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NATO'S EASTWARD MARCH
THREATENS ASIAN STABILITY

WORLD 8
JAPAN'S NEW LEADER VOWS
STRONGER DEFENCE

MONEY 10
ABOUT 1 PER CENT FALL IN SENSEX,
NIFTY AMID TENSIONS IN WEST ASIA

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Iran's Ali Khamenei adds fuel to West Asia fires



PTI/AP ■ TEHRAN/ BEIRUT

Iran's supreme leader on Friday praised the country's recent missile strike on Israel and said it was ready to do it again if necessary, state TV reported. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in his first appearance as leader, in about five years, at Friday prayers, called the missile strike a "shining" job by Iran's armed forces. On the other hand Israel carried out a series of massive airstrikes overnight, hitting suburbs of Beirut and cutting off the main border crossing between Lebanon and Syria for tens of thousands of people fleeing Israeli bombardment. The Israeli military said Friday

Peace crucial for global economy: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday made oblique reference to the widening conflicts in the Middle East and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, saying the two regions were crucial for the global economy and energy security. His comments came amid fears of further escalation of conflict in the Middle East if Israel were to retaliate and attack Iran, potentially

its nuclear and oil facilities. "India is more than 85 per cent dependent on the import of crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, and about half of its gas needs. A bulk of these come from the Middle East, and in scenarios of Israel-Iran getting into prolonged conflict, the supplies could be impacted," PM Modi said.



that a strike in Beirut the day before killed Mohammed Rashid Skafi, the head of Hezbollah's communications division. The military said in a statement that Skafi was "a senior Hezbollah terrorist who was responsible for the communications unit since 2000" and was "closely affiliated" with high-up Hezbollah officials. On Tuesday, Iran launched at least 180 missiles at Israel, the latest in a series of rapidly escalating attacks between Israel and Iran and its allies that threaten to push the Middle East closer to a region-wide war. Israel said it intercepted many of the missiles, and officials in Washington said US destroyers assisted in Israel's defence. Iran said most of its missiles hit their targets. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Khamenei, 80, said in a 40-minute speech to thousands of people at the Mosalla mosque, the main prayer site in Tehran, that the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel nearly a year ago on Oct 7, 2023, was a legitimate action by the Palestinian people. He said Tuesday's missile barrage was based on international law, the country's law and Islamic beliefs.

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30 Naxalites killed in Bastar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DANTEWADA/NEW DELHI

In the largest such operation in Chhattisgarh's 24-year history, at least 30 Maoists were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Abujhmad, Dantewada district, on Friday. The gunfight broke out at around 1 pm in the forest between Thulthuli and Nendur villages in Abujhmad on the Narayanpur-Dantewada inter-district border, when a joint team of security personnel was out on anti-Naxal operation. According to the police, the Districts Reserve Guards (DRG) from Dantewada and Narayanpur, acting on specific intelligence inputs on the presence of Maoists in the area, set out on an operation from different police camps. The DRG is a specialised force that includes Maoists who have

surrendered. Along with the 30 bodies, a cache of weapons, including an AK-47 rifle and one SLR (self-loading rifle), were also recovered from the encounter spot. Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai told the media that around 30 Naxalites were killed in the gun battle. Abujhmad straddles between Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, and is called the 'unknown hill' as the 6,000 sq km thick forest has not been surveyed since the British era. The jungle is the epicentre of Maoist activities and about a dozen senior cadres of CPI (Maoist) are said to be still camping there. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed the security forces for their operation and said the 'double engine' (BJP government in the state and at the Centre) is determined to eliminate the menace.

In a post on X, CM said, "There is news of 28 Naxalites gunned down in an encounter with security forces in the border area of Narayanpur-Dantewada districts. The great success achieved by the soldiers is commendable. I salute their courage and valour. Our fight to eliminate Naxalism will end only after reaching its conclusion. Our double engine government is determined for this. Eliminating Naxalism from the state is our aim."

According to police, with this latest encounter, 185 Maoists have been gunned down by the security forces in separate gun battles in the Bastar region comprising seven districts, including Dantewada and Narayanpur, so far this year. The last big encounter from the state was reported on September 3, when nine Maoists, including six women, were killed on the border of Dantewada and Bijapur districts. On April 16, as many as 29 Naxalites, including some higher-ranking cadres, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Kanker district. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, during his visit to Chhattisgarh in August had said India will be free from Left Wing Extremism (LWE) by March 2026, and a strong and ruthless strategy was required to launch the final assault against the menace.



Bizarre protest at Mantralaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

In a dramatic development, tribal leaders, including Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal, protesting against the demand to include the Dhangar community in the Scheduled Tribe list, on Friday jumped from the third floor of Maharashtra State secretariat Mantralaya on the safety net just a floor below. The protestors said they did this act for not getting appointment with Chief Minister. No injuries were reported in the incident that saw tense moments unfolding at the six-storey Mantralaya complex. The incident occurred around 12.40 pm. Zirwal, his fellow Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) legislator Kiran Lahamate and BJP tribal MP Hemant Savara were among those who jumped from the third floor onto the safety net installed on the second floor, a precaution taken in response to previous suicide attempts at the site.

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PUNE HORROR College student gangraped

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ PUNE/MUMBAI

A 21-year-old woman was gang-raped by three unidentified men. The accused attacked the woman after tying her male friend to a tree in the desolate Bopdev Ghat area in the outskirts of Pune late on Thursday night.

The victim, said to be a college student hailing from Gujarat, is being treated at the State-run Sassoon General Hospital in Pune.

The attack took place around 11 pm in the poorly lit and secluded area of Bopdev Ghat. The police came to know about the incident around 5 am on Friday.

With the incident having sparked a major public uproar in Pune, the local police swiftly arrested one person, a 36-year-old resident from Pune's Kondhwa area, in connection with the incident and launched a hunt for the two remaining suspects.

The Pune police have formed 10 teams from the Crime and Detection branches to look out for the two remaining suspects.



Friday evening, the police released the sketches of two of the three suspects involved in the alleged gang-rape. The sketches were drawn on the basis of a statement made by the victim girl to the police at the hospital. Talking to media persons, Pune's Additional Commissioner of Police Ranjan Kumar Sharma said, "As per preliminary details, the woman and her male friend had gone to the Bopdev Ghat area on late Thursday night where three unidentified persons allegedly raped her". The preliminary investigations have revealed that three suspects, posing as activists, approached the victim and her friend in a car. They asked the couple what they were doing in

that "prohibited" area. They also took photographs of the couple. After threatening them with dire consequences, one of the suspects forced the girl into a car. They tied the young man to a tree, and took turns to rape the young woman inside the car. The suspects also assaulted the victim's friend before fleeing the crime scene. The injured young man managed to take the victim to the Sassoon General Hospital for treatment. A complaint was lodged with the Kondhwa police Station at around 5 am on Friday. Happening as it did in the run-up to the State Assembly polls, the incident has snowballed into a political controversy.

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Court not to be used as political battleground: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday set up a five-member Special Investigation Team under supervision of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director to probe into the allegations of use of animal fat in making Tirupati laddus. A Bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) will comprise two officials each from the CBI and the Andhra Pradesh Police besides a senior Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) official. "We clarify that we will not permit the court to be used as a political battleground. However, in order to assuage the feelings of crores of people, we find that the investigation should be conducted by an independent SIT consisting of representatives of the state police, the CBI and a representative of the FSSAI," the Bench said. "We don't want this to be turned into a political



drama. There are sentiments of crores of people throughout the world," Judges observed during the hearing. The order was on the PILs filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Board (TTD) former Chairman YV Subba Reddy asking for a court monitored probe on the allegations by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The CM had accused the former regime led by Jagan Mohan Reddy for the adulterated ghee used in making of laddus.

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WINGS OF GLORY



People watch the final rehearsal of Indian Air Force (IAF) aircrafts ahead of its 92nd anniversary celebrations, in Chennai



Historic Kashmere Gate is now a traffic battlefield This stretch is notorious for being a bottleneck 24x7

BY RAJESH KUMAR

Situated close to Civil Lines, where residences of the Chief Minister, Lieutenant Governor and Delhi Cabinet ministers are located, Kashmere Gate has heavy traffic congestion daily. This stretch is notorious for being a traffic bottleneck 24x7.

Lala Hardev Marg is the main road in front of Kashmere Gate metro station and the Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) where the flyover coming from East Delhi areas, such as Shahdara and Dilshad Garden, merges. Netaji Subhash Marg connecting Kashmere Gate to Chandni Chowk and Daryaganj always choked due to encroachments and narrow lanes.

Another major congestion point on the stretch comes between ISBT Kashmere Gate and the Chandni

Ram Akhara junction. Nityanand Marg stretch connecting Tis Hazari court is another bottleneck here. Interestingly, as the number of vehicles on roads surrounding Kashmere Gate has increased manifold, the condition of roads and traffic management remains the same.

In 2018, Delhi traffic police had identified the area around Kashmere Gate as an 'accident-prone' zone due to heavy pedestrian movement and traffic congestion. The situation has worsened since 2018. The authorities seem to be clueless here. The area has illegal parking lots, which have an unregulated private vehicle flow, huge encroachments, that add chaos to the already heavy volume of traffic on the roads.

Rajni Kant Verma, former Transport Secretary of Delhi



A Traffic Jam Vehicles move on road at isbt kashmiri gate

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

government, said that traffic congestion is the major problem at Kashmere Gate, due to heavy traffic and illegal parking of auto rickshaws and buses. "Besides,

there are also encroachments surrounding the ISBT Kashmere Gate Metro station, leading to traffic jams here", he said. According to Verma, the problem

will be solved if encroachment is removed and regulate the auto rickshaw and private vehicles. According to transport department's officials, the Delhi

government has taken steps to reduce traffic congestion in the vicinity of the ISBTs by implementing new policies. Under it, parking and bus-bay usage fees for private and govt interstate buses will now be the same to discourage private buses from parking illegally on the roadside which congests traffic. Furthermore, buses will be assigned a fixed parking time slot of 25 minutes at a predetermined rate. If a bus exceeds this allotted time, additional charges will be levied. To ensure compliance, buses without FasTags will not be permitted to enter the terminal. Delhi has three ISBTs - at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar and Sarai Kale Khan. Raj Niwas officials said that traffic congestion outside the ISBTs is visibly lower now, and a report from the traffic police has also

been sought to ascertain the impact of reduced turnaround timings on traffic and pedestrian movement outside the ISBTs. At ISBT Kashmere Gate, the average turnaround time has dropped from 45 minutes in August to 29 minutes after the new order, averaging 19 minutes since then. The number of buses to and from the terminal was 1,373 per day on average in August and is now 1,644 per day. Notably, the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) has proposed several long-term modifications to the traffic diversion plan to decongest the area around Kashmere Gate Interstate Bus Terminus (ISBT). The CRRI has now suggested reducing the width of the footpath under Yudhistir Setu, which will create more space for buses.

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Amit Shah slams Congress over its links with drug bust kingpin

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday attacked Congress over Rs 5640 crore Delhi drug bust "kingpin" Tushar Goyal's link with the opposition party, saying it is dangerous and shameful. However, Congress has denied any link with Goyal and informed that he was expelled from the party two years ago. Shah also said that everyone has seen the plight of the youth of Punjab, Haryana and the entire north India due to drugs during the Congress rule.

'drug-free India', the involvement of a prominent Congress leader in the Rs 5,600 crore drug consignment seized from north India is extremely dangerous and shameful," the minister wrote on X in Hindi. He said that while the Modi government is taking the youth towards sports, education and innovation, the "Congress wants to take them into the dark world of drugs". "Our government is determined to make India a 'drug-free country' by destroying the entire drug network, without looking at the political position or stature of the drug dealers," he added. In one of Delhi's biggest drug

busts, police seized over 560 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kilograms of hydroponic marijuana estimated to be worth around Rs 5,620 crore earlier this week. The BJP on Thursday alleged that the kingpin, Tushar Goel, arrested in connection with the seizure of drugs is the chairman of the Delhi Youth Congress' RTI cell, a claim refuted by the opposition party as baseless. The Indian Youth Congress (IYC) said in a statement that Goel was expelled from the organisation on October 17, 2022, for anti-party activities soon after BJP spokesperson and MP Sudhanshu Trivedi charged the opposition party with



having links with drug dealers. Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, party national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia also rejected the

Congress youth wing's claim that Goyal had been expelled on October 17, 2022 for anti-party activities. In a significant development, Delhi Police have made a

fifth arrest in connection with the seizure of over 500 kg of cocaine—the largest haul ever recorded in the national capital, valued at approximately Rs 5,000 crore. The latest suspect, identified as Jitendra Pal Singh, also known as Jassi, was apprehended at Amritsar Airport in Punjab on Thursday as he attempted to flee to the United Kingdom. Jitendra Pal Singh, alias Jassi, 40, had come to India to oversee the drug cartel's operations but was planning to flee after the arrest of four other members, sources said. He has been living in the UK for the last 17 years and has a UK Green Card.

This arrest points to potential links between organised crime in the UK and a widespread drug smuggling network operating across India. The police were alerted to Singh's attempted escape due to an issued Look Out Circular (LOC) against him. Investigations reveal that this particular drug syndicate operates out of both Delhi and Mumbai, with suspected links to Dubai. One name that has emerged during police interrogations is Virendra Basoya, an Indian citizen currently residing in Dubai, who authorities believe could be one of the masterminds—if not the kingpin—behind this drug

smuggling network. Basoya had previously been arrested in an unrelated case but secured bail. Last year, police in Maharashtra conducted a raid in Delhi, resulting in the seizure of drugs worth Rs 3,000 crore, including 'meow meow', the street name for the synthetic stimulant mephedrone. Notably, this raid occurred just a day after Basoya's son married the daughter of a former MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Noida, during a lavish ceremony at a farmhouse near Delhi's airport. Following the police action, Basoya fled to Dubai and is believed to now head an international cartel.

SC raps LG over MCD standing committee elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday expressed reservations over the manner in which Delhi's Lieutenant General (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena had interfered in an election process for the appointment of the sixth member of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) standing committee. Issuing notice to the office of the LG, on a plea by Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi challenging the election held on September 27 in which the BJP candidate had returned successfully, a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and R Mahadevan was critical of the exercise of power under Section 487 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act by the office of LG for holding the poll for the member of standing committee on September 27. The bench orally asked Lt Governor's counsel Sanjay Jain to not to hold the elections till the matter is heard next.

Section 487 of the DMC Act allows the Delhi Lieutenant Governor to intervene in the functioning of the municipal corporation. The bench, which sought the response of LG's office in two weeks on the plea of Mayor Shelly Oberoi against the September 27 standing committee polls, told senior advocate Sanjay Jain, appearing for the office of LG, "We will view it seriously if you hold an election for the MCD Standing Committee chairman." It said that initially the court was not inclined to entertain this petition as everyone would start rushing to the Supreme Court but had to issue notice because of exercise of powers under Section 487 of the DMC Act by the LG. "Our initial view was why should we entertain Article 32 petition but after looking into the matter, we thought this is a matter where we have to issue notice, particularly in view of the manner in which the powers under Section 487 was exercised," the bench said. "We have serious doubts about the legality and validity of your (LG's) powers," it added. The Supreme Court said that there are other issues which it needs to go into with regard to certain decisions of the mayor. Jain, counsel for the



ing. Section 487 of the DMC Act allows the Delhi Lieutenant Governor to intervene in the functioning of the municipal corporation. The bench, which sought the response of LG's office in two weeks on the plea of Mayor Shelly Oberoi against the September 27 standing committee polls, told senior advocate Sanjay Jain, appearing for the office of LG, "We will view it seriously if you hold an election for the MCD Standing Committee chairman." It said that initially the court was not inclined to entertain this petition as everyone would start rushing to the Supreme Court but had to issue notice because of exercise of powers under Section 487 of the DMC Act by the LG. "Our initial view was why should we entertain Article 32 petition but after looking into the matter, we thought this is a matter where we have to issue notice, particularly in view of the manner in which the powers under Section 487 was exercised," the bench said. "We have serious doubts about the legality and validity of your (LG's) powers," it added. The Supreme Court said that there are other issues which it needs to go into with regard to certain decisions of the mayor. Jain, counsel for the

in power in MCD for 15 years, but then the people decided that now they wanted to see AAP in the civic body. But the BJP is trying to get power by all means, and for that, the LG himself is in the ground," Bharadwaj said. "Such a hurry shows that the LG is working under a planned conspiracy which does not suit a constitutional office," the minister added. Bharadwaj further said that someone else would have resigned from the LG post by now. Lambasting AAP, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday said in the last two years, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has completely stalled the Delhi Municipal Corporation. The situation has become so bad that fearing defeat, the AAP is not even allowing the election for the constitutionally required Dalit Mayor as per the Municipal Corporation Act, he claimed. Sachdeva said the AAP is showcasing the court's questioning of the Lieutenant Governor on the election issue of the Standing Committee members as its achievement, but the court routinely issues notices and seeks responses on the petitioner's questions in such matters. The Delhi Municipal Corporation is neither fulfilling its service responsibilities nor completing

any administrative work. Since 2015, the Aam Aadmi Party's Delhi government has financially crippled the Municipal Corporation to sabotage the BJP administration, and since coming to power in 2022, they have turned the corporation into a political and legal battleground, where even the elections for the Alderman and Standing Committee members only took place after strict court orders, state BJP chief said. Sachdeva added that, after a long wait, elections for the Ward Committees and Standing Committee of the Municipal Corporation were held under the pressure of the Supreme and High Courts. However, seeing an imminent defeat in the election for the Standing Committee chairman, the Aam Aadmi Party first did not participate in the process, and after losing, went back to court to ensure that the Standing Committee would not be formed, resulting in the corporation remaining stalled. He said by taking every issue of the Municipal Corporation to court, the Aam Aadmi Party has not only deprived the people of Delhi of development for two years but has also obstructed the election of a Dalit Mayor as mandated by the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act.

Juvenile held for murdering Unani practitioner after confessing on Instagram

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi police crime branch has arrested a 17-year-old for allegedly killing a 55-year-old unani practitioner inside his private nursing home in southeast Delhi's Kalindi Kunj on Thursday. According to police, the juvenile has confessed he shot him on the instructions of the husband of a nurse working in the same hospital. After the incident, he allegedly uploaded a post on a social media platform with his photograph and a caption: "Kar diya 2024 mein murder" (Finally committed murder in 2024). Both the juveniles lived in the same locality and the weapon used in the crime has been recovered, police said. The breakthrough came when police tracked the suspect through his Instagram account, where he posted a photo of himself holding a pistol with the caption, "First murder of 2024," which led the police straight to him. Police said one juvenile was arrested from the Anand Vihar area. During interrogation, the accused juvenile confessed that he had been hired by the husband of a nurse who suspected Akhtar of having an affair



with his wife. The minor accused further revealed that he was in love with the nurse's daughter and that the nurse's husband had promised him that he would get him married to his daughter if he murdered the doctor. "The husband suspected an affair between the nurse and Dr Akhtar. The accused teen was in love with the nurse's daughter. So, the husband promised he would get his daughter married to him if he killed Dr Akhtar," a Delhi Police officer told the media. Police said the juvenile confessed to his involvement in the murder, along with his accomplice, another juvenile. He stated that they had procured the pistol used in the crime from one Babu r/o Khadda Colony, Jaipur and kept the same with

their teenager friend in Jafarabad after commission of Murder. The weapon used in murder along with empty and live cartridges have also been recovered. The incident occurred in the early hours of October 3, when two teenagers, aged 16 and 17, entered Nima Hospital in Delhi's Jaipur area around 1:30 am, pretending to seek treatment. One of the boys asked the staff to change the dressing on his injured toe. Moments later, they shot Dr Akhtar at point-blank range. The police have also questioned a female nurse of the nursing home and her husband in connection with the case, sources said. Initially, the police said, the accused claimed a monetary dispute with Dr Akhtar but recanted later.

Kejriwal to address second Janta Ki Adalat rally on Sunday: Sanjay Singh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal will address his second 'Janta Ki Adalat' rally at north Delhi's Chhatrasal stadium on Sunday, AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters on Friday, Singh expressed hope that the people of Delhi will give a massive mandate to the AAP in the upcoming assembly polls, as a "certificate of Kejriwal's honesty". He said that the AAP national convenor will address the rally at



Chhatrasal Stadium in Model Town. On September 15, Kejriwal announced his decision to resign from the CM's post, saying that he needed to go to the "peoples' court", just two days after being released from Tihar

jail where he spent over five months in connection with the excise policy case. The AAP supremo also said that he would return to the top post after getting a "certificate of honesty" from Delhiites in the assembly polls due in February. Singh said that the BJP's intention to "finish the Aam Aadmi Party and Kejriwal" through a "misinformation" campaign was foiled by the AAP convenor. The BJP has been attacking Kejriwal on corruption issues, citing an alleged liquor scam related to the excise policy 2021-22.

Kalkaji Temple authority issues fresh directions to check all electricity points

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Kalkaji Temple authority on Friday issued fresh directions to check all the electricity points, a day after a 17-year-old boy got electrocuted while standing in a queue to enter the premises that resulted in a stampede. "It is an unfortunate incident and we are with the family members of the victim," an authority member said. "During navratri, a large number of people offer prayers at Kalkaji Temple. We got to know that some people climbed a railing to reach inside. During this time, one of them took support of an elec-



tricity wire which malfunctioned and touched an iron railing," he said. When the 17-year-old boy touched the same railing, he got electrocuted, resulting in a

stampede-like situation, he said. On the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, Mayank got electrocuted while standing in a queue to enter the temple. This resulted in a stampede in which six people got injured. After this incident, we have asked electricians to check every single electrical point and verify that no such condition will happen in future, the member said. Volunteers have been asked to maintain the crowd and only allow 50 people at a time to enter the temple to avoid such situations, he said. "More than 500 to 600 volunteers, along with security forces, are deployed to maintain law and order," the authority member said, adding that they have installed over 1,000 CCTV cameras to keep strict vigil. The last rites of Mayank were held on Friday.

"We were waiting for our relatives to come. Mayank's last rites were carried out today", his brother, Ritik Sharma said and demanded strict action against the temple authorities. According to the police, the boy was waiting in the queue, when he touched the railing and got electrocuted. He came to Kalkaji temple with his family members to pay obeisance. A case under section 289 (negligent conduct with respect to machinery), 125(9) (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered and further investigation was taken up.

Metro services on Yellow Line to be hit on Sunday due to maintenance work: DMRC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Train services between Vishwavidyalaya and Kashmere Gate metro stations on the Yellow Line will not be available for 40 minutes from 6 am on Sunday due to maintenance work, a Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) official said. Yellow Line connects Samaypur Badli in Delhi with Millennium City Centre, Gurugram.



However, normal train services, from 6 am onwards, will remain available on the remaining major section of Yellow Line from Millennium City Centre Gurugram to Kashmere Gate and Samaypur Badli to Vishwavidyalaya stations, they stated. During the maintenance work, the train services will be available at a frequency of 10 minutes and thereafter, regular Sunday timetable will be followed for the rest of the day, the officials said. To avoid any inconvenience to passengers during these early morning hours on Sunday, announcements will also be made at the stations and inside the trains on Yellow Line about the destination of trains and respective platforms for change over during this maintenance period, they added.

Sentiments protected in installation of Maharani Laxmi Bai statue at Shahi Idgah Park: Authorities assure HC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The city authorities on Friday assured the Delhi High Court that "sentiments" were protected in the process of installation of a statue of Maharani Lakshmi Bai at the Shahi Idgah Park at Sadar Bazar. The court was informed by the counsel for the MCD that the statue has been placed in a "corner", 200 m away from the Idgah wall. A partition wall has been built and "sentiments are being protected", the senior counsel for the DDA said. The court was hearing an appeal by the Shahi Idgah Managing Committee against a single judge's order refusing to restrain the installation of the freedom fighter's statue. The committee has submitted that the Shahi Idgah Park is an ancient property built during the Mughal period and it is used for offering namaz. The bench was told during the hearing that the statue has been installed. Favours an amicable resolution in the matter, the bench headed by Chief Justice Manmohan asked the authorities to take a delegation of the appellants to the site to show



how the statue has been placed. "Take a small team and show them the area," said the bench, also comprising Justice Tushar Rao Gedela. "Three representatives of the appellants are permitted to visit the area where the statue has been installed. Take them tomorrow," the court stated, while listing the matter for hearing on October 7. On October 1, the court had questioned the opposition to the installation of the statue by the MCD at the Shahi Idgah Park as Maharani Lakshmi Bai was not a religious figure. It had, however, said it does not want the issue to become a "flashpoint unnecessarily". On September 25, it had said Lakshmi Bai was a national hero and history should not be divided on communal politics.

Universities should not be evaluated solely on basis of placement records: Atishi Evaluate also on jobs their graduates create, says CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Friday said universities should not be evaluated solely on the basis of their placement records but also job opportunities their graduates create. Addressing the second convocation of Netaji Subhas University of Technology, Atishi, who also holds the education portfolio, highlighted the importance of fostering entrepreneurial skills among the youth. "The biggest challenge our youths face today is unemployment. I am pleased to know that 81 per cent of NSUT graduates secured jobs. However, I believe universities should not be evaluated based on placement percentages alone, they should be assessed based on how many jobs their graduates generate. This is the need of the hour," the chief minister said. "Our goal should be to not only secure the best job but also to create job opportunities for others," she added. Atishi also shared success



stories from the Delhi government's Business Blaster programme which provides financial support to school students for establishing startups. The convocation ceremony was also attended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, who serves as the chancellor of the university.

In his address, Saxena underlined that India's youths are its biggest national asset and their contributions will play a key role in nation-building. "Exhorted the students & faculty to focus on fundamental and basic research that leads to innovations & inventions for the progress of the Nation and humankind at large.

Humility is another trait that the young brilliant minds must inculcate. NSUT has fast evolved into a premier institution producing the best in technical disciplines. My heartfelt congratulations to the passing out students and their proud parents," Saxena said in a post on X.

Jaishankar to lead Indian delegation to Pakistan for SCO summit: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will lead the Indian delegation to Pakistan mid-October for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal announced here on Friday. The last Indian external affairs minister to visit Pakistan was Sushma Swaraj. She had travelled to Islamabad in December 2015 to attend a conference on Afghanistan. Pakistan is hosting the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting on October 15 and 16. "The external affairs minister will lead our delegation to Pakistan to participate in the

SCO summit which will be held in Islamabad on October 15 and 16," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. The spokesperson clarified that the external affairs minister is travelling to Pakistan only to attend the SCO summit. In August, Pakistan invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the SCO's summit. Jaishankar's visit to Pakistan assumes significance as it is seen as a major decision on New Delhi's part. The decision to send the senior minister is seen as a display of India's commitment to the SCO which has been playing a key role in boosting regional security cooperation. The ties between India and Pakistan came under severe strain after India's warplanes

pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Balakot in Pakistan in February 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack. The relations further deteriorated after India on August 5, 2019 announced the withdrawal of special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and the bifurcation of the state into two union territories. India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment free of terror and hostility for such engagement. The SCO council of heads of government conclave is the second-highest platform in the grouping. The SCO heads of state summit is the top



most forum in the grouping that is generally attended by the Indian prime minister. The SCO, comprising India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is

an influential economic and security bloc that has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations. India was the chair of the SCO last year. It hosted the

SCO summit in the virtual format in July last year. India's association with the SCO began in 2005 as an observer country. It became a full member state of SCO at the Astana summit in 2017. India has shown a keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence. The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan became its permanent member along with India in 2017. Jaishankar's Pakistan visit will

take a place nearly a month after he called out the neighbouring country over cross-border terrorism at the United Nations General Assembly. "Many countries get left behind due to circumstances beyond their control, but some make conscious choices with disastrous consequences. A premier example is our neighbour, Pakistan," the minister said on September 28. "When this polity instills such fanaticism among its people, its GDP can only be measured in terms of radicalisation and its exports in the form of terrorism. Today we see the ills it sought to visit on others consume its own society. It can't blame the world. This is only karma," Jaishankar

added in a strong statement. Referring to Pakistani prime minister Shehbaz Sharif's address at the UNGA a day before, Jaishankar said, "We heard some bizarre assertions from it at this very forum yesterday. So let me make India's position perfectly clear. Pakistan's cross border terrorism policy will never succeed, and it can have no expectation of impunity. On the contrary, actions will certainly have consequences." Shehbaz Sharif while addressing the UNGA compared Jammu and Kashmir to Palestine. "Similarly, like the people of Palestine, the people of Jammu and Kashmir too, have struggled for a century for their freedom and right to self-determination."

Former MP Ashok Tanwar officially inducted into Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Former MP Ashok Tanwar was officially inducted into the Congress on Friday and urged all sections, especially Dalits and backward classes, in Haryana to ensure a "big mandate" for the party in the assembly polls to send a message to the entire country. Tanwar had informally joined the Congress at Rahul Gandhi's rally in Mahendragarh district in Haryana on Thursday, dealing a setback to the BJP ahead of the October 5 assembly polls. Hours before joining the Congress, the former Sirsa MP was campaigning for the BJP candidate in Safidon assembly constituency and exhorting voters to bring it back to power for a third time. Tanwar was officially inducted into the Congress at the AICC headquarters by party treasurer Ajay Maken. Later, Tanwar, accompanied by party MP Deepender Hooda, also met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. "We are with 36 communities in Haryana. Our resolve is for everyone. We will always raise



the voice of Dalits, tribals, backward classes, minorities and the poor," Kharge said in a post on X. He also shared pictures from the meeting. Addressing a press conference, Tanwar said, "I began my political career with the Congress. In the last few months I was with the BJP, the environment that I saw, I was hurt over a number of issues, the faith that should be there in Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Constitution is not there (in the BJP)." "On the other hand, Rahul Gandhi is working on strengthening Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution and

ensuring that people get their rights and unity in the country is strengthened," he said. Tanwar credited the Congress for his political career. "I request all Dalits and backward classes of Haryana that to make the state number one and to ensure people of Haryana get their rights... All sections, I request them to give a big mandate (to the Congress) to send a message to the country," he said. The Dalit leader had on Thursday described his decision to return to the Congress as the "will of God". "It's all circumstances, destiny and will of the people. Let bygones be bygones," Tanwar

had told PTI on phone. "I am joining the Congress exactly five years after I left it. That was the will of God then, today also it is the will of God... Sometimes, there is not much in your hands," he had said. Asked on Friday about allegations of opportunism and losing from Sirsa parliamentary constituency on a BJP ticket, Tanwar said, "If Ashok Tanwar was an opportunist, he would have gone to the BJP five years ago. So, from this platform, because today we want to start on a positive note, I would not like to say anything negative but the BJP itself knows that Ashok

Tanwar did not lose there, the BJP lost there and the BJP's policy lost there." Tanwar accused the BJP of disrespecting the Constitution and Dalit leaders. Asked if there was a guarantee that he would now remain with the Congress, Tanwar replied with a Hindi idiom which loosely translates to if a person who loses his way in the morning returns home in the evening, he is not called lost. "When you also leave home, no matter where you go in the world, you will come back and stay at home. When a person leaves home, then he realises the value of home more... Now I have understood the entire political system 360 degrees and that is why today I am standing with Rahul ji," he said. At the rally in Bhawaria on Thursday, Tanwar shook hands with Gandhi and greeted former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who welcomed him into the party fold and patted his back. Congress leaders K C Venugopal, Bajrang Punia, Rao Dan Singh and political scientist Yogendra Yadav were also present on stage.

Maldives President to visit India to restore strained ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu will pay a five-day visit to India beginning Monday with an aim to reset ties that came under some strain since November last year. Though the Maldivian president attended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony in June, it will be his first bilateral visit to India. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), announcing Muizzu's trip, said it is expected to lend further momentum to cooperation and robust people to people ties between the two countries. "President of the Republic of



Maldives Mohamed Muizzu will be travelling to India on a state visit from October 6 to 10," it said. During his visit, Muizzu will hold discussions with Modi on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, it said. Muizzu is also scheduled to meet President Droupadi Murmu. Besides Delhi, he will also visit Mumbai and Bengaluru where he will be attending business events. "The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and holds a special place in the prime minister's vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and India's

"Neighbourhood First Policy," the MEA said in a statement. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar paid a three-day visit to the Maldives in August that prepared the grounds for Muizzu's upcoming trip. "The visit of President Muizzu to India after the recent visit of the external affairs minister to Maldives is testimony to the importance that India attaches to its relations with the Maldives," the MEA said. The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and the overall bilateral ties including in areas of defence and security witnessed an upward trajectory under the previous government in Male.

Moon replica to be unveiled in Assam to commemorate success of Chandrayaan mission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
A stunning 10-meter high replica of the moon is set to be unveiled in Guwahati in Assam to commemorate the success of the Chandrayaan mission, coinciding with the four-day India International Science Festival (IISF) from November 30. This 1:50,00,000 scale model will be prominently displayed in the city, crafted by British artist Luke Jerram, said a statement here by the Union Ministry of Science and Technology. Measuring seven meters in diameter, the moon features intricate 120dpi NASA imagery of its surface, with each centimeter of the illuminated sculpture representing five kilometers of the lunar landscape. He said that the festival aims to



This is for the first time the Ministry is holding the IISF at the Northeast to be hosted at IIT Guwahati. The event is a testimony to the Government's commitment to the Northeast and aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on the region as a key player in India's growth story, said Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh here at a press conference. He said that the festival aims to

celebrate India's achievements in science and technology. The much-sought after event will attract participants from around the globe, featuring discussions on visions for a developed India by 2047, specialized sessions on science and technology in the Northeast, workshops for educators. The event will also have a focus on nuclear energy for self-reliance, alongside a science literature festival.

Rajnath Singh reaffirms Government's commitment to empower India's defence industry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday reaffirmed the Government's commitment to empower India's defence industry by working hand-in-hand with them, and realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making the country a global manufacturing hub. Addressing the seventh annual session of Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) here, he described the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict as a reminder to build a strong defence industrial base, which can be bolstered and expanded with time. The defence minister asserted that the Government, in its third consecutive term, will provide a renewed thrust to its ongoing efforts towards developing a robust, innovative and self-reliant defence ecosystem. He enumerated



the steps taken to attain 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, including creation of defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh & Tamil Nadu, issuance of positive indigenisation lists (PILs), corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Board, handholding of private industries by DRDO, and unveiling of Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020. On the 10 PILs notified with

over 5,500 items, he stated that the idea is to equip the Armed Forces with platforms/equipment manufactured on Indian soil. Terming the lists as dynamic & not static, he exhorted the industry to achieve complete self-reliance for these items within the stipulated time, and keep shortening the list. He also urged them to assess and identify products that

can be added to the PILs in view of the rapid changes being witnessed in the field of defence across the globe. The defence minister emphasised that due to the Government's efforts, an environment conducive to ease of doing business in the country has been created, and a target set for making India's defence industry export-oriented. While he lauded the major contribution of the private sector in taking the defence exports to a record high of over Rs 21,000 crore in Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, he called upon the industry to keep in mind the export and import figures, and strive to reduce the ratio between the two with a target-oriented approach. Recognising the potential of small & medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups in the defence sector, he acknowledged the challenges they face in achieving ease of doing

business. He urged SIDM to work closely with the government to address ground-level issues & help these enterprises to play a larger role in defence manufacturing. "It is important to ensure that our policies translate into ease of doing business at the ground level. SIDM can help in identifying the practical challenges faced by start-ups and SMEs so that we can address them," he said. Rajnath urged the industry to invest more in cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), cyber defence, & autonomous systems. "India's defence industry must keep pace with global trends and focus on high-end technology. There is a need to increase investments in areas like AI & autonomous systems, which will define the future of warfare. The government is ready to provide all necessary support," he said.

Government introduces Ecomark certification to promote environment friendly goods

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
To promote environmentally friendly products, the Government has introduced the 'Ecomark' certification, aimed at a variety of categories, including cosmetics, food items, and electronics. The move aims to empower consumers to make informed choices while encouraging manufacturers to adopt sustainable production practices, ultimately fostering the growth of green industries. The initiative also aims to prevent misleading claims about a product's environmental impact, according to a statement from the Union Environment Ministry issued on Friday here. "Eco-labelling of products enables consumers to make informed purchase decisions as well as encourage manufacturers to transition to the production of environment-friendly products, leading to the promotion of green industries," said the notification



signed by Union Environment Ministry Joint Secretary Nameeta Prasad. The Ecomark initiative which aligns with the 'LIFE' (Lifestyle for Environment) principle, focusing on lower energy consumption, resource efficiency, and the promotion of a circular economy will cover a wide range of products. "These include products that reduce pollution by minimising or eliminating the generation of waste and environ-

mental emissions; products that are recyclable or made from recycled material or both. "...products that reduce the use of non-renewable resources, including non-renewable energy sources and natural resources; and products that reduce the use of any material that has adverse impacts on the environment," as per the notification issued last month. These include cosmetics such as skin powders, tooth pow-

der, toothpaste, creams, oils, shampoos, soaps, nail polish, and lipsticks and soaps and detergents, food items will cover edible oils, tea, and coffee to name a few while electric/electronic goods include TVs, refrigerators, food mixers, geysers, irons, toasters, and fans. Textiles will cover sustainable fabric products. Once granted, the Ecomark will remain valid for three years, with annual reports required from holders to ensure continued compliance. A dedicated Steering Committee, headed by the Union Environment Secretary, will oversee the implementation of the Ecomark rules, recommend products for certification, and periodically review the criteria to support ongoing research and development in sustainable practices. While developing criteria for the grant of 'Ecomark' to a product, the production process, including the source of raw material, will be considered.

Apart from this, the use of natural resources, environmental impact, the effects and extent of emissions or waste arising from the production process, the utilisation of waste and recycled materials, the suitability for recycling, and the use of non-hazardous substances in place of hazardous substances will also be considered. Talking about the implementation procedure, an official said that an application for 'Ecomark' will be required to be made to the CPCB. After that, the Board will, either by itself or through a verifier, verify whether the product complies. Once this is done, a report will be prepared. Once the Board is satisfied that the product meets the conditions mentioned in the guidelines, it may grant 'Ecomark'. This mark will be valid for 3 years or until there is a change in criteria, whichever is earlier. The certificate can be renewed, as per the notification.

ICMR inks pact with NVVN to harness solar power across its institutes nationwide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
In a move aimed to cut down carbon footprint and energy costs as the Government sets a target of Net Zero Carbon emission by 2070, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has inked a pact with NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN), aiming to harness solar power across its institutes nationwide. Under the agreement, NVVN will provide, install, test, and maintain rooftop solar panels at 15 ICMR institutes, totaling a capacity of 4,559 KW. Additionally, a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) will secure a fixed solar tariff for the next 25 years, enhancing long-term cost efficiency and sustainability for ICMR operations. Last year's total electric unit consumption of ICMR institutes was 24,181,811 kwh, as per the ICMR official. The move to empower these institutes with solar power is the part of the Modi-led



Government at the Centre to achieve the target of adding 50 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity every year for the next five years i.e. 2030. A senior official from the ICMR said that the emphasis is on energy conservation and pollution-free environment aiming to reduce the dependence on conventional sources of energy, and replacing them with renewable sources. Seven institutes are already benefiting from solar power under earlier projects, and the MoU with NVVN will extend solarisation efforts to additional facilities. States are already stepping up

efforts to help significantly reduce their carbon footprint and energy expenditure. For instance, Rajasthan is expected to attract investments worth Rs 5 lakh crore in the energy sector over the next five years, Minister of State Heera Lal Nagar said recently at the Renewable Energy India (REI) Expo 2024 organised by Informa Markets in India. The Minister said that, "Rajasthan has transformed its geographic challenges into an energy boon. Currently, we produce 20,000 MW of solar energy, of which only 5,000 MW is used locally, while the rest is supplied across the country. Additionally, we have taken steps to further scale this, with planned investments of Rs 5 lakh crore in the energy sector over the next 4-5 years," Nagar said. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh has taken initiatives for 600 MW of solar and 880 MWh of battery storage, aiming to integrate renewable energy with energy storage solutions.

Independent, nominated members can be kingmakers in J and K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU
Ahead of the declaration of Assembly election results on October 8, speculations are going on as to who will form the next Government in Jammu and Kashmir.

While the Bharatiya Janta Party is hoping to come closer to the magic numbers the pre-poll alliance partners - the National Conference and the Congress Party are keeping their fingers crossed. However, the political grapevine in the region suggested independent candidates along with five nominated members (with voting rights) are set to play a pivotal role in the Government formation in the region. Rough estimates suggested more than half a dozen independent candidates and five nominated members are most likely to play the role of kingmakers along with small political parties after the poll results are declared in Jammu and Kashmir.

The senior leadership of the BJP and the National Conference are secretly maintaining a close watch on the independent candidates likely to emerge victorious in both regions. According to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has been granted powers to nominate five persons to the Assembly including two each Kashmiri Pandits (migrant) and Women and one PoJK

refugee with voting rights, taking the effective strength of the House to 95. Following this development, the majority mark in the Legislative Assembly will be 48. to political pundits, the voters across Jammu and Kashmir are most likely to throw a fractured mandate. Since the 2002, Assembly polls no political party has won more than 28 Assembly seats. The National Conference and the PDP have won a maximum

number of 28 seats in the previous polls while BJP has touched the tally of 25 in the 2014 Assembly polls. Congress has touched 20 before hitting the lowest number of 12 seats in 2014. The like-minded political parties will have no other option but to join hands together to cobble up a majority. Meanwhile, Congress has strongly objected to the move of the ruling BJP to get five of its leaders nominated to the Legislative Assembly,

from LG before the process of Government formation in J and K and termed any such move as undemocratic and against the mandate of people and asked the LG to desist from any such move. Reacting strongly to the media reports, JKPC has termed any such move as undemocratic, an attempt to defeat the mandate of the people. JKPC senior vice president and chief spokesperson, Ravinder Sharma told media persons on Friday that the power to

nominate five members to the Legislative Assembly should lie with the new Government, otherwise it would be an attempt to defeat the mandate of the people. Expressing hope that Congress - NC will get a comfortable majority to form the Government, but any such exercise would be contrary to the democratic norms and would be another betrayal of the mandate of the people, he added. "The people have cast their vote to elect their

representatives to form the Government whosoever gets majority, in the elections should be given a chance to form the Government," Sharma said. The Congress party had favored reservations in the Assembly for PoJK refugees, KPs, and other minorities through elections to give representation to them but it would be a misuse of the provision of nomination if it is used to defeat the mandate of people by the BJP, JKPC chief spokesperson added.



Smoke rises after bombs were allegedly hurled at the office-cum-residence of BJP leader Arjun Singh, in North 24 Parganas district, Friday, October 4, 2024. Singh alleged that a group of people threw stones, hurled bombs and fired multiple gunshots around 8.30 am on Friday

Ex BJP MP's house attacked with bombs, bullets in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
Bombs were hurled and gunshots fired at the residence of former MP and senior BJP leader's Bhatpara residence in North 24 Parganas about 50 km off Kolkata, the politician on Friday alleged. Claiming that he had received a bullet when it grazed past him, the former Trinamool Congress-turned-BJP MP said that a band of TMC criminals were behind the attack. "At about 8.30 in the morning when the family members were busy preparing for Navaratri Pujas some criminals at the instance of local TMC councillor Namit Singh attacked my house-cum-office at Mazdoor Bhawan with brickbats, bombs and they even fired gunshots," he said adding, Namit Singh was a criminal whose name figured in the cases being investigated by the National Investigation Agency. He also alleged that the police stood silent spectator when the gun-toting criminals stomped about the area. "Everything was done at the instance of the local TMC leadership and in connivance with the police who are acting like slaves of the TMC leaders," the leader often

referred to be a strongman of the area said. "They hurled about 15 bombs one after the other ... they terrorised the locals and the members of my family but the administration did nothing," he said. Referred to as a mafia zone Barrackpore an industrial region dominated mostly by jute mills has been a hotbed of political clashes — resulting in several deaths — from the days of the erstwhile Left Front. Singh was a TMC MLA from the region in those days and a close follower of the then Opposition Leader and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. When asked to comment on the Friday's attacks local TMC MLA and archrival of Singh said Somnath Shyam said that his party was not involved in the attacks. "The police must be taking action if at all there is any incident ... but the TMC is not involved in anything," he said. Singh who had twice been an MP from Barrackpore, first on BJP ticket defeating TMC's Dinesh Trivedi in 2014 and then on TMC ticket winning in 2019 general elections. He finally joined the BJP after he was not given a ticket by the TMC in 2024 and contested against the sitting Bengal Minister Partha Bhowmick conceding the seat to him.

Former Minister Harshvardhan Patil to quit BJP, join NCP (SP)

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
The ruling BJP suffered yet another setback ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls on Friday, as former Minister and its senior leader from western Maharashtra Harshvardhan Patil announced his decision to quit the saffron party and join the Sharad Pawar-led NCP.

Patil's announcement came a day after he met NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar at the latter's "Silver Oak" residence in south Mumbai. Patil, it may be recalled, had quit the Congress and joined the BJP in the run-up to the October 2019 State Assembly polls. Patil's decision to join the NCP (SP) stems from the realisation that he will not be able to contest from home constituency of Indapur, a seat he had represented for four consecutive terms from 1995 to 2009. Welcoming Patil to his party, NCP (AP) chief Sharad Pawar said: "I welcome Harshvardhan Patil's decision. We expect many party workers to return to the party in the coming days. All those who believe in the ideology of the NCP (AP) are always welcome". Patil had wanted to contest the 2024 State Assembly polls on a BJP ticket from Indapur, a wish he had recently conveyed to deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis. However, coalition compulsions within the ruling MahaYuti — comprising BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit



Pawar-led NCP - has made it impossible for Patil to contest the State Assembly polls from Indapur. Because, NCP (AP) chief Ajit Pawar meanwhile, went ahead and announced sitting MLA Dattatray Vithoba Bharne — who had won the elections in 2014 and 2019 from the undivided NCP — as his party candidate for the Lok Sabha polls. A four-time MLA, Patil — who had been elected to the State Assembly from Indapur constituency in 1995, 1999 and 2004 as an Independent and in 2009 as a candidate from the Congress — is likely to be fielded as an NCP (AP) candidate from Indapur in the 2024 Assembly polls. Talking to media persons, Patil said: "I have been travelling across the Indapur constituency and meeting people from various sections for the last two months. People have been insisting that I should contest the Assembly election"

"I had a detailed discussion with Fadnavis...since the Indapur seat is going to the sitting MLA from Maha Yuti (Bharne), he (Fadnavis) assured me of another option. Though the option would have been feasible for me, it would not have been acceptable to my supporters and people from my constituency," Patil said. "During my meeting with Pawar sahib yesterday, he told me that since my supporters want me to contest from Indapur, I should take a call... I spoke to my supporters and have decided to join the NCP (SP)," Patil said. Welcoming Patil's entry to her party, Baramati MP and NCP (SP) Working President Supriya Sule said: "The family relations between Pawar family and Patil family go back to six decades... I welcome him to the NCP. Patil is the Chairman of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories. Patil's entry to the NCP (SP) comes close on the heels of Raje Samarjeetsinh Ghatge, a member of the erstwhile royal family of Kolhapur, quitting the saffron party, joining the Sharad Pawar-led party. Similarly, in a "ghar-wapsi" of sorts, three-time former MP and BJP leader from Gondia in Vidarbha region Gopaldas Agrawal had quit the saffron party on September 13, and joined the Opposition Congress. Both NCP (SP) and Congress are constituents of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVS).



The Union Minister for Defence, Rajnath Singh at the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) 2024, in New Delhi on October 04, 2024

Defence Minister reiterates India's stand for rules based on international order

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday here reiterated India's stand on having a rules based international order and respect for international laws and said "India advocates for a peaceful resolution to disputes and seeks to promote cooperation among nations in Indo-Pacific." These assertions were in apparent reference to China flexing its muscle in this strategically important region. Addressing the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2024, he also said India's vision for Indo-Pacific is based on fostering partnerships through sustainable development, economic growth and mutual security. "India's vision for the Indo-Pacific is based on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) as we believe in fostering partnerships that prioritise sustainable development, economic growth and mutual security," Rajnath said.

He added that the engagement with regional partners, including joint exercises and information-sharing initiatives, is aimed at strengthening the collective maritime security framework. He underlined that the Indian Armed Forces, especially Navy, has been at the forefront of cooperative endeavours with countries of the region, and are continuously working towards building their capacity and capabilities. "While India's endeavour for maritime cooperation continues, its interests are not in conflict with any other country. At the same time, interests of any other nation should not come in conflict with other nations. This is the spirit in which we must work together," he added. Rajnath pointed out that the rapidly evolving global maritime landscape is shaped by shifting power dynamics, resource competition and emerging security threats. He added that the emergence of the Indo-Pacific theatre reflects a visible balancing of global power. "The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the world's most dynamic geopolitical zone and is the centre of gravity of the economic and strategic interests. It also carries a degree of pre-existing international tension, rivalry and conflict. While some challenges are of local nature, many challenges have global ramifications. With respect to marine resources, we are witnessing a significant increase in geopolitical competition. As populations continue to grow, the demand for marine resources has surged, leading to heightened tensions and competition among nations," he added. Sharing insights on the subject of "Global Commons", the natural resources such as the ocean, outer space, climate, clean air, etc, which is shared by all of humanity, Rajnath stated that these are essential to maintain a sustainable planet. He stressed on the need to create a balance of competing interests, which can offer numerous ecological, economic, and social benefits transcending national boundaries.

India matching up to China by improving airfields: IAF chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

China is rapidly developing infrastructure on its side across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and India is also matching up by improving its airfields in the border areas, IAF chief AP Singh said here on Friday. He also said while India is ahead of China in terms of training, it lags behind in technology and rate of defence production and called for faster pace of developing and manufacturing weapon systems within the country. The Air Force Chief said the aim of the IAF is to achieve total self-reliance by 2047. The IAF Chief said India has the capabilities to intercept any incoming missile but lack the numbers. He made this observation when asked whether like Israel, which a few days ago intercepted most of the 200 missiles fired by Iran, India can do the same. He pointed out India is a much bigger country in terms of size compared to Israel and will prioritise in defending vital strategic installations if attacked by missiles. Making these assertions here during the annual press conference ahead of the Air Force Day on October 8, he said India is modernising its



Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh addresses a press conference at Akash Air Force Mess, in New Delhi on Friday

airfields along the borders with China and using advanced landing grounds (ALG) in central sector. Comparing the two countries, the Air Chief said India is better than China as far as human aspects and training are concerned but has lagged behind in technology and production rates of defence equipment.

"We have done our analysis. We don't have a design to go offensive unnecessarily. Only when we are pushed, we will do something... We have our plans in place. One place I can positively say is we are training much better than them. We have exposure much better than them. We get to know... how they train and how many

different Air Forces they interact with and how many do we interact with. As far as human angle is concerned, people behind the machine are concerned we are way ahead of them," he said. "As far as technology is concerned we may be not so good as of now, we have lagged. We were better than them in technology also sometime back, but we have lagged in that and we need to catch up. As far as production rates are concerned, we are way behind. We need to catch up. That will happen over a period of time, it cannot happen overnight." Acknowledging the delay in the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas programme with the MK-1A deliveries yet to begin, IAF chief said their first aim is not to let the fighter aircraft strength go down below 30 squadrons. In this regard, he said Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) must now stick to its promise of producing 24 aircraft every year to offset the delay. They have a third aircraft line in Nashik, it is yet to churn out an aircraft, he noted. He stressed that private players have to come in to ensure the numbers. "We can't keep relying on one agency. Even HAL will have limitations," he stated, given the numbers involved.

Thousands bid final farewell to Thomas Cherian

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
Thousands of people had gathered at Elanthur St Peters Church to bid farewell to Thomas Cherian, a craftsman in Indian Army's elite Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers who had laid down his life at the altar of the nation in an air crash on February 7, 1968 in Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh. High ranking bishops and priests of the Orthodox Church led the prayers and other rituals prior to the funeral as his brothers and sister stood with sombre faces. Cherman was buried with full military honors as

onlookers shouted "Thomas Cherman Amar Rahen". His mortal remains were recovered from the crash site last week after a 56 year long search operation carried out by the rescue team of Indian Army. The body was flown to Thiruvananthapuram by a special IAF aircraft and was received by the officers and jawans of the Pangode Brigade of the Army, stationed in the suburb of the capital city, Thomas Cherman began his last journey to his village early Friday morning after the officers and jawans accorded him the customary send off at the Brigade head quarters. A motorcade accompanied the

special vehicle that carried the coffin which was draped in the national tricolors. The body was kept in his ancestral home for two hours before the cortege accompanied by hundreds of people left for the church. Thousands had gathered to bid him good bye and for most of them Thomas Cherman was an unknown soldier till Monday. It was through the communication from Indian Army that they came to know about Cherman who had left the village at the age of 17 to serve the nation. A team of officers and soldiers acted as pall bearers while the group of bishops and priests read out psalms

and prayers from Holy Bible. There was a message from Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi which was read out by the church representative. Wreaths were placed on behalf of the Kerala Government as well as the district administration. Close relations of Cherman including his two brothers Thomas Varghese, Thomas Thomas and sister Mary kissed the coffin for the last time while the officers handed over the tricolour to Thomas Thomas. The casket was lowered into a special tomb near to the final resting place of their parents and elder brother. "This is an emotional farewell

to Cherman who had come back from the snow clad Himalayas to the arid soil of this village. All we could offer right now is our tearful goodbye," said Gopalakrishnan, who was in attendance at the Thomas's Odalil Home from morning till the last post was sounded by the Army buglers. Cherman's name would figure in the record books for the feat of Dogra Scouts of the Indian Army and Tiranga Mountain Rescue for recovering a soldier after 56 years of search mission. Till date only nine bodies out of the 102 passengers who were on board in the ill-fated aircraft had been retrieved.

Sedentary lifestyle main cause for heart disease, back pain, diabetes: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As work from home becomes a common lifestyle particularly post-Covid pandemic, many of us find ourselves spending excessive hours sitting, whether at our desks or on the couch, often slouched over our laptops and phones. A brisk walk and exercise is key, Joao Norha, a doctoral researcher and physiotherapist at the University of Turku who conducted the study has focused on adults aged 40 to

65 with metabolic syndrome - a cluster of conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Flagger the detrimental effects of a sedentary lifestyle on back pain, especially on the ones who are overweight and physically inactive, she said that the unhealthy habit can lead to serious long-term health issues. The study targeted participants with metabolic syndrome — a combination of health conditions involving the risk of heart diseases, stroke and diabetes. The study was conducted on 64 adults

between 40 and 65 years-old who were overweight or obese. The participants were further divided into two groups — one group was asked to reduce their sitting time and include light exercise in their routine, while the other group was asked to carry on with their normal routine. The ones who included light exercise in their routine demonstrated stable back pain, while the inactive group showed a steep increase in the intensity of back pain. Hence, the study concluded that reducing inactivity can help fix back pain significantly.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

How secular is India?

As India grapples with internal strife and external criticism, the debate surrounding its commitment to secularism intensifies

India, a nation characterised by its rich tapestry of religious diversity, has long championed the values of secularism and pluralism. However, the landscape of religious freedom in the country has come under scrutiny, particularly with the recent designation by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) of India as a "Country of Particular Concern." This designation has ignited a contentious debate, leading to a sharp rebuke from the Indian government, which labeled the USCIRF a "biased organisation with a political agenda." In its 2024 report, the USCIRF highlighted alarming trends regarding religious freedom in India. The commission reported instances of violence against individuals based on their religious identity, citing cases of killings, beatings and lynchings carried out by vigilante groups. It also noted the arbitrary arrests of religious leaders and the demolition of homes and places of worship, characterising these actions as severe violations of religious freedom. The report further pointed to changes



in India's legal framework that, according to the USCIRF, target and disenfranchise religious minorities. These changes include the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the implementation of a uniform civil code. Such measures, the USCIRF argues, contribute to a climate of fear and marginalisation for non-Hindu communities. In response to the USCIRF's assertions, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs firmly rejected the report. Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal described the commission's narrative as a "motivated" misrepresentation of facts aimed at maligning India's image on the global stage. The ministry's statement emphasised that the USCIRF's reporting is unscientific and driven by an agenda that fails to reflect the realities of India's democracy.

It is true that no external agency or country has right to give us lessons in religious freedom and tolerance as we have practiced it since ancient times. Moreover, they have skeletons in their own cupboard which they would better take care first. The trigger happy policemen in the US don't think twice before shooting a black guy for not pulling over his car. But having said that it is time for us to reflect and introspect. To be fair, religious freedom has eroded in the recent years. There have been lynching incidents and that is not a made up thing. We may say that they are isolated incidents but they are enough to send a message to the community. Moreover, the attacks on churches and other religious places have been reported from across the country all this while the police looked the other way or just took mild action. It is time to ensure one and all that India is safe as it has been for ages for people of all religions and castes. And India as a State does not discriminate people for the religion they practice or food they eat. The concerns raised by the USCIRF may be exaggerated and they may make isolated incidents look mainstream but the government must maintain zero tolerance for such incidents so that no outside agency dare raise a pointing figure at us.

PICTALK



A child looks at dolls depicting scenes from Ramayana during the Dussehra Doll festival, in Bengaluru

Double-edged sword of social media: Impact on relationships

While it offers the promise of community and instant communication, the allure of curated perfection can lead to unrealistic expectations and strain relationships

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, connecting people from all corners of the globe. While it offers numerous benefits, such as facilitating communication and fostering community, it also poses significant challenges to relationships and mental health.



One of the most significant ways social media can impact relationships is by creating unrealistic expectations. The carefully curated images and posts that people share online often portray an idealised version of their lives. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and comparison, as individuals may feel pressure to measure up to the perceived perfection of others. Additionally, the constant stream of information and updates can make it difficult to maintain deep and meaningful connections with loved ones. Social media can also contribute to the breakdown of relationships. The anonymity and lack of accountability that the internet provides can create a breeding ground for cyberbullying, harassment and online infidelity. These behaviours can erode trust, damage relationships and have a devastating impact on mental health. Furthermore, the constant pressure to be online and connected can lead to feelings of anxiety and stress. The fear of missing out (FOMO) can drive individuals to spend excessive amounts of time scrolling through social media feeds, neglecting their relationships and other important aspects of their lives. This can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness and low self-esteem. The impact of social media on mental health can be particularly severe for young people, who are often heavy users of these platforms. Studies have shown that excessive social media use can be linked to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. This is in part due to the exposure to negative content, such as cyberbullying and hate speech, as well as

NATO's eastward march threatens Asian stability

For Asia, aligning with NATO's expansionist policies risks destabilising the region and eroding cultural values of peace and coexistence



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

NATO's expansion into Asia poses a monumental danger that threatens not only regional stability but also the core values of peace and coexistence that many Asian countries uphold. The recent change in NATO leadership, with Mark Rutte taking the helm, may suggest a potential for new strategies, but the underlying policies and militaristic attitudes of the alliance remain unchanged. The illusion of progress is merely that—an illusion—while NATO's intentions to maintain a prolonged battlefield in Ukraine serve as a reflection of its true objectives. As observed, the US weapons sales surged dramatically in 2023, reaching a record total of \$238 billion as the demand for arms skyrocketed due to the ongoing conflict. Profiting from the sale of weapons on one hand and exploiting the suffering of unarmed civilians across Europe and West Asia is becoming increasingly reprehensible. This reflects a strategic mindset where war is not an unfortunate circumstance but an industry. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. This is how we "civilisations" behave. The history of military alliances has consistently illustrated a paradoxical truth: nations often proclaim peace while simultaneously preparing for war and engaging in it.



The recent rise of Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who has advocated for an 'Asian NATO,' is nothing but a sign of a looming storm ahead. Ishiba's call for deeper ties among Asian nations and the establishment of a NATO-like grouping echoes sentiments that prioritise militarisation over diplomacy. This vision stands in stark contrast to the scepticism expressed by India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who highlighted India's unique historical position and its reluctance to embrace the treaty alliances that such a framework would entail. Ishiba's proposition to station Japanese troops on the US soil and share control of nuclear weapons highlights the extreme lengths to which some leaders are willing to go in the name of security, yet it has not received significant backing from the US administration, signalling the complexities and limitations of this vision. While NATO presents itself as a bastion of defence, its actions betray a far more sinister agenda.



THE HISTORY OF MILITARY ALLIANCES HAS CONSISTENTLY ILLUSTRATED A PARADOXICAL TRUTH: NATIONS OFTEN PROCLAIM PEACE WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PREPARING FOR WAR AND ENGAGING IN IT

The alliance has not only prolonged conflicts but has also turned them into battlegrounds for competing ideologies and geopolitical power plays. This relentless devastation not only lays waste to nations but also serves the insatiable appetites of the arms industry, which reaps substantial profits from the chaos of ongoing warfare. Evidence reveals that the US government perceives conflicts as lucrative ventures rather than humanitarian crises. Nations that align themselves with NATO risk becoming collateral damage in a power struggle that has little regard for their sovereignty or cultural identity. The allure of NATO's promises can be enticing, but history teaches us that aligning with powerful military alliances often leads to disastrous outcomes. Karl Marx posited that "history repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." NATO's past interventions, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and today's Ukraine showcase a pattern of destruction that is all too familiar. The question remains: will Asia fall into this trap once again, sacrificing its autonomy for the sake of Western agendas? Moreover, the political discourse surrounding NATO often ignores the implications of its militarisation on social stability and development. This is particularly relevant as Asian nations find themselves increasingly pressured to align with NATO's militaristic strategies. The focus on military expenditure detracts from addressing pressing social issues, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The growing arms race in Asia, driven by NATO's expansion, threatens to spark regional conflict with catastrophic consequences, echoing the historical precedent set before World War I. The belief that increased military presence fosters stability is fundamentally flawed, often leading to insecurity and competition as nations rush to arm themselves against perceived threats. This environment heightens the risk of miscalculations and unintended escalations, with incalculable costs in human lives and economic stability. Additionally, engagement in militaristic alliances under NATO's banner risks placing Asian nations in a moral quagmire, contradicting the region's philosophies that prioritise peace, harmony, and cooperation, as espoused by Confucianism, Hinduism, Islamism, and Buddhism. The very qualities that were undermined by colonialism, after years of suffering and the sacrifices of millions, must be protected and promoted, as aligning with NATO may ultimately undermine these cultural values in favour of a destructive path centred on military solutions. Moreover, the consequences of such an alignment are not limited to immediate military conflicts. Long-term geopolitical ramifications could destabilise the entire region, further entrenching power struggles that lead to conflict. Embracing a militaristic alliance may offer a temporary illusion of security but ultimately leads to self-inflicted wounds—akin to harakiri. The path toward a more peaceful and stable future lies not in militarisation but in diplomacy, cooperation, and mutual respect. Instead of succumbing to the pressures of NATO's warmongering agenda, Asian countries should seek to forge their paths, grounded in their cultural philosophies and values that prioritise harmony and coexistence. The rhetoric of security and defence masks a more insidious agenda—one driven by the military-industrial complex that thrives on conflict and arms sales. For Asian nations, the choice to align with NATO is a perilous one, fraught with the potential for self-destruction. (The writer is a journalist and author; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TEN YEARS OF SWACHH BHARAT

Madam — Swachh Bharat Mission, one of the first programmes announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he took office in 2014, completes 10 years on October 2. The aim was to equip all households with individual toilets, ensure communities have cluster toilets to eradicate the open defecation system followed in villages, and ensure that schools and anganwadi toilets have waste management systems for both solid waste and liquid waste. To achieve this, the government's assistance was increased from Rs 10000 to Rs 12000 under the SBM scheme. Amazingly, over 10 million toilets have been constructed in rural households in 6 lakh villages till date, benefiting 50 million people, and many of these villages have been designated as open-defecation-free, which is essential for a healthy environment. Before launching SBM, unsafe sanitation caused an estimated 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually, with 3 lakh deaths. Also, a UNICEF report indicates that women in Indian villages feel safer after the installation of toilets in rural households. Also in villages declared ODF, the risk of groundwater contamination due to human waste has been reduced a lot. Though villages benefitted a lot due to the Swachh Bharat Mission, a survey has emphasised the urgent need for action against plastic pollution and air pollution in rural and urban lands. Motivating the communities against air pollution and water pollution for adopting a proper sanitation model for a healthy life is the urgent need of the hour.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

LAWRENCE'S FUNERAL CONTROVERSY

Madam—Apropos of the story 'The battle over CPI (M) leader M M Lawrence's final journey', October 3, 2024. The Communists globally are political chameleons with unequal rules for the comrades. Most of the Communists,

Indian PhD system needs revamp



The Indian education system, especially the higher and research-oriented education system, has gone through so many structural changes from the past till now. But the research-oriented PhD programme still lacks somewhere to provide ease to the people vis-à-vis their admission to the doctoral program. There exist some of the undoubted systematic flaws in the UGC-NET examination score as a mandatory requisite

for taking admission in a PhD. The research work and PhD are all about deep understanding instead of memory strength of the very field of students' specialisation and interest area, in which root learning from UGC-NET could merely assist. Already, the PhD course demands a minimum of a five-year time period for its completion, and mandating a UGC NET score as a prerequisite to taking admission in a PhD only extends the time period for aspirants interested in becoming research scholars. UGC needs to make either systematic changes in its examination pattern or needs to enhance critical thinking and innovative thinking tests for the students interested in doing PhDs from the reputed academic institutions of India. Otherwise, India will continue to bear the cost of losing some fantastic minds to non-Indian universities that offer research ease, especially at the time of admission.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

though they claim to be non-believers in God in public, may be passionate believers in God in private. The unfortunate Lawrence episode points to the chaos the Communist ideology can create in a Communist family by vertically dividing its members into two warring factions. It also shows that even the deceased Communist may not be allowed to rest in peace by the comrades merely to accommodate their political ideology, what may be to the grieving family. Once an individual is bitten by the Communist ideology, there is no escape from it, even if she/he desires to change his ideology after being convinced about the utopian Communist goals. If the die-hard Comrades learn a lesson or two from the unfortunate Lawrence episode and the Party's insensitive handling of the entire episode, it would be better for the Comrades.

Bichu Muttathara | Pune

STARVATION AMID GROWTH

Madam — India is the fifth-largest economy in the world. At the same time,

the Global Hunger Index-2023 ranked India 111th out of 125 countries, with the level of hunger falling in the serious category. Though the Union government had rejected this index as erroneous, it cannot be rejected altogether, as evidently West Bengal agricultural migrant labourer Samar Khan, 35, died of starvation in Chennai as he reportedly did not have money to buy food. He was admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Government Hospital after he collapsed owing to starvation. He had not eaten for six days. His colleague, another agricultural labourer, Satya Pundit is still in the hospital. Even having a buffer stock; people dying of starvation is a slur on the country, especially when we are talking of the fifth largest economy in the world. Besides, hollow slogans of the government that nobody will be allowed to die of starvation are belied.

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

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DEEBA SALIM IRFAN



FIRST COLUMN

THE POWER OF INTELLIGENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

The human mind should be open to positivity and confidence, to harness intelligence and knowledge



RAVI VALLURI

Two thousand five hundred years ago, a prince from the formidable Sakya dynasty, in the quest for reality and truth, discarded his monarchical apparel to adorn ochre robes and went on to become Gautama the monk. He and his mind incessantly wandered till the attainment of truth and insight. Upon attaining enlightenment after performing arduous tapas, Gautama the monk became Buddha the Enlightened and Compassionate One. The mind of the prince turned Bhikkhu had become hollow and empty from within and without realise the pristine verisimilitude. There is also the story of Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu. Once a young evangelist who cast away the traditions and rituals of the Catholic order, only to serve the poor and infirm (particularly those afflicted by leprosy), she was first to become a sister, then Mother Teresa, after rendering selfless yeoman service to the populace of Kolkata (then Calcutta) and humanity at large. She was the fourth Indian to be canonised on September 4, 2016, and was set in stone as St Teresa of Calcutta by Pope Francis for the phenomenal work and the miracles that have taken place. Buddha and St Teresa were not confined to monasteries and convents respectively to live their lives as ascetics in contemplation, meditation, chastity and poverty. Both were prototypical individuals who transcended boundaries to carve a niche for themselves by providing an alternative ideology.

Meanwhile, way back in the year 1943 a young Swedish national, Ingvar Kampard set up a company called IKEA. IKEA is an acronym for Ingvar Kampard Elmtaryd at Agunnaryd. Today it is one of the largest ready-to-assemble furniture companies in the world. These are individuals, who with their mettlesome moves hold the ordinary traveller's gaze in askance. What differentiates them from the rest of the pack? It is not the opaci-



ty of their thought process, but looking for out-of-the-box solutions. While IKEA sets up furniture in our households, and Jio and WhatsApp provide the necessary seamless connectivity in communication, it is intriguing to decipher the letters of the acronym IKW.

I stand for Intelligence, K signifies Knowledge and W represents Wisdom. Intelligence, Knowledge, and Wisdom need to be harnessed by humans in ample measure to metamorphose our minds and lives to become true achievers. In the wired world today, we are girdled with far superior technology in comparison to a few decades ago and are surrounded by a plethora of gizmos at our disposal. The product and service should necessarily be flexible, adaptable, and positively meant for the public good. Only in such a scenario will the longevity of the article in question be ensured and assured.

Siddhartha with his superior intelligence grasped that he was encumbered by misery and suffering; he gained knowledge through the various techniques of pranayama and meditation and ultimately wisdom dawned on him in the form of enlightenment. Today a seeker without living in the monastic order, living like any ordinary individual could attain and experience bliss and enlightenment by practising the technique of Vipassana.

Similarly, in the Art of Living, through the regular practice of the Sudarshan Kriya, a seeker can live in the present moment by banishing antipathetic thoughts. St. Teresa of Kolkata too possessed enormous intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom to establish the order of the Missionaries of Charity to serve the distressed sections of humanity. The human mind should be developed into a sacred place, which is malleable to embrace positivity and confidence to harness the skills of intelligence and knowledge so that the Gods bestow us with a bounty of wisdom.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Bangladesh's interim Govt's crackdown on secularists



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Shahriar Kabir's arrest, amid controversial charges linked to his long-standing fight for secularism reflects Bangladesh fundamentalists working behind the interim government



It is important to examine in some detail Shahriar Kabir's arrest in Dhaka on September 17, 2024, and the subsequent related developments, to understand the forces driving Bangladesh's interim government and direction in which it is taking the country. To start with, one must briefly look at who Kabir is. Author, journalist, film-maker and an internationally respected champion of human rights, secularism and democracy, he has also been at the forefront of the struggle to bring to justice those who had collaborated with the Pakistanis during Bangladesh's liberation war of 1971 and were their accomplices in the perpetration of crimes against humanity including mass murder and rape. He played an important role in the formation of the Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee for the Uprootment of the Killers and Collaborators of Seventy-One) under the leadership of Jahanara Imam whose husband and one of whose sons were savagely killed by the Pakistanis in 1971. Kabir, who subsequently became the organisation's president, was, at the time of his arrest, president of its advisory committee. Second, one needs to look at the circumstances of his arrest, the charges against him and his accusers and their ties with the interim government. According to a report in The Dhaka Tribune, datelined September 17, 2024 and carried under the heading "Shahriar Kabir arrested in Dhaka," Mufti Harun Izhar Chowdhury, joint secretary of the Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat), filed, on August 20, 2024, a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Dhaka, against Sheikh Hasina and 23 others—one of them being Kabir—accusing them of crimes against humanity and mass murder in connection with a rally by Hefazat on May 5, 2013. Further, according to a report in The Daily Star, datelined September 18, 2024, and carried under the heading "Shahriar Kabir placed on 7-day remand", Kabir, along with Mozammel Babu, was produced before the court with a 10-day remand plea by the police, in a case concerning the death of a domestic help, Liza Akter, during the quota



TO START WITH, ONE MUST BRIEFLY LOOK AT WHO KABIR IS. AUTHOR, JOURNALIST, FILM-MAKER AND AN INTERNATIONALLY RESPECTED CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SECULARISM AND DEMOCRACY

reform protests. The report cited a sub-inspector of police present in the court as saying that Dhaka's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Md Sanaullah, passed the orders remanding him custody for seven days.

A report datelined September 17, 2024, and published in *Prothom Alo* English under the heading, "Shahriar Kabir, Nurul Islam arrested," cited sources as saying that Kabir was an accused in several murder cases filed with Jatrabari and other police stations in Dhaka. According to information available with this writer, seven murder cases have so far been levelled against him besides the one the ICT. The levelling of murder charges against a person of Kabir's stature is not only laughable but suggests, as in a number of other cases, planned and coordinated behind-the-scenes effort.

As seen, the case before the ICT has been filed by Mufti Harun Izhar Chowdhury, joint secretary of the Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat) accusing Sheikh Hasina and 23 others, including Kabir, of crimes against humanity and mass murder in connection with a rally by Hefazat on May 5, 2013.

According to a report in The Dhaka Tribune (August 19, 2024) under the heading "Hefazat rally in Shapla Chattar: Odhikar publishes list of killed people," Odhikar, a human rights organisation, published on Monday (August 19) a list of people allegedly killed during the Awami League-led government's crackdown on the Hefazat's rally on May 5-6, 2013, at Shapla Chattar in Dhaka. The list, originally published in 2013, had led to action against the organisation by the Awami League government.

Citing persecution by the latter government, Odhikar, according to the

report, urged the interim government to immediately form an independent inquiry commission headed by a Supreme Court judge and conduct an impartial investigation into the extrajudicial killings committed on May 5 and 6 of 2013 and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The *Dhaka Tribune* report did not mention whether Odhikar had named the perpetrators. As seen above, Hefazat's complaint was filed on August 20, 2024, the day after Odhikar's post. Three questions arise here. What was the number of people killed? Was the rally peaceful?

What was the context in which it was held and what were the Hefazat's demands? Against the Odhikar's figures, a BBC report, datelined May 6, 2024, stated that at least 27 persons had been killed and dozens hurt in the clashes. It also said that at least two of the dead were policemen. Also, the fact that the police, according to the report, "used stun grenades and rubber bullets" to disperse the protestors indicates an effort to keep the casualties to minimum.

The rally was extremely violent. The report cites one witness as saying that the demonstrators "were very aggressive, some people were throwing stones and the situation quickly become violent... the police had no option but to respond". The witness further told the BBC, "Rioters vandalised markets and set fire to bookshops where the Holy Koran is sold. Thousands of Koran and religious books burned. They also attacked the ruling party's political office and national mosque."

The Hefazat's 13-point programme includes the enactment of an anti-blasphemy law with provision for death penalty, exemplary punishment to all bloggers and others who "insult Islam," cancellation of

Bangladesh's policy for women's development, bans on the erection of sculptures in public places, the mixing of men and women in public, candlelight vigils, and "shameless behaviour and dresses," besides declaring Ahmadiyas as "non-Muslims." Nadia Sarmin, covering its rally for ETV, was mercilessly beaten for daring to be a woman "in a men only" event. Grievously injured, she was rescued by other journalists.

It is not surprising if all this reminds one of the Taliban's agenda, a DW report (May 9, 2013) by Graham Lucas under the heading "Bangladesh Chaos," cited Maulana Habibur Rahman, one of the Hefajat leaders, as boasting of his role in the 1980s Afghan war and his support to the former al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

The interim government has close and warm relations with the Hefazat. It has lifted the ban on the organisation. The advisor for religious affairs, AFM Khalid Hossain, is the latter's Nayeb-e-Amir. Chief Advisor Mohammad Yunus had a long and cordial meeting on August 31, 2024, with Mamunul Haque, the organisations head. The Hefazat is holding rallies and processions all over the country.

It is in this context that one has to see Shahriar Kabir's arrest and continued detention, in the teeth of demands for his release by international human rights activists and organisations.

The idea is to send a clear message to people in Bangladesh: do not champion secular democracy and humanism and oppose Islamic fundamentalism. If we can send Shahriar Kabir to jail, we can also send you there.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer; views expressed are personal)

Legal tussles over EWS quota violations undermine RTE Act in Delhi

The violation of the Economically Weaker Section quota under the Right to Education Act continues to plague India's education system

The consistent violation of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota under the Right to Education (RTE) Act has become a troubling issue across India, particularly in major cities like Delhi. Despite clear legal mandates, several private schools continue to deny admissions to children who rightfully qualify under this provision, creating a barrier to equal educational opportunities for underprivileged communities.

Recent legal proceedings in the Delhi High Court have once again brought this issue to the forefront, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement of the law to safeguard the rights of EWS students. A case in point is Master Ayan



B K JHA

Saifi, a 4-year-old son of Shahid who had been allotted a seat through a computerised draw of lots conducted by Delhi's Directorate of Education (DoE) for the academic year 2024-25. But, a leading private Senior Secondary School in Rohini denied the admission and that ensued a legal tussle. Shahid approached to Delhi

High Court with his plight and sought justice. It is misconception that lawyers are reluctant to take up such cases especially for people coming from lower strata of society. Credit goes to a young Delhi lawyer Aman Sharma who took up the case for the kid and secured provisional admission for Ayan Saifi to the school. The Delhi High Court, under the guidance of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, acknowledged the violation of the RTE Act and in an interim order granted provisional admission to the child, emphasising the school's legal obligation to comply with the EWS quota. The RTE Act 2009 is a landmark legislation that ensures free and compulso-

ry education for all children aged 6 to 14. One of its key provisions mandates that 25 per cent of seats in private unaided schools be reserved for children from EWS and disadvantaged groups (DG). This quota is intended to promote inclusive education and bridge the gap between socio-economic disparities. However, despite the importance of this provision, its implementation has been met with resistance from many private schools, not only in Delhi but schools across the country. The refusal of admission highlights the ongoing challenge in enforcing this law. It violates a child's fundamental right to education under Article 21-A of the Constitution. "Denying chil-



den from economically weaker sections the education they are entitled to, despite a confirmed allotment, not only goes against the spirit of the Right to Education Act but also creates unnecessary hurdles for families already facing socio-economic challenges," argues advocate Sharma.

A pattern of non-compliance

can easily be seen and unfortunately, it has become pervasive across private educational institutions. Ayan's case is not an isolated incident. Private schools in Delhi have repeatedly been found guilty of disregarding the EWS quota, prompting legal battles that seek to restore the rightful educational opportunities for

underprivileged children. In March 2024, the Delhi High Court revised the income threshold for EWS admissions, reinforced eligibility criteria and offered clearer guidance. However, schools have continued to evade their responsibilities. A similar ruling in 2022 in the case of Rameshwar Jha v. Principal Richmond Global School set a precedent for punitive action against schools that refuse EWS admissions.

The Delhi High Court had then warned that schools could face severe consequences under the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, for non-compliance with the RTE Act. Yet, schools still engage in tactics that delay or deny admission to EWS

students, forcing families to take the matter to court. The larger issue at hand is the erosion of trust in educational institutions and the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional rights. Advocate Sharma urges the Directorate of Education (DoE) and the Judiciary to take stringent actions against schools that defy the RTE Act, calling for penalties and stricter enforcement measures.

It becomes imperative for policymakers, educators, and civil society to collaborate in upholding the principles of the RTE Act and to work towards a more inclusive education system.

(Author is a senior journalist; Views expressed are personal)

Dockworkers' pause strike until Jan 15

Detroit (AP) Some 45,000 dockworkers at East and Gulf coast ports are returning to work after their union reached a deal to suspend a strike that could have caused shortages and higher prices if it had dragged on.

Shortages could have driven up prices and reignited inflation. The union went on strike early Tuesday after its contract expired in a dispute over pay and the automation of tasks at 36 ports stretching from Maine to Texas.

Boston College, said the agreement to halt the strike means that the two sides are close to a final deal. "I'm sure that if they weren't going anywhere they wouldn't have suspended (the strike)," he said.

Melania says she supports abortion rights, putting her at odds with GOP

Melania Trump revealed her support for abortion rights on Thursday, ahead of the release of her upcoming memoir, exposing a stark contrast with her husband, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, on the crucial election issue.

individual freedom. What does 'my body, my choice' really mean? The video appears to confirm excerpts of her self-titled memoir reported by The Guardian on Wednesday.

Nobel Prizes to be announced next week

Wars, a refugee crisis, famine and artificial intelligence could all be recognised when Nobel Prize announcements begin next week under a shroud of violence.

Perhaps it would be right to draw attention to that by withholding the peace prize this year." Withholding the Nobel

Peace is not new. It has been suspended 19 times in the past, including during the world wars. The last time it was not awarded was in 1972.

Public Notice

General public at large is hereby informed that my client Manju Verma W/o Late Sh. Kishan Kumar Verma U/O 256, Guru Datta Nagar, Karkardoma, Laxmi Nagar Shakarpur, Delhi-110092 hereby disowning & dis-inheriting her

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Anis Ahmed, is the owner of Built-up Property bearing House No. C-85, area measuring 50 sq. yds., out of Khadra No. 536, situated at C-Block Raju Park, Delhi-110008

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mrs. Shubda Seth, Mr. Sanjay Seth & Mr. Rakesh Seth, are claiming to be the owners of Property No. 08, (300.96 Sq. Mtrs.), Block-A, Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., Nirman Vihar, Delhi-110092

MORE FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2024 In continuation to already announced Festival Special Trains-2024, Railways have planned to run following additional Festival Special trains as per detail given below:-

Table with 4 columns: Train No., STATIONS, ARR., DEP. Rows include 02262/02261 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. and 09067/09068 Udhna Jn. - Barauni Jn. - Udhna Jn.

UJJAIN SMART CITY LIMITED NOTICE INVITING TENDER Mela Office, Kothi Road, Ujjain (M.P.) 456001 Ph. 0734-2525856 No. USCL/352 Tender ID: 2024_UAD_374105_1 Dated 04.10.2024

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT GeM Bid Number: GEM/2024/B/5416689, Dated: 01-10-2024. E-TENDER CALL NOTICE (E-TCN)

MECHANISED CLEANING OF NEW JALPAIGURI RAILWAY STATION GeM Bid Number: GEM/2024/B/5416689, Dated: 01-10-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work.

CLIX HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED Registered Office: Aggarwal Corporate Tower, Plot No. 23, 5th Floor, Govind Lal Sikka Marg, Rajendra Place, New Delhi-110008

SRF LIMITED Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor Mayur Vihar Phase, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Sadhji Road, Faridkot - 151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236 E-TENDER NOTICE

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL PROTECTING INVESTING FINANCING ADVISING ADITYA BIRLA FINANCE LIMITED Registered Office: Indian Rayon Compound, Veraval, Gujarat-362266

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX No. 0172-50412168

कार्यालय नगर निगम, देहरादून पत्रांक-61 / मू-3-2024-25 सार्वजनिक निविदा सूचना दिनांक- 04.10.2024

Modi releases 18th installment of ₹ 20,000 crore under PM-KISAN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release Rs 20,000 crore as the 18th instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme on Saturday, benefiting over 9.4 crore farmers across the country. Disbursements will be through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) during an event in Washim, Maharashtra, an official statement said. Maharashtra farmers will receive an additional Rs 2,000 crore under the state's Namoi Shetkari Mahasnan Nidhi Yojana. With the 18th instalment, the total amount disbursed under PM-KISAN will exceed Rs 3.45 lakh crore, supporting more than 11 crore farmers nationwide. The PM-KISAN scheme, launched on February 24, 2019, provides Rs 6,000 annually to landholding farmers in three equal instalments. Maharashtra has received about Rs 32,000 crore in 17 instalments, benefiting around 1.20 crore farmers, the second highest among all states. Around 91.51 lakh farmers in Maharashtra will receive over Rs 1,900 crore in the 18th instalment. Modi will also launch an indigenous sex-sorted semen production technology, aimed at reducing costs by approximately Rs 200 per dose. The Prime Minister will



introduce a Unified Genomic Chip for cattle and buffalo, developed by the Animal Husbandry Department. Five solar parks with 19 MW capacity will be dedicated under the MSKVY 2.0 scheme, providing farmers daytime electricity and additional income through land leasing. The event will see the dedication of 9,200 Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) and e-distribution of awards for 3,000 MW under the KUSUM-C scheme. Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan, Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and Deputy Chief Ministers Ajit Pawar and Devendra Fadnis will attend the event. Around 2.5 crore farmers will participate through webcasts at various centres nationwide. States and UTs will celebrate the day as PM-KISAN Utsav Divas.

About 1 per cent fall in Sensex, Nifty amid tensions in West Asia

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty slumped nearly 1 per cent in a topsy-turvy trading session on Friday, dragged by intense selling in FMCG, auto and energy stocks amid escalating tensions in West Asia and persistent foreign capital outflows. Besides, a spike in global crude prices on supply uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions dented market sentiments, traders said. Falling for the fifth day running, the BSE Sensex tumbled 808.65 points or 0.98 per cent to settle at 81,688.45. The benchmark hit a low of 81,532.68 and a high of 83,368.32 during the day, reflecting a wild swing of 1,835.64 points. The NSE Nifty slumped 235.50 points or 0.93 per cent to 25,014.60. Intra-day, it hit a low of 24,966.80 and a high of 25,485.05. From the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, Nestle,



Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and HDFC Bank were the major laggards. In contrast, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and State Bank of India were among the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 15,243.27 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. Markets in mainland China are closed due to a holiday. European markets were trading higher in mid-session deals. The US

markets ended lower on Thursday. "The last three days have witnessed huge FII selling of Rs 30,614 crore in the cash market. FIIs are moving money from expensive India to cheap Hong Kong on expectations that the monetary, and fiscal stimulus being implemented by the Chinese authorities will stimulate the Chinese economy and improve the earnings of Chinese companies. "It remains to be seen how this Chinese recovery hopes to play out," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.99 per cent to USD 78.39 a barrel. Falling for the fourth straight session on Thursday, the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 1,769.19 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 82,497.10. During the day, it plummeted 1,832.27 points or 2.17 per cent to 82,434.02. The Nifty slumped 546.80 points or 2.12 per cent to 25,250.10.

US, India Dialogue advances semiconductor, minerals cooperation

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo held the 6th Commercial Dialogue here on Thursday during which they reviewed the progress made in semiconductor supply chains, innovation handshake, energy-industry network and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. A day earlier, the two leaders signed a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand and diversify critical minerals supply chains, with the aim of leveraging the two countries' complementary strengths to ensure greater resilience in the critical minerals sector. Priority areas of focus include identifying equipment, services, policies and best practices to facilitate the mutually-beneficial commercial development of the US and Indian critical minerals exploration, extraction, processing and refining, recycling and



recovery, a media release said. During the commercial dialogue, Goyal and Raimondo praised the two sides' continuing efforts to facilitate resilient, secure and sustainable semiconductor supply chains. Since the signing of the MoU establishing a semiconductor supply chain and an innovation partnership under the framework of the US-India Commercial Dialogue, the US Semiconductor Industry Association and the India Electronics Semiconductor Association have completed their private sector "readiness assessment",

benefit both countries, the Department of Commerce said in a statement. The two leaders welcomed the success of the two roundtables convened in San Francisco in November 2023 and in New Delhi in March 2024, bringing the two countries' startup ecosystems closer together and carrying forward their ambitions under the MoU to enhance innovation ecosystems through an innovation handshake under the framework of the US-India Commercial Dialogue. They praised the work done on the EIN Roundtable organised during the Clean EDGE and Environmental Technologies Business Development Mission in New Delhi in March. The trade mission brought 12 US companies to India to help grow sustainable and secure clean energy markets and accelerate the adoption of environmental solutions in India. Views exchanged during the EIN Roundtable helped inform the US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership

(SCEP) ministerial convened by the US secretary of energy and the Indian minister of petroleum and natural gas in Washington on September 16, the media release said. They also commended the significant progress announced at the virtual IPEF ministerial meeting last month, including the work being done to improve supply chain resilience under the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement for the IPEF partners. They highlighted their commitment to collaborate initially in the critical areas of semiconductors, chemicals, critical minerals with a focus on batteries, and potentially healthcare products, as agreed to by the IPEF Supply Chain Council. Goyal and Raimondo reviewed other joint efforts that have been made, including under the India-US Strategic Trade Dialogue and the Standards and Conformance Cooperation Program (SCCP). Looking ahead, they discussed several priorities for future collaboration, including critical minerals.

Apple to open four new stores in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

iPhone maker Apple on Friday said it will open four more stores in India, located in Pune, Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR and Mumbai. The company said it will also roll out its first-ever "made in India" iPhone 16 Pro and iPhone 16 Pro Max series devices this month. "We're thrilled to build our teams as we plan to open more stores in India because we're inspired by the creativity and passion of our customers across this country. We can't wait for them to have even more opportunities to discover and shop for our amazing products and services, and connect with our extraordinary, knowledgeable team members," Apple's senior Vice President of Retail, Deirdre O'Brien, said in a statement. In April 2023, Apple opened its two stores in India, one in Delhi and the other in Mumbai. "Future Apple Retail stores are planned in Bengaluru, Pune, Delhi-NCR and



Mumbai," the statement said. According to people aware of the development, the stores are likely to be opened next year. The company announced that it will now manufacture iPhone 16 series smartphones in India. "Apple is now manufacturing the entire iPhone 16 lineup, including iPhone 16 Pro and iPhone 16 Pro Max, in India," the statement said. Apple began manufacturing the iPhone in India in 2017. "Manufactured in India iPhone 16 Pro and Pro Max will soon be available for our local customers and for export to select countries across the world," the statement said. According to sources, supplies of the high-end, Made-in-India iPhone 16 Pro and Pro Max are expected to begin this month.

Vedanta reports mixed production results for Q2

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mining giant Vedanta Ltd on Friday reported a rise in production of aluminium, zinc and iron ore in the September quarter. However, the production of steel, mined metal overseas and oil and gas dropped during the quarter. The aluminium output grew 3 per cent to 6,09,000 tonnes in the second quarter compared to the same period last year, Vedanta said in a filing to BSE. At Zinc India, the saleable metal output grew to 2,62,000 tonnes from 2,41,000 tonnes. While at Zinc International the mined metal output dropped by 34 per cent to 44,000 tonnes, from 66,000 tonnes in the second quarter. Meanwhile, oil and gas output dropped 22 per cent



to 1,04,900 boepd (barrels of oil equivalent per day), average daily gross operated production during the quarter from 1,34,100 boepd a year earlier. The production of saleable iron ore rose to 1.3 million tonnes from 1.2 million tonnes in the year-ago period. The total saleable steel production dropped 22 per cent to 2,96,000 tonnes and power sales rose 7 per cent to 4,322 million units from 4,047 million units in the July-September period of the last financial year. The company said that the

PFC secures record foreign loan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on Friday announced that it has secured the largest-ever foreign currency term loan of USD 1.265 billion. This landmark transaction was executed through a facility agreement with multiple banks based in IFSC GIFT City, Gandhinagar, a company statement said. According to the statement, PFC announced successful closing of issuance of largest-ever foreign currency term loan from an Indian PSU amounting to USD 1.265 billion. The loan will primarily be deployed towards financing assets other than thermal

generation projects, furthering PFC's strong commitment to decarbonization and the transition to green energy. The multi-currency funding will enable PFC to expand its operations, enhance its market presence, diversify its funding sources and maintain a competitive edge. The floating rate loan, presently at an average rate of 4.21 per cent per annum, denominated in G3 currencies -- USD, EUR, and JPY -- has a 5-year tenor and is linked to external benchmark rates such as Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) for USD, Euro Interbank Offered Rate (EURIBOR) for EUR, and Tokyo Overnight Average Rate (TONA) for JPY.

BMW group sales rise in India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

German luxury carmaker BMW Group on Friday said its BMW and MINI brands recorded a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in sales, at 10,556 units in India during the January-September period of 2024. The number of cars (BMW and MINI) sold in the nine months of 2023 was 9,580 units. Besides, the group also sold 5,638 units of Motorrad brand of motorcycles, the group announced here on Friday. BMW Group comprises three brands BMW, Mini and Motorrad. Of the 10,556 units, BMW Group said, it sold 10,056 units of BMW and the remaining 500 units of the



MINI brand. "The highest ever car deliveries during January to September this year, reflects the synergy between a successful strategy and an unparalleled customer experience," said Vikram Pawah, President and CEO at BMW Group India. BMW Group India is changing the game with its long wheelbase product portfolio and a strong electric mobility offensive, he added. Key models like the BMW 7 Series Long Wheelbase, BMW 3 Series Long Wheelbase and BMW X1 are leading in their segments and demand for the new BMW 5 Series Long Wheelbase is overwhelming, Pawah stated. BMW Group India maintains its top position in the electric mobility space with 725 units of fully electric BMW and MINI cars getting delivered YTD (Year To Date) Q3 2024, it said.

Home cooked meal prices rise in September

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Home-cooked meals became dearer in September compared to a year ago as prices of onion, potato and tomatoes shot up, a report said on Friday. A vegetarian meal cost went up 11 per cent over year to Rs 31.3 in September from Rs 28.1 in September 2023, and inched up from Rs 31.2 in the preceding August, as per the report by domestic rating agency Crisil. Attributing the rise to firming up in the vegetable prices that account for 37 per cent of a thali cost, the "roti, rice, rate" report elaborated on the factors affecting the overall cost. "Prices of onion, potato and tomato rose 53 per cent, 50



per cent and 18 per cent on-year, respectively, in September because of lower onion and potato arrivals, while heavy rainfall impacted tomato output in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra," it explained. Prices of pulses jumped 14 per cent on year due to a drop in production, while fuel dropped 11 per cent due to a price cut earlier in the year, the report said. In the case of a non-vegetarian thali, the meal cost dropped by 2 per cent on year to Rs 59.3 on a 13 per cent decline in broiler prices which have a 50 per cent weightage. A non-veg meal cost, which also includes the payouts on vegetables but dal gets replaced with broiler, was flat compared to the rate in August, the report said.

India to invite bids for battery storage projects

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will soon invite bids for 10 gigawatts of battery energy storage projects, an official said on Friday. The move will strengthen India's position in the energy storage segment, which is in a developing stage. Vijay Mittal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries, said, "The ministry will soon come out with a 10 gigawatt RFP (request for proposal) for those who are working on the energy storage part of it for grid-scale energy storage systems. So that we have...Indigenous capability for manufacturing of battery energy storage system compatible with advanced chemistry cells."

The official was addressing the 'Summit on Lithium-Ion Batteries', organised by industry body India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA), virtually. The ministry is leading the mission of indigenous manufacturing of chemistry cells in the country as part of electric vehicle (EV) initiative. The goal is to achieve net zero by 2070 and reduce the need for imports of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, addressing environmental concerns, he said. Mittal further said that the government has allocated over 40 gigawatt-hours out of 50 gigawatts to various original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for indigenous manufacturing of advanced chemistry cell under



ACC-PLI scheme. IESA Chairman Rahul Walwalker said, "Many countries are looking for an alternative to relying solely on China, creating a potential market opportunity of up to 2,500 gigawatt hours for the supply chain in India. The goal is to scale up manufacturing in India, with the initial target being 50-gigawatt hours set up by the ACCPLI, and a larger vision set by the IESA for India to have a minimum of 550-gigawatt hours of cell manufacturing by 2035."

INBRIEF

- SRM IHM, SRM IST SIGN MOU**
KATTANKULATHUR: SRM Institute of Hotel Management (SRM IHM) at the Kattankulathur, Ekkathangal, and Soinipat campuses of SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRM IST) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Konyang University, South Korea, on October 4th, 2024.
- RITES, DMRC SIGN MOU FOR EXPLORING METRO WORKS**
GURUGRAM: RITES Ltd., signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. Through this MoU, both organizations will combine their strengths to identify, secure, and execute metro projects in India and abroad. Both organizations will combine their strengths to identify, secure, and execute metro projects in India and abroad.



A NIGHT OF MUSICAL TRIBUTE

CELEBRATING JAGJIT SINGH'S GHAZALS

The timeless melodies of Jagjit Singh continue to resonate with audiences, and the recent concert, *Salaam-e-Jagjit*, featuring Nisschal Zaveri at the Siri Fort Auditorium in Delhi, celebrated his enduring legacy. Fans united to honour the ghazal maestro, reliving the magic of his songs in a heartfelt evening of nostalgia, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Howson se chhu lo tum, mera geet amar kar do" - these beautiful lyrics by Jagjit Singh capture the heart of his music, expressing deep love and emotion. As a master of ghazals, he transformed Indian music with his soulful voice and meaningful lyrics, creating a legacy that continues to touch people today. His songs are anthems of love and nostalgia, connecting listeners across generations. During *Salaam-e-Jagjit*, the excitement in the auditorium was visible, reminding everyone that they were celebrating a beloved artist whose music resonates with their own stories. The recent concert, *Salaam-e-Jagjit*, held at the Siri Fort Auditorium in Delhi, was a powerful tribute to the legendary Jagjit Singh. From the moment the audience entered, there was a noticeable excitement in the air, a sense of collective anticipation that hinted at the emotional journey they were about to embark on. It was clear that everyone present had come not just to enjoy music but to celebrate the legacy of an artist who had touched their hearts.

As Nisschal Zaveri took to the stage, the auditorium erupted with applause, a heartfelt welcome from fans eager to honour Jagjit Singh's memory. Dressed impeccably, Zaveri carried an aura of confidence and reverence, and the love for Singh's music shone through every performance. With his first notes of "Pyaar Ka Pehla Khat," he immediately captivated the audience. They sang along, creating a beautiful chorus that filled the auditorium, merging their voices with his in a shared



ONE PARTICULARLY TOUCHING MOMENT WAS WHEN ZAVERI PAID TRIBUTE TO LATA MANGESHKAR BY SINGING "LAG JA GALE" IN HONOUR OF HER BIRTHDAY. THE AUDIENCE RESPONDED WITH ENTHUSIASM, MANY SINGING ALONG AND CLAPPING TO THE RHYTHM, AS IF THEY WERE AT A CLOSE FRIEND'S GATHERING RATHER THAN A CONCERT

celebration of the beloved ghazal. When Zaveri transitioned into "Aahista Aahista," the mood shifted. The audience fell silent, completely absorbed in the haunting melodies and poignant lyrics that had defined Jagjit Singh's music. At that moment, time seemed to stand still. Each word resonated, and the emotional weight of the song was felt throughout the hall. It was a moment that bridged generations, as listeners, young and old, connected with the timeless themes of love and longing that Jagjit Singh so eloquently expressed.

The presence of notable figures like Ustaaad Amjad Ali Khan and his wife, Mrs. Subhalaxmi Khan, added to the

significance of the evening. Their appreciation for Zaveri's performances was unmistakable. Ustaaad Khan stood in support, leading the audience in a standing ovation as the final notes echoed through the auditorium. This act of respect and admiration encapsulated the spirit of the night, a powerful acknowledgment of Jagjit Singh's enduring impact on music and culture.

One particularly touching moment was when Zaveri paid tribute to Lata Mangeshkar by singing "Lag Ja Gale" in honour of her birthday. The audience responded with enthusiasm, many singing along and clapping to the rhythm, as if they were at a close friend's gathering rather than a concert. This gesture highlighted the interconnectedness of these legendary artists, demonstrating the deep respect they had for one another and how their legacies intertwine.

As the evening progressed, it became clear that *Salaam-e-Jagjit* was more than just a concert; it was a heartfelt tribute to Jagjit Singh's contributions to Indian music. The audience's engagement, singing along, applauding and responding to the music, highlighted how deeply Singh's work resonates with people across generations. It was touching to see how music can bring everyone together in celebration of a shared love, creating a sense of community among fans.

The concert concluded with a wave of applause and appreciation, with the audience clearly moved by the performances. Zaveri's heartfelt connection to Jagjit Singh's music was evident as he expressed, "Performing Jagjit Saheb's music is always a deeply moving experience for me." The crowd's reactions showed that they weren't just passive listeners; they were engaged participants, each clapping and cheering as a tribute to their love for Singh's work.

As the concert drew to a close, the audience remained in the moment, enveloped in a sense of nostalgia and gratitude. The evening served as a reminder of how music can touch our lives in profound ways. *Salaam-e-Jagjit* was a fitting celebration of not just the songs of Jagjit Singh but also the very spirit of an artist whose influence remains ever-present. The shared claps, cheers and emotional responses from the audience spoke volumes about the lasting legacy of Jagjit Singh, reminding everyone that music has the power to unite and heal. It was an unforgettable evening that will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to be part of it.

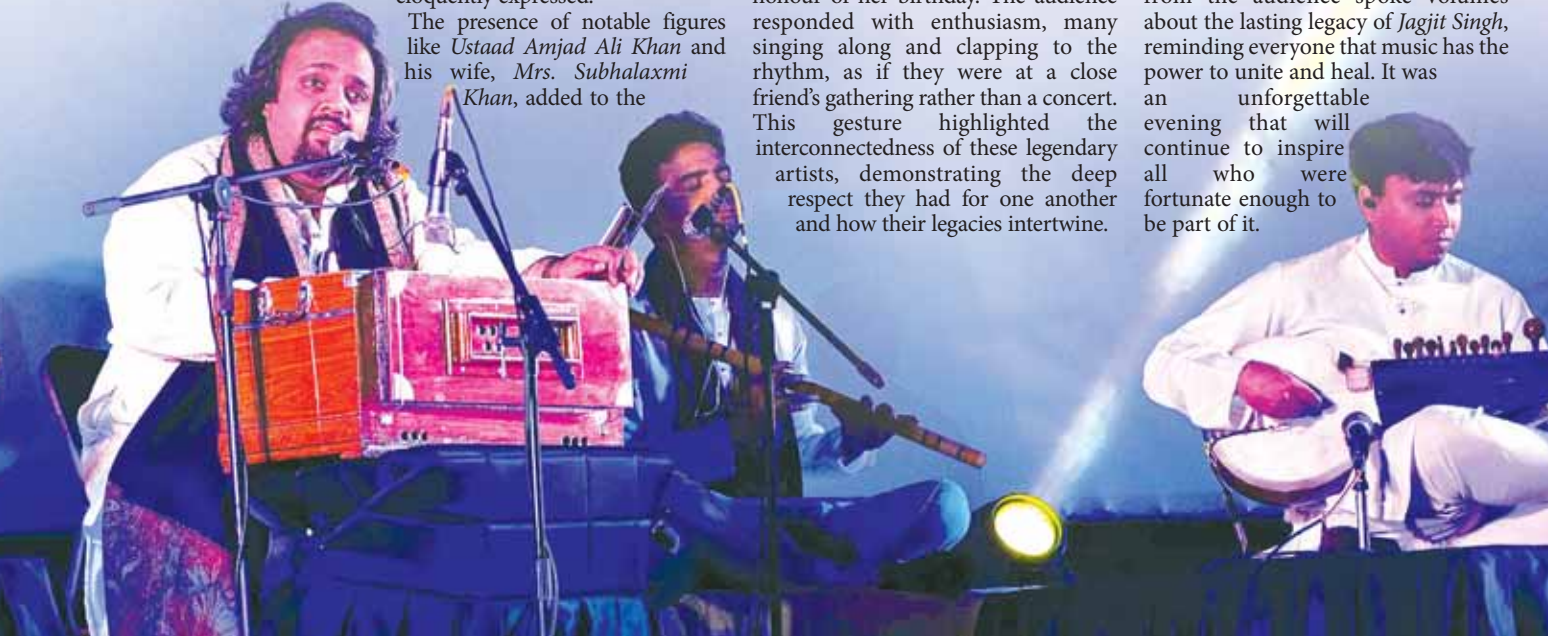


Photo: Pankaj Kumar



Taiwan and India Unite Through Music

BY TEAM VIVA

The India Habitat Centre was alive with the sounds of both East and West in a concert that crossed cultural boundaries. The Taipei Philharmonic Chamber Choir and The Neemrana Music Foundation came together for an evening titled "Eastern & Western Music Treasures", filling the Stein Auditorium with music that connected continents and traditions. More than 50 singers from Taiwan and India performed a stunning blend of Western classical pieces alongside Indian and Taiwanese musical traditions. It wasn't just a concert, it was a celebration of shared human experience, showing how music can unite us, no matter our origins. This extraordinary event was made possible with the support of the Taiwan Electrical and Electronic Manufacturer's Association and the India Habitat Centre. Their collaboration ensured the evening was an unforgettable success. Ferdinand Ta-Ming Ting, Executive

Director of the Taipei Philharmonic Foundation, captured the spirit of the event perfectly, saying, "Music transcends borders and through this collaboration, we hope to deepen the cultural bond between Taiwan and India." Since its founding in 1988, the Taipei Philharmonic Foundation has represented Taiwanese music on the global stage, performing in over 30 countries. Meanwhile, The Neemrana Music Foundation has been pivotal in promoting Western classical music in India, nurturing young talent and bridging cultures through the arts. Aude Priya Wacziarg, Managing Trustee of The Neemrana Music Foundation, reflected on the collaboration, "This concert is a beautiful testament to the longstanding friendship between Taiwan and India. It's an honour to bring our musicians together in this celebration of unity." The evening was not just about music, it was a celebration of how art unites people, breaking down borders and creating connections beyond words.

MYSTIC MINIATURES

A Journey of Introspection

BY TEAM VIVA

Anuj Prasad's solo exhibition, *Mystic Miniatures*, is an evocative dive into the realms of spiritual reflection, displayed at the India Habitat Centre's Visual Art Gallery. With intricate precision and an ethereal touch, Prasad offers viewers a chance to encounter mysticism in a way that feels personal rather than grandiose. As visitors enter the gallery, they are immediately transported into the artist's inner world, where the 150 artworks in ink, watercolour and oil invite a deeper exploration of self. Each piece, though small in scale, possesses a monumental capacity to provoke thought and contemplation. The exhibition showcases Prasad's ability to distill complex ideas into minute details, encouraging the viewer to engage intimately with each artwork.

At first glance, the intricate lines and vibrant colours create a sense of overwhelming complexity. However, as one spends time with the pieces, the seemingly chaotic forms begin to reveal hidden patterns and meanings. This slow unfolding mirrors the process of self-reflection, where confusion gradually gives way to clarity. The exhibition invites viewers to embark on a journey of discovery, probing the hidden meanings and symbolism work into each piece. The tactile nature of Prasad's work enhances this experience, allowing visitors to connect with the depth and intricacy of his artistry on a personal level. Prasad's connection to mysticism is evident in his exploration of spiritual themes through art. He describes mysticism as a natural instinct and each piece reflects this



belief. The artworks exude a quiet spirituality, inviting viewers into a dialogue rather than demanding their attention. The miniature scale of the works compels intimacy, urging visitors to lean in and engage, promoting a sense of stillness that feels almost radical in today's fast-paced world. Nature serves as a significant influence in Prasad's artistic practice. His use of organic shapes and textures reveals a deep reverence for the environment, reflecting an understanding of the interconnectedness of all living

things. This appreciation for the natural world is evident in every stroke, as Prasad captures the minutiae of life with a deft hand. The handmade textures of his paintings further emphasise this connection, inviting viewers to consider the beauty in the smallest details.

The titles of Prasad's artworks add another layer of meaning, prompting viewers to engage with the themes presented. Names such as "Soul Gateway," "Duality," and "3 Layer Orbit" hint at deeper spiritual explorations, while "Treasure Hunt" and "Balloon Above the Sky" evoke a sense of adventure and freedom. Other titles like "Net Zero," "Moving Goals," and "Boundary-less" challenge viewers to contemplate concepts of balance, change and the fluidity of existence. Each title serves as an invitation to interpret the work through one's own experiences, making the exhibition a deeply personal journey.

Mystic Miniatures go beyond the traditional art exhibition; it serves as an invitation to slow down and reflect on the often-overlooked details of life. In a world that constantly demands our attention, Prasad's work acts as an antidote to the fast pace of modern living. His unique artistic vision encourages audiences to immerse themselves in the spiritual and meditative verses present within each piece. By doing so, he reminds us that profound discoveries often lie in the intricate details we may overlook if we do not take the time to look closely. Through *Mystic Miniatures*, Prasad invites viewers not only to appreciate art but also to engage in a transformative exploration of their inner selves.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar

WE CAN SENSE EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS JUST BY OUR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS: SHAFALI ON MANDHANA

PTI ■ DUBAI

Shafali Verma, the significant other of the blockbuster Indian opening pair, says her no-holds-barred approach goes well with Smriti Mandhana's elegance and both can "sense each other's feelings just by our facial expressions" while batting. One of the factors behind the Indian women's cricket team's dominance in recent times has been the success of its openers, and Shafali admits they know how "important" they are to the team's fortunes. "I've been opening with Smriti for the past two-three years, and now we can sense each other's feelings just by our facial expressions while batting. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses, and we give each other positive vibes," Shafali told Star Sports when asked about her on-field



relationship with Mandhana. "We understand how important we both are to the team, especially during the

powerplay, so we try to perform well for ourselves, our teammates, and the country." The younger partner added, "Smriti di is an exceptional timer of the ball, and she knows how to build an innings. These are the two

things I admire most about her batting -- her timing and her ability to construct a big innings." India will begin their campaign in the ongoing Women's T20 World Cup with a game against New Zealand on Friday, and Shafali said it has been a dream of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur to win the tournament, in which they finished runners-up in the 2020 edition. "Harmanpreet di is very passionate about the game. Winning the World Cup has always been a dream for her, and I hope we can make that dream come true. She's a great player, a great teammate, and a fantastic captain who inspires and motivates us all the time," Shafali said of the skipper. Shafali made her World Cup debut as a 16-year-old and having missed the trophy by a whisker then, she is hoping to change that this time around.

"It was a big deal for me to debut at 16, and I loved being in Australia. It wasn't just the cricket; I also enjoyed exploring the country. "The tournament was special, and I performed well for the team. Thinking back to that World Cup always brings a smile to my face. We were so close to winning, but hopefully, we can change that this time around." Playing the final against home team Australia, in front of a packed crowd at the iconic MCG, is an experience that has helped her in learning to handle pressure better. "I couldn't hear anything because of the massive crowd. It was a completely new experience for me to play in front of such a big audience. "I was lost in the atmosphere and the noise, but I've learned to focus more now. I wouldn't feel the same pressure if I were in that situation again."



No. 1 Iga Swiatek parts ways with coach Tomasz Wiktorowski

AP ■ WARSAW

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek is separating from her coach Tomasz Wiktorowski. The Polish tennis player announced the split Friday, saying the decision was taken together. During the three years Swiatek worked with Wiktorowski, the Polish player won four of her five Grand Slam titles and rose to the top of the women's rankings. "After 3 years of the greatest achievements in my career, together with my coach Tomasz Wiktorowski we decided to part way," Swiatek wrote in a post on Instagram. "I want to start with a big thank you and appreciating our work together." Swiatek appointed Wiktorowski as coach at the end of the 2021 season. He helped her capture 19 of her 22 career titles and an Olympic bronze medal in Paris in August. "Coach Wiktorowski joined my team for three seasons, when I strongly needed changes and a fresh approach to my game," Swiatek continued. "His experience, analytical and strategic attitude and enormous knowledge about tennis helped us to achieve

things I've never dreamed of only a few months after we started working together. "Our main goal was to become No. 1 player in the world and coach Wiktorowski was the one who said it first." Swiatek hasn't competed since losing to Jessica Pegula in the quarterfinals of the U.S. Open. She withdrew from this week's China Open in Beijing - where she would have been defending champion - citing personal reasons. The 23-year-old Swiatek also pulled out of the recent Korea Open in Seoul, citing fatigue. "Due to this important change on my team, I give myself a couple of weeks to start a cooperation with a new coach," Swiatek wrote. "I'm in the middle of first talks with coaches from abroad (non-Polish) because I'm ready to take the next step of my career. I will let you know when I make a decision." Wiktorowski was voted the WTA's Coach of the Year by his peers last year. "Coach, THANK YOU, I wish you all the best," Swiatek wrote. "I know that you would like to rest after these 3 years of hard work and traveling a lot and spending some well deserved time with your loved ones and I hope you'll get what you need."

Buoyant Mohammedan Sporting gear up for Mohun Bagan challenge



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Fresh off their maiden ISL victory in an away match against Chennaiyin FC, debutants Mohammedan Sporting will aim to carry the same momentum when they square off with heavyweights Mohun Bagan in a lesser known 'Kolkata Derby' this Saturday. With bragging rights as well as points on the line, Mohammedan Sporting will be eager to prove themselves against one of Indian football's most dominant forces and resume their rivalry in the ISL. The black and white brigade secured their maiden win in the ISL by defeating Chennaiyin FC 1-0 last week with Lalremnunga Fanai scoring the decisive goal. Despite Chennaiyin's attempts to fight back in the second-half, Mohammedan's defence led by Joseph Adjei and Vanlalzuidika Chhakchhuak remained resolute to take home full three points that has kept them ahead of the city rivals on goal difference. Mohun Bagan, who are the League Shield Winners, on

the other hand are coming on the back of a 0-3 loss to Bengaluru FC as they will be looking to regroup and infuse fresh energy to their attacking duo of Dimitri Petratos and Jason Cummings. Petratos is on the brink of his 50th ISL appearance for the Mariners, and his experience will be vital in guiding the team through in pressure cooker scenario. The key for the midfield marshalled by Greg Stewart and Manvir Singh will be to dominate possession, pressing high up the pitch and using their full-backs to provide width. Lalengmawia Ralte has been flawless defensively, winning all 14 of his attempted tackles this season, which will be crucial in stopping Mohammedan's attacks. Despite their attacking prowess, Mohun Bagan head coach Jose Molina has expressed concern about his team's defensive frailties. The Mariners have conceded seven goals in their three matches so far, which has put pressure on their ability to secure results. Molina has identified that many of their defensive issues stem from mistakes in attack, emphasising that improving their offensive play will help tighten the defense. "We're conceding too many goals, and some of them are due to mistakes at the back, but most are because of errors in attack. To improve defensively, we need to attack better," Molina said. Mohammedan Sporting, however, may opt for a more cautious approach as they are likely to sit back, absorb pressure, and hit on the counter using the pace of Alexis Gomez and Franca up front.

Retired IPS Sharad Kumar appointed new head of BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retired IPS officer Sharad Kumar, who headed anti-terror organisation NIA for four years, has been appointed as the new chief of the BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit, bringing extensive experience to the role. Hailing from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, the appointment of 68-year-old Kumar was done on October 1 in the cricketing body. BCCI's ACU head is appointed for a three-year term. His name was finalised in the BCCI's Annual General Meeting on September 29, a Board source told PTI. He is a 1979 batch IPS officer from the Haryana cadre and has had a distinguished career especially as the chief of the National Investigation Agency from 2013 to 2017. He will take over from KK Mishra, also a former Haryana cadre IPS officer, who was appointed last year but did not complete his term due to unspecified



reasons. After serving in the NIA, Kumar was appointed as the Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission from June 2018 to April 2020, where he

also held the interim position of Central Vigilance Commissioner. In his new role, Kumar will play a crucial part in addressing corruption issues, including match-fixing and betting scandals, thereby reinforcing the BCCI's commitment to maintaining integrity of the game. During his tenure as NIA Director General, Kumar oversaw several high-profile investigations and operations. Kumar played a pivotal role in enhancing the NIA's capabilities and infrastructure. During his tenure, the NIA investigated several major terror attacks in India, including the Pathankot airbase attack by terrorists of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed. Kumar's efforts were instrumental in disrupting terror financing networks. His contribution to law enforcement has been recognised with the President's Police Medal for Meritorious Services in 1996 and the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services in 2004.

Man United has been revamped by Ratcliffe but it's the same old story for Ten Hag

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

It feels like Groundhog Day for Manchester United and Erik ten Hag. Another season has hit crisis point after only a few games. Perhaps that's why the United manager was so dismissive of the renewed pressure on him after last week's humbling 3-0 loss to Tottenham. "Nothing is easy, but this is nothing for me to panic about because I experienced it so often with my teams during seasons that you are facing those problems," he said this week. He is right. United's record of three losses after six English Premier League games is in keeping with his two previous campaigns at Old Trafford. In 2022, he lost his opening two and three of the first seven. In 2023 it was even worse, as United lost three of five at the start. Both of those seasons ended



with a trophy, but the feel-good factor provided by the most recent silverware - May's FA Cup triumph against Manchester City - has long evaporated in the face of the

likelihood that United's 11-year wait for the league title is set to go on. There is little sign of progress in the league despite spending around \$750 million on transfers. On Sunday, United travels to Aston Villa, which has been transformed by manager Unai Emery, who has worked on a fraction of that budget. The Spaniard has spent around \$270 million to turn Villa from a team that was battling relegation when he took over in October 2022 to one that beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday. In contrast United needed a stoppage time goal from Harry Maguire to salvage a 3-3 draw with Porto in the Europa League on Thursday, having led 2-0 after 20 minutes. Defeat against Villa would intensify questions about Ten Hag's position ahead of the October international break, which has traditionally been a time when clubs look to make managerial changes. Emery's success at Villa is evidence of what can be achieved in a short period of time. Villa was three points above the relegation zone when he was hired. In his first full season, he led the Midlands club to fourth, eight points ahead of United and qualified for the Champions League. He is yet to deliver silverware, but the trajectory is clearly upward. United is 13th heading into the weekend, having finished last season in eighth and the previous year third.

EU's top court says some FIFA rules on international transfers are contrary to the bloc's law

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The European Union's top court said Friday that some FIFA rules on player transfers are contrary to European Union legislation relating to competition and freedom of movement, in a ruling that will likely lead to a shakeup of the soccer market's regulations and change the sport's economy. The court's ruling came after former France international Lassana Diarra legally challenged FIFA rules following a dispute with a club dating back to a decade ago. Diarra argued that FIFA's restrictions meant he was unable to find a new club after his contract with Russian club Lokomotiv Moscow was terminated in 2014. FIFA's rules state that if a player terminates his contract without "just cause," the player and any club wishing to sign him are jointly liable for paying compensation to the previous club. "Those rules hinder the free movement of players and competition between clubs," the court said in a statement. "The rules in question are such as to impede the free movement of professional footballers wishing to develop their activity by going to work for a new club." The court added that current rules "impose considerable legal risks, unforeseeable and potentially very high financial risks as well as major sporting risks on those players and clubs wishing to employ them which, taken together, are such as to impede international transfers of those players." Diarra had signed a four-year contract with Lokomotiv Moscow in 2013. The deal was terminated a year later after Diarra was unhappy with alleged pay cuts. Lokomotiv Moscow applied to the FIFA dispute resolution chamber for compensation



and the player submitted a counterclaim seeking compensation for unpaid wages. The Court of Arbitration for Sport found the Russian club terminated the contract with Diarra "with just cause" and the player was ordered to pay 10.5 million euros (\$11.2 million). Diarra claimed his search for a new club was hampered by FIFA's rules stipulating that any new side would be jointly responsible with him for paying compensation to Lokomotiv. The former Real Madrid player also argued that a potential deal with Belgian club Charleroi fell through because of the FIFA rules, and sued FIFA and the Belgian federation at a Belgian court for damages and loss of earnings of six million euros (\$7 million). With the lawsuit still going through Belgian courts, the case was referred to the European Court of Justice for a ruling. Although the court said FIFA transfer regulations can help maintain a form of stability within professional squads and help guarantee the regularity of competitions, it insisted that in Diarra's case "the rules in question nevertheless seem, subject to verification (by the Belgian court) in a number of respects, to go beyond what is necessary to pursue that objective." The Diarra case, which is supported by the global players' union FIFPro, went through FIFA judicial bodies before the 2016 election of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who has made it a priority to modernize transfer market rules. Concerning competition rules, the court slammed FIFA's rulings for restricting and preventing cross-border competition between European clubs. "The Court recalls that the possibility of competing by recruiting trained players plays an essential role in the professional football sector and that rules which place a general restriction on that form of competition, by immutably fixing the distribution of workers between the employers and in cloistering the markets, are similar to a no-poach agreement," it said.

Bopanna-Dodig pair advances to second round of Shanghai Masters

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Ivan Dodig cherished their first win after joining forces, moving to the second round of the ATP Shanghai Masters with a straight-set victory over Pablo Carreno Busta and Pedro

Martinez, here Friday. The fifth-seed Indo-Croatian pair won 6-4 6-3 in the opening round match that lasted 63 minutes. Bopanna and Dodig fired five aces to none of their rivals, and converted three of the eight break points they faced. They also saved four break chances on their service games,

dropping serve only once in the match. India's singles challenge has already ended with both Sumit Nagal and Ramkumar Ramanathan making first round exits. Ramkumar had made it to the main draw through qualifying round while Nagal had earned a direct entry.

