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**MONEY 10**  
PWC INDIA PARTNERS WITH  
META FOR AI SOLUTIONS

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 284  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY OCTOBER 12, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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SLOW START FOR  
SHUBHANKAR IN  
FRENCH OPEN GOLF  
12 SPORTS

## Prime Minister will clean the air for Delhi this winter

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over the perennial problem of deadly pollution with the onset of winters in Delhi NCR, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Friday set the degree of engagement of stakeholders, including the NCT Government of Delhi, to combat the air pollution particularly augmented due to stubble burning in neighbouring States. The meeting comes a few days after the Supreme Court came down heavily on the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), for not taking any action on local officers amid a rise in crop burning in north Indian states, which leads to air pollution in Delhi. The SC said not a single committee was formed to tackle the stubble burning issue.

"Every year we see stubble burning. There has been total non-compliance of the CAQM Act. Have committees been constituted? Please show us a single step taken. Which directions have you used under the Act? You are silent spectators. You are doing nothing," the Supreme Court said on September 27, 2024. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. PK



File Photo: The Pioneer

Mishra convened a High Level Task Force meeting for the purpose where he reviewed short term and long measures being undertaken to prevent, and abate, air pollution in Delhi, and simultaneously expressed concern over slow pace of

clearance of landfill sites in the national Capital and delays in implementation of waste to energy plans by the civic bodies. Agriculture stubble burning, a major source of seasonal air pollution in Delhi and neighbouring states was

addressed. Although Delhi has a relatively small paddy area, Mishra called for the complete elimination of stubble burning in the city as a model for surrounding regions.

According to a senior official, the meeting focused on assessing the readiness of the Delhi Government and other stakeholders in implementing both immediate and long-term measures to mitigate air pollution in Delhi. The Task Force, comprising senior officials from Central Ministries and the Delhi administration, reviewed current strategies and discussed additional innovative steps to tackle the pollution challenge.

Task Force, consisting of representatives from the Delhi Government, Central Ministries including Secretary MoHUA, Secretary MoEFCC, Delhi Police, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), and the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), reaffirmed their collective resolve to abate air pollution in Delhi, especially during the ensuing winter season.

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## Nayab Chief Minister for Haryana



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

After Bharatiya Janata Party's spectacular performance winning a third consecutive tenure, Haryana's incumbent Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini is likely to take oath as the Chief Minister of Haryana on Tuesday, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Union ministers, and CMs of BJP-ruled states, are also expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

According to BJP leaders, Haryana may follow the precedent set by other states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha by introducing two Deputy Chief Ministers. This dual-leadership model is anticipated to balance party seniority, and caste representation within the Cabinet. The senior-most leader, former Home Minister Anil Vij, is tipped to be one of the Deputy CMs, while the other position may go to a Brahmin MLA, potentially offering a more inclusive leadership structure.

In another development, Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma met Saini in Delhi, as his mother, Shakti Rani Sharma, had secured a win from the Kalka constituency. In another strategic meeting, Rajya Sabha MP Kiran Chaudhary and her

## Omar returns to Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Legislative party Omar Abdullah Friday evening staked claim to form the government, the first since the Centre scrapped J&K's special status in 2019.

Omar, dressed in a traditional salwar suit, drove to the Raj Bhawan to meet Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. During the meeting, he formally presented his claim to form the government in Jammu & Kashmir, following the support from Congress. Omar also presented letters of support from the alliance partners and independent candidates.

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daughter Shruti Chaudhary, the newly elected MLA from Tosham, met with Union Minister Khattar, indicating a broader coalition-building process within the BJP.

A 10-member committee headed by the Panchkula district commissioner has been set up by the state chief secretary to oversee the arrangements for the ceremony. The ceremony was initially scheduled for October 12, but was postponed to accommodate the Prime Minister's schedule. According to sources, the Parade Ground had been chosen as the venue as it was adjoining Indradhanush Auditorium Complex, which had a huge secured parking space for VVIPs.

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## Mahadev app kingpin arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sourabh Chandrakar, one of the main promoters of the Mahadev betting app, is expected to be brought to India soon, following his recent formal arrest in Dubai on the basis of an Interpol issued arrest warrant in a money laundering and fraud case, official sources said Friday.

Chandrakar along with another promoter of the app, Ravi Uppal was detained and put under "house arrest" in that country late last year following the Enforcement Directorate (ED) request for issuance of a Redcorner Notice (RN) against them. The RN is issued by Interpol.

Sources said Chandrakar is expected to be either extradited or deported to India over the next few days after he was formally placed under arrest in Dubai recently. The ED is in the process of sending relevant documents for his extradition to Dubai authorities following which a competent court there will be approached, they said. Chandrakar is stated to have left for Dubai in 2019 and before that he used to run a juice shop named "Juice Factory" with his brother in Bhilai town of Durg district in Chhattisgarh. The ED has alleged that its probe in the Mahadev Online Book (MOB) gaming and betting app has shown involvement of various high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh, the state where Chandrakar and Uppal hail from.

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## Maa Kali decrowned in Bangladesh



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has urged Bangladesh to investigate the reported theft of a religious article that was gifted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Jeshoreshwari Kali temple during his visit in 2021.

In a social media post, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka expressed deep concern over the theft and

the authorities to recover the article and take action against the perpetrators of the crime.

"We have seen reports of theft of the crown gifted by PM Modi to Jeshoreshwari Kali Temple (Satkhira) in 2021 during his visit to Bangladesh," it said, adding "We express deep concern and urge Govt of Bangladesh to investigate theft, recover the crown and take action against the perpetrators."

Separately, Indian government sources said New Delhi is

deeply disturbed by the reported incident of theft. The Indian High Commission in Dhaka is in touch with Bangladesh authorities on the issue, they said.

The Bangladesh law enforcement authorities have been urged to investigate the incident, recover the stolen article and bring the guilty to book, sources said.

As per reports, the gold-plated crown of goddess Kali at the temple in Satkhira's Shyamnagar was stolen on Thursday afternoon. The absence of the crown from the deity's head was noticed by the cleaning staff after temple priest Dilip Mukherjee left around two pm.

Prime Minister Modi had visited the Jeshoreshwari Temple on March 27, 2021, as part of his tour to Bangladesh. The visit coincided with the celebrations of Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee of Independence and the birth centenary of its founding leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The temple is considered among the 52 Shakti Peethas (seats of the Goddess) and is believed to have been constructed in the late 12th Century.

## From Ratan to Naval, the Tata legacy moves on



T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a succession that came two days after the death of Ratan Naval Tata, his half-brother Noel Naval Tata was on Friday appointed new Chairman of Tata Trusts, the philanthropic arm of Tata Group. A formal announcement about Noel Tata's appointment as the head of the Tata Trusts came after the Trustees of various Trusts that come under the Tata Trusts held a joint meeting, condoled Ratan Tata's demise and noted his yeoman services not only to the Tata Group but also to nation building.

"In separate meetings held immediately, thereafter, it was unanimously decided to appoint Mr. Noel Naval Tata as the Chairman of the

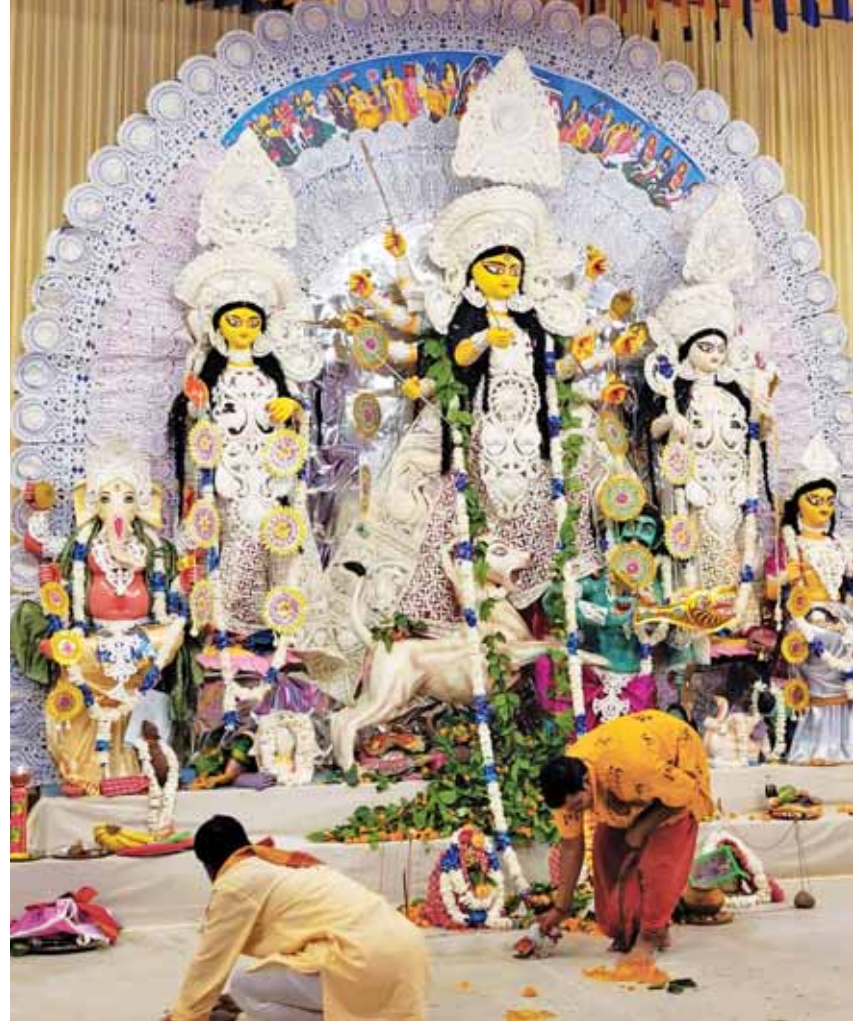
various Trusts that constitute the Tata Trusts and also designate him as Chairman, Tata Trusts," Tata Trusts said in a statement issued here in the afternoon.

Sixty-seven-year-old Noel Tata's appointment came into place with immediate effect. After being appointed as the new chairman of the Tata Trusts, India's oldest philanthropic institution, Noel Tata said that he was "deeply honoured and humbled" by the responsibility cast on me by my fellow Trustees and he looked "forward to carrying on the legacy of Ratan N Tata and the founders of the Tata Group".

"I am deeply honoured and humbled by the responsibility that has been cast on me by my fellow Trustees. I look forward to carrying on the legacy of Ratan N Tata and the founders of the Tata Group. Founded more than a century ago, the Tata Trusts are a unique vehicle for undertaking social good. On this solemn occasion, we rededicate ourselves to carrying on our developmental and philanthropic initiatives and continuing to play our part in nation building," Noel Tata said.

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## VIJAYADASHAMI GREETINGS



## Illegal parkings gobble up market roads at peak hours

### Commuters leave their vehicles on the roadside, to avoid paying parking fees

BY SANJAY RAI

That there are traffic jams in and round major markets of the national Capital is now old news for the locals. However, not many talk about what causes these jams in those busy commercial areas. It is also interesting to see that the market associations have not objected to these illegal parkings as the shop owners also park all their vehicles on the road side, even before the market opens. And customers prefer to park on the roads outside the shops as the charges are lower in comparison to the official parking. These vehicles park for a short

time but block the oncoming traffic as they enter and leave the illegal parking bays constantly. The attendants stand on the road and stop the traffic flow to facilitate that.

The problem is especially severe near big market places where people park their vehicles on the roadside. Regular commuters are left with no choice but to stop-look-and-go every few metres. They say that complaints to the authorities go unanswered. Visitors park their cars and two-wheelers on the roadside and go shopping, and prefer to pay a 'token' parking fee of just Rs 10-20, seldom do they have to pay more even if they park for more than five hours. Usually they



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

leave within an hour or so after shopping. It is this frequent 'side-movement' that then clogs the oncoming traffic. For example an underground parking lot has been made by Delhi Municipal Corporation near Subhash Nagar Market, where about 600 vehicles can be parked. But more than 30 percent of the area remains vacant here. The reason behind this is parking charges. An employee working here told The Pioneer that the car parking fee is Rs 20 for every hour. The bike parking fee is Rs 10 per hour while the monthly pass costs Rs 2,000. But people living here or coming to the market always park their cars on the road,

which makes it difficult for pedestrians, and other commuters. This results in the parking lot incurring losses every month. Apart from this, the condition of market areas such as Kamla Market, Rani Bagh Market, Karol Bagh, Lajpat Nagar, Avantika Market, Tilak Nagar, Rajouri Garden, and Uttam Nagar is the same. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has made underground parking on Asaf Ali Road at Delhi Gate, where vehicles gather dust and dirt. The monthly fee here is less compared to other parking lots, however roadside parking is also the norm here too.

# Row erupts over JPNIC as SP, BJP clash

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Jayaprakash Narayan International Centre (JPNIC) in Lucknow, home to a museum honoring the iconic socialist leader, has become the focal point of a political standoff between Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with Akhilesh even asking Nitish Kumar to sever ties with NDA.

The row erupted during Jayaprakash Narayan's birth anniversary, with SP accusing the BJP of preventing their tribute to the revered leader. Late Thursday night, entrances to the JPNIC were barricaded with tin sheets, and security was heightened Friday morning with heavy police presence, a day before Mr. Yadav's planned visit to

garland the statue of Narayan inside the complex. Sharing videos of the barricades outside his residence, Mr. Yadav accused the BJP government of obstructing his tribute. "Whether it is the BJP or their government, every action is a symbol of negativity. Barricades have been put up to prevent us from honoring Jayaprakash Narayanji on his birth anniversary, just like last time," Yadav said.

Responding to the allegations, BJP spokesperson Alok Awasthi defended the government's actions and asserted that the BJP holds great respect for Jayaprakash Narayan, hailing him as a "symbol of simplicity." However, Awasthi sharply criticized Yadav, questioning his alignment with Narayan's values.

"Mr. Akhilesh Yadav, do you



even possess a single quality of Jayaprakash Narayan? You lead a luxurious life. During your tenure, lawlessness, hooliganism, and corruption were rampant," Awasthi said. He added that Yadav's actions were contrary to the principles upheld by both Jayaprakash Narayan and socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia.

With his visit to the JPNIC blocked, Mr. Yadav garlanded a bust of Jayaprakash Narayan mounted on a vehicle outside his residence. Photographs of the tribute were widely shared, accompanied by the defiant message: "Socialists are not afraid of dictatorship."

Yadav also made a political appeal to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, a former ally of Narayan, calling on him to sever ties with the BJP over the incident. Nitish Kumar's

Janata Dal (United) party, which is allied with the BJP, plays a significant role in the NDA government.

"What does the government want to hide by blocking the gate with tin sheets?" Yadav questioned late Thursday night. "A museum was built here to honor a great socialist thinker. Why is the government doing this?"

**Birth Anniversary Standoff**  
This marks the second consecutive year that Yadav has been prevented from paying his respects at the JPNIC. In 2022, he famously scaled a wall to garland the statue, a symbolic act he cited as evidence of the government's hostility towards socialists. "Every year on this day, socialists gathered here to honor Jayaprakashji. He never bowed before the government of his time, and we won't either," Yadav declared.

The JPNIC, inaugurated by Akhilesh Yadav in 2016 during his tenure as Chief Minister, has been mired in controversy since the BJP came to power in Uttar Pradesh in 2017. Yadav has repeatedly alleged that construction at the center was deliberately stalled after the BJP's electoral victory and accused the government of planning to sell off the property.

The LDA, responsible for the maintenance of the JPNIC, has stood by its decision to deny Yadav access to the site. In its official statement, the authority reiterated concerns over the ongoing construction and the potential hazards posed by recent heavy rains. The letter also mentioned the heightened security risk posed by Yadav's Z+ security cover, a status shared only by the Prime Minister.

## Mayawati rules out future alliances with regional parties

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Supremo Mayawati announced on Friday that her party will no longer form alliances with regional forces in Uttar Pradesh or any other state, citing the poor performance of previous partnerships.

This move, she said, is aimed at protecting the morale of her party workers and preserving the BSP's political movement. Mayawati also reiterated her stance of maintaining a distance from both the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led INDIA alliance.

The decision was made during a review meeting held to analyze the "bitter experiences" from the Haryana Assembly election results and prior Punjab elections. In a series of posts on X (formerly Twitter), the former four-time Uttar Pradesh chief minister expressed her dissatisfaction with past alliances.



"The BSP had consistently transferred its votes to alliance partners during elections in Uttar Pradesh and other states, but these partners failed to reciprocate. This led to disappointing results, which demoralized our party workers and hurt the party's movement," Mayawati said. She emphasized the impor-

ance of shielding the party cadres from further disappointment, which could potentially damage the party's progress. Referring to the recent Haryana elections, where the BSP had partnered with the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) but failed to win any seats, she highlighted how the lack of reciprocation from allies had cost them.

"In light of the Haryana assembly election results and the previous Punjab elections, today's review meeting for Haryana and Punjab has decided that the BSP will no longer form alliances with regional parties. We will also continue to distance ourselves from both the BJP/NDA and the Congress/INDIA alliances, as we have done in

the past," Mayawati declared. She reaffirmed that the BSP remains committed to its core ideology of empowering the Bahujan Samaj (the marginalized sections of society) and upholding Ambedkarite values. She pointed out that, despite efforts by "casteist forces" to weaken the BSP, it remains the only party dedicated to this mission.

"The BSP is not a party that merges with others for selfish reasons. Instead, it is a movement aimed at uniting the various sections of the Bahujan Samaj into a powerful political force, based on mutual cooperation and brotherhood, to elevate them to a ruling class status," she added.

In the Haryana elections, the BSP, in alliance with INLD, failed to win any seats. After the results, Mayawati blamed the "casteist people of the Jat community" for not voting for BSP candidates, despite the party's efforts to transfer its vote base to the alliance partner.

## Ratan Tata Memorial meeting held at Kasaragod

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

No citizens in Kasaragod have met Ratan Tata, India's leading industrialist. But that did not prevent them from organizing a memorial meeting on Friday in honor of Ratan Tata who breathed his last late Wednesday night.

"It is because of the philanthropy of Tata that we are all alive today. When Covid-19 struck Kasaragod in a major way in 2019, the district was declared a no go area and all boundaries with Karnataka and other districts in the State were shut down. This made Kasaragod a ghost district as hundreds died without getting medical care," said Sukumaran Periyachoor, patron of Saparyana, a socio-cultural platform which organized the meeting.

The district was short of hospitals and residents had to depend on hospitals in Karnataka's Mangalore for



medical aid. Since the borders of the district were shut off, there was no means for the locals to commute to Karnataka for treatment. "It was at this juncture Ratan Tata came across our plight and he ordered the immediate setting up of a specialty hospital to treat Covid-19 patients. A full-fledged hospital was set up in record time of three months at Chattanchal. It was a 600-bed hospital and treated more than 6000 Covid-19 patients. The hospital cost the Tata Trusts more than Rs 60 crore," said Sukumaran who expressed his

gratitude to The Pioneer, the only newspaper that highlighted the concern of the people in the delay associated with the opening of the hospital. "While the media in Kerala ignored the sufferings of the Kasaragod people, The Pioneer was the only newspaper which highlighted the delay in commissioning the hospital because of the lethargy and indecisiveness of the Government," said Sreedevi Ambalapuram, who paid glowing tributes to Ratan Tata in the meeting.

The resolution adopted in the meeting described the philanthropy works carried out by the Tata Trusts as proof of value based economy. "Though none of us has seen Ratan Tata in person, we were all praying for his recovery and longevity so that more and more people could get the benefits showered by Tata Trusts, of which he was the soul and energy," said Premachandran Chombala.

## Ahead of commissioning, IAF aircraft lands at Mumbai International Airport

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a significant milestone witnessed months ahead of the commissioning of the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), a C-295 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) landed on its runway on Friday afternoon.

The C-295, a medium tactical transport aircraft, landed around 1215 hrs after which it was accorded a water salute. As the transport aircraft touched the NMIA's runway, there was a stunning flypast by Sukhoi-30 fighter jets of the IAF. The inaugural landing of aircraft marked a new

beginning in the country's aviation sector. The NMIA has been developed by the Navi Mumbai International Airport Pvt Ltd (NMIAL), which is a special-purpose vehicle formed by the Adani Airports Holdings Ltd (AAHL) and City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd (CIDCO). The CIDCO is the nodal agency for the project.

A Greenfield airport, NMIA will serve as the second international airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), to be operated alongside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) of Mumbai.

## Ashuras too have begun to celebrate Durga Pujas

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The "big breaking news" is: The hedge of stated 'discord' between the "descendants of Gods and Ashuras" is obliterating fast. Unlike their ancestors the Ashuras are joining Durga Puja celebrations in a big way.

Cut to Jalpaiguri in North Bengal where the members of Ashura tribe --- many of whom consider themselves the descendants of demon kings --- have cast off the age old "stigma" of being the descendants of Mahishasura to take part in the festivities. "We are proud of our Ashura culture ... when we come to celebrate Durga Pujas it is an assimilation of culture and not representation of hostilities," says Jamini an amateur artist from the community.

"Till even a few years ago the members of our tribe would not go out and mingle with the people in Durga Pujas as our ancestors did nothing of that sort ... we remained confined in our homes in these 10 days of Durga Pujas

... but modern education seems to have broken that barrier," said Rajiv Ashur of Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri. "We as children would not go to pandals though we were attracted by the pomp as people mostly the descendants of the Aryans would think that we were bad being the descendants of Mahishashur ... but our mythology says that he was a good king ... however that sense of stigma is diminishing and the people are taking part in the festivities as social beings ... even they come to our festivals," he says.

His grandfather Charu Ashur though however refuses to visit the pandal as he thinks that Mahishasur --- the demon God who was slain by the Mother Goddess to rid the Universe of evil --- "was a very benevolent king who did great good to his subjects but for the intervention of the Gods who tried to impose their will on the Ashuras taking away their lands and everything leading to a battle in which he was eventually



martyred." Charu however does not come in the way of his grand-

children mingling with the children of Durga as "past is past ... now time has come

when all should live together happily sharing mutual respect for each other." However Usha Ashur who has done her Masters in sociology is vehement in preserving her culture. "There is no problem mingling but why should be done by demeaning of our ancestors. According to her the myth that "the war between Gods and Demons is an eternal battle between good and evil" and that "the alleged epitome of evil that is Mahishasur is finally forgiven by the Goddess, should also be discarded" as "this leads to "continual marginalisation and exclusion of Mahishasur's descendants from the cultural mainstream."

But once again she has no problem joining in the festivities but with a caution "this must not mean white-washing of the Ashura culture." Her own brother who is a member in a Durga Puja community in Jalpaiguri says, "how can you resist the children who get a good opportunity to get

new clothes, sweets, and a long drawn off from the schools ... their friends are from what you call the traditional Aryan communities ... so it is better to get the cultures to mingle." But he does not reject his sisters' views that the Ashura community and its culture must not be allowed to be overwhelmed by the Aryan majoritarian culture.

According to the 1991 census, the population of Ashurs --- one of the 40 scheduled tribes of Bengal --- was about 4864. Of these, the total number is 3108 in Jalpaiguri. There were some Ashurs in Darjeeling and Cooch Behar districts too.

Bikash Ashur a private teacher and also member of a Puja club says "the time has come when Ashur or Shur should be identified by the inner quality and not the looks or descent ... after all the Hindu mythology itself says that the Gods and Ashuras were siblings with one being the descendant of Aditi and the other of Diti."

## Mahadev app kingpin...

From page 1

The MOB app, as per the federal agency, is an umbrella syndicate arranging online platforms for enabling illegal betting websites to enrol new users, create user IDs and laundering of money through a layered web of benami bank accounts. The ED has arrested a total of 11 people in this case till now. Two charge sheets have also been filed by the agency till now, including against the two promoters. The Chhattisgarh Police too

is investigating the case. The projected proceeds of crime in this case are about Rs 6,000 crore, according to the agency. The ED has alleged in its charge sheet that Chandrakar got married at Ras Al Khaimah, UAE, in February 2023 and about Rs 200 crore "in cash" was spent for this event. Private jets were hired to ferry Chandrakar's relatives from India to the UAE and celebrities were paid to perform at the wedding, the agency alleged.

## From Ratan to Naval...

From page 1

Noel Tata is the son of late Naval Tata, who was also Ratan Tata's father. Noel's mother is Simone Tata. Tata Trusts was founded by Noel and Ratan's great grandfather Jamsetji Tata in 1892, years after he founded the Tata group. Currently the Vice Chairman of Tata Steel and Titan, Noel Tata is already on the board of several listed Tata firms and trusts governed by Tata Trusts. He was the frontrunner to succeed Ratan Tata as the chairman of Tata Trusts. Incidentally, Tata Trusts owns 66% shares of Tata Sons, the holding company of various firms under the Tata brand. Noel Tata has been the chairman at Trent Ltd., the conglomerate's massively successful apparel retailer, since 2014. He is also on the boards of several listed Tata firms like Tata Steel Ltd. and Voltas Ltd.

## Can Delhi hope for a cleaner winter...

From page 1

Mishra expressed concern over the persistent air quality issues and underscored the need for strict enforcement of existing laws. He emphasised that adequate measures for dust control, both from roads and construction activities need to be taken. Officials said Mishra urged the adoption of a mission-mode approach to greening central verges of roads and paving/ greening of pathways, open areas along roadsides to abate dust generation. Mechanised road cleaning, deployment of adequate numbers of anti-smog guns and regular water sprinkling also needs to be ramped up, particularly in high-pollution hotspots and during the periods under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

Delhi Chief Secretary Dharendra, presented a comprehensive report on the city's air quality management efforts for 2024. He highlighted that construction-related dust, biomass burning and vehicular emissions continue to be key contributors, especially during the winter months when stagnant weather conditions worsen the situation. The PMO directed for accelerating the shift towards electric mobility. He called for the creation of a clear roadmap to ensure that future registrations prioritise electric vehicles, particularly for commercial fleets, government services, and public transport. Mishra directed officials to increase inspections of industries and commercial establishments to ensure compliance with prescribed emission control measures.

## Omar returns to...

From page 1

Briefing media persons after meeting the Lieutenant Governor, CM designate Omar Abdullah said the oath ceremony is likely to take place on October 16. "There are certain formalities which are there to be followed and I have been informed it will take two to three days to complete the same. I am hoping the swearing-in ceremony can take place on October 16," he said.

Before visiting Raj Bhawan, a three-member delegation of senior Congress leaders, including AICC in-charge Jammu and Kashmir BharatSinh Solanki, also gave him a letter of support formally extending their support to form the alliance government at his Gupkar Road residence. JKPC Chief Tariq Hamid Karra and newly elected MLA

Ghulam Ahmad Mir were also present on the occasion. After stepping out of the residence of Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Tariq Hamid Karra told media persons, "We have given the letter of support to Omar Abdullah and he will meet the Lieutenant Governor (LG) and will stake claim to form the government". The Congress leaders, however, maintained they would have a detailed discussion with the National Conference leadership to decide the contours of the governance model. "We have no demands. We are supporting the National Conference for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The elected legislators of the Congress party also authorised the party's high command to elect the leader of the Congress Legislative party on Friday.

Meanwhile, the National Conference tally has further gone up to 48 as two more newly elected legislators extended their support to the party. On Friday, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said that it will extend support to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) after the NC-Congress alliance emerged victorious in the recently concluded assembly election in the Union Territory. Four Independents extended their support to the party on Thursday. The formal letter of support has been submitted to the Lt Governor by the party. Thana mand-winning candidate Muzaffar Iqbal Khan also officially extended his support to JKNC on Friday. He was felicitated by the VP & JKNC Chief Ministerial candidate, Omar Abdullah at Gupkar.

## Nayab Chief...

From page 1

Another ground in the vicinity near a mall had been reserved as the venue. All the necessary arrangements for the Haryana CM oath-taking ceremony are overseen by a district-level committee. In an official order issued on Thursday, Chief Secretary TVSN Prasad said that additional deputy commissioner and municipal commissioner of Panchkula will also be members of the committee. The BJP Legislature Party is likely to

meet a day ahead of the oath-taking ceremony to elect its leader who will be the state's new chief minister, most probably 54-year-old Saini. Saini, talking to reporters in Kurukshetra, parried the question about the date of the swearing-in. "We will tell you the date...the oath ceremony will be held soon..." he said. A day after the election results, Saini met Modi and credited him for the historic hat trick. He also met BJP chief JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

# City roads to be pothole free by Diwali: CM Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Atishi on Friday announced that Delhi roads will be made pothole-free by Diwali following a review meeting with officials from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) to assess the repair work on the roads under these agencies in Delhi.

In the meeting, Atishi asserted, "As a government, our priority is to provide better roads for the people of Delhi. All agencies are working at war footing to achieve this vision and are improving the city's roads."

She added, "During our inspection, we found that many roads in Delhi are in a dilapidated condition, causing traffic problems due to potholes."

Recently, the Delhi cabinet, along with Atishi, inspected the roads managed by the



Public Works Department (PWD) in Delhi. "During the inspection, it was noted that several roads had been handed over by the PWD to the Delhi Metro and NCRTC, and many of these roads were in a dilapidated condition, requiring urgent repairs," a statement stated. It added that Atishi directed the PWD officials to coordi-

pothole filling on most roads has been completed, and all work related to patching and potholes will be completed within the next two weeks," an official said.

Atishi also commended the collaborative efforts of all agencies to repair the roads and expressed optimism that, under the guidance of Arvind Kejriwal, they would provide pothole-free roads to all Delhi residents by Diwali.

During the meeting, NCRTC officials shared that repair work will commence immediately on the road from Nizamuddin Bus Stand to Railway Station and the entire 300-meter stretch will be fully repaired by October 25. NCRTC officials stated in the review meeting that repairs will be completed within a week on a section of the road near Eastern Apartment, New Ashok Nagar Metro is damaged. "The road at Khichripur near Dhoobi Ghat also falls under NCRTC jurisdiction, and a 300-meter section is damaged. NCRTC will repair it soon," another official said.

# Swiggy delivery agent stabbed to death by teenager in Rohini

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



A 28-year-old Swiggy delivery agent was allegedly stabbed to death in Delhi's Rohini by a teenager following an altercation over a common female friend.

According to the police on Friday, the incident took place in Vijay Vihar area on Tuesday when some boys stabbed the victim multiple times. The victim has been identified as 28-year-old Deepak while the accused has been identified as 19-year-old Nikhil Tomar, alias Neeraj, who is a resident of Delhi's Nithari.

According to police, the two men had an altercation last week over the woman that escalated. However, police are still ascertaining the number of boys involved in the stabbing. According to a police officer, at least two men were present and efforts are being made to nab the remaining.

"On Wednesday at 5:20 pm, a PCR call regarding the stabbing of a person near Nirankari Bhawan was received at Vijay Vihar police station. Upon enquiry, it was found that the injured had been shifted to the hospital, where he was declared brought dead by the doctors," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Amit Goel said.

A case under section 103(1) (Punishment for murder) of BNS was registered at Vijay Vihar police station and investigation was taken up. "Both the victim and the accused had criminal backgrounds," Goel stated.

The officer added that on the day of the incident, the deceased was going on his motorcycle in a lane adjacent to his house, where he was waylaid by some persons and stabbed multiple times. The victim had a past criminal history and three criminal cases were found registered against him.

About 200 CCTV footage were analysed and Tomar was identified that led to his arrest. During interrogation, he confessed to the crime and disclosed information about his accomplices, who are currently on the run.

Tomar also revealed that his enmity with Deepak grew due to their common female friend which led to the murder. "As per the version of the accused, deceased and accused had a common female friend and over whom, they developed enmity between them."

# Free ki revdi reaches US: Kejriwal on Trump's promise to slash energy costs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, often criticised by Opposition for offering 'freebies', found a connection with the US Presidential candidate Donald Trump and used his promise to slash energy costs by half to make a point about the universal appeal of 'revdi'. Responding to a post on X by former US President and the Republican party's presidential candidate Donald Trump, where he promises to cut electricity and energy prices in half, Kejriwal posted, "Trump has announced that he will reduce electricity rates by half. Free ki revdi reach US..."

Kejriwal, while speaking at the Detroit Economic Club on Thursday, pledged to halve electricity costs within a year if elected. He tweeted, "I will cut the price of ENERGY and ELECTRICITY IN HALF within 12 months. We will seriously expedite our environmental approvals and quickly double



our electricity capacity. This will DRIVE DOWN INFLATION, and make AMERICA and MICHIGAN the best place on earth to build a factory." Accusing Kejriwal for misquoting Trump, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said his claim is entirely false. Sachdeva clarified that Trump has clearly stated in his election speech that if elected, he would increase electricity production and lower rates, which is a sound economic decision. However, it is unfortunate that Arvind Kejriwal referred to

welfarism done right. The world takes notice," Chadha said in the post.

This comes on the heels of Kejriwal's own challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On October 6, during a public meeting, Kejriwal said he would campaign for the BJP in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections if PM Modi implemented free electricity in all 22 states ruled by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Addressing a public meeting last week, Kejriwal said, "I am giving six free revdi -- power, water, bus rides for women, pilgrimage for the elderly, health and education -- to my two crore people of Delhi so that I can make their lives happier." "The revdi belongs to the public. I am distributing it among them," he added.

However, the AAP chief and his party maintain that their policies, such as free electricity and water, are vital for uplifting the poor and ensuring equitable access to basic services.

# CM Atishi allotted bungalow at 6, Flag Staff Road; AAP, BJP attack each other

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Public Works Department (PWD) on Friday allotted Chief Minister Atishi the bungalow at 6, Flag Staff Road following the procedures even as the AAP and BJP attacked each other over the sealing of the residence.

An offer letter issued by the PWD said the bungalow in Civil Lines has been formally allotted to Atishi, after completing the due process of handover and preparation of inventory.

"The Director of Allotment, PWD, GNCTD is pleased to offer the under mentioned PWD General Pool Bungalow to Atishi, Chief Minister, GNCTD, as per the provisions of Delhi Administration Allotment of Govt. Residences (General Pool) Rules, 1977," PWD said in the letter.

It added that since the said house is under investigation of CBI and other agencies for various violations, the allottee is advised to extend full coop-



eration in the investigation, as may be required. The bungalow was at the centre of an intense tussle involving the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the LG office since former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal vacated it earlier this month. Earlier, officials Raj Niwas has stated that this bungalow was not earmarked as Chief Minister's official residence. While the Vigilance Department has stated that the bungalow can not be allotted with a completion certificate.

allotted, the allottee will have to vacate the house/bungalow within 15 days after taking possession of the new house/bungalow allotted in lieu of the previous one," it said.

The PWD stated that if allottee makes any unauthorized construction in the Bungalow at any time, the allotment is liable to be cancelled in addition to payment of applicable damages etc. as per the relevant provisions of Delhi Administration Allotment of Govt. Residences (General Pool) Rules, 1977.

"After submitting acceptance, the allottee will be given an Authority Slip from PWD Secretariat, 3rd Floor, MSO Building, I.P. Estate, New Delhi in order to take possession of the allotted house/bungalow within the date mentioned in the authority slip. In case of failure to take the possession of the allotted Bungalow within the time specified, the allotment will be treated as cancelled," it added.

# Gahlot flags off trial run of last mile connectivity Mohalla bus service

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The trial run of the Delhi government's last-mile connectivity Mohalla bus service started on the Vasant Vihar circular route on Friday. Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot flagged off the Mohalla bus.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA from R K Puram, Parmila Tokas, was also present during the event. "This route will connect Munirka, Vasant Kunj, the three malls, the police station and also Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The route is around 11 kilometres long," Gahlot said.

Considering last-mile connectivity, this route is very important, as we were getting lots of requests for this, he added. Gahlot said a total of two buses will be there in the trial for now and more buses will be added later as per the requirement.

The trials are already underway on at least four other routes -- Pradhan Enclave Pushta to Majlis Park Metro Station, Akshardham Metro Station to Mayur Vihar Phase III Paper Market, Kailash Colony Metro



Station to PNB Gitanjali Colony, and Lok Kalyan Marg metro station to Vasant Vihar Metro station. The Mohalla Bus Scheme aims at providing feeder bus services to the Delhiites around their homes through nine-meter-long electric buses. The AAP government aims to operate 2,180 Mohalla buses by 2025. These buses will run on congested roads with limited width in areas where 12-meter buses face manoeuvring challenges. The Mohalla buses have 23 pas-

# AAP Government approved 100 projects to boost city's village development, says Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Development Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said that the AAP government approved 100 projects worth Rs 93 crores in a bid to boost development in Delhi's villages.

In a meeting held at the Delhi Secretariat and chaired by Rai, the Delhi Gram Vikas Board approved 100 schemes to ensure development in the capital's villages.

"These include development works related to roads, drains, water bodies, community centers, parks, crematoriums, and playgrounds. The projects will be carried out in Delhi's rural areas at a cost of Rs 93 crore. During the meeting, officials were instructed to complete the village development projects within the stipulated time frame," a statement said.

During the meeting, members raised concerns about pending and new proposals. In response, the senior AAP leader said that the government had established the Delhi



Gram Vikas Board to ensure the development of Delhi's villages. "These projects aim to improve amenities across all villages in Delhi. Additionally, department officials were instructed to process project files related to village development within the stipulated time frame," it stated. Speaking about the decision, he said, "The board has approved the installation of 100 benches in large villages and 20 benches in smaller villages. These development projects, under the Development Department, are being implemented through the Irrigation and Flood Control Department and the MCD."

# Transport Department launches fresh crackdown on overage vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government Transport Department on Friday launched a fresh round of crackdown on overage vehicles, an exercise that will continue till December to combat air pollution in the national capital.

The department has asked traffic police to deploy four teams in every municipal zone in coordination with its enforcement wing to impound diesel and petrol-run vehicles that are 10 and 15 years old, respectively.

Similar action has also been launched against unregistered and unfit e-rickshaws across the city. Total 213 vehicles, including two-wheelers, cars, and e-rickshaws were impounded on Friday, officials said.

This is the second round of city-wide crackdown on overage vehicles. In March last year, the department launched a drive to impound such vehicles. The drive continued for a few months.



According to the latest figure, more than 55 lakh overage vehicles have been de-registered so far in the national capital. An official said that several teams of Delhi Traffic Police, Enforcement Wing of the Transport Department, MCD and other agencies will take action. The official said the "end of life" vehicles will be impounded and directly sent to the scrapping yard if they are found plying on city roads or parked in public places. According to the Transport Department's recent public notice, owners of overage vehicles have three options - keep such vehicles in a private parking space owned by the individual, not in a shared parking space, obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to move the vehicle out of Delhi within one year of the vehicle's expiry date, or scrap the vehicle through a registered agency. As the winter season approaches, when pollution levels typically spike, the drive is also part of a broader strategy to improve air quality and streamline vehicle registration across the capital, an official of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) said.

# Ramlilas take over entire city, Dussehra promises to be a grand affair

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital is in a festive mode as Ramlilas have taken over the city in their entire splendour with Dussehra promising to be a grand affair in Delhi. Devotees are flocking different pandals and Ramlilas across the city with people rejoicing in the festival that celebrates the divine feminine energy and preaches good over evil.

At Madhavdas Park, within the historic Red Fort grounds, the Shri Dharmik Leela Committee is set to host a major event featuring a dramatic reenactment of the leg-

endary Ram-Ravana battle with the presence of both the President and the Prime Minister expected, underscoring the event's national significance. The celebration will also feature the cast of 'Singham Again' participating in the much-anticipated Ravana Dahan at the renowned Luv Kush Ramlila.

The Ramlila will feature prominent Bollywood stars, including Kareena Kapoor, Ajay Devgn, and Rohit Shetty, from the cast of 'Singham Again,' blending traditional drama with contemporary celebrity appeal. BJP President Virendra Sachdeva will also be in atten-



dance, adding to the political significance of the festivities. In Dwarka, the Sri Ram Lila Society has created a striking 120-foot effigy of Ravana, inspired by the ancient Ram Mandir temple in Ayodhya. The entrance gates, designed in the South Indian 'Gopuram' style, aim to offer attendees a rich cultural experience.

The Luv Kush Ramlila Committee has also constructed a 120-foot-tall Ravana effigy, a project that took two months and involved 18 skilled artisans from Uttar Pradesh and the Delhi-NCR region. Additionally, they have crafted a 100-foot effigy of Meghnaad

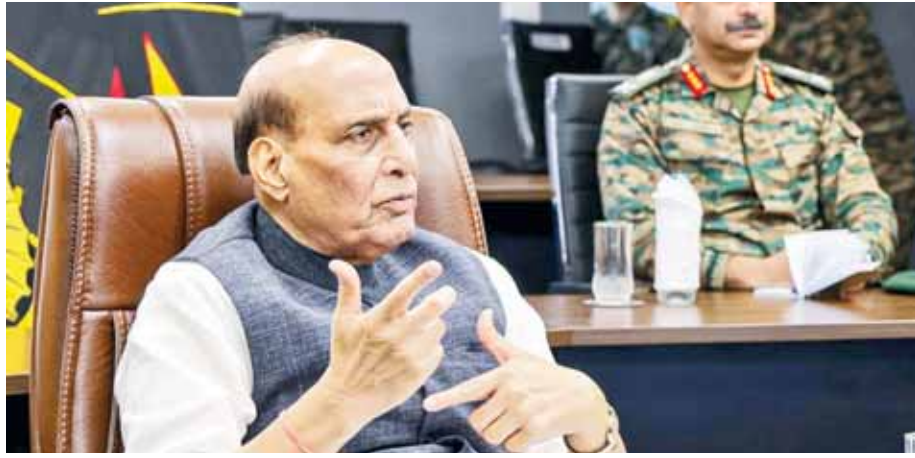
and a 110-foot effigy of Kumbhakaran, promising a visual spectacle for the audience. Additionally, the Dussehra celebrations extend beyond these locations. At Ramlila Maidan, known for its grand effigies and deep-rooted history in Dussehra festivities, the Delhi Ramlila Committee will organize various performances and rituals. Lal Qila Maidan in Old Delhi will also continue its tradition of elaborate celebrations with massive effigies. For those seeking a unique cultural experience, the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra Theater Lawns at Mandi House will host a captivating Ramlila performance followed by the symbolic Ravana Dahan. Meanwhile, the Dwarka Sri Ram Leela Society at DDA Grounds, Sector 10, invites local residents to join in the vibrant festivities.

As Delhi gears up to bid farewell to Ravana, the city comes together in a spirit of unity, celebrating the timeless message of Dussehra: the triumph of good over evil. With cultural performances, distinguished guests, and an air filled with enthusiasm, this year's Dussehra celebrations in Delhi promise to be both memorable and inspiring.

# Defence Minister urges military to be alert amid global uncertainty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said the present complex and ambiguous world situation affects everyone globally and urged military top brass to be alert, regularly modernise and prepare continuously for various contingencies. Making this assertion while addressing the Army Commanders' Conference in Sikkim, he said "Unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war will be part of the future conventional wars and the same is evident in the recent conflicts happening in various parts of world. This necessitates that Armed Forces should keep all these facets in consideration while planning and formulating strategies. We must keep learning from the incidents to include the global ones, happened in present as also in past, so as to avert the damage control." Commenting on the current situation along the Northern



borders facing China, the defence minister expressed full confidence in the Army for any contingency though, the ongoing talks for peaceful resolution will continue at all levels. The second Army Commanders' Conference this year commenced in a hybrid format on Thursday in a forward location at Gangtok. Conduct of the Senior Commanders Conference at a forward location underlines Indian Army's focus on ground realities. During the event, Indian

Army's apex leadership comprehensively deliberated upon all aspects of existing security scenarios, situation along the borders and in the hinterland and challenges for the present security apparatus. In addition, the conference is also focusing on issues pertaining to organisational restructuring, logistics, administration and human resource management. Owing to the bad weather at Gangtok, Rajnath addressed the commanders in virtual mode from an army location Sukna,

West Bengal. Referring to the situation along the Western borders with Pakistan, he complimented the Indian Army's response to cross border terrorism, however the proxy war with the adversary continues. "I compliment the excellent synergy between the CAPF/ Police forces and the Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. The synergised operations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are contributing to

increased stability and peace in the region which was also evident in the recently conducted elections in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, and for this I again compliment the Indian Army," he said. The Defence Minister commended the Army for the high standard of operational preparedness and capabilities which he has always been experiencing first hand during his visits to forward areas. Rajnath stressed upon the technological advancement taking place in every sphere of our life and applauded the Armed Forces for aptly incorporating them. He appreciated the Army's efforts to develop niche technologies in collaboration with civil industries, including premier educational institutions and thereby progressing towards the aim of 'Modernisation through Indigenisation' or 'Atmanirbharta'. He stated that modernisation of weapons for every soldier through Atmanirbharta is the key focus of the government and the government is completely with the Armed Forces in this aspect.

# Act or face consequence: FEMA, IMA tell Mamata Banerjee

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Both the Federation of Medical Associations (FeMA) and the Indian Medical Association have asked Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to take cognizance of the ongoing indefinite fast of the junior doctors and resolve the impasse by acceding to their 10-point demands that include justice for the lady doctor of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital who was on August 9 raped and murdered while on duty inside her hospital. In a strongly worded letter to Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee the Federation of Medical Associations (FeMA) has written that if there was a casualty among the doctors who were fasting unto death then the consequence would be uncontrollable. "We have realised that Mamata Banerjee is least interested in addressing the genuine demands" of the junior doctors who had been on a fast unto death. Threatening a complete cease work of doctors and also a bigger movement the FeMA has warned that "no amount of vote bank or police force will be able to stop the movement. We will make sure that this extreme step that you are

forcing us to take will be supported by every common man and even your own vote bank. It will soon be followed by similar action Pan India. Even central forces will not be sufficient to douse the flames," the FeMA wrote. The letter barely a few hours before Aniket Mahato a striking doctor was hospitalized in a "critical condition." Nine doctors, seven in Kolkata and two in Siliguri were sitting in fast unto death in support of their demands post the brutal rape and murder of "Abhaya" the victim doctor of RGKMCH. In a ten-point demand the doctors have been asking for a central referral system with real time monitoring so that no patient has to run from hospital to hospital losing vital time of treatment, installation of CCTV cameras, foolproof security of medical staff, end of threat syndicate inside medical colleges and related "rule of and rule by corruption," and conducting of college elections so as to end the "threat and extortion raj being perpetrated in the

colleges," the doctors said. The Bengal chapter of IMA too wrote to the Chief Minister to end the imbroglio by providing the junior doctors with a written deadline by which their demands would be fulfilled. "It (has) almost (been) a week since the young doctors of Bengal (started their) fast onto death. The Government is entirely capable of meeting all the demands. Peaceful ambience and security are not a luxury. They are a prerequisite. We appeal to your good self to settle the issues with the young generation doctors as an elder and the Head of the Government," the letter said adding how "the entire medical fraternity of India is concerned and trust you would be able to save their lives." Meanwhile, Dr Aniket Mahato, one of the junior doctors participating in the strike, was hospitalized after his condition worsened. "He is presently stable and is responding to treatment but we are keeping watch on other doctors too as their parameters are going down too we hope the Government loves its doctors and it knows how to show that love," Dr Subarna Goswami one of the senior doctors said.

# Mortal remains of missing Coast Guard pilot recovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The mortal remains of Commandant Rakesh Kumar Rana, the missing pilot of the Advanced Light Helicopter MK-III of Indian Coast Guard (ICG), which made an emergency landing last month, have been retrieved approximately 55 kms south west off the coast of Porbandar, defence ministry said here on Friday. After over 70 air sorties and involvement of multiple ships, the mortal remains of Commandant were retrieved on Thursday. The Commandant, who was the helicopter's pilot-in-command, was on a medical evacuation mission along with one pilot and two air crew divers to evacuate a seriously injured crew member from Motor Tanker Hari Leela. The helicopter had to make an emergency landing on September two, after which ICG along with the Indian Navy launched a massive search and rescue operation



for the missing personnel. One crew was rescued, while the mortal remains of three others were recovered on September three. "His mortal remains will be cremated as per service traditions and honour. A warm salute to the three brave souls from Rank and File of the Indian Coast Guard who laid down their lives in the line of duty," it said. The Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) of the Coast Guard with four crew members met with the

accident while trying to evacuate an injured man on board motor tanker Hari Leela, nearly 30 nautical miles from the Porbandar coast. While one of the four crew members on the helicopter, diver Gautam Kumar, was rescued immediately, three went missing. A day later, the bodies of pilot Vipin Babu and diver Karan Singh were recovered. But Rana remained missing, prompting a massive search operation.

# India expresses concern over security in West Asia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday said it was "concerned" at the "deteriorating" security situation in parts of West Asia, amid reports that United Nations peacekeepers have been caught in the intensified fighting in southern Lebanon. In a statement, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also said New Delhi continues to monitor the situation closely. "We are concerned at the deteriorating security situation along the Blue Line. We continue to monitor the situation closely," the MEA said. There are about 600 Indian soldiers as part of the UN peacekeeping force, it was learnt. The 120-km Blue Line is a United Nations-recognised demarcation line to indicate that Israel had withdrawn its military from southern Lebanon. It separates Lebanon from Israel and the Golan Heights, but it is not



an official international border. "Inviolability of UN premises must be respected by all, and appropriate measures taken to ensure the safety of UN peacekeepers and the sanctity of their mandate," the MEA said in its statement. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL),

the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, said in a statement on October 10 that "recent escalation along the Blue Line is causing widespread destruction of towns and villages in south Lebanon." "In the past days, we have seen incursions from Israel into Lebanon in Naqoura and

other areas. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers have clashed with Hizbullah elements on the ground in Lebanon," it alleged in the statement. "This morning, two peacekeepers were injured after an IDF Merkava tank fired its weapon toward an observation tower at

UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura, directly hitting it and causing them to fall," the UN statement read. "The injuries are fortunately, this time, not serious, but they remain in hospital," it added. The situation along the Israel-Lebanon border has escalated rapidly after the killing of former Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have accused Hezbollah of operating in areas near UNIFIL posts. In a statement, the IDF said, "The IDF is operating in southern Lebanon and maintains routine communication with UNIFIL." "This morning (Thursday), IDF troops operated in the area of Naqoura, next to a UNIFIL base. Accordingly, the IDF instructed the UN forces in the area to remain in protected spaces, following which the forces opened fire in the area," the statement added.

# Ghanshyam Tiwari appointed Chairman, Rajya Sabha Ethics Committee

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bhartiya Janta Party MP From Rajasthan, Ghanshyam Tiwari, has been appointed as the chairman of the Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha by Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. The Committee has been reconstituted by the Rajya Sabha chairman with effect from October 10. Among other members appointed as members of the Committee are Pramod Tiwari (Congress), Derek O'Brien (TMC), Tiruchi Siva (DMK), Sanjay Singh (AAP), V Vijayasai Reddy (YSRCP), Sasmit Patra (BJD), Prem Chand Gupta (RJD), Medha



Vishram Kulkarni and Darshana Singh (both BJP). The Rajya Sabha chairman has also changed the nominations of members in the department related to Parliamentary Standing

Committees, with Fauzia Khan changed from Social Justice and Empowerment to Committee to the Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel, V Vijayasai Reddy from Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture to Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. Babubhai Jesangbhai Desai has also been nominated by the chairman to the Committee on Health and Family Welfare, from the Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj earlier, and Neeraj Dangi from the Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj to the Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture.

The chairman has also nominated Seema Dwivedi to the department-related to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources. The Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha has the mandate to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members and to examine cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of members. In respect of procedure and other matters, the rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges apply to the Ethics Committee with such variations and modifications as the chairman, Rajya Sabha, may from time to time make.

# PM Modi pays tribute to Jayaprakash Narayan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tribute to socialist stalwart and anti-Emergency movement icon Jayaprakash Narayan on his birth anniversary. In a social media, the Prime Minister said Narayan dedicated his life to bringing positive change in the country and society. His personality and ideals will remain an inspiration for every generation, he said. Modi also paid homage to Nanaji Deshmukh, a leading member of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, on his birth anniversary. Modi said, his dedication and service for the empowerment of villagers,

especially the deprived sections, will always be remembered. A fierce socialist and freedom fighter, Narayan, fondly called JP, led a popular movement against the Indira Gandhi government's alleged corruption and repressive politics in the 70s before she imposed an Emergency. He then united opposition parties and rallied the masses against Congress in the first election after the Emergency in 1977, scripting a crushing defeat for the ruling party. Associated with the RSS, Deshmukh was an active member of the anti-emergency movement and later quit politics to become a social activist who dedicated his life to improving the lives of villagers.

# Modi invites EAS countries to Nalanda Conclave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday invited East Asia Summit countries for the first-ever Heads of Higher Education Conclave to be held at Nalanda University in Bihar. He extended the invitation during 19th East Asia Summit (EAS) at Vientiane, the capital of Lao People's Democratic Republic. "Reiterating the importance of the EAS mechanism and reaffirming India's support to further strengthen it, the PM recalled support received from EAS Participating Countries on the revival of Nalanda University. The PM took this opportunity to invite the EAS countries for a

Heads of Higher Education Conclave to be held at Nalanda University," an official statement said. The statement did not mention the date of the conclave. The EAS has 18 members the 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) along with Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. Modi had in June inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University at Rajgir in Bihar. The University is conceived as a collaboration between India and the EAS countries.

# India's vaccine regulatory system gets WHO approval

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Drug regulator Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) and the National Regulatory Authority of India have met the standards set up by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for a functional vaccine regulatory system. A team of international experts from various countries led by WHO headquarters in Geneva reviewed India's vaccine regulatory system from September 16 to 20, the health ministry said in a statement. Safety, efficacy, and quality were the three basic parameters of assessment of vaccines, it said.



The WHO has established global standards and benchmarks for assurance of vaccine quality through the

development of tools and guidelines, benchmarking of the National Regulatory Authorities (NRA) and pre-qualification programme of vaccines, the statement said. The WHO NRA re-benchmarking was aimed to assess and document the status of the India regulatory system in the area of vaccine regulation, re-benchmark the status of the India vaccine regulatory system against the WHO NRA Global Benchmarking Tool (GBT) and measuring the maturity of the system. "India has been declared 'functional' against all the core regulatory functions of the WHO Global Benchmarking Tool Version VI. India's vaccine regulatory system was

benchmarked in 2017 against Global benchmarking tool (GBT) version V which is now revised to GBT VI with raised bars and stringency in benchmarking criteria," the statement said. India retains maturity level 3 with highest marks in several functions. Speaking about the achievement, Punya Salila Srivastava, Union Health Secretary, stated, "The Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO), in collaboration with WHO, has made exemplary efforts towards this achievement. India is one of the main players in the pharmaceutical industry worldwide and is known for its affordable vaccines and generic medicines."

# Indian Navy hosts NIIO Seminar 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The third edition of the Indian Navy's Naval Innovation and Indigenisation (NIIO) Seminar, Swavlamban 2024, will take place for two days starting October 28 at Bharat Mandapam here, navy said on Friday. Giving details, officials said over the last two editions of Swavlamban, the Indian Navy has received more than 2,000 proposals from the Indian industry that have been converted into 155 challenges to facilitate development of prototypes. This initiative has enabled collaboration with more than 200 MSMEs/Startups under the iDEX Scheme. 'Swavlamban 2024,' is expected to build on the



experiences and insights gained through the conduct of previous editions of the seminar, and provide new and substantial impetus to the innovation and indigenisation endeavour. The event will showcase products of niche technologies such as air and surface surveillance, autonomous systems in surface, aerial and underwater domains, AI and quantum technologies, they said.

Domain specific interactive sessions on October 29 at Bharat Mandapam will provide an opportunity for interaction among policy makers, innovators, startups, MSMEs, financial institutions and venture capitalists to discuss and deliberate on issues such as emerging technologies, future warfare, indigenisation, boosting innovation ecosystem and inculcating an innovative culture.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that the names of 147 members and (18 vacancies), the details of which are given below are being forwarded to the office of the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Government of NCT of Delhi, Old Court's Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 by the Managing Committee of Ramjas Co-operative Group Housing Society Limited (Regn. No. 1050 (GH), Regd. Office: 10/155, Geeta Colony, New Delhi-110031 for approval of all such membership of the members who have complied with the requirement as per DCS Act, 2003 & Rules, 2007 and to forward their names to Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for allotment of flat in the society for construction of flats for its members through Co-operative Movement as per provisions of DCS Act/Rules & DDA norms/guidelines therefor:

Table with columns: S.No., Date of Enrollment, M.No., Name of Members, Father/Husband Name, Address, S.No., Date of Enrollment, M.No., Name of Members, Father/Husband Name, Address. Contains 147 rows of member data.

There are 18 vacancies in the society

Initially, in the year 1983-84, 255 members have applied for registration of the society in the name and style of 'Ramjas CGHS Ltd.', however, the RCS office struck of the names of 16 members from the promoter list due to noncompliance of the statutory requirements as laid down in the DCS Act & Rules thereof. At the time of registration of the society, the strength of the members were 239 members. Before the approval of freeze list, a total of 412 enrollments (including the 239 promoters) occurred, and 231 members resigned, leading to the approval of 165 members by the competent authority (412 - 231(resigned)-16 (rejected)). Consequently, the freeze strength of the society was approved and fixed at 165 members, as confirmed by the RCS office in its letter no. F.47/1050/Coop/GH/SW/464 dated 01.04.2003. Currently, the society has a strength of 147 members, having 18 vacancies created due to resignations. After approval of freeze strength, 44 members enrolled against 62 resignations, resulting in the current strength of 147 members. Overall, the society has processed a total of 456 applications since its inception. Out of these, 309 members have been removed from the membership register due to rejections or resignations, in accordance with the provisions of the DCS Act and Rules under intimation to the office of the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Govt. of NCT of Delhi. The details of outgoing members are provided below:

Table with columns: S.No., Date of Enrollment, M.No., Name of the Members, Father/Husband Name, Date of MC resolution approving resignation, S.No., Date of Enrollment, M.No., Name of the Members, Father/Husband Name, Date of MC resolution approving resignation, S.No., Date of Enrollment, M.No., Name of the Members, Father/Husband Name, Date of MC resolution approving resignation. Contains 147 rows of outgoing member data.

Objections are invited from the general public, Member/ members of society and all concerned, if any, to be filed before the President/ Secretary of Ramjas Co-operative Group Housing Society Limited at 10/155, Geeta Colony, New Delhi-110031 or before the Office of the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Old Court's Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 within 5 days of publication of this notice, failing which no objection shall be entertained thereafter in any manner whatsoever and after expiry of 05 days, the society shall be free to proceed further as per provisions of DCS Act & Rules.

For Ramjas Co-op. G/H Society Ltd. (D.K. SHARMA) Secretary



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## India acts East

PM Modi visits Laos for the 21st India-ASEAN Summit; says the 21st century belongs to India and ASEAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Laos for the 21st India-ASEAN Summit reestablishes India's diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asian nations. With a focus on enhancing connectivity and resilience, Modi announced a comprehensive 10-point action plan aimed at fortifying the India-ASEAN partnership. This initiative not only underscores the importance of regional collaboration in a time of global uncertainty but also highlights the potential for growth within the 21st-century landscape, which PM Modi asserts 'belongs to India and ASEAN.' PM Modi emphasised the critical need for friendship and cooperation among India and ASEAN countries, especially as tensions rise globally, with conflicts affecting various regions. He reiterated that India-ASEAN friendship, coordination dialogue and cooperation are essential at a time when several parts of the world are facing conflicts and tensions. The summit also coincides with the review of a decade of India's Act East Policy, which has significantly contributed to the doubling of India-ASEAN trade to over USD 130 billion in the past ten years.



The Prime Minister's vision for deeper ties with ASEAN encompasses several key areas. One of the important initiatives is the enhancement of connectivity, marked by the establishment of direct flight connections with seven ASEAN nations. This move aims to facilitate easier travel and trade, further integrating the economies of the region. In the realm of technology, PM Modi announced the launch of fintech connectivity with Singapore, setting a precedent for future collaborations across the ASEAN region. This initiative promotes technological advancement and financial inclusion, essential for emerging economies. Cultural ties are also a focal point, with efforts to restore shared heritage in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Indonesia reflecting India's commitment to preserving regional history and identity. Moreover, Modi stressed the urgency of completing the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AITIGA) review to unlock greater economic potential for both parties. He highlighted the significance of educational exchanges. Over 300 students from ASEAN countries have benefitted from scholarships at Nalanda University, fostering deeper educational ties. As regional tensions persist, especially concerning maritime disputes in the South China Sea and the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, PM Modi's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative underscores the need for collaborative efforts in ensuring regional stability and security. This approach, along with a commitment to humanitarian cooperation, highlights India's readiness to support ASEAN nations in times of natural disasters. India's vision is firmly anchored in a people-centric approach, indicating a commitment to sustainable development that addresses the needs and aspirations of citizens across both regions. Indeed India and ASEAN nations have much in common; they share heritage and values which date back to centuries. It is time to revive them.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Laos for the 21st India-ASEAN Summit reestablishes India's diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asian nations. With a focus on enhancing connectivity and resilience, Modi announced a comprehensive 10-point action plan aimed at fortifying the India-ASEAN partnership. This initiative not only underscores the importance of regional collaboration in a time of global uncertainty but also highlights the potential for growth within the 21st-century landscape, which PM Modi asserts 'belongs to India and ASEAN.' PM Modi emphasised the critical need for friendship and cooperation among India and ASEAN countries, especially as tensions rise globally, with conflicts affecting various regions. He reiterated that India-ASEAN friendship, coordination dialogue and cooperation are essential at a time when several parts of the world are facing conflicts and tensions. The summit also coincides with the review of a decade of India's Act East Policy, which has significantly contributed to the doubling of India-ASEAN trade to over USD 130 billion in the past ten years.

### PICTALK



An artist paints effigies of the demon king Ravana on the Dussehra, in Prayagraj

PTI

## A new era of global opportunities awaits India in higher education

With initiatives like 'Study in India' and the recognition of qualifications of other countries, India is positioning itself as a growing hub for international education

India offers tremendous opportunities in various sectors, the education is no different. Internationalisation of this sector was envisaged in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP), and the Government of India has taken effective steps over the last 4 years towards achieving this goal. Initiatives such as Study in India, Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) setting up campuses in India, collaborations between Indian institutions and FHEIs, and mutual recognition of qualifications between governments are already seeing positive results. Enabling FHEIs to set up their campuses in India was allowed through Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) regulations as well as by the University Grants Commission (UGC). These regulations aim to attract top-ranked global universities and institutions to India and offer Indian students a chance to avail global certifications at comparatively affordable costs in their home country. We have already seen Deakin University operationalise its



campus in July this year and the University of Wollongong preparing for their launch, both at GIFT City. The University of Southampton (UK), ranked 80th in the 2025 QS World Rankings, became the first university to receive a Letter of Intent (LoI) from the Indian Government to establish its campus in India. We are also seeing Indian institutions set up campuses overseas as part of the internationalisation initiative. IIT Delhi has set up its first international campus in Abu Dhabi and IIT Madras has located its first overseas campus in Zanzibar. The UGC Institutions of Eminence (IoE) guidelines enable IoEs to set up their campuses overseas and BITS Pilani and Manipal Academy took advantage of the window to do their forays outside India. While there is a lot of inter-

est from other private universities to set up campuses overseas, promulgating an enabling framework through regulations by the government would catalyze this interest further. In May 2022, the government revamped the collaboration guidelines to allow for joint degree, dual degree and twinning programmes between Indian institutions and FHEIs. We have already seen a lot of traction in this space, with Manipal Institute of Technology tying up with Deakin, the University of Australia, and Shoolini University offering dual degrees with the University of Melbourne being some recent examples. Studying in India is another initiative towards the internationalisation of the Indian education system. It is a flagship programme of the Government of India in line with PM Modi's vision. The website portal acts as a single window system for admission and visa applications for foreign students wanting to pursue higher education in India, with more than 60,000 students already registering through this portal. The

bation of internationalisation of education is also being taken forward through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) and the Mutual Recognition of Qualification (MRQ) Agreement between India and other countries, which aims to facilitate student and faculty exchanges. There are around 50 plus active MoUs (including France, and Germany) with a few under negotiation. MRQs have been signed with a few countries as well and some are under negotiation. A fabulous start to an era of transformation of the Indian education landscape! Is there a need to do more? A more targeted approach, probably through a campaign run with Indian consulates in overseas countries, could further the cause of internationalisation. FHEIs are now rethinking their strategy. Possibly an opportunity for India to tap - open an FHEI campus in India and offer itself as an alternate education hub in the region. (The writer is Partner, Deloitte India, inputs by Guncha Prakash, Assistant Manager, Deloitte India; views are personal)



SAHIL GUPTA

# Strengthening RTI Act with practical reforms

As the Right to Information (RTI) Act completes 19 years, it is time to amend the rules and expand its scope to ensure it continues to serve its purpose effectively



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, implemented on October 12, 2005, marked a monumental step toward government transparency and accountability in India. Over the years, the Act has been instrumental in exposing corruption and various scams, empowering citizens to demand information from public authorities. However, while the Act has undeniably brought about significant reform, certain amendments to the RTI rules—not the Act itself—are necessary to prevent misuse, streamline the process, and reduce the burden on the courts.

### Addressing Misuse and Unnecessary Litigation

One of the key challenges facing the RTI framework today is the misuse of the system by individuals and groups, often leading to unnecessary appeals and challenges in courts. The Central Information Commission (CIC), tasked with handling RTI appeals, is often burdened by frivolous cases that clog the system and delay the resolution of genuine complaints. Amendments to the RTI rules, particularly in the area of public-private partnerships (PPPs), sports bodies, and cooperatives, could alleviate some of this pressure.

By declaring PPPs, sports bodies, and cooperatives as public authorities under the RTI Act, a significant amount of time and resources could be saved. These entities often handle substantial public funds, and their exclusion from RTI coverage has raised questions about transparency. Including them under the Act would not only enhance accountability but also reduce the number of cases that reach Information Commissions and courts, streamlining the entire RTI process.

### Bringing Government Allotments Under RTI

A critical area that requires attention is the issue of government land and accommodation allotments. Many government-owned properties are allotted at subsidised rates, often raising concerns about favouritism or corruption. To address this, all such allotments should be brought



under the purview of the RTI Act. Moreover, future allotments should be made conditional upon compliance with the Act, ensuring that beneficiaries are transparent about the process and accountable to the public. This move would further reduce the burden on Information Commissions, as it would discourage non-compliant beneficiaries from evading public scrutiny. It would also provide citizens with a tool to question and monitor how public resources are being allocated, contributing to more transparent governance.

### Streamlining High Offices' RTI Applications

High offices such as those of the President, Prime Minister, and Chief Ministers often receive RTI applications that may not be directly related to their functions. To improve efficiency, these offices should only address RTI applications that pertain specifically to their roles. Any other applications should be returned to the applicant, along with advice on which department or authority they should approach instead. This measure would reduce the workload on these high offices while ensuring that citizens receive the information they seek from the correct sources.

### Bringing Private Sector Banks Under RTI

The financial sector has long been an area where greater transparency is needed, particularly in light of recent scan-



ONE OF THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE RTI FRAMEWORK TODAY IS THE MISUSE OF THE SYSTEM BY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, OFTEN LEADING TO UNNECESSARY APPEALS AND CHALLENGES IN COURTS

dals and issues of financial mismanagement. While public sector banks are already subject to RTI, the private sector remains outside the Act's purview. This is a matter of concern, given the extensive use of public funds by private banks and the critical role they play in the economy. To address this gap, private sector banks should be brought under the RTI Act. This would allow citizens to seek information about their financial practices, thereby increasing accountability in the sector.

### Standardising RTI Fees and Preventing Misuse

Another issue that plagues the current RTI framework is the inconsistency in application fees across states. RTI fees should be standardised nationwide at Rs 50, which would cover the cost of 20 photocopied pages. Furthermore, no fees should be charged for appeals. These changes would simplify the process for citizens and eliminate confusion regarding varying charges in different states. However, there is also a need to address the misuse of free RTI applications by certain vested interests. For instance, contractors have been known to exploit Below Poverty Line (BPL) workers by having them file RTI requests on their behalf, thus avoiding fees. To prevent this, the free provision for BPL applicants should be limited to 20 pages. Any additional pages should incur a nominal charge, ensur-

ing that the system is not abused while still providing free access to information for genuinely disadvantaged individuals.

### Enhancing Accessibility and Digital Integration

To further streamline the RTI process, post offices across the country should accept post-free RTI applications. This would make it easier for citizens, particularly those in rural areas, to file applications without worrying about postage costs. In addition, a mandatory requirement for ID proof, as seen in states like Punjab and Haryana, should be implemented nationwide. This would prevent misuse of the RTI system and ensure that applications are being filed by genuine individuals seeking information. The introduction of online RTI portals has been a positive step in recent years, but there is still room for improvement. All states should adopt the National Informatics Centre (NIC)-designed RTI websites, which allow for greater standardisation and ease of use. These portals should feature auto-emailed responses and alerts, keeping applicants informed of the status of their requests. Moreover, outdated state-specific RTI laws, such as the Delhi RTI Act, should be repealed in favor of the national RTI Act to ensure uniformity across the country. (The writer is a RTI activist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDIAN WORKERS ARE OVERBURDENED

Madam — "Work more, take less" is the mantra of the Indian employers of all sectors who are hell-bent on extracting more and more work from their employees while the emolument is not parallel to the labour at all. Consequently, stress tends to percolate through the workplace as shown by two work-related deaths of young employees in private companies. An International Labour Organisation (ILO) report that Indians work 46.7 hours per week, much higher than their American, Japanese, South African and Chinese counterparts, speaks volumes about the workload taken by an average Indian worker.

It is documented in other papers, too, that more than sixty percent of the Indian workers are stressed at work, while in general the Asian countries' workforce is more burdened by work. The primary cause for all this can be traced to the burgeoning unemployment in the country and the dearth of the right job for the right person. Employers' proclivity to recruit less to save their coffers has compounded the problem. Egoistic and haughty employers, fretting and fuming over no real reason, have pushed an already overstressed Indian worker to the edge. There is no time to waste: balancing work with rest should engage everyone's attention including that of the government.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

### INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS IMPROVE

Madam—India and its neighbour Maldives recently concluded a bilateral summit and agreed upon numerous deals. This came after a strain of ties between the two nations for almost one year after Mohamed Muizzu became president of the Island nation. India came forward to help the Maldives recover from its economic distress by signing a currency swap deal of around 385 million dollars. The two nations also agreed to enhance strategic and defence cooperation in the future. This visit has

## Sports promote social unity



From time immemorial, sports have always been more than just games; they are powerful agents of social change, capable of uniting people, breaking down religion and caste barriers, and driving positive transformations in society. From local community

games to international tournaments, sports have a unique way of bringing people together, fostering a sense of community, and promoting health and well-being. One of the most compelling aspects of sport is its ability to bridge cultural gaps. Whether it's a small-town soccer match or the grandeur of the Olympic Games, sports create a common ground where individuals can connect and share experiences.

This shared passion fosters mutual respect and understanding, promoting peace and camaraderie among different cultures. The impact of sports on society is profound, touching on aspects of culture, economy, and personal development. As we move forward, embracing the positive aspects of sport while addressing its challenges will ensure that it continues to be a powerful force for good in the world.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

### THE BJP WINS HARYANA

Madam — Contrary to all expectations and predictions, the BJP was able to retain Haryana for the third time. All pollsters, analysts and exit polls have been proved wrong. Politics is an unforgiving game and the defeat of the Congress has created ripples in opposition unity as the Congress will have lost its bargaining power. The victory for BJP will undoubtedly give them a lot of confidence to face assembly elections in Jharkhand and the all important Maharashtra. It is not in the best interests of Indian democracy to use caste equations to try and win elections. All parties are guilty of the practice of pandering to particular castes for gaining their votes. Time and again, it has been seen that in a one-to-one fight, the Congress is no match for the well-oiled BJP election fighting machinery.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

brought positivity amidst reports of the Maldives being closer to China. New Delhi also extended its Rupaya card system to the Maldives, which can also improve people-to-people ties among the two nations.

Good relations between the two countries will lead to peaceful South Asia. The partnership between New Delhi and Male will also counter China's aggressive expansion motives in the region. Traditionally, the Maldives has always been a good friend to India, but in the last one year, administrative and people-to-people ties have become strained between the two nations. Recently, both countries took the initiative to make it better. These steps resulted in this bilateral talk. The deals signed between the two nations will help both countries boost their economies. This will also benefit the region as well. India should also try to change the anti-Indian sentiments in the island nation and push for Indian businesses to expand and invest in a country with a rich tourism industry.

Deba Prasad Nayak | New Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

## OVERCOMING ANXIETY: THE RIGHT WAY

Mindfulness, mental resilience and stress-relieving activities are essential to combat anxiety



RAVI VALLURI

Sameer was armed with a degree in management from an estimable institute. Having specialised in the field of marketing management, he was well versed in the 4Ps of marketing. At this juncture of his life, the young trainee fantasised about joining an FMCG company, earning an exorbitant salary and over a period acquiring an opulent property in an up-market area of the town. But there was an element of hesitation in his mind about successfully crossing the final hurdle – the interview. As the mind was not in the present moment and instead fixated on the future it remained anxious and continuously agitated. Thus, it was not in a state of equilibrium, equipoise, or equanimity. Meanwhile, Siddhartha, his school mate majored in architecture and apprenticed at a celebrated architectural firm in the city. Siddhartha however, was not content in designing buildings.

He possessed a febrile mind that ached to pursue a greenfield area called entertainment design. The strapping self-taught himself and acquired ultra-modern and newfangled skill sets. Fortified with the newly acquired knowledge he prepared a portfolio consisting of visionary and ingenious graphics, sketches and paintings. Yet, mentally he was anxious, tense and strained as to what lay in future. It is a normal human tendency to be apprehensive before anxious situations as it is not in the present moment. Several individuals become splenetic and waspish. Invariably there is a churning in the abdomen region and the mind is subsumed with anxiety. Arjuna, in possession of a lethal arsenal, was numbed seeing the mammoth army of the Kauravas. This, even though Lord Krishna was his charioteer! At zero hour, before the showdown at Kurukshetra, he lay down his weaponry. The consummate warrior could not distinguish between righteousness and malevolence. The demons in his mind were



eventually dispelled through the Vishwarupa Darshan of Lord Krishna and the song celestial – The Bhagavad Gita. Psychologists have advanced a two-pronged strategy to combat such inhospitable states, firstly by closely monitoring the piquant state and taking prompt and effective action and second, by avoiding and blunting the situation. Monitoring involves taking several proactive steps which help in the preparation of the mind. Advanced and well-rehearsed preparation before a significant event; this is tapasya and no one can relax on this ground.

The mind should be resolute and robust, to practice incessantly like the celebrated archer Arjuna. In the process, the individual de-clutters the mind and gets rid of the baggage of anxiety and fear. The Inoculation Technique is another effective strategy. An individual insulates the self against the perils of stress through constant exposure to rehearsals and role-playing.

This mentally toughens up the candidate to be prepared for the scrutiny and appraisal with utmost confidence and credence. Further, adopting a positive dispensation is invaluable. In addition, there are blunting tactics and strategies which help to augment the above. It is perspicacious and canny to drown in physical activity. It could be going for long walks, swimming, hitting the gym, taking up a sport or learning yogic techniques to de-stress the mind. These activities release endorphins which assuage the mind. Simultaneously, an individual will appear chiselled and smart. There are other ways to remain happy. For instance, join the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living to learn the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya which calms the body and mind. Learn pranayama and various techniques of meditation to remain in the present moment. Only when a human being is in the present moment is he insulated from anxiety and manages inexpedient and onerous situations?

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

## ‘Fourth transformation’ of Mexico embraces inclusivity



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Claudia Sheinbaum’s leadership promises to reshape the nation’s trajectory away from its violent past, embracing inclusive and human-centred policies

Claudia Sheinbaum’s swearing-in on October 1 as Mexico’s first female President marks a transformative moment not only for gender equality but also within the broader historical trajectory shaped by violence, revolution and the ongoing pursuit of justice. In a nation long burdened by colonial legacies and systemic inequality, her presidency signals a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and human-centred governance. Declaring a “fourth transformation,” Sheinbaum’s leadership reflects the weight of Mexico’s tumultuous history and the lives lost in its struggles. Her rise to power disrupts the deeply entrenched male-dominated political sphere, accentuating the resilience of women fighting for representation in a country plagued by gender-based violence and femicide.

Historically, Mexico has undergone significant transformations marked by bloodshed and resistance. The country’s struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century was fuelled by revolutionary fervour and the desire for self-determination. Statesmen like Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos emerged as symbols of resistance, galvanising the population against colonial oppression. The violent conflicts that followed laid the groundwork for a nation striving for autonomy, albeit at a considerable human cost. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the divide between church and state catalysed further revolutions and conflicts. The Liberal Reform, led by figures such as Benito Juárez, sought to dismantle the power of the Catholic Church and establish a secular state.

This period was marked by violence and civil strife, as conservative factions resisted these changes. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 further exemplified the nation’s tumultuous journey, with leaders like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa rallying for agrarian reform and social justice. The revolution, while transformative, came at a heavy price, resulting in the loss of countless lives and widespread suffering. The bloodshed that characterised these early transformations stands in stark contrast to Sheinbaum’s vision for the fourth transformation, which she advocates as a path of non-violence and reconciliation. She seeks to distance her administration from the militarised approach that has defined previous efforts to combat crime and violence. In her inaugural speech, she emphasised that “we must turn the page on the cycles of violence that have plagued our country.” By framing her presidency as a continuation of a peaceful and humanistic governance model, she aims to redefine Mexico’s political structure.

The economic model embraced by Sheinbaum’s administration marks a significant departure from the neoliberal policies that have dominated Mexico for decades. The neoliberal framework, characterised by deregulation, resource exploitation, privatisation, and an emphasis on unethical free-market principles, has often exacerbated social inequalities and marginalised vulnerable populations. In contrast, Sheinbaum’s “Mexican Humanist” approach seeks to prioritise social welfare, equity, and sustainable development. This shift is not merely a matter of policy but represents a broader socio-political transformation in the way governance is conceived. Sheinbaum advocates for a model that empowers communities and fosters inclusivity, stating, “We must build



IN THE CONTEXT OF CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM’S PRESIDENCY, THE ENDURING LEGACY OF CIA COVERT OPERATIONS AND FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS LOOMS LARGE

a Mexico where no one is left behind.” This vision reflects a recognition that systemic issues require collective solutions and that the voices of marginalised communities must be heard in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Yet, while Sheinbaum’s approach has garnered support from many, it also faces criticism and scepticism from those who question the feasibility of her proposed reforms. Critics argue that the structural challenges posed by organised crime and entrenched political corruption may undermine her efforts to implement meaningful change. The harsh realities of violence and inequality persist, and many Mexicans remain wary of promises that may be difficult to fulfil in the face of overwhelming opposition. The historical backdrop of Mexico’s political volatility illuminates the formidable challenges in achieving authentic progress, as the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and systemic oppression remain deeply ingrained.

The ongoing struggles for justice and equality have come at a profound cost, with the violence woven into Mexico’s history continuing to influence the present and complicate future paths.

The Zapatista movement, which arose in the 1990s in response to neoliberal policies and the marginalisation of Indigenous communities, stands as a powerful testament to the fight for social justice. Led by Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatistas championed self-determination, autonomy, and the acknowledgement of Indigenous rights, challenging dominant political narratives and inspiring a new generation of activists, including Sheinbaum. Yet, their movement also reveals the challenges inherent in revolutionary politics; while their promise of non-violence

and social justice aligns with Sheinbaum’s vision, navigating the realities of power and governance often demands difficult compromises. The pressing challenge remains: how to dismantle deeply rooted systems of inequality and violence without mirroring the oppressive methods of the past. Sheinbaum’s fourth transformation for Mexico calls for a reevaluation of economic policies and a fundamental shift in political culture, emphasising transparency, accountability, and democratic principles that prioritise the needs of the many.

She stresses the importance of restoring faith in institutions and rebuilding the nation’s social fabric. However, the ongoing issues of alleged corruption and political machinations, exacerbated by her predecessor López Obrador’s concentration of power and undermining of democratic institutions, raise concerns about the sustainability of her reforms. In the context of Claudia Sheinbaum’s presidency, the enduring legacy of CIA covert operations and foreign interventions looms large. Historically, the United States has intervened in Latin America to safeguard its interests, often undermining democratic governance and social justice.

The repercussions of these interventions have fostered a deep-seated distrust and scepticism toward foreign influence in Mexico’s internal affairs. As Sheinbaum endeavours to establish a nation committed to human rights and social justice, she must grapple with the pervasive effects of these historical injustices and the Western media narratives that distort the actual picture of Mexican society. In terms of international relations, Sheinbaum vehemently opposes foreign intervention, particularly regarding the US blockade against Cuba, which harms ordinary cit-

izens rather than the government. She advocates for cooperation rather than militarisation in addressing drug-related violence, emphasising that the drug market is intricately linked to US consumer demand. As she aptly stated, “We must honour our past, learn from our struggles, and build a future that reflects the aspirations of all Mexicans.” Yet, the pursuit of a more just and equitable Mexico demands collective action, engagement from diverse communities, and a steadfast commitment to dismantling systemic barriers, as Sheinbaum seeks to embody the hopes of a nation shaped by resilience and struggle. However, the structural challenges, as Enrique Dussel, an Argentine-Mexican philosopher, explained in his writings, continue to haunt Mexico, posing real threats to the stability of political leadership. He emphasises the need for integrating diverse cultural perspectives and fostering dialogue from the Global South, as seen in his concept of transmodernity. Dussel also highlights the coloniality of power, illustrating how historical injustices persist in contemporary governance, perpetuating inequality. Furthermore, his ethics of the Other calls for recognising the experiences of marginalised individuals as central to any discourse on justice. Additionally, the aporia of borders illustrates the contradictions communities face at national edges, such as the Mexico-US border, where ideals of freedom and security often clash. Addressing these issues demands a nuanced approach that acknowledges the voices of those usually left unheard, which presents a significant challenge for the historic administration of Dr Sheinbaum.

(The writer is a journalist and author; Views expressed are personal)

## Half of the world’s GDP at risk due to environmental degradation

The conservation and restoration of depleted forests are essential steps to combat climate change

Climate change has become an important challenge for the whole world. Conservation and restoration of depleted forests can become a necessary step to deal with this challenge.

Regarding this, many companies around the world have pledged to plant over 12 billion trees in the next seven years. The report published by the World Economic Forum on Nature and Biodiversity on January 18, 2024, clarifies that half of the world’s GDP, i.e. about \$44 trillion, is in danger. Which is due to the loss of nature.

To save it, more than 100 companies have pledged to conserve, restore and plant new trees of over 12 billion



RAJEEV AACHARYA

five new companies Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL), Burberry China, Go To Group, RPG Enterprises and Vale. Member companies of It.org are committed to implementing the goal in line with the Paris Agreement to save trees and reduce carbon emissions. Tree conservation is not only important for environmental sustainability, but it is also a part of our cultural and religious heritage. Trees learn from each other. That research was published on May 28, 2024 in the Current Forestry Reports magazine of Springer Nature, America.

This research is based on the topic that how trees planted in agro-forestry and urban

other and flourish. According to the research, both systems can be seen as natural solutions. Both systems also have similarities in ownership and management responsibilities. For example, most of the agricultural land in the Global North is privately owned, just as a large part of the green cover is seen in cities. Increasing the density of trees improves air quality. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore conducted a study in 2023 on the role of trees in the urban environment. This study was mainly done in urban areas of Bangalore. It was found that trees in urban areas play an important role in improving air quality as well as controlling

temperature. In this research, it was told that the higher the density of trees, the greater the increase in air quality and the effect of heat can also be reduced.



temperature. In this research, it was told that the higher the density of

trees, the greater the increase in air quality and the effect of heat can also be reduced.

This study also found that the mental and physical health of people living in green areas improves. The density of trees prevents soil erosion.

A study conducted by the University of Sydney, Australia, says that dense cover of trees can control the flow of water and help prevent soil erosion. This study also stated that the conservation of trees helps in reducing the effects of climate change. All these studies confirm how important the conservation of trees is for our future. In Indian culture, importance has been given to the conservation of trees since the beginning. According to Matasya Purana, “Dashakoopasama Vaapi, Dashavaapisamo

Hradah. Dashahradasamo Putro, Dashputrasamo Drumah.” That is, one tree is equal to ten sons. Similarly, it is said in Vishnu Purana that the person who plants a tree earns virtue not only in his life but also for the coming generations.

Planting and caring for trees has been described as an important religious and social work in Indian scriptures. At present, planting trees is not only to save lives but also to save the earth. Let us take resolve to conserve nature. Each one of us must take a pledge to plant at least 5 trees, only then this disaster of global warming can be dealt with.

(The writer is an environmentalist; views are personal)

# Nobel Peace prize awarded to Japanese organisation for work against N-weapons

AP ■ OSLO

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded Friday to Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese organisation of survivors of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for its activism against nuclear weapons. Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said the award was made as the “taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is under pressure.”

Last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a shift in his country's nuclear doctrine, in a move aimed at discouraging the West from allowing Ukraine to strike Russia with longer-range weapons. It appeared to significantly lower the threshold for the possible use of Russia's nuclear arsenal. Watne Frydnes said the Nobel com-

mittee “wishes to honour all survivors who, despite physical suffering and painful memories, have chosen to use their costly experience to cultivate hope and engagement for peace.” Hidankyo's Hiroshima branch chairperson, Tomoyuki Mimaki, who was standing by at the city hall for the announcement, cheered and teared up when he received the news.

“Is it really true? Unbelievable!” Mimaki screamed.

Efforts to eradicate nuclear weapons have been honoured before by the Nobel committee. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons won the peace prize in 2017, and in 1995 Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs won for “their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in interna-

tional politics and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms.”

This year's prize was awarded against a backdrop of devastating conflicts raging in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan.

“It is very clear that threats of using nuclear weapons are putting pressure on the important international norm, the taboo of using nuclear weapons,” Watne Frydnes said in response to a question on whether the rhetoric from Russia surrounding nuclear weapons in its invasion of Ukraine had influenced this year's decision.

“And therefore it is alarming to see how threats of use is also damaging this norm. To uphold an international strong taboo against the use is crucial for all of humanity,” he added. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X that

“the spectre of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still looms over humanity. This makes the advocacy of Nihon Hidankyo invaluable. This Nobel Peace Prize sends a powerful message. We have the duty to remember. And an even greater duty to protect the next generations from the horrors of nuclear war.”

Alfred Nobel stated in his will that the peace prize should be awarded for “the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

Last year's prize went to jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi for her advocacy of women's rights and democracy, and against the death penalty. The Nobel committee said it also was a recognition of “the hundreds of thousands of peo-

ple” who demonstrated against Iran's theocratic regime's policies of discrimination and oppression targeting women.”

In a year of conflict, there had been some speculation that the Norwegian Nobel Committee that decides on the winner would opt not to award a prize at all. The prize has been withheld 19 times since 1901, including during both world wars. The last time it was not awarded was in 1972. In the Middle East, spiraling levels of violence in the past year have killed tens of thousands of people, including women and children. The war, sparked by a bloody raid into Israel by Hamas-led militants on Oct. 7, 2023, that left about 1,200 people dead, mostly civilians, has spilled into the wider region.

In the past week, Israel sent ground troops into Lebanon to pursue

Hezbollah militants firing rockets into Israel, while Iran -- which backs both Hamas and Hezbollah -- fired ballistic missiles into Israel. Israel has yet to respond, but its defense minister vowed this week that its retaliation would be both devastating and surprising.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 42,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says more than half are women and children. In Lebanon, more than 1,400 people have been killed, with thousands more injured and around 1 million displaced since mid-September, when the Israeli military dramatically expanded its offensive against Hezbollah.

The war in Ukraine, sparked by Russia's invasion, is heading toward

its third winter with a massive loss of human life on both sides.

The UN has confirmed more than 11,000 Ukrainian civilian dead, but that doesn't take into account as many as 25,000 Ukrainians believed killed during the Russian capture of the city of Mariupol or unreported deaths in occupied regions.

The Nobel prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (USD 1 million). Unlike the other prizes that are selected and announced in Stockholm, founder Alfred Nobel decreed the peace prize be decided and awarded in Oslo by the five-member Norwegian Nobel Committee. The Nobel season ends Monday with the announcement of the winner of the economics prize, formally known as the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

# Trump says India biggest tariff charger; vows to reciprocate if elected to power

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Vowing to introduce a reciprocal tax if elected to power, former US president Donald Trump on Thursday alleged that India, among all major countries, imposes the highest tariffs on foreign products.

“Perhaps the most important element of my plan to make America extraordinarily wealthy again is reciprocity. It's a word that's very important in my plan because we generally don't charge tariffs. I started that process, it was so great, with the vans and the small trucks, etc. We really don't charge. China will charge us a 200 per cent tariff. Brazil is a big charger. The biggest charger of all is India,” Trump said in a major economic policy speech in Detroit.

“India is a very big charger. We have a great relationship with India. I did. And especially the leader, Modi. He's a great leader. Great man. Really is a great

man. He's brought it together. He's done a great job. But they probably charge as much,” he said.

“I mean, I think they probably charge more than, in many ways, China. But they do it with a smile. They do it... Sort of a nicer charge. They said, thank you so much for purchasing from India. Harley Davidson came to the White House a long time ago during my third year or second year. I met with them. They were based in Wisconsin. I said, how's business? Good, good. What are the bad countries? Well, India is very tough. And they gave me some others. Why? Tariffs. I said, what are they? And they said like 150 per cent, some massive amount,” Trump told the members of the Detroit Economic Club.

“I said so do you sell many motorcycles because you think people want to buy a Harley. No, we sell very few in India, but they want us to go there. They said, if you go there and



build your plant there, we're not going to charge you anything. I mean, you can do whatever you want. I said I don't like that. And I see they went, they built the plant, and now they do their business with India. They probably do it outside of India too. They built a very big plant in many countries, they do that. Then all of a sudden, you hear

that they're leaving Milwaukee or they're leaving wherever they may be located,” he said.

Thursday's remarks by Trump come following his praise for Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this week. Trump described Modi as “the nicest human being,” saying the Indian leader is “a friend of mine.” “Modi, India. He's a

friend of mine. He's great. Before him, they were replacing them every year. It's very unstable. He came over. He's a friend of mine. But on the outside, he looks like he's your father. He's the nicest, but he's a total killer,” he said.

Trump recalled Modi's visit to Houston in 2019 to attend the ‘Howdy Modi’ event during his tenure and said: “It was beautiful. It's like 80,000 people going crazy. We were walking around.”

The Republican candidate said he shared a “very good relationship” with Modi.

Recalling that there were a couple of occasions where somebody was threatening India, Trump said: “I told Modi, let me help as I am very good with those people. To which he aggressively responded, ‘I will do it. I will do it. And I would do anything necessary. We have defeated them for hundreds of years.’ I said ‘Whoa, what just happened there,’” he added.

# 22 killed in airstrikes in central Beirut

AP ■ BEIRUT

Israeli airstrikes on central Beirut on Thursday left two neighborhoods smoldering, killed 22 people and wounded dozens, Lebanon's health ministry said, as well as further escalating Israel's bloody conflict with Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. The air raid on central Beirut — the deadliest in over a year of war — apparently targeted two residential buildings in separate neighborhoods simultaneously, according to an AP photographer at the scene. It brought down one eight-story building and wiped out the lower floors of the other.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the reported strikes. Israeli airstrikes have been far more common in Beirut's tightly packed southern suburbs, where Hezbollah bases many of its operations. After the strikes, Hezbollah's Al Manar TV reported that an attempt to kill Wafiq Safa, a top

security official with the group, had failed. It said that Safa had not been inside of either of the targeted buildings.

Thursday's strikes followed a year of tit-for-tat exchanges between Hezbollah and Israel that boiled over into all-out war in recent weeks, with Israel carrying out waves of heavy airstrikes across Lebanon and launching a ground invasion. Hezbollah has expanded its rocket fire to more populated areas deeper inside Israel, causing few casualties but disrupting daily life. The attack came the same day Israeli forces fired on United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and wounded two of them, drawing widespread condemnation and prompting Italy's Defense Ministry to summon Israel's ambassador in protest. Witnesses reported a large number of ambulances and people gathering in the rubble of two Beirut sites that were hit, in the Ras al-Nabaa neighborhood and Burj Abi Haidar

area.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said 22 people were killed and 117 others wounded, without elaborating on their identities. Recent Israeli airstrikes in neighborhoods adjoining Beirut, in particular the densely populated southern suburbs, have killed Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and other senior commanders. Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in support of Hamas and the Palestinians, drawing Israeli airstrikes in retaliation. Hezbollah kept up rocket fire into Israel on Thursday, setting off air raid sirens in parts of northern Israel. Several drones heading toward Israel were intercepted, the military said.

Iran — which supports Hamas, Hezbollah and other armed groups across the region — launched some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel last week in retaliation for the killing of top Hamas and Hezbollah militants.

# Zelensky meets Pope, pushes his ‘victory plan’

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis met Volodymyr Zelensky at the Vatican on Friday, the latest step on the Ukrainian president's European tour to win support for his proposed “victory plan” aimed at ending the war with Russia.

The pope and the Ukrainian leader held private talks for 35 minutes. After their private meeting at the Sala della Biblioteca and the presentation of the Ukrainian delegation, Francis gave Zelensky a bronze plaque depicting a flower and an inscription reading: “Peace is a fragile flower.”

In turn, Zelensky gifted the pontiff with an oil painting portraying “The massacre of Bucha. The story of Marichka.”

Bucha, a suburb northwest of Kyiv, was occupied by Russian troops shortly after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and witnessed some of Russia's worst atrocities against civilians.

Later Friday, Zelensky met the Vatican's secretary of state, Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard

## Russia attacks Ukraine's grain-exporting Odesa region

AP ■ KYIV

A nighttime Russian missile strike on Odesa killed at least four people including a 16-year-old girl, regional authorities said Friday, in the latest in a series of attacks this week on the southern Ukrainian region that are likely intended to disrupt the country's grain exports.

Four Russian missile and drone attacks on the Odesa region this week have killed 14 people and wounded around 20, according to local officials. The strikes have hit merchant ships and damaged port infrastructure in the region, which is a vital hub for Ukraine's agricultural exports through the Black Sea.

An attack on Odesa late Wednesday killed nine people and hit a container ship sailing under the Panamanian flag — the third attack on a merchant vessel in four days, according to

regional Gov. Oleh Kiper.

The apparent Russian effort to frustrate Ukraine's exports, which bring vital revenue for a national economy battered by more than two years of war, coincided with a renewed push by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to ensure continuing military and financial support from his country's Western partners.

Russia last year tore up an agreement that allowed Ukraine — one of the world's biggest suppliers of grain and other food staples, especially to developing nations — to export produce safely through the Black Sea.

Months later, amid successful Ukrainian attacks on Russia's Black Sea fleet which forced its navy to back away from the coast, Ukraine established a shipping corridor that hugs the coast down to Turkey and opens a way to the Mediterranean Sea.

Galagher, secretary for relations with states and international organizations.

“The discussions were dedicated to the state of the war and the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, as well as the ways in which it could be brought to an end, leading to just and stable peace in the country,” the Vatican said in a statement,

adding that “some matters relating to the religious life of the country were also examined.”

Since the first Russian attack on Kyiv, there have been multiple contacts between Francis and Zelensky, through visits, letters and phone calls.

The pope sparked some criticism from Ukrainian leaders in March when he suggested they

should have the courage of the “white flag” negotiating an end to the war with Russia, in what was interpreted by many as a call to surrender.

Francis has repeatedly and strongly for an end to the war, focusing on prisoner exchanges and on reaching a diplomatic solution to the Ukrainian conflict.

Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi was sent as a special envoy on a mission to ease tensions among the parties at war, meeting with political and ecclesiastical leaders around the world. His mission was, in particular, to encourage exchanges of Russian and Ukrainian prisoners and to find a way to facilitate the return of children forcibly deported from Ukraine to Russia.

Zelensky is city-hopping across Europe to promote a plan that he said “aims to create the right conditions for a just end to the war” against Russia, unveiling the proposals to European allies after a summit with President Joe Biden was derailed by Hurricane Milton.

On Thursday, Zelensky met with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in London, French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni in Rome.

He is expected to travel to Germany later on Friday to hold talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

# UN peacekeepers caught in intensified fighting

AP ■ BEIRUT

The UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, said in a statement that its headquarters and positions “have been repeatedly hit” by Israeli forces.

It said an Israeli tank “directly” fired on an observation tower at the force's headquarters in the town of Naqoura, Lebanon, and that soldiers had attacked a bunker near where peacekeepers were sheltering, damaging vehicles and a communication system. It said an Israeli drone was seen flying to the bunker's entrance. The two UNIFIL troops wounded in the attacks and hospitalized are Indonesian, Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said. The Israeli military acknowledged opening fire at a UN base in southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it had ordered the peacekeepers to “remain in protected spaces.”

Later Thursday, the UN peacekeeping chief said 300 peacekeepers in frontline positions on southern Lebanon's border have been temporarily moved to larger bases, and plans to move another 200 will depend on security conditions as the conflict escalates. Jean-Pierre Lacroix told an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council that peacekeepers with UNIFIL are staying in their positions, but because of air and ground attacks they cannot conduct patrols.



UNIFIL, which has more than 10,000 peacekeepers from dozens of countries, was created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon after Israel's 1978 invasion. The United Nations expanded its mission following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, allowing peacekeepers to patrol a buffer zone set up along the border.

Israel accuses Hezbollah of establishing militant infrastructure along the border in violation of the UN Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 war. The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, sharply condemned Israeli strikes that hit UNIFIL positions as “an inadmissible act, for which there is no justification.”

# Hurricane Milton leaves 8 dead, Florida in darkness

AP ■ ST PETERSBURG (FLORIDA)

Rescue teams plucked Florida residents from the flotsam of Hurricane Milton on Thursday after the storm smashed through coastal communities where it tore homes into pieces, filled streets with mud and spawned a barrage of deadly tornadoes. At least eight people were dead.

Arriving just two weeks after the misery wrought by Hurricane Helene, the system also knocked out power to more than 3 million customers, flooded barrier islands, tore the roof off a baseball stadium and toppled a construction crane.

Among the most dramatic rescues, Hillsborough County officers found a 14-year-old boy floating on a piece of fence and pulled him onto a boat. A Coast Guard helicopter crew rescued a man who was left clinging to an ice chest in the Gulf of Mexico after his fishing boat was stranded in waters roiled by Hurricane Milton. The agency estimated the man had survived winds of 75 to 90 mph (121 to 145 kph) and

waves up to 25 feet (7.6 metres) high during his night on the water.

“This man survived in a nightmare scenario for even the most experienced mariner,” Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Dana Grady said. Despite the destruction, many people expressed relief that Milton wasn't worse. The hurricane spared Tampa a direct hit, and the lethal storm surge that scientists feared never materialised.

The storm tracked to the south in the final hours and made landfall late Wednesday as a Category 3 hurricane in Siesta Key, about 70 miles (112 kilometres) south of Tampa. Damage was widespread, and water levels may continue to rise for days, but Gov. Ron DeSantis said it was not “the worst-case scenario.”

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“You face two hurricanes in a couple of weeks — not easy to go through — but I've seen a lot of resilience throughout this state,” the governor told a briefing in Sarasota. He said he was “very confident that this area is going to bounce back very, very quickly.”

Five people were killed in tor-

nadoes in the Spanish Lakes Country Club near Fort Pierce, on Florida's Atlantic Coast, where homes were destroyed, authorities said. Police also found a woman dead under a fallen tree branch in Tampa.

In Volusia County, authorities said two people, a 79-year-old woman in Ormond Beach and a 54-year-old woman in Port Orange, were also killed when trees fell on homes.

Speaking at a White House briefing, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said there were reports of as many as 10 fatalities from tornadoes, but he cautioned that the number was tentative.

At least 340 people and 49 pets have been rescued in ongoing efforts, DeSantis said Thursday afternoon.

South of Tampa, Natasha Shannon and her husband, Terry, felt lucky to be alive after the hurricane peeled the tin roof off their cinder block home in Palmetto. They spent the night in a shelter with their three children and two grandchildren after she pushed them to leave.

“I said, Baby, we got to go. Because we're not going to



survive this,” she said.

They returned to find the roof torn into sheets across the street, shredded insulation hanging from exposed ceiling beams and their belongings soaked. “It ain't much but it was ours,” she said. “What little bit we did have is gone.”

The worst storm surge appeared to be in Sarasota

County, where it was 8 to 10 feet (2.5 to 3 metres) — lower than in the worst place during Helene. The storm also dumped up to 18 inches (45 centimetres) of rain in some areas.

Officials in the hard-hit Florida counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Sarasota and Lee urged people to stay home,

warning of downed power lines, trees in roads, blocked bridges and flooding.

Among the dozens of tornadoes was a twister that hit the tiny barrier island of Matlacha, just off Fort Myers. The fishing-and-tourism village also endured a surge, with many of the colorful buildings sustaining serious damage. Tom

Reynolds, 90, spent the morning sweeping out 4 feet (1.2 metres) of mud and water and collecting chunks of aluminum siding torn off by a twister that also picked up a car and threw it across the road.

Elsewhere on the island, a house was blown into a street, temporarily blocking it. Some structures caught fire. Reynolds said he planned to repair the home he built three decades ago. “What else am I going to do?” he said.

In contrast, city workers on Anna Maria Island were grateful not to be wading through floodwaters as they picked up debris Thursday morning, two weeks after Helene battered buildings and blew in piles of sand up to 6 feet (1.8 m) high. Those piles may have helped shield homes from further damage, said Jeremi Roberts of the State Emergency Response Team. “I'm shocked it's not more,” city worker Kati Sands said as she cleared the streets of siding and broken lights. “We lost so much with Helene, there wasn't much left.”

Helene flooded streets and homes in western Florida and left at least 230 people dead

across the South. In many places along the coast, municipalities raced to collect and dispose of debris before Milton's winds and storm surge could toss it around and compound any damage.

Power was knocked out across much of the state. More than 3.4 million homes and businesses were without electricity, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

The fabric that serves as the roof of Tropicana Field — home of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team in St. Petersburg — was ripped to shreds by fierce winds. Debris littered the field.

About 80,000 people spent the night in shelters, and thousands of others fled after authorities issued mandatory evacuation orders across 15 Florida counties with a total population of about 7.2 million people.

In Punta Gorda, a 10-foot (3-metre) surge from the Peace River swept into the historic district, damaging homes and depositing six boats along one riverside street. It was the third surge to hit the neighbourhood in three months.





# RBI asks banks to ensure easier accessibility for persons with disabilities

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday asked banks to review their payment systems to ensure easier accessibility to persons with disabilities.

All sections of the population, including differently-abled persons, are increasingly adopting digital payment systems, it said in a circular.

"To promote effective access, payment system participants (PSPs, that is, banks and authorised non-bank payment system providers) are advised to review their payment systems/devices in terms of accessibility to Persons with Disabilities," it noted.



Based on the review, banks and non-bank payment system providers may carry out the necessary modifications in payment systems and devices like point-of-sale machines, which can be accessed and used by persons with

disabilities with ease, the RBI said.

The RBI also asked them to refer to the accessibility standards issued by the Ministry of Finance in February.

While selecting potential solutions for the purpose, care should be taken to ensure that the modifications or enhancements do not compromise security aspects of the systems, the central bank said.

PSPs have been asked to submit to the Reserve Bank, within one month, details of their systems/devices that need to be modified, along with a time-bound plan of action for achieving the same.

# Life insurers' new premiums rise 14 per cent to ₹ 35,020 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Life insurers recorded a 14 per cent rise in underwriting new business with a premium collection of Rs 35,020 crore in September. New business premiums stood at Rs 30,716 crore in same month a year ago.

The new business premium collection in the first half of FY25 rose 19 per cent to Rs 1,89,214 crore from Rs 1,58,377 crore in the same period last year, as per the monthly data released by the industry body Life Insurance Council.

Driven by a strong demand for enhanced insurance protection from individual consumers, new policy issuances too increased by 45.49 per cent on a year-on-year basis in the month, resulting in the addition of new 32,17,880 policies vis-à-vis 22,11,680 policies in the



year-ago period, it said. According to data released by the Life Insurance Council, the life insurance industry saw individual single premiums growing 13 per cent to close at Rs 5,142 crore for September while year-to-date growth stood at 14.99 per cent.

Meanwhile, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) collected new premium of Rs 20,369 crore as against Rs 18,126 crore in September 2023, recording a growth of 25 per

cent. However, private sector put together grew 12 per cent to Rs 73,664 crore as against Rs 65,734 crore garnered in the same month a year ago.

The life insurance industry in India has been making significant strides by expanding access to insurance and making an effort to reach out to areas and segments of the country's population that were previously underserved when it comes to their insurance needs, it said.

# PwC India partners with Meta for AI solutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

PwC India has announced a collaboration with Meta to expand and scale its open-source AI solutions to enterprises and citizen services on Meta's Llama models.

This collaboration will promote the adoption of the Llama open-source platform and help PwC develop innovative solutions powered by Generative AI (GenAI) on a global scale, the consultancy firm said in a release. In light of the Indian government's announcement to launch the IndiaAI Mission and its investment in building a robust AI ecosystem, the moment is ideal for businesses to harness the potential of GenAI, it added.

"With Llama Models, we see a unique opportunity to democratise this technology across industries, and drive innovation while solving real-world challenges. Together, we aspire to create a more



digitally enabled future for our clients and our communities - to create value and drive meaningful change at scale," Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson of PwC India, said. The collaboration will help PwC India and Meta to democratise GenAI and make it more accessible to businesses by jointly building and deploying enterprise-grade and citizen-service GenAI solutions.

It aims to create an ecosystem of GenAI solutions that will be built on Meta's technical expertise and powerful Llama open-source platform along with PwC India's domain expertise.

Sandhya Devanathan, Vice President and Head at Meta India, said Gen AI solutions, including Llama, are poised to revolutionise India's businesses and accelerate the country's digital transformation journey. "By harnessing the power of natural language understanding and generation, Llama can unlock new efficiencies, enhance customer experiences, and drive data-driven decision-making. As India strives to become a leading digital economy, Gen AI will be instrumental in empowering businesses to innovate, scale, and compete on a global stage," Devanathan said.

# Edible oil imports drop 29 per cent in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's import of edible oils fell 29 per cent annually in September to 10,64,499 tonnes due to lower inward shipments of crude and refined palm oils, according to industry data.

Import of edible oils stood at 14,94,086 tonnes in the same month last year.

Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) on Friday released the import data for vegetable oils (both edible and non-edible) for September.

Imports of non-edible oils fell to 22,990 tonnes in September from 57,940 tonnes in the year-ago period. According to the data, import of vegetable oils in September declined 30 per cent to 10,87,489 tonnes compared to 15,52,026 tonnes a year earlier.

In the edible oil category, the SEA data showed that import



of crude palm oil declined to 4,32,510 tonnes last month from 7,05,643 tonnes in September last year, while refined palm oil shipments were down to 84,279 tonnes from 1,28,954 tonnes.

Imports of crude sunflower oil also declined to 1,52,803

tonnes from 3,00,732 tonnes. SEA attributed the fall in import to higher inward shipments during July-August, and subdued demand, resulting in stock building at port. Moreover, the association said importers have become

cautious because of volatility and firmness in prices. Reduction in import was led by palm oil, which is trading above soyabean oil and sunflower oil prices, SEA said, adding that domestic players have reduced their buying.

According to SEA data, the overall import of vegetable oils during the first 11 months of the current 2023-24 marketing year ending October declined 6 per cent to 1,47,75,000 tonnes as compared to 1,56,73,102 tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Of the total vegetable oil imports so far in 2023-24 marketing year, the imports of edible oil fell to 1,45,35,955 tonnes from 1,54,68,912 tonnes. Imports of non-edible oils rose to 2,39,045 tonnes from 2,04,190 tonnes.

India imports palm oils from Indonesia and Malaysia, and soyabean oils from Brazil and Argentina.

More than 50 per cent of India's edible oils demand is met through imports. Recently, the government increased import duties on edible oils to protect farmers' interest amid harvest of kharif crops.

# JioFinance app launches with diverse services

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jio Financial Services on Friday announced the launch of a new and improved JioFinance App that offers a range of services, including loans, savings accounts, UPI bill payments, recharges, and digital insurance.

A beta version of the JioFinance App was launched on May 30, 2024. Over six million users have experienced Jio Financial Services Ltd's (JFSL) new-age digital platform, and the valuable customer feedback received was instrumental in improving the app's overall user experience.

"A wide array of financial products and services have been added since the Beta launch, including loans on mutual funds, home loans (including Balance Transfer), and loans against property,



These loans are available at competitive terms and will offer substantial savings for our customers," JFSL said in a statement.

The new app is now available on the Google Play Store, Apple App Store and MyJio, with a wide range of attractive offerings, it said.

On the savings front, the digital savings account from Jio Payments Bank Ltd (JPBL), which can be opened digitally in 5 minutes, offers a secure bank account with biometric authentication and a physical debit card, it said. Over 1.5 million customers manage their routine,

recurring expenses using their JPBL account. Additionally, it said, features such as seamless UPI payments, mobile recharge, and ability to pay credit card bills are empowering customers to transact digitally with ease. The JioFinance app also offers customers an aggregate view of their holdings across different bank accounts and across their mutual fund holdings, helping them manage their finances better.

Moreover, it said, the JioFinance app brings as many as 24 insurance plans spanning a comprehensive suite of life, health, two-wheeler and motor insurance digitally. JFSL, along with its joint venture partner BlackRock are also working towards bringing world-class and innovative investment solutions.

# Markets close lower; Sensex drops 230 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Friday, dragged by selling in banking, utility and financial stocks as investors turned cautious ahead of key macro data.

Besides, a mixed trend in global equity markets and unabated foreign fund outflows also hit investors' sentiment, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 230.05 points or 0.28 per cent to close at 81,381.36. During the day, it declined 307.26 points or 0.37 per cent to a low of 81,304.15.

The NSE Nifty slipped 34.20 points or 0.14 per cent to 24,964.25. It hit an intraday low of 24,920.05. From the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, Maruti Suzuki India, Power Grid, Axis Bank



and Adani Ports & Special Economic Zones were among the laggards. The government is scheduled to release IIP data later in the day.

On the other hand, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, JSW Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and Titan were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong were closed in green territory, while Shanghai and Seoul ended in the red.

European markets were trading on a mixed note in mid-session deals. US markets ended lower in overnight deals on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent Crude fell 0.77 per cent to USD 78.79 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,926.61 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 3,878.33 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 144.31 points to settle at 81,611.41, while the NSE Nifty climbed 16.50 points to close at 24,998.45.

## IN BRIEF

**NIFTEM-K CELEBRATES XTH FOUNDATION DAY**

**NEW DELHI:** The National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIFTEM-K), celebrated its Xth Foundation Day on 7th October with immense enthusiasm and grandeur.

**PUNJAB GOVERNMENT APPOINTS PSPCL DIRECTOR**

**PATIALA:** Punjab Government has appointed Er. Harjit Singh as Director/Generation, Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd (PSPCL) for two years. Hailing from Patiala, Harjit Singh an alumnus of Thapar University, has around 30 years of experience in the field of Design/Construction/Operation & Maintenance.

**SRM UNIVERSITY-AP SENDS AN EXPEDITION TO MT. EVEREST**

**ANDHRA PRADESH:** SRM University-AP flagged off the much-awaited Everest Base Camp Expedition that will take place from October 12 - 27, 2024.

**NFR RECORDS SIGNIFICANT GROWTH**

**MALIGON:** Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is working relentlessly round the clock to serve its customers and ensure the timely delivery of essential commodities to end users.

# IREDA receives DIPAM approval for new Subsidiary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-run IREDA has received approval from DIPAM to set up a wholly-owned subsidiary to undertake retail and B2B business in the renewable energy sector.

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), under the Ministry of new and renewable energy, is a non-banking financial institution.

It has received in-principle approval from the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) to establish a wholly-owned subsidiary to handle retail business under PM-Suryaghar (Rooftop Solar), PM-KUSUM schemes, and other B2C segments in the renewable energy (RE) sector, IREDA said in a statement on Thursday.

The subsidiary will also focus on emerging RE sectors, including EVs, energy storage, green technologies, sustainability, energy efficiency, etc. IREDA CMD Pradip Kumar



Das said, "By extending our expertise in RE finance to retail market, we will provide innovative financing options for both urban and rural consumers, promoting sustainable practices and reducing carbon footprints." The company presently is engaged in developing and extending financial assistance

for setting up projects relating to new and renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency/conservation. On Thursday, IREDA reported a 36 per cent rise in its profit after tax to Rs 387.75 crore in the September quarter from Rs 284.73 crore PAT in the same period of the preceding 2023-24 fiscal.

# TCS stock falls two per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) fell 2 per cent on Friday after its September quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

The scrip of the Mumbai-based company slipped 1.93 per cent to close at Rs 4,146 apiece on the NSE.

On the BSE, stock of TCS went down by 1.84 per cent to end at Rs 4,150.60 per piece. In terms of volume, 57.59 lakh equity shares were traded on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and 2.86 lakh shares exchanged hands on the BSE during the day.

It emerged as the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms. TCS, the country's largest IT services firm, on Thursday reported a 4.99 per cent increase in September quarter net profit at Rs 11,909 crore, held back by a narrowing of profit margin.

# Mobius Foundation advocates for Greening Education curriculums

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 6th International Conference on Sustainability Education (ICSE) was organised by the Mobius Foundation in collaboration with prominent global partners, concluded successfully with a resounding call to integrate sustainability into educational curriculums.

Held over two days, the conference drew more than 500 experts, educators, policymakers, and environmentalists from over 20 countries, focusing on the theme 'Greening Education for a Sustainable Future.' The discussions emphasised the growing need for sustainability to be a core part of education, promoting eco-conscious living and sustainable lifestyles. A significant takeaway from



the event was the endorsement of India's National Education Policy 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework 2023. They both seen as crucial frameworks for advancing sustainable education. This year's ICSE also highlighted the importance of 'green education' and 'green jobs' as key components of future sustainability efforts both in India and globally. Since its launch in 2019, ICSE has become a vital platform for addressing sustainability challenges within education systems worldwide.

SHUBHO BIJOYA DASHAMI!



WALKING THROUGH THE HEART OF THE FESTIVAL



In 'Chittaranjan Park', New Delhi, Durga Puja comes alive with families in festive attire, dhol beats echoing, and the aroma of delicious Bengali food, creating a vibrant celebration of community, says SAKSHI PRIYA

As the festive days of Durga Puja come to an end, we celebrate Vijaya Dashami with love and gratitude. Today, we say goodbye to Maa Durga until next year, thanking her for the blessings and protection she has showered upon us. On this special day, may you and your loved ones be blessed with joy, peace, and happiness. Shubho Bijoya Dashami to everyone!

In C.R. Park, located in South East Delhi, Durga Puja isn't just another festival - it's an emotion. Often called the mini Kolkata of Delhi, this bustling neighbourhood truly becomes the heart of the city during these days. Families eagerly wait the whole year for this, preparing for pandal hopping, relishing Bengali delicacies and being part of the vibrant celebrations that make this time so special.

with every new sight. The sound of dhols echoes through the air, and in the evenings, the Sandhya Aarti becomes a beautiful and calming experience for everyone watching. The streets of C.R. Park transform into a magical world, full of lights, music and devotion, and no matter how many pandals you visit, the excitement never dies down.

A FEAST FOR ALL

No Durga Puja is complete without indulging in the food. The food stalls lining the streets and pandals in C.R. Park offer everything from traditional Bengali dishes to popular street food that

everyone loves. You can try the famous Kolkata-style Puchka that bursts with flavour or enjoy classic rolls stuffed with spicy chicken or mutton.

For those who love fish, Bhetki Paturi - fish marinated in mustard and wrapped in banana leaves is a must-try. Fish Kebab and Chicken Shami Kebab are equally popular among non-vegetarians, while vegetarians can indulge in dishes like Hara Bhara Kebab or Channar Paturi (paneer wrapped in banana leaves).

And for the main course, Golbari Murgi and Dhakai Mangsho (mutton curry) and Aloo Dum served with soft luchis are pure bliss.

The joy of Durga Puja isn't just in the rituals but also in sharing these meals with family and friends. Sitting down at a table with loved ones, eating delicious food and laughing together under the twinkling lights is a memory that stays in your heart long after the festival is over.

THE STREETS COME ALIVE

The streets of C.R. Park become a celebration in themselves. It's not just about the pandals - it's the whole neighbourhood that transforms. The lanes are filled with people walking from one pandal to another and families taking pictures to capture the beautiful moments. The colourful lights strung across buildings, the sound of Rabindra Sangeet floating through the air and the laughter of people enjoying the festival all come together to create a magical atmosphere. Even if you're not Bengali, it's hard not to get swept up in the energy of Durga Puja in C.R. Park. People from all over Delhi come here to experience the festival and there's a sense of community that goes beyond language and culture. It's a time when everyone comes together to



celebrate the victory of good over evil, the triumph of light over darkness.

THE CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

One of the most beautiful things about Durga Puja is how it brings people together to celebrate not just the goddess, but also the rich cultural heritage of Bengal. During the festival, the pandals host a variety of performances, from Purulia Chou to traditional Bengali folk music. These performances are not just entertaining, they're a way to connect with our roots and pass on our traditions to the next generation. Whether you're watching a soulful song performance or enjoying a dance recital, there's something about the atmosphere during Durga Puja that makes everything feel a little more special. The connection between the audience and the performers, the shared love for the culture and the joy of being part of something bigger than yourself, it's all part of what makes Durga Puja so meaningful.

THE BLESSINGS OF SANDHYA AARTI

As the sun begins to set, one of the most special moments of Durga Puja takes place, the Sandhya Aarti. The rhythmic beating of the drums, the chanting of mantras and the sight of people gathered in devotion create a moment of pure

peace. It's a time when everyone pauses to



reflect and give thanks to Maa Durga. The aarti fills the air with a sense of calm and the glow of the lamps as they're lit adds to the sacredness of the moment. It's in these quiet moments that you feel the true spirit of Durga Puja, the blessings of

the goddess, the love of family and friends and the joy of being part of something so special.

SAYING GOODBYE ON BIJOYA DASHAMI

As the festival comes to an end, there's a bittersweet feeling in the air. It's time to say goodbye to Maa Durga as she returns to her heavenly home. The day is marked with rituals like Sindur Khela, where married women apply vermilion to each other, symbolising the strength and joy of womanhood.

Then comes the Bijoy Yatra, the immersion procession, where the idols of Maa Durga are carried to the river or pond for their final journey. In C.R. Park, this procession is a deeply emotional experience. People gather to bid farewell, throwing flowers into the water and praying for the goddess's return next year. Though there are tears as we say goodbye, there's also a sense of hope. We know that this isn't a permanent goodbye. Maa Durga will return next year, bringing with her the same joy and blessings. And until then, the memories of this Durga Puja will keep our hearts full.

UNTIL NEXT YEAR...

As we celebrate the last day of Durga Puja and look forward to the coming year, let's carry the love, joy and blessings of the festival with us. The laughter, the shared meals, the excitement of pandal hopping, and the spiritual peace of the Sandhya Aarti - these moments are what make Durga Puja so special. So as we say goodbye to Maa Durga on this Bijoya Dashami, let's remember the joy of this festival and look forward to next year when we will once again gather with our loved ones to celebrate. Until then, may Maa Durga's blessings be with you and your family, bringing peace and happiness to your lives. Shubho Bijoya Dashami, Vijaya Dashami or Dussehra to all!

THE MAGIC OF PANDAL HOPPING

For many, Durga Puja is all about pandal hopping, going from one beautifully decorated pandal to another, admiring the stunning idols of Maa Durga. In C.R. Park, the streets come alive with people of all ages, dressed in their finest traditional clothes. The women in sarees, the men in kurtas and kids running around in excitement, it's a sight that fills your heart with joy. You can start your pandal journey at the Kali Mandir, where the peaceful surroundings set the mood for the rest of the day. Then comes the grand Durgotsab in GK II, which attracts thousands of visitors every year. From stunning decorations to cultural performances, the spirit of Durga Puja is alive and thriving here. Another must-visit spot is the Mela Ground, where families gather to enjoy not just the festivities but also the wide variety of food stalls that line the streets. Children dart between pandals, holding their parents' hands, their faces lighting up



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

SAVOUR THE SPIRIT OF NAVRATRI

Celebrate Navratri with AnnaMaya's special thali, offering a delightful mix of traditional fasting dishes with modern twists, perfect for the festive season, says SHARMILA CHAND

Navratri fasting goes in harmony with Satvik food. Feasting on traditional dishes completes the celebrations with joy and happiness. I head to indulge in an authentic experience. As the specially curated thali is placed before me, I am on an immersive culinary journey in the festive spirit. This year's thali at AnnaMaya is a testament to tradition and innovation, crafted by their renowned Maharaj, Mahendra Jakhar, who has been delighting guests with his unique Navratri offerings for the past nine years. Known for infusing modern twists into traditional fasting dishes, the chef continues to elevate the dining experience, ensuring both authenticity and indulgence during the sacred fasts. "The Navratri Thali has been thoughtfully curated to honour the spirit of devotion and celebration of Durga Puja and Dussehra, offering guests a culinary journey that reflects India's rich heritage. Every dish adheres to Navratri's dietary requirements while providing a vibrant and flavourful dining experience," he says.

He explains, "The highlights of the thali are Falahari Shakarkandi Ki Chaat, a refreshing blend of sweet potatoes with creamy yoghurt, 'Kacche Kele Ki Shammi', a delectable mix of raw banana, paired with potato, cardamom and green chilli, 'Pethe Ki Khati Meethi Sabzi', a tangy and sweet pumpkin preparation with tamarind and ghee, 'Makhana Moonghali Ki Kadhi', fox nuts and peanuts simmered in a lightly spiced yellow curry, and 'Samak Chawal', which is Barnyard millet cooked to perfection." The experience doesn't end with the savoury delights - the chefs have also curated divine Satvik desserts that perfectly conclude the meal, such as 'Makhana Kheer' and 'Badam Gulab Ki Barfi', a rich almond barfi infused with rose petals and milk. Each offering in the thali is crafted using high-quality, farm to table



Navratri, Maharaj Jakhar concludes, "For me, every year is a new opportunity to explore the rich diversity of India's rituals while honouring the purity and devotion of the festival. This year's thali brings together flavours and ingredients that not only nourish the body but also celebrate the cultural heritage we hold." Go ahead and celebrate the festival of purity and devotion at AnnaMaya, where each dish tells a story of cultural India and is prepared with the utmost care to nourish the body and soul. Priced at INR 2000 plus taxes per person, this Navratri Thali offers a harmonious blend of culture, nutrition, and indulgence. Available on all days from 3rd October to 12th October 2024, the Thali is served during both lunch and dinner.



RECIPE BY MAHARAJ JAKHAR SAMAK CHAWAL PULAO

- Preparation and Cook Time: 25-35 minutes
- INGREDIENTS
- 60 gm barnyard millet ( samak chawal )
- 20gm carrots
- 10gm beans
- 10gm cauliflower
- 15gm potatoes
- 10 gm fresh green peas
- 1 tbsp ghee
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 tsp cumin seed

- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 3gm green chilies
- 1 tsp fresh coriander
- 5 gm sendha namak (Himalayan rock salt)
- METHOD
- Soak the barnyard millet in double the amount of water for 10 minutes.
- Peel and cut carrots, beans and potatoes into small diagonal pieces.
- Boil water in a pan, add Himalayan salt, and blanch potatoes, carrots, peas, and beans, separately for 2-3 minutes. Once they are boiled, rinse them in cold water.
- Heat sunflower oil in a vessel, add cumin seeds, and sauté.
- Add water and cook for a minute. Add the vegetables and salt. Cook for some time.
- Now add yogurt and cook for 5-10 minutes. Add water and boil it for some time.
- Add green chilies and millet
- Gently stir and reduce the heat. Cover and cook for some time.
- Once the millet is cooked, finish with the ghee. Serve hot.

Sharmila Chand is an Author and Consulting Editor who writes on Food, Travel, Lifestyle, Art & Culture

# INDIA EYE SERIES SWEEP, WITH RUNS FROM OPENERS

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Disinsequential nature, India will be eagerly pursuing the twin goals of a series sweep and monitoring the progress of impressive second-line players during the third and final T20 against Bangladesh here on Saturday. India have already bagged the series 2-0 after wins at Gwalior and New Delhi.

This Indian bunch under Gautam Gambhir has shown an insatiable hunger for victory, and doubters can glance back at its result-oriented approach during the rain-marred Kanpur Test against the same opposition a few days ago.

Hence, they are unlikely to show any laxity here too as a 3-0 sweep will sit nicely along with the 2-0 margin in the preceding Test series. Beyond the obvious, India will also look to add new pieces to their white ball jigsaw puzzle ahead of some important assignments such as the Champions Trophy. So, in a season teeming with showpiece events globally as well as bilaterally, it's critical for the team to have multiple backup options. In that context, it's clear that Gambhir and his colleagues in the backroom have set in motion the process of finding able support cast to frontline



players keeping in mind the long-term goals such as the ICC event next year. Be it pacer Mayank Yadav or spinner Varun Chakravarthy, Gambhir wants to take a closer look at them and assess their readiness for the sterner assays ahead. They haven't been disappointing either in this series. Mayank, who missed a lot of action since IPL 2024 due to an injury, bowled at over 150

clicks while Chakravarthy returned with a three-wicket haul in his first outing in blue in three years at Gwalior. The team management will also keep a close eye on the journey of Nitish Kumar Reddy, highly impressive in the Delhi T20 while smashing a 34-ball 74 and returning with a couple of wickets. Opening woes Among these slivers of positives, the outings of Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma

stick out like a sore thumb. Samson has given a chance to open the innings in this series and it's a godsend in T20s, giving the batter a chance to exploit the six power play overs. But the Kerala man has two modest outings to show so far - a 19-ball 29, a missed chance to make a fifty in a small chase of 128, and a 7-ball 10. Samson will have to come up with something special here not to slip away from the

eyesight of management, unless they want to give a go to Jitesh Sharma, the second wicketkeeper batter in the squad. Similarly, the backroom staff would want a substantial outing from Abhishek who too has produced lukewarm 15 and 16 in the last two matches. The failure of openers has put a bit of strain on the middle-order, as the hosts were 41 for three inside the power play segment before the middle-

order bailed them out in the second T20. Apart from that, the team think-tank will decide whether to hand a match to some other worthy names on the bench like leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi and all-rounder Harshit Rana.

As for Bangladesh, the visitors will strive to taste that elusive victory on this tour. For that, they will need a consistent effort, particularly from seniors like captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, Litton Das and Mustafizur Rahman who all have been disappointing till now.

## SQUADS:

**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (C), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Rinku Singh, Hardik Pandya, Riyan Parag, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Varun Chakravarthy, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Mayank Yadav, Tilak Varma.  
**Bangladesh:** Najmul Hossain Shanto (Captain), Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Tawhid Hridoy, Mahmud Ullah, Litton Kumar Das, Jaker Ali Anik, Mehidy Hassan Miraz, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Rakibul Hasan.



# Latham wants New Zealand to play with freedom in India

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand's new Test captain Tom Latham feels the only way to challenge an almost invincible India in their own backyard is by playing fearless cricket. Latham has taken over the captaincy from Tim Southee ahead of the three-match Test series in India beginning on October 16 in Bengaluru. "It's an exciting challenging going over to India and once we can go over there, hopefully play with a bit of freedom, bit of no fear and try and take it to them. If we do that hopefully, it gives ourselves a good chance," said Latham ahead of the team's departure to India on Friday.

While India have won their last 18 series at home, New Zealand come to India on the back of four successive series defeats in the World Test Championship, most recently against Sri Lanka. New Zealand have won only two Tests in India with their last one coming back in 1988. "In India we've seen teams that have done well out there in the past have been quite aggressive towards them, especially with the bat they've looked to play a few shots, but also put them under pressure... Rather than sitting and waiting for something to happen. "We'll decide on how we want to play when we get over there, but guys have got plans around how they like to approach things and hopefully we can fine-tune those." Despite the 0-2 defeat in Sri Lanka, left-handed Latham

reckons they got a few things right in the island nation. "We actually did some really good things in Sri Lanka. We fell on the wrong side of the results but there were some good things. The approach we had with the bat, apart from that one innings, I thought we played really well. "So it's about continuing that as much as we can and trying to play a brand of cricket that we are proud of playing," he said. Latham's predecessor Southee has not been at his best with the ball over the 12 months. The emergence of pacer Will O'Rourke means Southee is not a sure starter in the playing eleven. The skipper, however, backed the veteran.

"If you look back, think in Bangalore (Southee) took seven wickets last time we toured there," Latham said. "Someone with that amount of experience who's done it for many years there's certainly no reason why he can't get back to where he's been in the past. He's been a fantastic bowler for us for many years, there's a reason why he's so high on the wicket list for New Zealand. "He'll have a similar role that he has always had whether it's as captain or in the past, someone like that who has a wealth of experience, a wealth of knowledge in all conditions and he's done it for many years and has been successful. We'll certainly be tapping into his mind, his ideas, so looking forward to it," he added. The first Test will be played in Bengaluru, second in Pune and third in Mumbai.

# England completes record-filled test match with innings win over Pakistan



AP ■ MULTAN

England notched one of its most memorable test wins as it beat Pakistan by an innings and 47 runs on the fifth and final day of the first cricket test on Friday. Pakistan was bowled out for 220 inside the first session as Salman Ali Agha (63) and Aamer Jamal (55 not out) delayed the inevitable with their fighting half centuries. Ill No. 11 Abrar Ahmed couldn't bat due to a fever as Pakistan suffered the

embarrassment of becoming the first test-playing country to lose a match by an innings after scoring over 500 runs in the first innings. Left-arm spinner Jack Leach picked up all the three wickets on the final morning to finish with 4-30 after fast bowlers Gus Atkinson and debutant Brydon Carse had mopped the Pakistan top-order on the fourth evening. Resuming on 152-6, Agha and Jamal resisted for an hour and stretched their partnership to 109 before Leach struck in his

first over when he had Agha trapped leg before wicket off a straight delivery. Leach then finished off the tail quickly by grabbing a stunning low return catch of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah was stumped after hitting the left-arm spinner for a straight six. England had broken number of test records when it amassed 823-7 declared on the back of Harry Brook's belligerent triple century and Joe Root's impeccable 262 in reply to Pakistan's first innings score of 556. On Wednesday, Root also became England's highest test run-scorer. Pakistan woeful run in test cricket continued with skipper Shan Masood losing his sixth successive test since being elevated as captain last year. It was also Pakistan's seventh loss at home in 11 test matches with the last win coming against South Africa in February 2021. The second test begins at Multan from next Tuesday with the final test scheduled for Rawalpindi from Oct.

# Slow start for Shubhankar in French Open golf

PTI ■ PARIS

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma's patchy form continued as he carded a topsy-turvy one-over 72 in the opening round of the FedEx Open de France that left him tied 77th in the standings here. Sharma struck four birdies against five bogeys. He was one of the early starters and stumbled to a bogey on the second hole but quickly made amends with two fine birdies on the fourth and the sixth. On the back nine, he had a good start with a birdie to go to two-under. Then came three bogeys on the trot from 11th to the 13th and he was not able to recover from that, managing a birdie-bogey finish in the last two holes. The cut looks likely at even par or better and Sharma will need a solid round to make the cut, after missing out last week. Joe Dean, Thorbjorn Olesen and Jesper Svensson shared



the first-round lead after carding identical six-under 65s. The trio made the most of soft conditions at Le Golf National after almost 80 millimetres of rain fell on Wednesday, causing the ground staff to work through the night to make the course playable. Englishman Dean, making his first appearance at this venue, posted the early clubhouse lead after carding four birdies

and an eagle. He was then joined at the top of the leaderboard by Olesen, who has fond memories of the Albatros Course as a member of Thomas Bjorn's victorious 2018 Ryder Cup side. The Dane was one-under after playing the back-nine, but then reeled off four consecutive birdies from the first before adding a seventh gain of the day on the par-four seventh hole.

# England loses to Greece as Carsley experiment backfires and France wins without Mbappé

AP ■ LONDON

Lee Carsley ran into the first problems of his tenure as England's interim coach after a bold team selection backfired in a 2-1 home loss to Greece in the Nations League on Thursday. Erling Haaland became Norway's record scorer at the age of 24 with a double in his country's 3-0 win over Slovakia, while France - playing without Kylian Mbappé and the retired Antoine Griezmann - still had far too much for Israel in a 4-1 victory. After leading England to back-to-back victories since becoming temporary coach after the European Championship, Carsley felt emboldened enough to field a team without a recognized striker in the absence of injured captain Harry Kane. The lineup looked interesting and exciting on paper but resembled a mess on the field as Greece repeatedly picked off England and got in behind a stretched defense. Vangelis Pavlidis scored the opener for the visitors at Wembley Stadium in the 49th, Jude Bellingham equalized in the 87th, only for Pavlidis to take advantage of



more sloppy defending to grab Greece's winner in the fourth minute of stoppage time. Greece's players, who also had three goals disallowed in the game, celebrated one of their most famous wins by gathering together and holding up the No. 2 jersey of George Baldock, the Panathinaikos defender who was found dead in his Athens

home on Wednesday at age 31. Baldock played 12 matches for Greece and there was a period of silence in tribute to the right back ahead of the game, with players wearing black armbands. "We gave everything for him," Pavlidis said in a tribute to Baldock, who he described as a "special guy." It was England's first loss to Greece, which is ranked No.

48 in the world ranking, in 10 matches between the teams and deals a major blow to Carsley's hopes of becoming coach of the national team on a permanent basis. It was meant to be fluid set-up, with in-form Chelsea playmaker Cole Palmer starting a competitive international for the first time for England and deployed in central midfield, with Phil

Foden and Bellingham splitting time as the furthest player forward in an attack filled with midfielders. It didn't work. "We never really gave ourselves a chance to see whether it was the right decision or wrong," said Carsley, who insisted it was not an "experiment." "With the players we've got, we've got to be courageous at times with our systems and be creative. I thought it was important to try something different. I never at any point thought I've got it cracked. It was a case of, let's try something different." Haaland scored twice to move onto 34 goals for Norway, one more than the previous record-holder Jorgen Juve from the 1930s. Haaland, who has already scored 11 goals for Manchester City this season in all competitions, was captaining Norway for the first time in his 36th international appearance. Alexander Sorloth also scored for Norway. Mbappé wasn't called up by France because of a minor injury, even though he has since played for Real Madrid, while the surprise retirement of Griezmann - a stalwart for

coach Didier Deschamps for the past decade - gave it the feel of a new era for Les Bleus. Goals by Matteo Guendouzi in the 87th and Bradley Barcola in the 89th wrapped up France's win against Israel, after Eduardo Camavinga and Christopher Nkunku netted in the first half. The game was played in Budapest, with Israeli teams having played home matches in neutral countries such as Hungary and Cyprus for security reasons since the Hamas attacks one year ago. Italy forward Lorenzo Pellegrini's red card proved decisive as his team squandered a two-goal lead and drew with Belgium 2-2 in Rome. Italy went in front after barely 60 seconds, through right wing back Andrea Cambiaso, and striker Mateo Retegui made it 2-0 in the 24th. Pellegrini was sent off for a foul on Arthur Theate that initially earned him a booking but was upgraded to a red card in the 40th after a VAR review. From the resulting free kick, Maxim De Cuyper tucked away a fine finish from a well-worked move and Leandro Trossard equalized in the 61st.

# Toyota returns to Formula 1

AP ■ TOKYO

Toyota is returning to Formula 1 after 15 years as the Japanese automaker becomes a "technical partner" of American racing team Haas. There will be Toyota branding on the Haas cars starting from next week's United States Grand Prix in Austin, Texas, and the auto giant's racing division will provide "design, technical and manufacturing services" to the North Carolina-based team. This doesn't mean a return of the Toyota works team which raced in F1 for eight seasons until 2009, however. Haas will still race under its own name and Toyota isn't going to be supplying engines like it did for other teams in the 2000s. Haas already has an agreement to use Ferrari engines through 2028 as part of an existing partnership which dates to Haas' first F1 season in 2016. Haas previously extended its Ferrari deal in July to cover the new F1 regulations coming in 2026. The announcement of the "multi-year agreement" seemed to suggest Toyota could seek to place a driver with Haas, which doesn't have

a spare seat for next year. The head of Toyota's Gazoo racing division, Tomoya Takahashi, said in a statement Friday that Toyota would aim to "cultivate drivers, engineers, and mechanics" in its partnership with Haas. The team has already signed Ferrari reserve Oliver Bearman and the experienced Esteban Ocon, who's currently at Alpine, as its drivers for 2025. Toyota spent lavishly when it joined F1 in 2002 as it attempted to build a title-winning team, but never won a race despite several near-misses. Toyota made a sudden announcement at the end of the 2009 season that it was leaving F1 as part of a cost-cutting program even though it had almost finished designing its car for the following season. Since then, Toyota has focused on other forms of auto racing like NASCAR, the Le Mans 24-hour race - where it has a rivalry with Ferrari - and rallying. The Toyota-Haas F1 announcement Friday came just over a week after the company was among three big Japanese firms which pulled sponsorship money out of the Olympics.

