, officials said and added that polling continued till 5 pm.

The poll percentage in other districts were Seraikela--Kharsawan (72.19), Gumla (69.01), Simdega (68.66), Khunti (68.36), Garhwa (67.35), Latehar (67.16), West Singhbhum (66.87), Ramgarh (66.32), East Singhbhum (64.87), Chatra (63.26), Palamu (62.62), Koderma (62), Ranchi (60.49) and Hazaribag (59.13).

Former CM Champai Soren and ex-MP Geeta Kora were among the 683 candidates in fray in the first phase.

## Guv, CM, MS Dhoni among other VVIPs cast their votes in City



DIVYA MODI : RANCHI

Voting for 43 seats spread across 15 districts in the first phase of the Jharkhand Assembly elections concluded on Wednesday evening. The second phase for 38 seats is scheduled to take place on November 20 while the results will be declared on November 23. In the State capital, along with the citizens, the Governor, CM and other officials too stepped out to exercise their right to vote and participate in the election.

Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar exercised his franchise by visiting the polling booth at Srikrishna Institute of Public Administration, Ranchi. Extending his greetings to the people of the State on this festival of democracy, Gangwar called upon all the voters to actively partici-



pate in this great festival and exercise their franchise compulsorily. "Being a responsible citizen, it is the duty of all of us to vote," said the Governor.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his wife MLA Kalpana Soren stepped out to cast their votes in the first phase of the Jharkhand Assembly election in Ranchi on Wednesday. "Today we took this festival of democracy as a festival of our own opinion and we went to our respective polling booths to cast our votes. I appeal to every citizen of the State to strengthen this system of democracy. We all should accept and strengthen this system of democracy which has been going on for years and will continue for as long as this as this country will exist" said the CM.

Indian cricket captain and SVEEP icon of Jharkhand assembly elec-



tions Mahendra Singh Dhoni along with his family exercised his franchise. Dhoni arrived at DAV Jawahar Vidya Mandir to cast his vote.

Chief Election Officer K Ravi Kumar along with his wife cast his vote at Rajkrit Model High School, Doranda. Kumar appealed to the urban voters to cast their vote by overcoming their indifference towards voting. "Citizens can exercise their franchise till 5 pm and that it is not only your right but also your duty towards democracy," said Kumar. Additional Chief Electoral Officer Dr Neha Arora used her franchise at the Tehsil Kachhari, Ratu Road polling booth while Additional Chief Electoral Officer Sandip Singh cast his vote at Nehru Sanskriti Kendra, Jawahar Nagar under Kanke Assembly constituency. Preeti, a first year

college student was very excited to exercise her voting rights this election. "Voting is a very important process as every single vote counts and the leader chosen is responsible for the betterment of our lives in the coming years. My vote will be for the party addressing issues like better job opportunities, education and health facilities."

Arjun Basu a senior citizen feels that the government which will come to power should do something about the increasing pollution levels. "The rising level of pollution, excessive harsh temperature during the summer and winter months, climate change- all are very pressing issues and need immediate attention. I hope my vote will help in bringing such a government to power that will take necessary steps in protecting the environment."

## Bajaj Allianz Life achieves 34% growth in IRNB, highlights strong Q2FY25 performance

Gross Written Premium registered a significant 23% increase at INR 6,544 crore

IRNB surges by 34% at ₹1,895 crores in Q2FY25 as compared to Q2FY24

Assets Under Management at ₹1,23,178 crores as of 30th September 2024

Ranchi, November, 2024: Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance, one of India's leading private life insurers, witnessed a strong Q2FY25 marked by substantial growth. The Company reported a remarkable 34% year-on-year growth in Individual Rated New Business (IRNB), reaching INR 1,895 crores compared to INR 1,415 crores in Q2 FY24. The New Business Premium also showed strong year-on-year growth of 14% from INR 2,821 crore in Q2FY24 to INR 3,202 crore in Q2FY25, while Gross Written Premium registered a significant 23% increase from INR 5,338 crore in Q2FY24 to INR 6,544 crore in Q2FY25.



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DARBHANGA (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday showered accolades on Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, praising the alliance partner for bringing in good governance in a state which was previously reeling under "jungle raj". Modi made a veiled attack on the Congress-RJD combine—without mentioning it by name—at a function in Darbhanga, a town in north Bihar, where he laid the foundation stone for an AIIMS and inaugurated projects worth more than Rs 12,000 crore. In the course of his address, which lasted around 40 minutes, the Prime Minister referred to Kumar, whose JD(U) played a crucial role in enabling the NDA's return to power in the parliamentary elections earlier this year, as

"lokpriya mukhyamantri" (popular chief minister). Modi said, "Nitish babu has set up a model of sushasan (good governance)." He added, "No praise is too high for him (jitni saraahna ki jaae kam hai) for his contribution in pulling Bihar out of the era of jungle raj. Now, under the NDA's double engine government, the state is making rapid, all-round progress." Earlier, Kumar had thanked the Prime Minister for AIIMS, Darbhanga, even as he recalled having first made request for the super speciality hospital in the north Bihar town with late BJP leader Arun Jaitley.



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

people in the tribal state would come out to vote in large numbers. Modi asserted that his government worked with a "holistic approach" towards healthcare

and five other such facilities elsewhere in the country". "Today, we have more than two dozen AIIMS across the country. Healthcare is being made available to people of weaker sections through 1.5 lakh 'Aaryogya mandirs'. Besides, more than four crore people have benefited from the Ayushman Bharat scheme", the Prime Minister said. Modi also highlighted his government's efforts to increase the number of doctors by allowing pursuit of courses in medicine in Hindi and other vernacular languages besides "adding 75,000 new seats" in medical colleges across the country.

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

schedule of the Constitution. He also spoke of other steps taken by the Centre to promote Bihar's cultural heritage like giving classical language status to Pali. Modi also underscored that his government's policies would give a boost to export of freshwater fish and foxnuts (makhana), which are produced in abundance in Mithila region. He also paid tributes to folk singer Sharda Sinha, who hailed from Supaul district in Mithila and passed away last week. The Prime Minister also recalled the contributions of late Kameshwar Singh, a renowned philanthropist who was the last ruler of the princely state of Darbhanga, and remarked "even in my parliamentary constituency (Varanasi) people keep talking of his generosity".

Modi said projects like AIIMS Darbhanga will enable the people of not just Bihar but neighbouring areas in West Bengal and Nepal to avail quality medical service "instead of making a beeline to Mumbai and Delhi". The Prime Minister also touched upon the problem of floods that ravage the Kosi-Mithila region every year, saying his government was making "honest" (imaandaar) efforts to solve the problem by holding necessary discussions with Nepal, besides drawing a detailed plan involving Rs 11,000 crore to tackle the calamity. Others who were present at the function in Darbhanga included Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Union ministers Chirag Paswan and Nityanand Rai and Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha.

## India supports early ceasefire in Gaza: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India supports an early ceasefire in Gaza and it has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Wednesday. In his opening remarks at a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jaishankar said the situation in West Asia is a matter of "deep concern", particularly the conflict in Gaza. The external affairs minister described Saudi Arabia as an important force for stability in the region. Jaishankar and Al Saud co-chaired the second meeting of the Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation (PSSC) held under the framework of the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC). In his remarks, Jaishankar said Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and India's Viksit Bharat 2047 hold complementarities



for the industries of the two sides to build new partnerships. "Trade and investment are important pillars of our partnership, and we are strengthening our collaboration in new areas including technology, energy, renewable energy including green hydrogen, connectivity, health and education," he said. Al Saud is on a two-day visit to India. On the situation in Gaza, Jaishankar said any response

must take into account the international humanitarian law. "The situation in West Asia is a matter of deep concern, particularly the conflict in Gaza. India's position in this regard has been principled and consistent," he said. "While we condemn acts of terrorism and hostage taking, we are deeply pained by the continuing death of innocent civilians. Any response must take into account the international humanitarian law.

We support an early ceasefire," Jaishankar said. "India has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution. We have also contributed to the building of Palestinian institutions and capacities," he added. Delving into India-Saudi Arabia ties, the external affairs minister said both sides maintained a good tempo of high level engagements and coordination across multilateral fora. "Our defence partnership has witnessed several 'firsts' over the past few years including the first ever land forces joint exercise 2024; and two editions of our joint naval exercises," he said. "We had regular exchanges on training and capacity building. And our cooperation has now expanded in the field of defence industry and exports as well," he said. Jaishankar also noted steady growth of security cooperation between the two sides. "We are collaborating in counter-terrorism, combat-

ing extremism, terror financing, and drug trafficking," he said. "We welcome efforts to promote culture, tourism and youth exchanges. And we see considerable potential for cooperation in the field of media and entertainment," he said. In the meeting, the two sides also deliberated on issues relating to the G20, the BRICS, the IMEEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) and other regional and global issues. In his opening remarks, Jaishankar said India and Saudi Arabia have a similar interest in preserving the stability of the region and in driving the economies towards greater prosperity. "We have maintained a good tempo of high level engagements and coordination across the multilateral fora. The Indian community in Saudi Arabia is 2.6 million strong, and I take the opportunity to thank you for their welfare and comfort," he said.

## Defence Space Agency conducts maiden three day exercise Antariksha Abhyas successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Space Agency has successfully conducted maiden three-day Exercise 'Antariksha Abhyas' to enhance strategic readiness in space warfare, defence ministry said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said Defence Space Agency of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff successfully conducted the Space Table Top Exercise Antariksha Abhyas-2024 from November 11 - 13, a significant milestone aimed at bolstering the strategic readiness of the Indian Armed Forces in the domain of space warfare. This pioneering event marked a crucial step in strengthening India's space based operational capabilities, enhancing tri-services integration for space security. Key components of the exercise included focused discussions on emerging space technologies, space situational awareness and India's space programmes.



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

insights into the present and future landscape of military space capabilities and technologies, elucidating specific challenges faced in defence space operations and also the evolving nature of space safety, security, and international space laws. Antariksha Abhyas 2024 successfully met its objectives of improving interoperability, fostering mutual understanding and enhancing cohesion between the tri-services and Defence Space Agency.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the soon to be raised all-woman battalion of the CISF will shoulder the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and provide security to VIPs as commandos. A first-ever all-woman battalion of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) comprising more than 1,000 personnel was sanctioned by the Union government on Monday keeping in mind the burgeoning duties of the force.



"In a firm step towards realizing Modi Ji's vision of enhancing women's participation in every field of nation-building, the Modi government has approved the establishment of the first all-women battalion of the CISF. To be raised as an elite troop, the Mahila Battalion will shoulder

the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and providing VIP security as commandos," Shah said in a social media post. The home minister said the decision will certainly fulfil the aspirations of more women to participate in the crucial task of protecting the nation. Women personnel constitute more than seven per cent of the CISF whose present strength is about 1.80 lakh. One of the central armed police forces in India, the CISF was set up in 1969 and is tasked with the security of vital government and industrial buildings.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry's Health Pavilion at the 43rd India International Trade Fair (IITF) here beginning November 14 will be centred around the theme of 'One Health', a comprehensive approach emphasising the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant and ecosystem health. By recognising these interdependencies, 'One Health' seeks to mobilise various sectors, disciplines and communities to promote well-being and effectively address health and environmental challenges, the health ministry said in a statement. Dr V K



Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, will inaugurate the Health Pavilion on November 14 at Bharat Mandapam. Through 39 informative stalls, the pavilion will present the ministry's major accomplishments in healthcare, with highlights on programmes

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

Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which now includes senior citizens over 70 years with an additional Rs 5 lakh top-up cover, the pavilion will illustrate India's efforts to provide accessible and quality healthcare for all. Visitors will have the opportunity to participate in screenings and counselling sessions for HIV, diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The pavilion will also feature innovative installations like the BHISHM Cube, indigenous mobile hospital showcasing its design and utility in real-world settings, the ministry statement said. The pavilion is designed not only to be educational but

also engaging for visitors of all ages. Daily street plays, competitions and games will captivate the audience while delivering essential health messages. A specially curated kids zone will feature virtual reality games that combine fun with learning, allowing children to explore healthcare in a playful and interactive environment. Through this immersive pavilion, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare aims to spread awareness and understanding of the 'One Health' approach, ultimately fostering a holistic view of health that integrates human, animal and environmental well-being, the statement said.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A pan-India coastal defence exercise aimed at assessing the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and enhancing the nation's overall maritime defence framework is set to be conducted on November 20-21, the Navy said on Wednesday. Originally conceptualised in 2018, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' was designed to validate and enhance measures adopted to bolster coastal defence post the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. "This year, participation by other Services (the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force), and planned deployment of a large number of ships and aircraft have enhanced the tempo of the exercise," according to a statement issued by the Indian Navy. The Navy leads this exercise whose fourth edition, to be held on November 20-21, will span an "unprecedented scale", both in terms of geographical reach and the magnitude of participation, with the involvement of six ministries and 21



organisations and agencies, it said. While coastal security exercises are conducted by individual coastal states and maritime security agencies regularly, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' coordinated by the Indian Navy stands out as a national-level initiative that provides a holistic appraisal of India's maritime defence and security capabilities. "The exercise offers a significant opportunity to assess the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identify their strengths and weaknesses and enhance the nation's overall maritime defence framework," the Navy said. The Coastal Defence and Security Readiness Evaluation

(CDSRE) phase of the exercise is being conducted by naval officer-in-charges of all coastal states and UTs (including Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands) since the end of October, where in a thorough audit of complete coastal defence and security infrastructure is being carried out, it added. This year, National Security Council Secretariat officials will also be part of Indian Navy-led CDSRE teams "for the first time", along with personnel from state marine police, coast guard, customs, and fisheries, among others, the statement said. The exercise will focus on strengthening the security of coastal assets, like ports, oil rigs, single-point moorings, cable

landing points and critical coastal infrastructure including the coastal population. "Encompassing the entire 11,098-km coastline and vast Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.4 million square kilometres, this comprehensive exercise will engage complete coastal security infrastructure and all maritime stakeholders, including the fishing community and coastal populace, simultaneously," it said. One of the aims of the exercise is to raise awareness among coastal communities about maritime security, and the involvement of fishing communities, coastal populace and students from the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and the Bharat Scouts and Guides will add to the fervour of the endeavour, the Navy said. Serving as a precursor to the Theatre Level Readiness Exercise (TROPEX), conducted biennially by the Indian Navy, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' will serve as an essential measure in reinforcing India's commitment to safeguarding its maritime boundaries and ensuring coordinated efforts among all stakeholders in coastal defence, it added.

## US delegation visits Sulabh School in city

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Senior representatives from the US government and aircraft major Boeing visited Sulabh campus in the national Capital on Tuesday. This visit underscored the impactful collaboration between Sulabh and Boeing in empowering children, with a strong emphasis on educational advancement and community development. Among the delegation were Nancy Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Government, Salil Gupte, President, Boeing India & South Asia, Philip M Cummings, Deputy Minister Counselor - Economic Section, US Embassy of India, Praveena Yagnambhat, Chief of Staff & BGE Lead Boeing India and South Asia. Nancy praised Sulabh's initia-

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A three-day national conference of research scholars with the objective of fostering research culture among the youth by integrating India's cultural heritage with modern methodologies will be held from November 15. The conference "Vision for Viksit Bharat - VIVIBHA 2024" organised by RSS affiliate Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal at SGT University, Gurugram, will be inaugurated by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. "As part of VIVIBHA 2024, the karyakartas of Bharatiya Shiksha Mandal, reached out to more than one million students and researchers, over one lakh teachers and more than 10,000 educational institutions. The submitted research papers were evaluated by panel of subject experts from across the country and the selected researchers will have the opportunity to present their work at the conference," Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal national president Sachchidanand Joshi said at a press conference here.

"The Bharat-centric research initiatives will enhance the research quality and foster a spirit of learning, writing skills and a research aptitude among the youth. Vivibha will motivate the young researchers to conduct studies focused on rural development and preservation of Indian Knowledge System, which is essential of realising the dream of Viksit Bharat," he added. As part of VIVIBHA, an exhibition is also being set up using artificial intelligence, focusing on the theme of "Research to Realisation" and Indian Knowledge System. "The exhibition will showcase India's contributions in knowledge and science, spanning from the pioneering insights of ancient sages to groundbreaking innovations of modern scientists of India," said Joshi. "This exhibition will offer insights into the future of education and provide young students and researchers an immersive experience of indigenous teaching methods, key reforms and technological advancements, inspiring them to contribute to a developed, superior and self-reliant India," he added.

# Congress' shehzada conspiring to scrap reservations: PM Modi

PTI ■ DEOGHAR/GODDA (JHARKHAND)

In an apparent dig at Rahul Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday accused the Congress 'shehzada' of conspiring to scrap reservations for people belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities in an attempt to "weaken" them.

said at a rally in Deoghar. Promising to thwart such attempts, besides that of "weakening" SC, ST and OBC communities, Modi exuded confidence that the BJP-led NDA was going to form government in Jharkhand and he would come to attend the oath ceremony.

referring to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his father and former PM Rajiv Gandhi without naming them. PM Modi claimed that infiltration was a major concern in Jharkhand due to which the "tribal population in Santhal Pargana has reduced to half and if the trend remains unchecked, it will change the identity of the state."



the assembly elections, the prime minister said that those making permutations and combinations sitting in air-conditioned rooms should see the massive crowd that has been attending rallies. Modi said he would attend the oath ceremony of the BJP-led NDA government here.

commission.' "The JMM-led coalition is patronising infiltrators. It is facilitating infiltrators to occupy land, forest and water of tribals, making their population decline," the PM alleged while addressing a poll rally at Godda.

The JMM-led coalition applied salt to your wound by giving tickets to the wife of the jailed leader, the PM said without naming Alamgir Alam who is behind bars in a multi-crore money laundering case.

## Opposition demands judicial, SIT probe against Goa CM over job scandal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PANAJI/NEW DELHI

The cash-for-jobs scandal in Goa has set off a political firestorm, with Opposition leaders uniting in their demand for transparency and a thorough investigation into alleged corruption within the State's recruitment processes.

and preliminary investigations have revealed a network of middlemen, political operatives, and public servants who facilitated the exchange of money for such job offers, often at the expense of qualified candidates.



the Goa Forward Party, has emerged as a key figure in exposing the scam. The Opposition leaders including those from Aam Admi Party (AAP) have argued that these arrests are part of an attempt to downplay the severity of the issue.

how the government could justify arresting its own members. "Their cadre being arrested by their own police makes it indefensible. How can an immoral party continue to rule Goa?" Sardesai challenged, also calling into question the role of government officials and the Public Service Commission's oversight in such practices.

professionals from outside the state administration to ensure an impartial review," demanded Sardesai and sought all ongoing government recruitment should be put on hold to prevent further misconduct.

## President Murmu to inaugurate LokManthan 2024 on November 22

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

President Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate LokManthan-2024, a colloquium of nationalist thinkers, in the city on November 22. Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, and other dignitaries are also expected to attend the event to be held from November 21 to 24.



programmes for LokManthan will begin on November 21, he added. Delegates from foreign countries, including groups that follow pre-Abrahamic traditions, will also participate and perform cultural dances and other exhibitions.

## Total shutdown affects normal life in Manipur's Imphal Valley



Normal life was affected in Manipur's Imphal Valley on Wednesday due to a total shutdown called by 13 civil rights organisations to protest the alleged abduction of three women and children each by militants in Jiribam district, officials said.

Organisation, Manipur strongly condemned the incident and alleged Kuki militants were behind it. The trucks were transporting rice, onions and potatoes for Noney and Tamenglong districts, the students' body claimed in a statement.

lives and property". "We are not a power-thirsty party but we want to stress that for a government, the priority is to protect peace," he added.

## SP's rebel MLA Puja Pal campaigns for BJP in Phulpur by-election

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PHULPUR

In a notable shift in Uttar Pradesh's political dynamics, Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA Puja Pal has openly joined the campaign for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Deepak Patel in the Phulpur assembly by-election.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "My community and I finally received justice from CM Yogi. My loyalty lies with justice and self-respect, so I stand with him," she said, noting that her entire community is backing her stance.

into politics where she has since held various positions, transitioning from BSP to SP in 2022. This by-election has brought caste dynamics to the forefront.

Yadav-Muslim support, while BJP courts Patel voters. According to Rajkumar Kashyap, a local resident, the BJP has a clear advantage this time, as the by-election will not alter the state government, leading voters to support BJP on local issues.

## Research on disability by Uttar Pradesh NCPEDP fellows to enrich policy making

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a promising step towards informed policymaking and raising awareness on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Uttar Pradesh, four impactful research findings by fellows of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)-Javed Abidi Fellowship Program have been recently released.

uncovered critical gaps in employment data and accessibility to government support. His research highlights that many disabled persons are unaware of existing livelihood schemes, with only 10% having taken loans from government banks or received employment training.

needs, Priya Srivastava's research in Lucknow reveals significant gaps in caregiving services and the impact of caregiver shortages on disabled people.

## Minister Mansukh Mandaviya highlights youths' role in achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said the youth always rendered their services in times of crises for the welfare of the country, and emphasized their role in achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

launched by his ministry with the inspiration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to involve the youth in nation-building. So far, about 1.5 crore youths have enrolled themselves on this platform, he said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## High stakes battle

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

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



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

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

## PICTALK



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

# India's tax overhaul: Why simplification is the key



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

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

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

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



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

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



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

of banks issuing cards, despite the lower transaction fee. To facilitate smooth payments, every GST-registered dealer should maintain at least two card-swiping machines and those refusing to accept cards should face strict penalties. Another significant concern is the Input Tax Credit (ITC) mechanism in the GST regime, which has become a hotbed for tax evasion, especially in manufacturing. Unsold GST invoices are often purchased by manufacturers seeking ITC, who then receive cash back from sellers. This practice has exacerbated the currency-in-circulation issue that demonetization sought to address. To prevent misuse, an annual forensic audit could be mandated for all ITC claims. An even better solution might be to eliminate the 18 per cent GST slab and restrict ITC eligibility to specific sectors like tradable goods, which would streamline GST compliance for manufacturers and reduce tax evasion. A simplified GST structure with just three tax slabs-6 per cent, 12 per cent and 30 per cent-would be far more manageable than the current system with multiple rates. India remains one of the few countries with such a fragmented GST system, which is often bewildering for businesses. Over time, the 6 per cent and 12 per cent slabs could be consolidated into a single 10 per cent rate. Essential raw materials such as agricultural products, fish and cotton yarn, which require further processing, could remain

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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### YUNUS FACES CHALLENGES

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

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

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

### ARAB LEADERS UNITE

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

## Health risks of tattooing



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

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

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

increase military equipment with immediate effect.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### RENEW CRICKET TIES

Madam— It will be nice if the BCCI reconsiders its decision of not sending the Indian cricket team to Pakistan to participate in the Champions Trophy to be held there next year. Unlike politics, sports enable people to channel emotional impulses through victory and defeat, which may help explain why some key India-Pakistan cricket games have helped both nations move closer diplomatically in tense geopolitical environments. Through phased timelines and subnational trust-based initiatives, India and Pakistan can certainly resume cricketing ties and normalise their political relations. The Champions Trophy 2025 provides a great opportunity to realise the same.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

environmental ratings using regional materials—could drive more developers toward climate-responsive practices. Achieving net zero requires a fundamental shift in how we conceive, design, and construct buildings. Global architectural firms and developers must recognise that regional adaptation is not a limitation but an opportunity for innovation. A glass-and-steel tower may look sleek, but its environmental footprint should be minimised by integrating green roofs, indigenous materials, and passive climate strategies. Ultimately, the transition to net zero requires a new paradigm where buildings are no longer static, universal symbols of modernity but dynamic, responsive structures that work with—rather than against—their environment. Embracing diversity in architecture is not just about aesthetics or cultural representation; it is an essential strategy for sustainable living in a warming world.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



## FIRST COLUMN

## MAKE A HABIT OF PRAYING

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## Are e-commerce giants violating FDI norms?



UTTAM GUPTA

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



Reportedly, on October 7, 2024, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the offices of half a dozen sellers operating on the e-commerce platforms of Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart for alleged violations of Foreign Investment norms and Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The intent behind the searches was to gather evidence on complaints that these sellers have been importing products from China but routing them through other locations to avoid paying higher import duties and longer time in getting the consignment cleared at the ports (that would be the case if the products were imported directly from China involving higher import tariff and more security-related checks).

The agency also wanted to verify if the firms had indulged in 'under-invoicing', a practice that involves understatement of the true value of goods to save on payment of import duty. Establishing such violations will be less of a headache for the enforcement authorities although proving them in the court will remain a challenge apart from the process being long drawn. However, the big headache relates to proving violations of the norms relating to foreign direct investment (FDI). E-commerce, put simply, is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet. Amazon and Flipkart essentially operate the "market-place" model of e-commerce – a special dispensation carved out by the Narendra Modi Government under which 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

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

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



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

of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' on August 21, 2024, Goyal took a shot at Amazon, for selling products directly to consumers and indulging in "predatory pricing". That could lead to massive growth of e-commerce capturing half of the Indian retail market ten years from now. This would adversely impact an estimated 100 million small retailers across the country. Predatory pricing involves setting prices for a product at an unrealistically low level to undercut the competition and gain market share. Generally practised by a new player, predatory pricing violates antitrust laws even as it seeks to create a monopoly. Goyal opines that Amazon is selling products on its e-commerce platform at unrealistically low prices which results in heavy losses estimated to be about a billion dollars annually. To fund these losses, it brings the money from its parent but camouflages it as FDI. Pertinently, he levelled these charges in 2020 also.

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

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

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

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

To answer this let us look at the fine print. While allowing 100 per cent FDI in a market-place model of e-commerce, the PN (2016) had prescribed two main riders viz., (i) the entity can't permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on its platform from one vendor or its group companies; (ii) it can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price. The first condition didn't specify that a firm connected with the owner of "market-place" (say its subsidiary or its joint venture or JV with an Indian company) couldn't be a vendor. Thus, contrary to the real intent of the policy which disallowed the e-commerce platform owners from direct selling to individual consumers, the fine print permitted them to do so. Putting a cap of 25 per cent on each such entity led to a bizarre scenario whereby four JVs or subsidiaries of Amazon could control all of the sales on its platform.

And, having permitted it as a direct seller, you can't prevent him from deciding/influencing the price. Thus, the second condition becomes redundant. Meanwhile, the extant policy permits FDI in business-to-business or B2B segments in physical/offline format. This has enabled Amazon and Flipkart to set up offline stores. From these stores, they sell products to sellers (many of such entities are the darlings of the duo or JVs set up in collaboration with them), who in turn, sell those products on their marketplace platform.

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

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

Meanwhile, the enforcement agencies are in full action mode raiding the latter's premises, looking at the documents with the intent to identify and expose such links. But, this won't lead them anywhere. The government should face the facts head-on.

If, its original intent was to ensure that the marketplace can't have any connection whatsoever with the seller whether by way of ownership or sourcing of the latter's inventory, that should have been mentioned in the guidelines issued in 2016. Anything done subsequently even if it comes by way of a clarification will be considered a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal.

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

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

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

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

As climate change reshapes our world, Taiwan and India, like many other nations, find themselves grappling with the profound challenges it brings. As major economies in the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan and India not only bear responsibility for their environmental welfare but also share a commitment to addressing the global climate crisis.

Our cooperation on climate change holds immense potential, as Taiwan and India pursue a shared vision of green growth, innovation and sustainable development. In recent years, Taiwan has faced severe impacts from climate change, including the worst drought in a century, unprecedented rainfall and powerful typhoons. Under the leader-



BAUSHUAN GER

ship of President Lai Ching-te, Taiwan has outlined a comprehensive strategy for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

This vision includes advancing a second energy transition, accelerating the development of geothermal, hydrogen, biomass, solar and ocean energy, fostering a dual digital and green transformation of industries, and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Taiwan's

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





British author Samantha Harvey wins Booker Prize

British author Samantha Harvey has won the 2024 Booker Prize for her ambitious and beautiful 'Orbital'...

reflecting on the individual and collective value of every human life. "I originally thought, 'Why on earth would anybody want to hear from a woman at her desk in Wiltshire writing about space, imagining what it's like being in space when people have actually been there,' said Harvey...



sunrises and 16 sunsets. Everyone and no one is the subject, as six astronauts in the International Space Station circle the Earth observing the passages of weather across the fragility of borders and time zones...

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

a dramatic increase in global sales and a career transformed overnight. The Booker Prize 2023 was won by Paul Lynch with 'Prophet Song'...

Stage set for parliamentary polls in Sri Lanka today

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

carry out rehearsals from 7 am on Wednesday," Ratnayaka said. Thursday's vote would be the first major test of the popularity of the ruling party, National People's Power, led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Olaf Scholz to seek trust vote in Dec

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

Amsterdam warns of new calls for unrest

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

outlining what happened last week, including new details about actions by Maccabi Tel Aviv fans ahead of the Maccabi Tel Aviv-Ajax soccer match. Local authorities had decided against banning the game, but beefed up security.

Dubai approves first aerial taxi vertiport, set for 2026 launch

Dubai has approved the construction of its first aerial taxi vertiport near Dubai International Airport, marking a major step towards becoming the first city to offer urban aerial transport.

Public Notice: To be known to all that I, Sushila Devi W/o Ramkrishna Singh R/o B-106, Printers Apartments, Plot No. 18, Sector 13, Rohini, Delhi-110085...

Public Notice: Notice is hereby given on behalf of SAGAR JINDAL who is the owner of Ground Floor without roof rights in the property No. E-38, B-106, portion of old Plot No. 98, area measuring 116.5 sq. yds. out of Khara No. 530, Khatwa -11, Situated in the area of Village Chowkri...

Public Notice: Since Mr. Shiv Sankar seeking a home loan from of Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. for the property i.e. Property Bearing No. E-12, area measuring 291.64 sq. ft. situated in Sector-13, B.K. Dut Colony, Karbla, New Delhi; That Mr. Shiv Sankar has made us understand that previous owner Mrs. Manju Anand has lost or misplaced earlier the Deed of Allotment, Letter of Possession Letter and Lease Cum Conveyance Deed in favour of Mr. Sonu Singh vide document No 2117 dated 28.03.1989 having LR No. 22743824 dated 13/11/2024 somewhere, which are not traceable or cannot be found.

Public Notice: Rec. Entire First Floor without roof rights, having covered area 116.54 sq. mtrs. (i.e. 16 the said floor), built on Plot No. 770, measuring 168.32 sq. mtrs., situated in Sector-2, Residential Colony known as Rajendra Nagar, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & District Ghaziabad, U.P., hereinafter referred to as "said property".

Public Notice: Rec. Entire First Floor without roof rights, having covered area 116.54 sq. mtrs. (i.e. 16 the said floor), built on Plot No. 770, measuring 168.32 sq. mtrs., situated in Sector-2, Residential Colony known as Rajendra Nagar, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & District Ghaziabad, U.P., hereinafter referred to as "said property".

Public Notice: Under the instructions from my client BEENA RANI W/o Hari Singh resident of Flat no. 8, Pocket C, Dildash Garden, Delhi-110095, it is hereby notified to the general public at large that henceforth my above-named client has ceased all her relations with Mrs. Komal wife of her deceased son Deepak Kumar and her kids master Krishna Singh and miss Yashika completely and forever and further my client disowns her as her said daughter-in-law is residing there against the wishes and desire of my client as unauthorized occupants and my client shall be constrained to initiate proceedings against the said daughter in law before appropriate Forum.

Public Notice: Under the instructions from my client BEENA RANI W/o Hari Singh resident of Flat no. 8, Pocket C, Dildash Garden, Delhi-110095, it is hereby notified to the general public at large that henceforth my above-named client has ceased all her relations with Mrs. Komal wife of her deceased son Deepak Kumar and her kids master Krishna Singh and miss Yashika completely and forever and further my client disowns her as her said daughter-in-law is residing there against the wishes and desire of my client as unauthorized occupants and my client shall be constrained to initiate proceedings against the said daughter in law before appropriate Forum.

Public Notice: My Client Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur S/o Sh. Sachidanand Thakur & Smt. Vrinda Devi W/o Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur both R/o E-71, Gali No.3, Savidha Enclave, Bagpura Vihar, Delhi - 110043 has served all their relations with their son & daughter-in-law namely Vicky Kumar Thakur & Nisha Mishra and also debar them from their all moveable/immovable properties due to their misconduct.

Rungta Irrigation Limited. Regd. Office: 101, Pragati Tower 26, Rajendra Place, New Delhi 110008. Tel: 011-40453330,31,32, E-mail: cs@rungtairrigation.in, Website: www.rungtairrigation.in

Statement of Standalone Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter and Half Year ended 30-09-2024. (Rs. in Lakhs, Unless Otherwise Stated)

RLF LIMITED. Reg. Office: 14 KMS, Gurgaon Pataudi Road, Village Jhund Sarai Veeran, Dist. Gurgaon Haryana-122001. Corporate Office: D-41, South Extension-II, New Delhi-110049. CIN NO. L74999HR1979PLC032747, Phone: 011-26255237, Email: limitedrfl@gmail.com

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E-TENDER NOTICE. E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned.

Table with 5 columns: S. No., Jobs No., Name of the work, Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs). Includes details for various infrastructure projects in Noida.

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

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

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



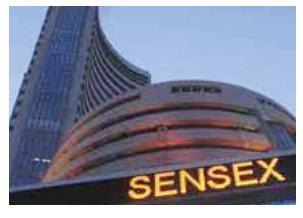
per kg in Nashik. Onions are not produced in Odisha and hence, the state is dependent on other states. Prices of onion and garlic are high outside the state

and it has contributed to the price rise here. We have asked (NAFED) to sell onions at Rs 30 per kg in Odisha," the minister told reporters. According to traders, Odisha imports onions from Nashik in Maharashtra and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. The Kharif crop in both regions suffered due to the rains during September. While the price of good quality old onions brought from Nashik has soared to Rs 70 per kg, those from Kurnool (new but medium quality onions) are available at Rs 40-Rs 55, depending on the quality. The price of onions in the retail market was Rs 50 a kg a week ago, traders said. The price of garlic has also increased to Rs 400 per kg in retail market in the state. Odisha Byabsayee General Secretary Sudhakar Panda said that the prices might come down in the next four to six days with the supply of new onions in the market. To a question, the minister said the new ration cards will be provided to the people in the New Year as the e-KYC verification process will be completed in November. He said at least 16 lakh ineligible beneficiaries have been identified.

# Sensex, Nifty see free fall amid soaring inflation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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



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

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

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



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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



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

fundings needs through revenue transfers. Timely and adequate revenue assignment from the upper tiers of the government is essential. "In this regard, a State-level rule-based system of compensation and transfers, including the regular setting up of State Finance Commissions (SFCs) assumes importance," it emphasised. The report further said municipal revenues, which were hit during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, recovered in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

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

budgeted at above Rs 1,000 crore in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, and Telangana, led by Maharashtra (Rs 11,04 crore). The surplus in MCs in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu was placed in the range of Rs 100 crore (Tamil Nadu) to Rs 687 crore (Delhi). In contrast, MCs in Tripura, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala budgeted for a revenue deficit in the range of (-) Rs 2 crore (Tripura) to (-) Rs 789 crore (Kerala) for 2023-24. Own tax revenue, inclusive of property tax, water tax, electricity tax, education tax, and other local taxes, constituted 30 per cent of total revenue during 2023-24, with significant variations across states. The Indian municipal bond market remains in a nascent stage, the report said. As of March 2024, the total municipal bonds outstanding at Rs 4,204 crore was just 0.09 per cent of the total corporate bonds outstanding.

## Euron launches affordable, accessible EdTech platform for all

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

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

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

## Arvindar Singh Sahney to be new chairman of Indian Oil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

## INBRIEF

### VIT CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY-RUBY JUBILEE

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



### HONOURING MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD'S LEGACY



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

### NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE EXPANDING HORIZONS OF NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

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



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



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

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

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



## First American turkey shipment leaves for Indian market

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

**PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)**  
 Buoyed by back-to-back victories in as many games, hosts India will look to work on the finer points of the game with an aim to thrash minnows Thailand in the women's Asian Champions Trophy here on Thursday.  
 Both India and reigning Olympic silver medallist China are unbeaten so far from two matches but the hosts have an inferior goal difference.  
 China are atop the points table with a goal difference of 20, while India have a goal difference of five and a handsome victory on Thursday will only help their cause ahead of final two round robin matches against China and Japan.  
 Japan are placed third in the points table ahead of Korea. The top four sides from the round robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team continental tournament.  
 In both the matches India created plenty of scoring chances but failed to score the amount of goals they would have liked.  
 While India defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament opener, they scored a late goal to eke out a narrow 3-2 win over South Korea.  
 The Indian players were guilty of rushing and faltered in choices once inside the opposition circle, a



fact which chief coach Harendra Singh admitted. "We could have scored more goals. We were guilty of rushing and did not look for the right choices," Harendra said after Tuesday's match. "We will watch clippings of the match and analyse where we went wrong and work on the finer points," he added. Another factor which would be a

cause of concern for Harendra is the team's poor penalty corner conversion rate.  
 Against Malaysia India secured as many as 11 penalty corners but utilised just three and that to from indirect attempts.  
 If that was not enough, India failed to make use of eight set pieces they managed to earn against Korea on Tuesday.  
 The bright spot for India has been the performances of forwards Sangita Kumari and Deepika, both scoring three goals apiece.  
 Sangita specially has been a live wire upfront with her deft stick work, but the likes of Sharmila Devi, Preeti Dubey, Beauty Dung Dung need to share more responsibility.  
 Skipper Salima Tete and her deputy Navneet Kaur too need to pull up their socks in the midfield.  
 A win on Thursday will virtually seal India's place in the semifinals before tough matches against China and Japan.  
 Going by rankings, ninth placed India are the second best side in the tournament after world no.6 China. And Thailand, who are ranked 29th in the world, should be an easy outing for the Indians.  
 Meanwhile in other matches of the day, Korea will take on Malaysia while China will be up against Japan.



## Spain-Poland tie in Billie Jean King Cup Finals postponed

**AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)**  
 The first tie of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals between Spain and Poland was postponed on Wednesday because of a severe weather alert in the Malaga region.  
 Organizers said the "decision has been made based on the guidance from the relevant authorities to ensure the health and safety of all participants and attendees."  
 The first-round tie will now be played on Friday when Germany will also face Britain. Two ties are scheduled for Thursday: Japan-Romania and Slovakia-United States.  
 Both the Billie Jean King Cup Finals and the Davis Cup Finals are taking place in the southern Spanish city, with the men's competition beginning next week.  
 The women's event is taking place after a powerful storm caused flash floods that killed more than 200 people in the Valencia region, east of Malaga, about two weeks ago.  
 The International Tennis Federation recently announced a donation to the Spanish Red Cross to support relief and recovery efforts in the region and Spanish player Paula Badosa said she will donate half of her prize money to help the victims.

## Aishwary-Sanjeeta strike gold in World University Shooting

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Olympic Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeeta Das combined to give India a gold medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team event as the hosts claimed their third top-podium finish at the World University Shooting Championship here on Wednesday.  
 Aishwary, following the disappointment of finishing fifth in men's 10m air rifle and having to settle for silver in 50m rifle 3-positions, finally came up with a gold-winning effort, combining with Sanjeeta, to overcome a strong challenge from the South Korean pair of Kim Hyobeen and Lee Junhwan 17-15.  
 The Polish team of Julia Piotrowska and Maciej



Kowalewicz defeated the Indian duo of Manini Kaushik and Umamahesh Maddineni 16-0 in the bronze-medal clash. Sanjeeta (316.8) and Aishwary (316.2) had earlier aggregated 633.0 to top the qualification round and move into the final, where they faced Korea who were second with an aggregate of 631.7.

The top two teams in the event fight for the gold, while the third and fourth-placed pair compete for the bronze.  
 Manini and Umamahesh were placed fourth at the end of the qualification round with an aggregate of 628.7 and faced third-placed Poland, who totalled 629.8.  
 On Tuesday, young Indian skeet shooter Bhavtegh Singh Gill had won the country's second gold medal, while the air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma had struck the first gold on Sunday.  
 As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies.



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

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary general, Anilkumar, who attended the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop in Sri Lanka recently, said such events would go a long way in improving and strengthening the financial management of the member associations.  
 The workshop was held in Colombo on November 6 and 7, with the participation of general secretaries and finance directors from the member associations of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.  
 "Attending the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop has been an invaluable experience. The insights shared on transparency, accountability and best practices in financial management are essential for strengthening our governance

framework," said Anilkumar. FIFA's commitment to develop football around the world depends on sound financial management to ensure that member associations get the best value for money for the funding distributed through the FIFA Forward programme.  
 As part of its effort to ensure this happens, FIFA has been holding regular workshops around the world to enhance financial governance and capacity development within the MAs.  
 The event was held under the banner of the newly established FIFA Campus, which serves as the central football learning hub for all FIFA capacity development and education initiatives for member associations.  
 Starting with a presentation of the Financial Governance Guide, the workshop included discussion, group work and case sessions on topics such as conflict of interest, planning and budgeting and procurement process, as well as the importance of having adequate supporting documentation.  
 The sessions emphasised the importance of accountability, transparency, and responsible financial management within the context of the FIFA Forward programme.  
 The FIFA Forward programme was introduced in 2016 to provide funding for tailor-made projects in each of the 211 FIFA member associations.  
 In the first two cycles, between 2016 and 2022, more than USD 2.8 billion was committed to a diverse array of projects to provide football infrastructure and competitions, and to promote and advance women's football.  
 The four-year cycle of FIFA Forward 3.0, from 2023 to 2026, represents an increase in investment of almost 30 per cent and is a direct consequence of the reinforced governance and financial situation of the new FIFA since 2016.

## Amandeep Johl appointed CEO of Professional Golf Tour of India

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) on Wednesday announced the appointment of Amandeep Johl as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from January 2025.  
 A respected name in Indian golf, Johl brings extensive experience to his new role.  
 The appointment comes alongside another recent significant leadership addition, with the legendary cricketer Kapil Dev assuming the role of PGTI President in June this year.  
 Johl replaces Uttam Singh Mundy, who has essayed a key role in the organisation since its inception.  
 Johl, who until recently was on the PGTI board, will take



charge from January 1. In the interim period until December 31, he will be assisting Mundy in completing the handover process.  
 Welcoming Johl's elevation to CEO, Kapil Dev said: "Amandeep has been on the Indian and Asian golf circuit for nearly 34 years and it is just apt that somebody who is so entrenched in the sport leads the PGTI.

"These are exciting times for golf in India and with Amandeep at the helm, the PGTI looks forward to strengthening its presence, in India and around the world."  
 The legendary all-rounder hailed the outgoing CEO for his contribution to PGTI and Indian golf.  
 "Uttam Mundy's commitment and vision have been instrumental in establishing PGTI as the premier professional golf tour in India, and his contributions are deeply appreciated," he said.  
 Johl, who holds a degree in mechanical engineering, has been an integral part of Indian golf since making it to the junior Indian team in 1985 and four years later emerging as the National amateur champion in 1989.  
 Since then, he has worn various hats, be it as a professional player on the Asian and European Tours, national coach, a board member of the PGTI and also as a founding member of the Asian Tour (2004).  
 "I am thrilled and thank the PGTI for entrusting me with this huge responsibility," remarked the 55-year-old Johl.  
 "It is probably the most important role of my golfing career," he said, adding, "I have big shoes to fill thanks to my dear friend, Uttam Mundy, who has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for the PGTI with his untiring efforts."

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

**PTI ■ HYDERABAD**  
 India may still be searching for their first win under Manolo Marquez nearly four months into his tenure but goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on Wednesday backed the head coach and said qualifying for the next AFC Asian Cup is the team's "minimum" target.  
 The Indian football team's last victory was a 1-0 win against Kuwait in the World Cup Qualifiers on November 16 last year. Since then, the side has struggled, losing seven of its last 11 matches and falling in FIFA rankings from a sub-100 position in July 2023 to 125.  
 "The past is past; we can't change it. As a team, we always want to win," said Gurpreet ahead of their home friendly against Malaysia here on November 18.  
 "Phases like this happen -- there was a phase when we were winning and not losing,

"It's about how you handle it and not getting bogged down by it. We're lucky to get opportunities to do well again and again. We need to use the games we've played against good opposition as stepping stones."  
 "The (1-1) Vietnam draw was a good test for us, and we need to carry the same understanding and energy into the next game," he added.  
 After a disastrous 2023 Asian Cup outing, previous head coach Igor Stimac was replaced in July this year by Marquez, who is also managing ISL franchise FC Goa.  
 Under Marquez, India drew with Mauritius and Vietnam and suffered a 0-3 loss to Syria.  
 The transition has been marked by the retirement of star forward Sunil Chhetri.  
 "A transition like this is always difficult. Everything would feel perfect if we



started winning games right away, but the important thing to remember is that we've played very competitive teams since the coach (Manolo Marquez) took over. "He's trying to instill his philosophy, and that's going to take time. In every camp, we're getting closer to what he wants from us as a team. With time, training, and the level of coaching he has, I have no doubt we'll be a strong team in the qualifiers. "Qualifying for the Asian Cup is something we should strive for every single time, as

Jhingan. He is returning after recovering from a knee injury he sustained in a match against Syria earlier this year.  
 "I'm very happy to have Sandesh back in the squad. Since taking over as India's No. 1 goalkeeper from Subrata Paul, Gurpreet has been a key figure in the national team.  
 The experienced goalkeeper emphasised the importance of team unity and healthy competition as India prepare for the upcoming Asian Cup Qualifiers.  
 "I don't think it's been a long time; in my opinion, it's probably been a short time (as No. 1 goalkeeper) in my experience," he said reflecting on his journey.  
 "I would love to play for the national team -- it comes with a lot of responsibility. I know the importance of it, and as long as I give my 100 per cent, I'm satisfied. As for who plays or not, that's not my decision; it's up to the

coaches, and we have to respect that."  
 He also praised the competition within the squad, singling out the talented Vishal Kaith and Amrinder Singh.  
 "Vishal is a great keeper, a very talented player. I'm very happy for him. It's a pleasure to have him in the team, knowing there's someone who can push me just like Amrinder did.  
 "If our roles were reversed, I'd do the same for him. It's all about being in the team. It's not about who plays or time; it's about achieving our goal for the Indian team. "For me, it's important to do what I've learned from Sunil bhai. He always gives 100 percent, keeps a positive and competitive environment, and ensures the mood is good. We're all working towards one aim right now, which is to qualify for the Asian Cup," he signed off.

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



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

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

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

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



Kohli with the new ball, and their batting. ("They should) work on their technique, freshen up, get away from cricket for as much as they can and then hit the ground running when

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

**PTI ■ SYDNEY**

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



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

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**

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



preparations, and yeah, he used to execute it come what may. And over the years, I've found ways and means to break it down. "His time at Delhi Capitals, his time at RPSG, all these net sessions that I've seen him go about his business gave me an insight as to how he prepares and what he likes and doesn't like." Ashwin, who first bowled to Smith during India's 2013/14 tour of Australia, lauded his fierce rival for being a "thinking cricketer", who has so far scored 348 runs in 570 balls while facing the ace spinner. Smith has got out to Ashwin three times. "He's a very thinking cricketer as well.

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

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

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**

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

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

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

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**

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

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



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

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

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

**PTI ■ SYDNEY**

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

both fast bowling attacks are so good and they will get on a roll. For me, it is that really crucial role of Alex at number seven and Rishabh at number six likely." Both Pant, who played a key role in India's series victory last time, and Carey are known for their aggressive brand of cricket. "Carey is aggressive, Rishabh is aggressive. The game is going to go one or two ways really quick. And I think that will be so important. "Maybe when you are five down and the second new ball comes just before stumps and they take it for 50 that 10 overs before stumps, that changes the momentum of the game." Finch feels both side's bowling units are at par which each other, while their batters haven't been at their best recently. India head to the marquee series on the back of an embarrassing 0-3 home



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

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