



the pioneer

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 23, 2024; PAGES 12 & 4

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

INSIDE

SPORTS 11
AMERICAN SOFIA KENIN
ADVANCES TO SECOND
ROUND AT PAN PACIFIC OPEN



GIVE PEACE A CHANCE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in Kazan, Tuesday

PTI ■ KAZAN
The Russia-Ukraine conflict should be resolved in a peaceful manner and India is ready to provide all possible cooperation towards it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday during his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Modi held bilateral talks with Putin hours after arriving in this central Russian city to attend the 16th BRICS summit. In his televised opening remarks, the Prime Minister conveyed to the Russian leader that New Delhi "fully supports" the early return of peace and stability in the region. Modi also said that his second visit to Russia in the last three months reflected "close coordination and "deep trust" between the two countries. "We are in constant touch on the issue of ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. As I said earlier, we believe that problems should be resolved in a peaceful manner," the Prime Minister said. "We fully support the early return of peace and stability. All our efforts give priority to

humanity. India is ready to provide all possible cooperation in times to come," he said. "We have the opportunity to discuss all these issues," he added. On his part, Putin noted the "good condition" of trade turnover between Russia and India. In his remarks, Modi also referred to his summit talks with the Russian leader in Moscow in July. Our annual summit resulted in strengthening cooperation in every field, he said. The Prime Minister also congratulated Putin on Russia's successful presidency of BRICS. Many countries want to join the grouping now, he added. "It is a matter of great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to visit a beautiful city like Kazan for the BRICS summit. India has deep and historical ties with this city," Modi said. "The opening of India's new consulate in Kazan will further strengthen these ties," he added. It is learnt that the Ukraine conflict figured prominently at the meeting. In the summit talks on July 9 in Moscow, Modi told Putin that a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace efforts do not succeed in the midst of bombs and bullets. Weeks later he travelled to Ukraine. In his talks with Zelenskyy, Modi said both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to end the ongoing war and that India was ready to play an "active role" to restore peace in the region. India has been maintaining that the conflict in Ukraine must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.



Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi during a press conference, in New Delhi

We are trying to restore the trust: Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/PTI ■ NEW DELHI/BEIJING

With India and China reaching an agreement on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday said as of now "we are trying to restore the trust" and both sides will have to "reassure each other" to achieve this. His assertion in New Delhi came a day after India announced an agreement with China on patrolling. China on Tuesday confirmed that it has reached an agreement with India to end the standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh. It means both the armies will now resume patrolling in their respective zones as was the practice before May 2020. Following the Galwan clash in June that year, both sides deployed a large number of troops on the LAC leading to heightened tension. Continued on page 2

Hoax threats leave financial scars

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

While there seems to be no end to the menace of bomb threat messages targeting Indian airlines, as about 80 more flights, operating on domestic and international routes, received fresh threats from Monday night to Tuesday, it has also had a huge financial impact on the airline operators who already under financial stress, operations stakeholders like security forces logistics and regulatory bodies to under take the drill to ensure safe flight. According to estimates from aviation industry sources, it costs about Rs one to three Crores, on an average, to undertake the security drills and the burden is on all the stakeholders from government to the private agencies. Which means given the total of 180 flights that have undergone the process after the hoax calls an additional burden of about Rs 300 Crore. "Following the laid down protocols, relevant authorities were immediately alerted, and all security procedures strictly adhered to, as per guidance from the regulatory authorities and security agencies," an Air India spokesperson said in a statement. Protocols for the Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC), is convened in the event of a bomb threat call to an aircraft or airport, to tackle the spate of the ongoing "random" Internet-based threats being made to various Indian airlines. On Monday night, the BTAC that assembled at seven airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Pune, Mangalore, Bengaluru and Kozhikode declared as "hoax or nonspecific" bomb threat messages sent to 30 flights belonging to three carriers - Air India, Vistara and Indigo. The threat was assessed as "non specific" as it was found that one X handle posted these "bombs onboard" messages for 10 flights each of these three carriers between 10.46 pm and 11.42 pm. The protocol undertaken by the BTAC has been tweaked and a fine assessment, acting on a set of new 'red flags', is being undertaken now, the sources added. Continued on page 2



More CRPF schools get bomb threats

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the crude bomb blast outside the Central Reserves Police Forces (CRPF) public school in Delhi's Rohini area, an email threat was received at the central agency's school in Telangana's Hyderabad on Tuesday threatening to blow up five schools across the country. However, official sources later confirmed that the email turned out to be a hoax. According to police sources, an email was received in a CRPF school in Medchal near Hyderabad threatening to blow up three CRPF schools in Delhi and Hyderabad, and two Kendriya Vidyalayas within the forces' office premises in other cities. The three CRPF schools include two in Delhi (Rohini and Dwarka), one in Hyderabad (Telangana); while the two Kendriya Vidyalayas are within the paramilitary forces' office premises at Panchkula (Haryana) and Rampur (Uttar Pradesh). Deputy Commissioner of Police, Dwarka, Ankit Singh said, "The CRPF school in Dwarka did not receive any message or mail regarding the same. However, the message was shared to us by stay alert. Continued on page 2



Kalyan Banerjee ko gussa kyon aata hai?



Members of Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill leave after a meeting at Parliament House Annex, in New Delhi, Tuesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
In a bizarre incident, All India Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament Kalyan Banerjee created a ruckus during a crucial Waqf meeting in Parliament on Tuesday where he smashed a glass water bottle and hurled it towards the Chair. Banerjee injured himself and jeopardised the safety of other

Jagdambika Pal of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), during a heated exchange of words with BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay, a former Calcutta High Court judge. This is the second time Banerjee has made news for odd reasons, the last time he had mimicked a presiding officer of the Parliament. The act was condemned by the President of India, Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues. According to sources, the panel voted nine-eight on a resolution moved by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey to suspend Banerjee for a day for his choice of words for the panel chairman, and for smashing a glass bottle and throwing it towards Pal. After the meeting concluded, Banerjee refused to talk to reporters about the incident. After being administered first aid, Banerjee was seen being escorted back to the meeting room by AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and AAP leader Sanjay Singh. Continued on page 2



Officials at the blast site of Ordnance Factory Jabalpur (OFJ), in Jabalpur district, Madhya Pradesh, Tuesday

Blast at Jabalpur Ordnance Factory, many injured

PNS ■ JABALPUR

More than a dozen workers were injured in a powerful blast at the Ordnance Factory Khamaria in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district on Tuesday morning, an official said. The blast took place at around 9.45 am when explosive material was being filled in the bombs at a refilling section of the factory, the official from the establishment said. Among the injured persons, two were in a serious condition and admitted to a hospital. Another worker was missing and was possibly trapped under the debris of the section in which the blast took place, he said.

The blast was so powerful that it was even heard by people a few kilometres away, as per eyewitnesses. The Ordnance Factory Khamaria is one of the major ammunition production units under the Department of Defence Production. More than a dozen workers received injuries in the blast and efforts were on to locate a missing worker, who was possibly trapped under the debris of the building, the official said. A probe has been ordered into the incident and the exact cause behind the blast will be known after completion of the investigation, he said. Fire brigade and security staff of the factory launched a relief and rescue operation, the official added.

Delhi is most polluted city: IQAir

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even before the arrival of winter, Delhi along with several cities of north India is gasping for clean air as air quality has degraded to alarming levels over the past few days. Based on the real time data, Delhi ranks top on the list of most polluted cities in the country. It was the second-most polluted city in the world on Tuesday, a live ranking on IQAir's a Swiss based air quality monitoring website indicated, after only Lahore in neighbouring Pakistan. AQI in Lahore recorded 394. A layer of smog engulfed Delhi and surrounding areas, including Noida, on Tuesday morning, even as the air quality plummeted to the 'very poor' category at 327, followed by Haryana's Jind where the AQI stood at 311. Meanwhile, out of 36 monitoring stations in the National Capital, 26 are in the red zone, with the AQI recorded in the "very poor" category, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board. These stations



A smog as air quality deteriorates, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

include Anand Vihar, Bawana, Dwarka, Jahangirpuri, Mundka, Narela, Patparganj, Rohini, Shadipur, Sonia Vihar, Wazirpur, Alipur, Ashok Vihar, Aya Nagar, Burari, Mandir Marg, and others. A thick layer of fog was seen in areas like Anand Vihar, Kalkaji, Nehru Place, and Akshardham Temple, as Delhi's air quality continued to deteriorate. Factors contributing significantly to pollution include transportation, stubble burning, and dust pollution, with emissions from transportation accounting for approximately 11.45 percent of Delhi's air pollution, according to the Centre's Decision Support System for Air Quality Management. As the air pollution in Delhi reaches the red zone, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday wrote letters to the transport ministers of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, urging them to ensure no diesel buses from their states plied to the national capital in view of GRAP II restrictions in place. Rai announced a slew of measures, including enhanced water sprinkling to control road dust, use of dust suppressants and deployment of additional traffic personnel to ease traffic congestion, among others. Continued on page 2



Driving to Gurgaon? Pack a meal, and a diaper

District administration has identified 18 hot spots on the city roads

BY PARVESH SHARMA
To tackle traffic congestion in the city, the Gurugram district administration has identified 18 spots on the city roads which have reported heavy traffic movement and congestion. The officials have asked traffic police and other departments to take correctional steps in this regard. These places include Delhi-Gurugram Expressway, Sohna Road, Delhi-Jaipur Highway, Sheela Mata Road, Old-Delhi Road and other major roads. The city administration recently wrote to traffic police asking for a reduction in jams at the identified spots. Officials have advised enforcement and increased police presence on roads so that road congestion is cleared quickly. "We conduct drives to reduce congestion and ensure traffic movement remains smooth. We have also increased the presence of

traffic police personnel at these 18 hot spots and the enforcement has been made strict. We are also conducting awareness among the vehicle owners to follow traffic rules," Virender Vij, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) told The Pioneer. Another traffic congestion reason is rain. A few hours of rain causes severe water logging in different areas of Gurugram, which in turn results in traffic disruption in the city. The traffic police have also identified more than 55 places in the city, including major key points on the expressway, that witnessed water logging due to rain. Rainwater collected at various spots also hampers the traffic movement on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway. The traffic movement at this major junction of the expressway slowed down, especially when two-wheelers and four wheelers faced huge inconveniences due to rainwater.



Among the 18 spots identified are Ambience Island, Iffco Chowk, Subash Chowk, Hero Honda Chowk, Umang Bhardwaj Chowk, Sohna Chowk, Kherki Daula toll plaza, Dwarka Expressway, Huda City Centre, Hero Honda Chowk, Subhash Chowk Underpass and Subhash Chowk. Gurugram Deputy Commissioner has asked authorities to take strict measures to check violations of traffic norms. He asked officials to launch a drive to check wrong parking, ferrying of dangerous goods and seizure of old vehicles that are not allowed to ply on roads. The city traffic police department said they have increased police presence at these hot spots and measures in line with the Graded Action Response Plan (GRAP). Traffic police issued over 24,000 penalties in the previous month. Offences include wrong-side driving, helmet-less riding, wrong

parking, jumping signals, underage driving, speeding, without a driving licence, without a high-security number plate, using a mobile phone while driving, overloading, and driving without seat belts. "To make people aware of traffic rules in Gurugram, people should follow the traffic rules in public places so that they can save themselves and their families from road accidents and avoid being victims effort is being made by the traffic police in Gurugram to get rid of the problem of traffic jams and ease the traffic in the cyber city by taking continuous action against the violators as per the rules," Vij said. "To curb the traffic menace across Gurugram we have been organising special drives from time to time. We have issued a clear direction to the traffic personnel to be present on the roads and curb traffic violations, he added.

High alert on Bengal coasts as Dana hurtles up

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As the low pressure belt over the Bay of Bengal was intensifying into a severe cyclonic storm with a possibility of hurtling straight towards north-western Bay, the Bengal Government on Tuesday issued Red and Orange alerts for a number of districts in the southern part of the State. Though the weather office predicted that the cyclonic storm Dana could make a landfall somewhere between Bhadrak --- Paradeep to be specific --- and Sagar Islands the State the Government was not leaving anything to chances sources said. "The cyclonic storm is likely to hit the coastal areas in the intervening hours of Thursday midnight and Friday morning... in view of that the Bengal Government has issued a high alert in the coastal districts of North and South 24 Parganas and two Midnapores," a senior official



at Nabanna said adding all the schools and educational institutions in the coastal districts will remain closed. "Most likely it may make a landfall around Balasore or Paradeep," IMD sources said adding exact location of the area could be given much later. "As the cyclone is moving in anti-clockwise manner the

areas on right side of its path like the sea beaches of Digha, Mandarmani of Bengal could be affected," sources said. "We are taking maximum precautions so that no life lost and other damages are kept to the minimum," sources quoting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said adding several thousand people have been

evacuated from the coastal areas, and banks of the tidal rivers to the safer areas. A number of embankments particularly those in Namkhana area of Sunderbans have been reinforced so that the tidal rivers do not breach them, said Bankim Hajra State minister in charge of Sunderbans.

The Indian Meteorological Department in its latest bulletin said that the well marked low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal had concentrated into a deep depression and was positioned around 700 km south east of Sagar Islands. There could be heavy rains and wind lashes in southern districts like North and South 24 Parhanas, Hooghly, Howrah, Kolkata, two Midnapores, Bankura, Nadia and even Burdwan. As the wind speed could be between 100 and 110 km per hour with a gust of around 120 kmph all those who leave in "kuccha houses" and near the coast have been asked to vacate the area, Bengal Ministers Firdad Hakim said adding the police and the disaster relief force had been put on high alert and the tourists in sea beaches of Digha, Bakkhali, Mausani Islands had been asked to return home. A control room had been opened at State secretariat Nabanna, an official said.

Secure vital infrastructure projects across J and K: LG Sinha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Tuesday highlighted the need for securing the vital infrastructure projects across the Union Territory of J&K and putting in place a multi-pronged and foolproof mechanism for coordination with project implementing agencies to prevent security breaches.

Sinha travelled to Gagangir, Ganderbal to interact with officers and workers of Project Implementing Agency and to review the security measures on the project site. During his visit, the Lt Governor chaired a meeting of Officers of Police, Civil Administration, Project Implementing Agency and other security agencies.

During the meeting he directed that the security grid should be further strengthened to ensure zero terror



incidents in order to push rapid social and economic development. He said the safety and security of workers and officers working on key infrastructure projects is the highest priority for the government. The Lieutenant Governor

emphasised the need for stricter access control and regular patrolling around the project sites. He also directed the security forces and the police to conduct coordinated counter-terrorism operations pro-actively to wipe out terrorism in J&K UT.

Jitendra Singh emphasises on optimal use of AI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh on Tuesday emphasised on the need for the optimal use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in government working to enhance efficiency and productivity. Speaking at a special session on AI organised for the staff of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at South Block here, he highlighted the critical role AI can play in revolutionising governance, streamlining operations and improving decision-making processes across various government departments. The session, which saw participation from officers across all levels — from Section Officers to the Principal

Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Union Minister — was a unique demonstration of breaking hierarchical barriers within the PMO, with officials learning the same advanced concepts alongside each other, according to an official statement. Addressing the session, which included senior officials like Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister P K Mishra and Advisors to the PM, Amit Khare and Tarun Kapoor besides other senior officers, Singh underscored that AI has the power to automate routine tasks, freeing up government officials to focus on more strategic areas of governance. He highlighted how AI could transform key sectors like healthcare, agriculture and

public service delivery, ensuring that government departments become more efficient and public services more responsive to citizen needs. The session was part of the ongoing "National Learning Week" under Mission Karmayogi, an ambitious capacity-building initiative spearheaded by Prime Minister Modi, aimed at empowering government employees with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the complexities of modern governance. The initiative focuses on creating a more agile, transparent and effective bureaucracy, and Tuesday's session on AI was a step in that direction, said the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry. Singh praised the prime minister's vision for Mission

Karmayogi, stating it not only enhances the skills of individual officers but also promotes a collaborative and inclusive learning environment, where traditional hierarchies are dissolved in favour of collective learning and growth. He also emphasised the importance of deploying AI responsibly, stressing the need to safeguard data privacy, particularly in sensitive areas of government functioning. "While AI holds immense potential for enhancing productivity, it must be implemented with caution to ensure confidentiality and data security," the minister said, adding strong security measures are necessary to protect AI systems from cyber threats and unauthorised access.

Woman stabbed by neighbour in Tilak Nagar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old woman who avoided a neighbour following uncomfortable interaction was allegedly stabbed by him in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar area. According to the police on Tuesday, the man was identified as a 36 year old Ravinder Singh alias Goldy. Deputy Commissioner of Police (west) Vichitra Veer said, "On Monday, at around 11:30 am, an incident of stabbing was reported in Tilak Nagar police station." The man was arrested and a weapon recovered from him, he added. "As per the details that came during the enquiry, a female around 30 years of age was stabbed by a man named

Ravinder Singh. The lady was admitted in the hospital with multiple stab wounds. She was operated late last evening and is under observation," he added. The incident took place on Monday when the accused entered the victim's house and stabbed her multiple times, they said. The accused used to live nearby with his family. "In the initial investigation, it has come forward that the victim had come to live in this neighborhood around two years back with her husband and kids," Veer said. Singh and the victim had formal interactions occasionally. "The accused and the victim had a formal interaction occasionally, living in the same neighborhood," another senior police officer said.

MVA seat tie up delayed, ally PWP names 4 candidates

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) still to formalise the seat-sharing arrangement among its key constituents, its small ally Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP) on Tuesday went ahead and announced the names of four its candidates for the State Assembly polls. Informed sources in the MVA attributed the delay in its key constituents signing the seat-sharing pact for the November 20 State Assembly polls to the lack of consensus between the Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) on at least half a dozen seats from Vidarbha and Mumbai. The leaders of the MVA — comprising Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) -- held one more round of talks on Tuesday evening to iron out differences over the sharing of at least six out of the total 288 Assembly seats. "We expect to arrive at a consensus on the seat-sharing process. A formal announcement on seat tie-up among the MVA constituents will be made tomorrow," a senior MVA leader said.

The release of candidates' list by PWP came a day after the Congress on Monday announced that the discussion on its share of 96 seats had been completed. However, on Tuesday, the Congress did not release its list of candidates as announced on Monday. Meanwhile, BJP's former minister Rajkumar Badole from from Gondia in Vidarbha region joined the NCP (Ajit Pawar). The Ajit Pawar-led NCP is likely to field Badole, a two-time MLA (2009 and 2014) from his home constituency of Arjuni Morgaon in Gondia district of eastern Maharashtra. In what came as a pre-poll boost to the NCP (Ajit Pawar), several several wrestlers led by Deenanath Singh, who is a winner of the Hind Kesari and Maharashtra Kesari titles, joined the NCP on Tuesday. At a function, outgoing deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and State NCP president Sunil Tatkare welcomed Deenanath Singh and other wrestlers into their party. Apart from Deenanath Singh, the other wrestlers who joined the NCP (Ajit Pawar) are: Aba Kale (Mumbai Kesari), Sagar Garud (Upmaharashtra Kesari), Amul Barate (Hind Kesari), Yuvraj Vahag (Twice Upamaharashtra Kesari), Sonba Kale (Pune Mayor Kesari), Akshay Garud (Young Maharashtra Kesari), Akshay Hirgude (Hind Kesari, Gold Medalist), and Rishikesh Bhande (Maharashtra Champion). The wrestlers' entry has come as a shot in the arm for the NCP (AP) in Kolhapur district of western Maharashtra. Kolhapur has a long history of wrestling and has produced many noted wrestlers. Kolhapur's wrestling culture has over the years been dominated by Gangavesh Akhara, Shahupuri Akhara, Motibag Akhara and New Motibag Akhara

Kalyan Banerjee ko gussa...

From page 1

The committee was listening to the views of two organisations from Odisha, which included retired judges and lawyers, when the opposition members questioned what was their stake in the bill. A BJP member said Banerjee was the first person to speak and was also allowed some interventions by the Chair. When he sought another turn to speak, Pal declined and a heated exchange erupted between him and Gangopadhyay, who objected to the repeated disturbance. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was referred to the joint panel of the Houses soon after being introduced in the Lok Sabha in the Monsoon Session. The Bill to amend the law governing Waqf boards has proposed far-reaching changes in the present Act, including

ensuring the representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in such bodies. It also aims at renaming the Waqf Act, 1995, as the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995. According to its statement of objects and reasons, the Bill seeks to omit Section 40 of the current law relating to the powers of the Board to decide if a property is Waqf property. It provides for a broad-based composition of the Central Waqf Council and the State Waqf Boards and ensures the representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in such bodies. The Bill also proposes the establishment of a separate Board of Auqaf for the Bohras and Aghakhans. The draft law provides for the representation of Shias, Sunnis, Bohras, Agakhans and other backward classes among Muslim communities.

Hoax threats...

From page 1

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the respective airline security have also been asked to ensure "focussed" security protocols for frisking passengers, their baggage and the aircraft so that nothing is left to chance while preparing a flight, they said. When it is established that the bomb or hijack threat message made through social media was published "without any rationale", the BTAC will categorise it "non specific or hoax" so that passengers and airlines crew are not harassed and their precious time is not wasted, they said, without elaborating on the specific details due to operational reasons. There will still be some cases where a message or call will be declared "specific" but that will not be done en masse, the sources said. Aviation security officials said they expect that these new measures will help to ease "some" trouble posed

by these fake social media or phone call messages. Cyber security agencies have said some of these threats are triggered from virtual private network (VPN) activated Internet connections and many such handles, especially on X, were created only a few hours or days before they posted the threats to various airlines. The most recent threats targeted flights to major destinations such as Jeddah, Riyadh and Medina are in Saudi Arabia, Istanbul and Doha are the capital of Turkey and Qatar respectively. This has led to disrupting schedules, bleeding airlines and panic among passengers during the peak festive season. This is the first time that hoax callers have targeted flights bound to Middle East countries. Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu has said that making hoax bomb threat calls to airlines will be made a cognisable offence.

Delhi is most polluted city...

From page 1

He stated that a major component of this air pollution is vehicular emissions largely attributed to the significant number of diesel buses reaching Delhi from their states. Rai also announced a series of anti-pollution measures, including extra metro trips, deployment of more than 6,000 MCD staff for road dust control and 1800 more traffic personnel at congestion points. He said 1,800 additional traffic personnel will be deployed at 97 congestion points across the city, while inspections at construction-demolition sites will also be intensified under the GRAP II. The minister further said the Delhi Metro will make 40 additional train trips daily from Wednesday and the frequency of DTC buses will also be increased to encourage people to take public transport

to aid the fight against pollution. During the winter months, Delhi faces severe pollution due to a combination of factors, including low wind speeds, dropping temperatures, high moisture levels, and pollution particles that serve as surfaces for condensation. At least 16 farmers have been arrested in India's northern state of Haryana for illegally burning paddy stubble to clear fields, a practice that stokes air pollution in the region around New Delhi at the onset of winter, authorities said on Tuesday. India's National Capital Region battles pollution at this time each year as temperatures fall and cold, heavy air traps pollutants such as construction dust, vehicle emissions and smoke, much of which authorities say travels from the neighbouring breadbasket states of Punjab and Haryana.

We are trying to restore the...

From page 1

Once patrolling commences, the two sides will eventually disengage by withdrawing their troops from the LAC to peacetime locations in their respective territories. After this step, the area may see de-escalation. Speaking at an interaction session after delivering a lecture hosted by defence think-tank USI, the Army Chief said "As far as we are concerned, we were looking at... We want to go back to the status quo of April 2020. Thereafter, we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of Line of Actual Control. And, this normal management of the LAC will not just start there. There are phases in that also," the Army chief said. "So, this is what I am saying. This has been our stance since April 2020... And even today remains the same. So, as of now, we are trying to restore the trust. How the trust will get restored. It will get restored once we are able to see each other, and we are

able to convince each other" related to the buffer zones that have been created, he said. "And, both will have to reassure each other," the Army chief added. Patrolling gives you that kind of advantage, and that is what is commencing. "And, as we restore the trust, the other stages will follow through," he said. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Monday announced India has reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. This is seen as a major breakthrough in ending the over four-year-long military standoff ahead of a likely meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia this week. "Over the last several weeks, Indian and Chinese diplomatic and military negotiators have been in close contact with each other in a variety of forums," the foreign secretary said. "As a result of these discussions, agreement has

been arrived at patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020," Misri added. Later, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also said Indian and Chinese soldiers would be able to resume patrolling in the way they had been doing before the border face-off began. Army Chief Dwidvedi also said India would be looking at disengagement and de-escalation after a return to the 2020 situation. He said it was important to see that buffer zones that have been created were not being encroached upon. The troops of both nations had previously disengaged from four places, including the Galwan Valley, where a deadly clash in June 2020 left 20 Indian soldiers and several Chinese troops dead. The new agreement will facilitate patrolling in the Depsang and Demchok areas. The four places which saw disengagement include

Galwan Valley, Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Gogra. Newagency PTI reported from Beijing, China on Tuesday confirmed that it has reached an agreement with India to end the standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh. "Over a recent period, China and India have been in close communication through diplomatic and military channels on issues related to the China-India border," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here. Now, the two sides have reached a resolution on the "relevant matters," he said. The spokesperson added China will work with India to implement it but declined to provide details. About the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on the margins of the BRICS summit at Russia's Kazan, he said, "We will keep you updated if anything comes up." In New Delhi, Navy Vice Chief Vice Admiral Krishna

Swaminathan on Tuesday said the naval force was happy to learn about India and China reaching an agreement on patrolling along the LAC in eastern Ladakh as he underlined that in national security issues, it is "not easy" to come to any kind of a settlement. He said this during a media interaction held at Kota House ahead of the third edition of Navy's flagship seminar Swavlamban. "In national security issues, it is not easy to come to any kind of a settlement. It's not easy, because there are views, there are perceptions, there are emotive issues. There are land issues and there are national security considerations. So, at one time you address several elements of national consciousness. You go and talk, negotiate," Vice Admiral Swaminathan said. "So, if you come to any kind of settlement, I don't know what the details are, and I don't even need to know it, but I... Know there is some kind of settlement, and all of us are happy," he added.

More CRPF schools get...

From page 1

The school also announced a holiday for students." He added that a bomb squad was deployed, and the school was checked by anti-sabotage teams. Singh stated that nothing suspicious was found. However, student turnout has remained relatively low and business owners in the Rohini area continue to bear the brunt of the blast. Eateries opposite to the school remain shut as locals said that they have been asked to do so by the police. A senior Delhi Police officer, who did not wish to be named, said the cyber cell has launched a probe into the threat mail and the police has written to the email service provider to get the user ID and other details of the sender. "A Delhi Police cyber cell team has been constituted to probe if the threat was in any way linked to a BRPF Sunday morning at the CRPF Public School in Rohini's Prashant Vihar in Delhi," he said. The hoax threat was received by Monday night and claimed that the improvised devices may explode on the schools' premises by 11 am on Tuesday.

Security and intelligence agencies are probing the role of alleged Khalistani supporters in the Sunday morning blast after a purported Telegram post was being circulated on social media which claimed that the blast was carried out in retaliation to the "targeting" of pro-Khalistan separatists allegedly by Indian agents. "If the Indian coward agency and their master think they can hire filthy goons to target our members to silence our voice then they live in a fool's world. They can't imagine how close we are to them and how capable we are to strike anytime #KhalistanZindabad #JL," read a Telegram post by "Justice League India," it read. According to the sources, the sender has also mentioned "politics in Tamil Nadu" and sacked DMK functionary Jaffer Sadiq in the email. The CRPF schools are run by the country's largest paramilitary force that is deployed in three major combat theatres of anti-Naxal operations, counterterrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and counter-insurgency in the Northeast. There are a total of 14 schools in the country of the CRPF.

Academicians agree to explore cooperation with Kazakh National University

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A group of academicians from Kazakhstan visiting India has agreed to explore possibilities of cooperation between CIS, MERI and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The areas identified for cooperation were information technology, artificial intelligence, international relations; geopolitics. The outcome followed after talks were held between Prof Lalit Aggarwal, Vice-President, Management Education Research Institute (MERI), New Delhi and Prof Kuralay Baizakova, Director, Institute for Security and Cooperation Studies (ISCS), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan and Prof Fatima Kukeyeva also from the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University last Friday. Prof (Dr) Ramakant Dwivedi, Head, Centre for International Studies (CIS), MERI was also present during the deliberations.

LG shares pictures of toxic froth in Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Tuesday shared pictures of toxic froth in Yamuna, saying instead of making excuses and accusations on media, authorities should focus on providing relief to the city's residents.

Saxena, in a post on X, also asked for accountability, saying truth cannot be suppressed, as he apparently hit out at the AAP-led Delhi government "Who is responsible? The truth has a very bad habit; it cannot be suppressed," the LG said. Sharing images of froth and

garbage in the river, he said, "Instead of making accusations, allegations, and excuses on media or social platforms, it would be better to provide relief to the people of Delhi, especially Chhath worshippers and fasting people from this worsening situation." "I expect concrete steps for redressal," he added.

Saxena's comments follow his earlier post on Monday, where he expressed concern over the condition of the river. Sharing a set of pictures showing froth in the river, the LG had asked, "This is the condition of Yamuna, the pain of Delhi's people; I can't see it. Who is responsible for



such a plight? Who had claimed to clean the Yamuna and announced to take a dip in it?"



The issue is compounded as major festivals like Chhath Puja approach, when people traditionally immerse themselves in the river.

Videos circulating on social media also show the river blanketed in white foam, which dissipated later in the day.

With major festivals like Chhath Puja approaching, experts have urged the government to take immediate steps to address the pollution. The froth, which contains high levels of ammonia and phosphates, poses significant health risks, including respiratory and skin problems, according to experts.

"This kind of foam formation is common when fats from decaying plants and pollutants mix with the water, but

its presence during the monsoon is surprising," said one expert, adding that the lack of flood spells this year, which usually help wash away pollutants, may have contributed to the frothing.

However, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in a statement on Monday claimed that the pictures of the foam on the Yamuna were from 2015 and alleged that the BJP is "stooping to desperate tactics" by sharing old images.

AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, ahead of Assembly polls in 2020, had promised to rid the Yamuna of heavy pollution by 2025, enabling people to take a dip in its water.

Rai writes to neighbouring States to ensure no diesel buses plied to city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

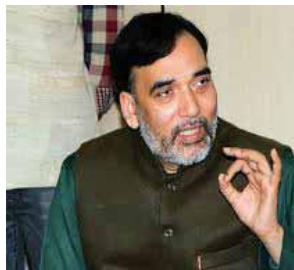
As the national capital reels under severe pollution, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday wrote letters to the transport ministers of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, urging them to ensure no diesel buses from their states plied to the national capital in view of GRAP II restrictions in place.

With the air quality in Delhi plummeting, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) second stage restrictions kicked in from 8 am. Rai announced a slew of measures, including enhanced water sprinkling to control road dust, use of dust suppressants and deployment of additional traffic personnel to ease traffic congestion, among others.

The minister in his letters said a major component of this air pollution is vehicular emissions largely attributed to the significant number of diesel buses reaching Delhi from their states.

"The impact of diesel emissions on air quality is well established and the large influx of such buses significantly contribute to the degradation of air quality in Delhi, posing serious health risks to the residents," he said. Delhi is already grappling with poor air quality and this additional burden from interstate traffic is aggravating the situation, he said.

"In light of this, I kindly request your office to consider restricting the entry of diesel buses from entering Delhi or implementing stricter regulations to



control their emission norms," Rai added. The minister offered to collectively work out implementation of more effective solutions like transition to CNG or use of electric buses for interstate transport along with strict enforcement of emission norms. He emphasised that taking proactive steps can help to reduce air pollution and ensure a cleaner and healthier environment in the national

capital. As regards measures in Delhi, Rai announced a series of anti-pollution measures, including extra metro trips, deployment of more than 6,000 MCD staff for road dust control and 1800 more traffic personnel at congestion points. He made the announcements at a press conference here after Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)-II came into force in the national capital in view of the surge in pollution levels in the city.

He said 1,800 additional traffic personnel will be deployed at 97 congestion points across the city, while inspections at construction-demolition sites will also be intensified under the GRAP II. He further said the Delhi Metro will make 40 additional train

trips daily from Wednesday and the frequency of DTC buses will also be increased to encourage people to take public transport to aid the fight against pollution.

"With the change in weather in Delhi, we are also witnessing an increase in pollution levels. This trend is not limited to Delhi; it is being observed across North India as well," he said.

"The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has established four levels to control pollution. Currently, the Air Quality Index (AQI) is above 300, which has led to the implementation of GRAP Stage II," he said. The minister said a meeting was held where measures were formulated to implement the necessary restrictions.

AAP, BJP spar over termination of DCW contractual employees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP and BJP sparred over the termination of contractual employees of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Tuesday with former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accusing the BJP of snatching their livelihoods before Diwali, assuring them that they will be reinstated while the state BJP blamed it on the 'anarchy' of the ruling party.

In an order, the DCW earlier on Monday discontinued the services of its entire contractual staff with immediate effect. AAP supremo Kejriwal assured the affected workers that his party would fight to get their jobs reinstated. "I assure my sisters who have been fired from DCW that

I will get them their jobs back, no matter what it takes," the former Delhi chief minister said in a post on X. Senior AAP leader and former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia criticised the BJP for dismissing the contractual staff at the DCW, calling it a direct contradiction of the saffron party's promises of job creation in its manifestos.

"The BJP has done wrong by snatching the jobs of people just before Diwali. Their manifestos talk about giving employment, but they are taking away the jobs of people who have been working on contracts for the last 30 years. How will these people celebrate Diwali now?" he asked. "The BJP is a party for snatching jobs and their talk about giving employment is a sham,"

Sisodia said, asserting his party stands with the affected workers and will take necessary steps to support them.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva stated, "Like thousands of other contractual workers in Delhi, the hardships faced by the terminated contractual female employees from the DCW are due to the anarchy of Arvind Kejriwal's government."

He added that, driven by the intoxication of power, the Kejriwal government filled thousands of contractual and co-terminus posts with both ordinary youths and party-affiliated individuals. "Reports also surfaced alleging the involvement of AAP legislators in these appointments," the BJP leader said.

NDMC rolls out set of stringent measures to curb pollution levels

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid worsening air quality in the national capital, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Tuesday rolled out a set of stringent measures aimed at curbing pollution levels.

Under the directives of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), all Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and Market Trade Associations (MTAs) have been instructed to implement the guidelines immediately to safeguard public health and improve air quality, an official statement said.

According to the advisory issued, one of the key measures is the strict prohibition of open garbage burning, which has been identified as a significant source of harmful emissions. "Violators will face an initial fine of Rs 5,000 with heavier penalties for repeated offenses. RWAs and MTAs are expected to ensure that no such activities take place in their respective localities," the advisory said.

Additionally, in a bid to prevent the burning of biomass or wood by security guards, associations must provide electric heaters for their use during the cold season, it added.

To tackle dust pollution from construction activities, the NDMC has mandated the



covering of all construction and demolition (C&D) sites, it reads.

"RWAs are responsible for ensuring that construction debris is properly covered, and any violations must be reported through the NDMC 311 App for prompt action," it said.

The council has also emphasised the need for RWAs to promote the use of electric and hybrid vehicles among residents, with the NDMC pledging to install charging stations to support the transition to cleaner transportation.

Further, the NDMC has encouraged the enhancement of green spaces as a critical step toward improving air quality. "All RWAs and MTAs must take proactive steps to increase green cover within their localities. < This includes tree plantation

drives and the maintenance of parks and communal spaces. Enhancing greenery is critical to improving air quality, and NDMC shall partner in these endeavours," the advisory said.

The NDMC also requested cooperation from all RWAs and MTAs. The civic body's advisory came after a thick layer of smog had started enveloping Delhi in the morning for the past few days as the city's air quality deteriorated to the 'very poor' category.

The deterioration in air quality led to prompting enforcement of Stage II of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the national capital which enforces a ban on the use of coal and firewood, including tandoors in hotels, restaurants and open eateries as well as diesel generator sets, except for emergency and essential services.

BJP protests against Kejriwal's misuse of taxpayers' money at 'Sheeshmahal'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



BJP leaders and workers staged protests across the city, accusing AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal of spending taxpayers' money on personal comfort during his tenure as Delhi chief minister.

The BJP leaders alleged that Kejriwal spent crores on lavish items and modern facilities at his official residence at 6 Flagstaff Road. Kejriwal after resigning as Delhi Chief minister vacated the Flagstaff Road bungalow in Civil Lines earlier this month. In a protest near Kejriwal's current residence on Firozshah Road, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that 15 toilet seats installed at "Sheeshmahal" (Flagstaff Road bungalow) after spending lakhs of rupees were missing.

"We are protesting to tell people how Kejriwal spent taxpayers' money on toilet seats worth Rs 12 lakhs. Fifteen such toilet seats were stolen," Sachdeva charged. He asserted that the fight against the corruption of Kejriwal and Atishi's government will continue while comparing Kejriwal to a former UP Chief Minister who they claimed stole faucets while vacating his bungalow. "Kejriwal, on the other hand, took commodes worth Rs two crores so that no common man could see them," he added.

Sachdeva highlighted the extravagance by mentioning that each toilet seat in the bungalow cost Rs 12 lakhs. "What common man's house has such luxury?" he asked, stating that Kejriwal uses taxpayers' money for personal enjoyment but pretends to be a victim.

"Arvind Kejriwal will have to give an account of the crores of rupees from the taxpayers money spent on providing him a luxurious stay at the Sheeshmahal," he said. Alka Gurjar, co-in-charge of Delhi BJP, said the issue directly impacts the people as taxpayers' money was involved and AAP cannot be allowed to "loot" it. "While Prime Minister Narendra Modi is working to provide proper toilets in rural areas, Kejriwal's bungalow boasts facilities that even five-star hotels do not offer. She stressed that citizens would hold Kejriwal accountable in the upcoming elections," he said. Northwest Delhi BJP MP Yogendra Chandolia criticised Kejriwal for taking the commodes while vacating the bungalow and stating, "The self-proclaimed common man is now a privileged one, as everyone in Delhi has witnessed."

Rohini blast: Shopkeepers, businessmen say Diwali won't be the same this time

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the residents of Rohini area were left terrified due to the blast in Central Reserves Public Force (CRPF) public school, businessmen and shopkeepers on Tuesday said that their Diwali won't be the same this time even as the markets continue to remain affected due to lower turnout of customers in the area.

In the aftermath of the blast that shook the national Capital, eatery shops, especially those opposite to the spot remained shut including Wah ji Wah. Locals said that the police have asked the owners not to open them until they say so. The businessmen have to bear the brunt of the incident with days left for the festival of Diwali. Rajiv, who works at a jewellery shop, said that the incident happened on the day of Karwachauth, when the sales are usually higher. "First of all it happened on a day when we usually see a higher turnout of customers and higher sales. We had to keep it shut after the incident because of the police. Now that we have opened our shops, as you can see there are no customers," he said.

He added that the markets that are usually bustling with people are not stepping out as

there is still fear in the masses after the incident. 50 year old Neetu, who is an owner of a bakery located near the spot, also shared the sentiments and said that they have incurred losses a lakh at least.

"We are estimating a loss of a lakh but it can also be higher. But even if I leave that aside, this time when sales are expected to be high, only my relatives and close people have placed an order. There are no walk-ins since the nearby eatery shops have been closed and customers won't come solely for my bakery," she said, adding that she opened her shop two years ago. Another shopkeeper also added that the markets, which were bustling till 12 am in the night, saw a handful of people. "We have been asked to close our shops early by the police authorities. Well, even if they didn't order, we won't even have any customers. A lot has changed since the blast but we hope that this doesn't continue for a long time," he added.

74 year old Vijay, who runs a shop of eyewear, said that he incurred a loss of Rs 1.5 lakh. "We are witnessing a downfall of 60 per cent of customers in comparison to the normal," he said, adding that all of this happened when it is usually a peak season for sales.

DU campus yet to recover from student union's election excesses: HC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has said campuses at the Delhi University were yet to recover from student unions' "election excesses" and looked "shabby" as posters and graffiti hadn't been removed as it directed the candidates to clean up the place and repaint the defaced walls.

A bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela impleaded 16 students, who had contested the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) 2024-25 elections held on September 27, as parties to the proceedings while directing them to appear before it on October 28 and explain their conduct. The high court said the cleaning work should be done by the student candidates in collaboration with the university or colleges.

On the prayer of the petitioner, the court impleaded as respondents -- Bhaanu Pratap Singh, Ronak Khatri, Yash Panwar, Rishabh Chaudhary,



Lokesh Chaudhary, Yash Nandal, Rahul Singh Dedha, Aman Kapasia, Deepika Jha, Aman Kapasia, Shivam Maurya, Himanshu Nagar, Aaryan Maan, Rishi Raj Singh, Rahul Jhansla and Priyanshu Chaudhary. The petitioner had alleged that major defacement was carried out by these candidates. The court, therefore, directed

to remove the all the posters, graffiti and repaint the defaced walls in collaboration with the Delhi University and colleges. It also asked the DU to inform the newly-impleaded respondents through WhatsApp and e-mail to appear in court on October 28.

The court, which had halted the counting of votes of DUSU

polls till all the defacement material was cleaned up and public property was restored, reiterated the warning. Two candidates, who contested the college elections in two separate DU colleges, urged the court to allow the counting of votes and declaration of results saying they had taken the initiative of cleaning up the area and motivated other students

to. The court, which appreciated the efforts put in by the two candidates, said the photographs and videos show the campuses were still in a shabby condition. "... Both the north and south campuses are yet to recover from the 'election excesses' and they continue to look shabby as a large number of posters/hoardings/banners/graffiti are yet to be removed and boundary walls of a number of colleges are still to be repainted," the bench noted.

The court directed the Delhi Police, MCD and DU to file fresh status reports and posted the hearing on October 28. While the polling took place on September 27, the HC had halted the vote counting -- scheduled for September 28. The court was hearing a petition by advocate Prashant Manchanda, who sought action against the prospective DUSU candidates and student outfits involved in allegedly damaging, defacing, soiling and destroying public walls.

LG directs DISCOMs to provide 11,000 pending electricity connections in PM-UDAY unauthorised colonies



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In what comes as a major relief, cutting through red tape and deliberate harassment, Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena has directed DISCOMs to provide more than 11,000 pending electricity connections to applicants in PM-UDAY unauthorised colonies. The same will be provided within a week to 10 days. Saxena, who chaired a meeting attended by MCD Commissioner, Divisional Commissioner, Secretary (Power), Principal

Commissioner (DDA) and CEOs of the two DISCOMs, took grave objection to the red tape being indulged into by the agencies, in providing power connections to residents / applicants of unauthorised colonies in the land pooling areas.

He emphasised that there was no confusion left after the clarification issued by DDA on October 16 and directed the two DISCOMs to provide connections within the next week / 10 days. He also instructed the government agencies to not create any further confusion or hurdle in this regard.

LG OK's extension of contractual nursing employees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor (LG) V K Saxena has once again approved the extension of contractual nursing employees under the Health and Welfare Department, GNCTD for another year or till such time that they avail of the one-time regularization policy dated 11.10.2020, Raj Niwas said here on Tuesday. Giving details, officials said Saxena had earlier approved the extension last year on 01.07.2023 with the direction to the Health Department and DSSSB to notify the vacant posts, against which these contractual employees were hired and conduct the exercise for regular appointments against these permanent posts.

India values the close cooperation within BRICS says PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India values close cooperation within Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) which has emerged as an important platform for dialogue and discussion on a range of key issues concerning global developmental agenda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday. Modi made this assertion in a statement before embarking on a two-day visit to the Russian city of Kazan to attend the 16th summit of the BRICS grouping. "The expansion of BRICS with the addition of new members last year has added to its inclusivity and agenda for the global good," he said. Being hosted by Russia, the summit is being seen as an attempt by non-Western powers to project their clout amid the conflict in Ukraine and the escalating situation in West Asia. Modi is set to hold a series of bilateral



meetings including with Russian President Vladimir Putin and a likely meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa). It will be the first summit of the grouping after it was expanded at its summit in Johannesburg last year. "India values the close cooperation within BRICS which has emerged as an important plat-

form for dialogue and discussion on issues concerning the global developmental agenda, reformed multilateralism, climate change, economic cooperation, building resilient supply chains, promoting cultural and people to people connect, among others," Modi said in his departure statement. Modi said his visit to Kazan will further reinforce the 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'

between India and Russia. The prime minister visited Moscow in July during which he held summit talks with President Putin. "Building upon the annual summit held in July 2024 in Moscow, my visit to Kazan will further reinforce the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between India and Russia," Modi said. "I look forward to meeting other leaders from BRICS as well," he said. In a social media post, the Prime Minister said he was looking forward to extensive discussions on a wide range of subjects at the summit. The BRIC, as a formal grouping, started after the meeting of the leaders of Russia, India and China in St. Petersburg in 2006. It was agreed to expand BRIC into BRICS with the inclusion of South Africa in 2010. Last year's expansion was the first such exercise since 2010. The new members included Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

President Murmu expresses concern over water issues at National Water Awards 2023

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At the National Water Awards 2023 event here on Tuesday, President Droupadi Murmu gave a clarion call for collective responsibility in safeguarding water resources for future generations as she expressed concern over the critical issue of groundwater depletion and pollution. Underscoring the alarming trend that threatens both the environment and public health, in her speech, she highlighted the essential role of groundwater in supporting communities and ecosystems, while urging a unified approach to water conservation. The President emphasised that without immediate and concerted efforts to protect this vital resource, society's growth and sustainability would be at risk. "Groundwater is not only getting polluted but also depleting. This is a serious concern," the president said while confer-



ring the National Water Awards 2023 here. She warned that without conservation efforts, society cannot progress. Murmu said that all major civilisations have thrived around water bodies, and yet, in modern times, water is often neglected. "We at times forget the importance of water," she said. Speaking on the occasion, the President said that water is a basic necessity and a fundamental human right for every individual. A clean and prosperous soci-

ety cannot be built without ensuring access to clean water. The unavailability of water and poor sanitation has a greater impact on the health, food security and livelihood of the underprivileged. The President pointed out that water conservation is part of our tradition. "Our ancestors used to build ponds near villages. They used to build reservoirs in or near temples so that the stored water could be used in case of water shortage. Unfortunately, we are forgetting the wisdom of our ancestors. Some people have encroached upon reservoirs for personal gain. This not only affects the availability of water during drought but also creates flood-like situations when there is excessive rainfall," she said. Murmu emphasised the role of the state governments in water management, praising the Ministry of Jal Shakti and minister C R Patil for their dedication to conservation. The President also lauded the winners of the National Water Awards for their efforts and urged that their best practices be shared widely. The awards, organised by the Department of Water Resources under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, recognised efforts across nine categories, with Odisha securing the top spot for Best State, followed by Uttar Pradesh while Gujarat and Puducherry were joint third place. The National Water Awards started in 2018 to promote water conservation is in line with the government's vision of a 'Jal Samridh Bharat' (water-sufficient India).

Haryana cracks down on stubble burning, 24 officials suspended for inaction



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana's Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Department has suspended 24 officials over alleged failure to take adequate steps to prevent stubble burning incidents in their respective areas. An order in this regard was issued on October 20. While the order mentioned that the officials are suspended on administrative grounds, a senior officer of the department on Tuesday said the action has been taken because of the alleged failure of these officials to prevent stubble burning incidents. He said more stubble burning cases were found in their areas. The officials, who have been placed under suspension, include agriculture inspectors, supervisors and agriculture development officers from nine districts - Jind, Panipat, Hisar, Kaithal, Karnal, Fatehabad, Kurukshetra, Sonapat and Ambala. When reporters here on Tuesday asked Haryana's Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana the reason behind suspension of the 24 officials, he said, "The reason is that stubble should not be burnt." "Where farmers took wrong decision, even if under compulsion, but the decision is wrong," he added.

Rana said he has been told that 3,000 cases have been registered against the violators. He said Haryana is taking steps to control stubble burning incidents. When asked if strictness is being done by the authorities in view of hearing in the Supreme Court, Rana said every government obeys the apex court's orders. The Supreme Court had pulled up the Punjab and Haryana governments over the non-prosecution of violators found guilty of stubble burning while summoning the state chief secretaries to appear before it on October 23 for an explanation. A bench of justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Maish pointed out "complete insensitivity" on the part of both states, directing the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to take penal action against both the government officials for the failure to take action against the violators. Stubble burning is a major contributor to the rising pollution levels in the national capital. With the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) dispensation in Delhi blaming 'parali' (paddy stubble) burning in BJP-ruled Haryana as one of the reasons for poor air quality, Rana said it is being publicized that farmer alone is causing pollu-

tion. "In Delhi, what are the reasons for pollution? How much population is there? A densely populated city will have more pollution. How many airports are there? How much pollution is caused by an aircraft? How much construction work is taking place there? (in Delhi region). There are 28 nullahs (in national capital) which are flowing into Yamuna, pollution is because of that also," he said. When asked Delhi is blaming Haryana, Rana said, "AAP is ruling Delhi and Punjab, but they will not say anything to their party ruled dispensation in Punjab." Earlier on Sunday, Haryana Chief Secretary T V S N Prasad, who held a review meeting via video conferencing with the district deputy commissioners, to discuss measures to prevent stubble burning across the state, had emphasized strict adherence to the Supreme Court's orders, instructing officials to ensure that incidents of stubble burning are effectively curtailed. Recently, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Congress general secretary and Sirsa MP Kumari Selja demanded that the government fix MSP for stubble and buy it from the farmers. Referring to recent directions of Haryana agriculture department, Hooda slammed the state government for issuing directions to register FIRs against the farmers found burning crop residue besides imposing restriction on selling crops in mandis through the e-kharid portal for the next two seasons. He also slammed the directions of making a "red mark entry" in farm records of the farmers found burning crop residue.

BJP leader Vijaya Rhatkar takes charge as NCW chairperson

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader Vijaya Rhatkar who officially took charge as the chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Tuesday emphasised her commitment to advancing women's rights and ensuring justice for victims of gender-based violence. In her first address after assuming office, she also promised to build on the commission's ongoing efforts while acknowledging the significant responsibility of the role. "This is a role of great responsibility, and I will strive to fulfill it to the best of my ability," Rhatkar said, recognising the pressing issues women face today. Rhatkar, a former head of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (2016-2021), spearheaded initiatives like "Sakshama" (support for acid attack survivors), "Prajwala" (linking self-help groups to Central government schemes), and "Suhita" (a 24x7 helpline service for women). The NCW, a statutory body, is empowered to work towards the advancement of women's rights.

rent is created," she said, underlining that the commission would continue to work towards these objectives. She also addressed the public's perception of the commission's work, noting that while not all of its efforts are visible, the NCW remains committed to pushing forward on its commitment. "Not everything comes to the forefront, but the commission keeps working, and we will continue to expand our efforts," Rhatkar added. According to a statement issued by the Union Women and Child Development Ministry a few days ago, Rhatkar has demonstrated leadership skills across various political and social responsibilities. During her tenure as the chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (2016-2021), she spearheaded initiatives like "Sakshama" (support for acid attack survivors), "Prajwala" (linking self-help groups to Central government schemes), and "Suhita" (a 24x7 helpline service for women). The NCW, a statutory body, is empowered to work towards the advancement of women's rights.

Congress names youth leader Akash Sharma for Raipur South bypoll

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Opposition Congress on Tuesday announced the candidature of its youth leader Akash Sharma for the next month's bypoll to Raipur City South assembly seat in Chhattisgarh. The seat fell vacant after sitting Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator and former state minister Brijmohan Agrawal resigned following his election to the Lok Sabha from Raipur parliamentary constituency. "Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has approved the name of Akash Sharma as the Congress candidate for the ensuing bye-election to the Raipur City South constituency," the party's state spokesperson said here. Sharma, the incumbent president of the state unit of the Congress, has served as the state president of National Students' Union of India (NSUI), a student wing of Congress, in the past, he said. According to political experts, fielding a young face in the form of Sharma may benefit Congress in Raipur City South seat, considered as the strong-



hold of the BJP. The ruling BJP has fielded its former MP Sunil Soni for the bypoll. The BJP has never lost Raipur City South, an urban constituency which came into existence in 2008. So far, this seat is being held by BJP's influential leader Brijmohan Agrawal. Agrawal, an eight-term legislator, was unbeaten since 1990 in assembly polls. The BJP fielded him in the last Lok Sabha polls and he was elected as an MP for the first time. Polling to the seat will be held on November 13 and the counting of votes will take place on November 23. October 25 is the last day of fil-

ing of nominations for the bypoll. In the last year's assembly elections, the BJP had registered a landslide victory winning 54 out of the 90 seats in the state, while the Congress had won 35 and Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) bagged one seat. There are 2,70,936 electors, including 1,33,713 males, 1,37,171 females and 52 transgenders in this constituency. A total of 253 polling booths have been set up for the bypoll and five companies of security personnel will be deployed to maintain law and order during the election, officials said.

Assam Chief Minister urges to expedite 57 national highway project

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that the collective priority of both the Centre and the state government is the timely completion of 57 critical National Highway projects. Sarma said he attended a review meeting chaired by Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and requested him to expedite key projects, including the early



completion of the Jorhat-Dibrugarh highway, in the state. "Building the road to progress. Today in New Delhi, I had the privilege of attending a review meeting led by Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @nitin_gadkari ji, focused on the development of 1001 kms of highway projects in Assam. Our collective priority remains the timely completion of 57 critical National Highway projects across various imple-

menting agencies', the chief minister posted on X. The alignment of the Kaziranga elevated corridor has been approved, and the detailed project report of the Gohpur-Numaligarh Tunnel under the Brahmaputra river was also nearing completion, he said. The completion of the four-laning of the Baihata Chariali-Tezpur highway stretch was also urged, Sarma said. He also requested Gadkari for

re-tendering of the Majuli bridge over the Brahmaputra river, connecting Kamalabari and Nimati Ghat, where construction has been halted since early September. The meeting was also attended by Union Minister for Waterways and Ports Sarbananda Sonowal and MPs from Assam, he said. Gadkari reviewed national highway projects of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim in Delhi on Tuesday.

USAID launches three initiatives to boost Clean Energy Forum in South Asia

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Three new initiatives designed to accelerate clean energy progress across the South Asia region were launched in the South Asia Clean Energy Forum by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) here. The new initiatives, supported by the USAID through its South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP), are aimed at combating climate change and supporting sustainable economic growth in South Asia. Speaking at the inaugural session of the event, US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, said the US government is committed to supporting South Asia's clean energy transition. "The new initiatives reaffirm the United States' commitment to partnering with countries in the region to address



the urgent climate crisis through transformative action. By working together, we have an extraordinary chance to protect our planet, our people and build our prosperity for generations to come," Garcetti said. He said that South Asia has positioned itself as one of the most influential regions in

devising creative solutions to its challenges. Rajasthan Energy Minister Heeralal Nagar said collective efforts are important to effectively combat the global challenges of climate change. He expressed confidence that the discussions at the South Asian Clean Energy Forum would shape future energy

policies. The new initiatives are the "US-South Asia Mayoral Platform on Clean Energy and Sustainable Cities", which empowers local leaders to lead municipal clean energy transitions; the "US-India Low Carbon Comfort and Cooling Collective", aiming to mobilize USD 1 billion for super-efficient cooling technologies by 2030; and "Clean Energy Investment Facilitation Platform", designed to connect investors with clean energy companies and close the financing gap for clean energy projects. The initiatives will give a push to the region's clean energy transition, promote sustainable economic growth, diversify clean energy supply chains and reduce carbon emissions. "By facilitating innovation, cooperation and investment, the United States is partnering

with South Asian countries and private sectors to pave the way for a cleaner, more sustainable future in the region," a release said. The clean energy transition will not only reduce emissions but also improve energy security and create opportunities for economic empowerment, driving progress toward global climate goals," the release added. The South Asia Clean Energy Forum, being held from October 22 to 24 in Jaipur, is convening leaders from across the region to tackle the challenges posed by climate change, including rising temperatures, energy demands and the need for resilient infrastructure. The Forum serves as a platform for collaborative solutions to meet these challenges, unlocking new economic opportunities and fostering regional cooperation.

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to face trial in defamation case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP said on Tuesday that everyone in politics has a right to criticise but those levelling defamatory allegations will have to suffer consequences, as the Supreme Court cleared the way for AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to face trial in a defamation case for remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational qualifications. BJP leader and Lok Sabha MP Ravi Shankar Prasad claimed that Kejriwal's conduct towards

Prime Minister Modi has been utterly irresponsible, saying it need not be told the kind of "abuses" he has heaped on Modi. Prasad said Kejriwal offered to tender an apology during the hearing in the Supreme Court on Monday but it was declined. He has become an expert in tendering apologies, the BJP leader said, adding he has apologised 10 times to different leaders, including Arun Jaitley, Nitin Gadkari and Kapil Sibal, for his defamatory remarks. In a swipe at Rahul Gandhi, Prasad described him as a com-

panion of Kejriwal and noted that the Congress leader has also been facing defamation cases and tendered apologies in past. To a question about the opposition party's criticism of the government as India and China reached an agreement on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, he said, "As far as Rahul Gandhi and Asaduddin Owaisi are concerned, how much they understand the nuances of foreign policy is a matter of larger debate." He said the BJP has no comment to offer apart from what the External Affairs Ministry has already made. Asked about Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav's alleged use of a profanity at the Supreme Court, Prasad noted that the Rajya Sabha MP has already clarified but added judiciary and judges should be respected.

Doctors slam Didi Government for 'sympathy' to health mafia

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal junior doctors who announced the withdrawal of the 17-day-long fast-into-death late on Monday evening consequent to "partially successful talks" with "insensitive, arrogant and arbitrary" powers that be on Tuesday assured continuous agitation via different forms and means until they extracted justice for the Kolkata rape and murder victim and "restore health of the moribund health department."

The doctors had been agitating post the brutal rape and murder inside the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital of a post-graduate lady doctor in the small hours of August 9 triggering a nation-wide, nay world-wide protest.

"Though we managed to get some assurance of fulfillment of some of our demands --- of which we will still have to wait for the directive to come from the Government --- the body language of the State Government was not positive," Debashis Halder one of the agitating doctors said adding "though the common people supported the doctors' cause whole-heartedly the powers



that be still were not ready to listen to us when we were raising issues on the corrupt officials and elements who have been under the CBI scanner and who have been perpetrating a threat and extortion syndicate in most of the Government medical colleges all these years."

Doctor Aniket Mahato one of the protesting doctors who had heated verbal arguments with Banerjee on the issue of getting 59 junior doctors and students of RGMCH expelled said, "Chief Minister is rebuking our Principal for taking action ... she was scolding him for expelling the criminal elements who had perpetrated a regime of sexual exploitation,

extortion and examination malpractices besides other kind of corrupt activities in connivance with the former Principal Sandip Ghosh." Seemingly the first person on camera match the Chief Minister word-by-word and decibel-by-decibel in the past 13 years of the Trinamool Congress rule he continued, Mahato said, "we would not take such insult of our teachers in front of us ... when we told her that the expulsion was done by an empowered committee in consequence of deposition by victims and witnesses she refused to take our argument and warned all the Principals against taking such action in the future ... she said

in such cases the permission of the State Government would be necessary ... does this mean that the Government has taken no lesson from the RG Kar rape and murder case which is fall-out of the existing corrupt culture ... does this mean that the Government is siding with the hardened criminals ... Was this meeting held for setting the system right or sending a message to the criminals that they would once again get license to perpetrate crimes."

Another doctor said, "when we were raising the issue which was being live-streamed the Chief Minister seemed more worried about her Government's getting bad name in Delhi than she was concerned about the limping health infrastructure of the State marred by corruption and threat culture perpetrated by some students, doctors and officials who have been drinking from the cup of power." Meanwhile, the doctors who called off the Tuesday's general medical strike sector too said that their movement would continue in days to come via different ways "which will be decided following future meetings."

Mamata asks PM to reduce drug prices

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal Opposition has advised Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to "first mind her own business" by putting a lid on the "rampant corruption in the State Health Department of which she happens to be the minister in-charge before lecturing Centre after the former shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to roll-back in the hiked price of eight life saving drugs.

"I urge upon your kind office to issue directions to the concerned ministry to immediately reconsider the decision on the price escalation in the overall interest of the health and wellbeing of the common people," the Chief Minister wrote to the Prime Minister saying "the welfare of the citizens" should "of paramount importance" for the Government.

"Perhaps, our aim ought to be preserving a balanced approach that respects both commercial viability and the citizen's right to affordable healthcare. The welfare of the citizens is of paramount importance, and all the stakeholders must align the policies to reflect this commitment. Looking forward to your urgent and kind consideration," the two-page letter said.

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari promptly hit back saying the Chief Minister should first mind her own business before lecturing the Centre. "The entire Government departments in have rotted ... the Health and Education sector are brimming with corruption ... and her own party men are the main pivot of that corruption raj which is why the junior doctors and the people in general have descended on the streets today ... she has no right to write sermons before cleaning her own backyard," the BJP leader said.

A 50 percent hike in price of eight essential drugs was earlier green-signaled by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) a government-controlled agency responsible for availability of essential drugs at affordable price.

When asked whether the Trinamool Congress would use the price hike issue in the November 13 Assembly elections to six seats, senior party leader Kunal Ghosh said that the people were smart conscious enough to differentiate between a friend a foe and a pseudo friend apparently indicating the Trinamool Congress, BJP and the Left adding, his party would raise the issue in public.

Tej Pratap owns 2.4 kg gold and assets worth over Rs 10 crore



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Tej Pratap Yadav, the former MP known for his simple public persona, has a penchant for gold jewelry in his private life. Currently contesting from the Karhal constituency, Yadav owns more than 2.4 kilograms of gold ornaments, significantly more than his wife, Rajlakshmi. Both Tej Pratap and Rajlakshmi are millionaires.

On Monday, Tej Pratap Yadav filed his nomination as the Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate from Karhal. In the affidavit submitted with his nomination papers, he disclosed details of his assets.

According to the document, Tej Pratap Yadav owns movable and immovable assets worth Rs 10.25 crore, while Rajlakshmi's assets are valued at Rs 2.33 crore. Besides his wealth, Tej Pratap also surpasses his wife in gold ownership, possessing 2.410 kilograms of gold ornaments compared to Rajlakshmi's 240 grams.

Additionally, Tej Pratap Yadav owns two luxury vehicles—a five-year-old Jeep Camper worth around Rs 15 lakh and a two-year-old car valued at about Rs 35 lakh. Rajlakshmi, however, does not own any cars.

Tej Pratap Yadav first entered the electoral fray in 2014, contesting the Lok Sabha by-election from the Mainpuri seat. Now, a decade later, he is running in the assembly by-election from Karhal. During this period, his assets have more than doubled, increasing from Rs 4.29 crore in 2014 to Rs 10.27 crore by 2024.

India, Singapore agree to further step up defence cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Singapore on Tuesday agreed to further step up defence cooperation including industry collaboration in niche domains during the sixth India-Singapore Defence Ministerial Dialogue here.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of Defence of Singapore Ng Eng Hen co-chaired the Dialogue. Both Ministers acknowledged the deep and long-standing bilateral defence relations based on shared outlook on regional peace, stability and

security. This meeting assumes significance in the backdrop of India marking a decade of its Act East policy, in which Singapore has played a key role in promoting economic cooperation & cultural ties, and developing strategic connectivity with countries in the region.

Both Ministers expressed satisfaction at the growing defence cooperation between the two countries. There have been regular engagements between the Armed Forces of the two countries in recent years. As 2025 marks 60 years of



establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore, both Ministers agreed to further step up defence cooperation and agreed to achieve new feats. They also agreed to extend bilateral agreement on Joint Military Training Army for the next five years.

Recognising that both nations are natural partners for commencing co-development and co-production of defence equipment, both sides agreed to enhance industry cooperation, including exploring collaboration in niche domains such as automation and Artificial Intelligence.

The two Ministers also decided to take forward the cooperation in emerging areas like cyber security. Rajnath thanked Ng Eng Hen for Singapore's support as country coordinator for India in ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting - Plus from 2021 to 2024.

The Defence Minister of Singapore acknowledged that India is a strategic voice for Asia's peace and stability. The bilateral relationship was recently elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Singapore.

SC permits Setalvad to travel to Amsterdam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted activist Teesta Setalvad to travel between November 14 and November 24 to attend the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam. Setalvad had received an invitation from the organisers to attend the festival in her capacity as producer of the documentary film Cycle Mahesh. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V

Viswanathan allowed the plea filed by Setalvad. The apex court had in July, 2023, granted her regular bail in a case of alleged fabrication of documents to frame innocent people in the 2002 post-Godhra riot cases. During the hearing on Tuesday, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Setalvad, said she had filed an application seeking permission to travel abroad as the apex court had in July, 2023, directed for her passport to be in the custody of the sessions court.

Amit Shah stresses on need for clarity in laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday stressed the need for clarity in laws, stating that judiciary can intervene only when people responsible for drafting legislations leave "grey areas". He was addressing the Gujarat Legislative Assembly here as part of a day-long 'Legislative Drafting Training Workshop' organised for the officials of the Assembly Secretariat.

"I know that whatever I am going to speak will create a controversy, but I want to tell you that the judiciary will intervene only when you leave any grey area in drafting the legislation. More clarity in the legislation, less the intervention of courts," Shah said in his address to the House, where MLAs, MPs as well as former legislators and Speakers were present.

Citing the Modi government's move of abrogating Article 370, he said, "When the Article was drafted, it was clearly written that it is a temporary provision of the Constitution which can be removed through an amendment that can be passed through a simple majority in Parliament." "Now, if it was written that it is a constitutional provision instead of a temporary one, then we would have required a two-thirds of majority during voting instead of a simple majority. Thus, more clarity leads to less judicial intervention," the minister added.

In August 2019, the Centre revoked the special status granted under Article 370 of the Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir. The Supreme Court later also upheld its abrogation stating that it was a temporary provision. Shah claimed that "bad drafting" of legislations is the main reason why the difference between legislature, executive and judiciary is getting blurred today.

"Our Constitution is very clear about the roles of legislature, executive and judiciary. It says that the government will formulate policies and the legislature will pass laws as per those policies. Judiciary will define the



laws and the executive will implement them. But lines are blurred today between these three because of bad drafting of legislations," he said. "The art of drafting legislation" is slowly getting extinct, he said, and opined that every legislative assembly should conduct such workshops for its staff to enhance their drafting skill. He also stressed that officials involved in this process should be given guidance on what to include in the Act and what provisions should become part of the Constitution, drafted and edited under Dr B R Ambedkar, is the most ideal example in the entire world on legislative drafting.

"At that time, there were 72 barristers who were part of the constituent assembly... Nearly 14 per cent of their time was spent on discussing fundamental rights. After such intense discussions, our Constitution was prepared. And today, some NGOs give us advice on the issue of fundamental rights," he said. The senior BJP leader said national and international perspectives should be kept in mind while drafting any act and common man should be able to understand its language also. Giving an example, Shah said the three new criminal laws - the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) - have been prepared keeping in mind Indian perspective as directed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. These three new laws replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) and the Indian Evidence Act, all of which came into existence during the British era, he said.

After offered two seats; Congress wary to contest UP by-polls

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Congress party has shown reluctance in contesting the upcoming Uttar Pradesh by-elections after being offered just two seats by its INDIA bloc ally, the Samajwadi Party (SP). This hesitation stems from internal divisions and concerns that a poor performance could undermine the party's bargaining power in the 2027 assembly elections.

Some Congress leaders argue against accepting SP's offer to contest two seats—Ghaziabad and Khair—which are considered strongholds of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). They believe that a loss in these constituencies could

weaken the party's position when negotiating seat-sharing arrangements for the 2027 elections. "This is why the state Congress leadership is hesitant to fully commit to the alliance with the Samajwadi Party for the by-polls," a senior party leader revealed. Initially, Congress sought five of the 10 seats up for grabs in the by-elections. However, SP has nominated its candidates in seven constituencies, leaving Ghaziabad and Khair for Congress. These seats are seen as difficult for Congress to win, leading to internal debates over whether to participate at all. Sources indicate that Congress fears a poor showing in these by-elections could



limit its leverage when negotiating seat distribution for the 2027 assembly elections. If the party fails to perform, it may be left with little choice but to accept whatever seats SP allocates in the future,

weakening its negotiating stance. Ajay Rai, the Uttar Pradesh Congress president, addressed the concerns, stating, "We haven't refused to contest the by-elections, but two seats are

not enough. The state leadership has communicated the reality to the party's top brass. Defeating the BJP is crucial, and we are willing to make sacrifices if necessary." Within Congress, a faction opposes participating in the by-elections unless the party secures a more favorable seat allocation. These leaders worry that accepting an unfavorable arrangement could set a precedent, making it difficult for Congress to demand a better deal in future elections. Political analysts see Congress in a delicate position as it attempts to regain influence in Uttar Pradesh. The 2027 assembly elections are viewed as a crucial opportunity for the party's resur-

gence. However, a break with the SP could allow the latter to cast Congress as a spoiler within the anti-BJP alliance, damaging its credibility among voters. The Samajwadi Party is also wary of openly rejecting the alliance, as a future BJP victory could prompt Congress to blame SP for any setbacks. Both parties remain in a strategic limbo, with the final decision on their alliance's direction resting with the central leadership. "The upcoming by-elections are expected to play a decisive role in shaping the future of the Congress-SP alliance, with potential implications for their strategies heading into the 2027 assembly elections."

Cylinder explosion in Bulandshahr leads to house collapse; six dead

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

A tragic incident unfolded in the Ashapuri Colony of Bulandshahr, where a two-storey house collapsed following a massive oxygen cylinder explosion, resulting in the death of six family members and leaving three others critically injured.

Emergency personnel, along with local residents, carried out relief and rescue operations throughout the night, working to save 17 individuals trapped under the debris. The accident occurred late on Monday night, sending shockwaves through the neighborhood.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar confirmed the fatalities, stating, "Six people lost their lives in the accident. How the incident occurred will be determined after an investigation. Those trapped under the debris have been rescued."

According to sources, the explosion happened while oxygen was being administered to Rukhsana, the wife of Riyazuddin, a shuttering worker. Rukhsana had recently been



discharged from a private hospital after experiencing breathing issues but started having difficulties again upon returning home. During the setup of an oxygen cylinder for her, it suddenly exploded, causing the house to collapse.

The impact of the explosion buried 26 members of Riyazuddin's extended family under the rubble, including his sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. Among those who lost their lives were Riyazuddin, his wife Rukhsana, their sons Siraj and Shahruck, and their daughter Tamanna.

Rescue efforts involved fire brigade units, the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and local volunteers. By late night,

17 individuals were rescued, while seven others sustained injuries. One remains in critical condition and is currently undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital. The explosion's deafening noise sent panic through the neighborhood, with many residents initially mistaking it for an earthquake or a bomb blast. Rashid, a resident of the Ashapuri Colony, described the sound as "deafening, as if a bomb had been dropped." Smoke filled the area, adding to the fear and confusion. Realizing the house had collapsed, neighbors rushed to the scene, using their hands and makeshift tools to dig through the rubble and reach those trapped underneath.

VP Dhankar emphasises on need of supportive framework for artists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar on Tuesday emphasised the urgent need for a supportive framework that allows artists to flourish free from financial insecurity. He highlighted the importance of recognizing and uplifting those dedicated to dance and music who are currently facing hardships.

"We must handhold them and reignite their passion," he said at the Concluding Ceremony of the International Festival on Indian Dance held here organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

Dhankar acknowledged the critical role of fiscal assistance, noting that many artists become so immersed in their craft that they overlook their financial needs. He assured that the Union Culture Ministry would establish a mechanism to unite all stakeholders in the arts, promoting collaboration to create a nurturing ecosystem where artists feel secure and sup-



ported. This initiative aims to uncover and celebrate the immense talent found in villages and smaller cities, fostering a vibrant cultural landscape. The Vice President also expressed concern about the lack of inclusivity across various sectors.

He asserted that India has become a global beacon of inclusive growth, benefiting from good governance and affirmative policies that uplift the most vulnerable and marginalized. "This has instilled a sense of hope and possibility in our nation, a sentiment that was absent just a few years ago," he noted.

In a world rife with conflicts and challenges, Dhankar pointed to the unifying power of dance and music. "These art forms transcend cultural barriers and offer a ray of light amidst turmoil," he remarked. He called for collective action to engage the youth in Indian dance and music, emphasizing that such involvement can help divert them from detrimental habits like drug use. By participating in the arts, whether as performers or spectators, young people can foster positivity and a sense of community well-being, he added.

Dhankar urged a collaborative effort to promote Indian cultural heritage, ensuring that the richness of our artistic traditions resonates widely and positively impacts society.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Breathless in Delhi

Delhi's air quality has once again plunged into the 'Very Poor' category, marking the beginning of the dreaded annual pollution season

As the Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 312 on October 21, 2024, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) announced the activation of Stage 2 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR, which came into effect from October 22. The city is bracing for several days of toxic air, with forecasts indicating that the AQI will remain in the 'Very Poor' range due to unfavourable climatic and meteorological conditions, such as calm winds and stagnant air. Over the years, Delhi has consistently struggled with air quality issues, particularly during the winter months when pollution levels spike to alarming levels. The problem intensifies due to a combination of factors including the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring states, construction dust, vehicular emissions and industrial activities. In previous years, the city witnessed severe smog days that not only disrupted daily life but also had long-lasting effects on public health. Efforts to curb pollution have included initiatives such as the implementation of



the GRAP, which consists of a set of emergency measures that are triggered based on the severity of air quality. These measures have previously helped prevent air quality from worsening further, but the results have been mixed. While temporary improvements have been achieved, long-term solutions remain elusive. The annual nature of the problem indicates that past measures, though helpful, have not addressed the root causes effectively.

A significant contributor to Delhi's poor air quality is the burning of crop residue in neighbouring states like Punjab and Haryana. Despite bans and incentives for alternative disposal methods, stubble burning remains a widespread practice due to economic and logistical challenges faced by farmers. Besides this vehicular emission and construction activities adds to the pollution. With the invocation of GRAP Stage 2, a range of measures will be implemented to tackle the escalating pollution levels: To reduce dust on roads, mechanical sweeping and water sprinkling will be conducted daily on identified roads. Besides, strict enforcement of dust control measures at construction and demolition sites will be carried out. The use of diesel generator sets will be discouraged, except for essential services. These actions will supplement the Stage 1 measures that have been in place since October 15, which include banning garbage burning, banning coal and firewood usage in hotels and restaurants, and imposing restrictions on brick kilns. Indeed, the 'Very Poor' air quality has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of Delhi's residents. While GRAP provides a framework for emergency measures, long-term strategies are needed to bring about lasting improvements in air quality. Without a comprehensive approach that combines policy interventions, technological innovations, and behavioural changes, the cycle of pollution will continue to haunt the city each year. Till that happens, Delhiites will have yet another season to breathe the polluted air.

PICTALK



People buy lanterns ahead of the Diwali festival, in Solapur

Trump tries hard to win the second term



BHOPINDER SINGH

The traits Trump exhibits on the golf course serve as a metaphor for his approach to life and politics: a willingness to bend the rules and win at any cost

American sportswriter Rick Reilly wrote a book called *Commander in Cheat: How Golf Explains Trump*, to explain Donald Trump's incorrigible ways. He alludes to Trump's self-claimed prowess in Golf and his purported handicap of 2.8 by a fawning *Golf Digest* by saying, "If Trump is a 2.8, Queen Elizabeth is a pole vaulter."

However, perhaps the most damning reality check for Trump is the fact that both his 'wingman' (former and current) i.e., Vice President Mike Pence and his current running mate, JD Vance, would have the maximum access to Trump and know him as a person, have been critical - even if expediency forces Vance to conveniently renege from his earlier views and for Pence says a lot with his deafening silence and refusal to endorse his former boss's candidature.

For all his matching vitriol, boorishness (remember, 'childless cat ladies') and Oorah-style brouhaha as a former Marine, JD Vance was once stoutly anti-Trump. Vance had once declared himself as a 'never-Trump guy' and called Trump 'reprehensible' and an 'idiot'. Vance then had the clarity to articulate the reason for his non-support of Trump by insisting, "The reason, ultimately, that I am not... is because I think that (Trump) is the most raw expression of a massive finger pointed at other people."

In the 2016 US Presidential elections, Vance had rationalised Trump's authoritarian, illiberal and intolerant ways by slamming, "back and forth between thinking Trump is a cynical a-hole like Nixon who wouldn't be that bad (and might even prove useful) or that he's America's Hitler!" For all his matching vitriol, boorishness (remember, 'childless cat ladies') and Oorah-style brouhaha as a former Marine, JD Vance was once stoutly anti-Trump. Vance had once declared himself as a 'never-Trump guy' and called Trump 'reprehensible' and an 'idiot'. He was quick to 'take down' uncomfortable views that he had expressed about Trump like the one he had put about the 'Access Hollywood' tape where



Trump had shockingly claimed that fame had enabled him to grope women!

Then Vance had heeded to his moral conscience as a practising Christian and lamented, "Fellow Christians, everyone is watching us when we apologize for this man. Lord help us". But all his conscience came to nought at the altar of political ambition as Vance meekly retracted later, "I've been very open that I did say those critical things and I regret them, and I regret being wrong about the guy".

With that, everything was supposedly forgotten, and Vance now 'presumably' sees Trump as a paragon of Christian values, morality, and dignity that America needs for the future!

Meanwhile, the elephant in the room who says a lot by not speaking at all is former Vice President Mike Pence - once the most devout and virtuous of Christians who was earlier the most loyal confidante of Trump. Presumably, the die-hard Republican had put up with all of Trump's crassness in the silent hope that the Republican Presidency would set things right with conservative and far-right policies, as any committed Republican would have hoped.

Much as he remained loyal to the bitter end, Pence did final-



TODAY, THE FORGOTTEN IMAGE OF PENCE IS REFLECTIVE OF THE CONUNDRUM THAT MANY COMMITTED REPUBLICANS FACE IN TRUMP'S CANDIDATURE - HE REFUSES TO SUPPORT TRUMP AFTER "ALL THAT HE HAS DONE" AND CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO ENDORSE A PARTISAN RIVAL, KAMALA HARRIS, EITHER

ly put fealty to the Constitution above the unreasonable demands of a man he had once slavishly addressed as 'my President', on the fateful 6th January 2021.

That Trump had showed his true character by shrugging his shoulders with a 'so what' refrain when told that Pence was at physical risk with rioters chanting 'hang Mike Pence', is a footnote in the long history of Trump's unhinged, amoral and reckless politics. Importantly, Pence had held his head, heart, and soul intact, when he played a pivotal role in saving America's democracy by confirming the electoral process and result, to the utter dismay of Trump.

Pence was to later reflect philosophically, "like the Bible says, at some point, you've just got to wipe the dust off your feet and go your separate ways". In Trump's golfing world, the term 'Mulligan' (an extra stroke allowed after a poor shot) is best applicable to Pence's tumultuous tenure, unceremonious parting, and subsequent redemption with the Trump era.

Today, the forgotten image of Pence is reflective of the conundrum that many committed Republicans face in Trump's candidature - he refuses to support Trump after "all that he has done" and

cannot bring himself to endorse a partisan rival, Kamala Harris, either.

This lurking ambiguity in Republican ranks (or amongst the 'undecided') could tilt things decisively in the forthcoming cliffhanger of a Presidential contest. Meanwhile Trump's view of his former 'wingman' Pence is as expected of a cribbing, complaining and bitter man who vaingloriously claims that Pence lacked the 'courage' and 'stamina' in the ultimate bidding.

Even Vance's own mealy-mouthed and almost forced views on Trump's "stolen mandate" in the 2020 Presidential elections are also, hardly convincing.

This is situationally reflective of the 'cultlike campaign' of Donald Trump that is hoping to cross the bridge even if it tramples on imperatives that are constitutional, moral or ideological/partisan, as in Donald Trump's world, if you can cheat in Golf.

You can surely cheat in life - winning at any cost is only an extension of the selfish and deceitful spirit that represents Donald Trump.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry; the views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAHAYUTI GAINS EDGE

Madam — This refers to the news report, 'BJP releases 99-strong candidate list' (October 21). On one hand, alliance partners of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) are still struggling to finalise the seat-sharing formula for Maharashtra Assembly polls, the BJP has announced candidates for the majority of seats in its share. The MVA dealt a deadly blow to the Mahayuti by winning 29 out of 48 Lok Sabha polls. But, in the last 4 months, political equations have drastically changed in the state, which may help the ruling dispensation, i.e. the BJP-led Mahayuti, which was just 1.52 per cent behind the MVA in terms of Lok Sabha vote share. The Shinde government's Ladki Bahini Yojana scheme has been very popular among women voters.

The Congress which won 13 seats and secured lead in 63 assembly segments in Lok Sabha polls, appeared to lose momentum after its poor performance in recent Assembly polls in Haryana and J and K. In addition, the Mahayuti has less discord over the chief ministerial face in the Assembly polls though it is going in the polls without any CM face. But the MVA is a divided house on CM face. The Shiv Sena (UBT) wants projection of former CM and party chief Uddhav Thackeray while Sharad Pawar is repeatedly hinting to support Jayant Patil as CM face. Unexpected success in Lok Sabha has also driven ambitions of the Congress high for the CM post in case of the victory of the MVA. The Manoj Jarange factor is also unlikely to be as effective as in Lok Sabha polls.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

NAIDU'S BOLD MOVE

Madam — Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu is a part of the far-right government at the centre, which has been demanding for more than 10 years that 'population control policies should be implemented as soon as possible to control India's population growth. But Chandrababu Naidu is going exactly the

Yamuna pollution on the rise



The current condition of the Yamuna River has been raising concerns for the past few days as the festive season arrives. The river is covered with a very thick layer of froth. The froth can cause major health problems, which can affect both human

health and wildlife in the areas surrounding the river Yamuna. Now, as we see, pollution levels have reached an alarming stage. Instantaneous steps should be taken in order to address the issue as soon as possible.

According to experts, the froth contains high levels of ammonia and phosphates, which can lead to respiratory and skin disorders. Recently, the Environment Minister, Gopal Rai, mentioned that a few days ago, the officials were instructed to recognise the regional sources of pollution. 13 hotspots have been chosen for this purpose, where the main local source of pollution will be identified, which was causing the area's pollution levels to rise significantly above Delhi's AQI.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

opposite and talking about bringing the opposite policy to his state. He wants to encourage those who have more children and is planning to punish those who have fewer. He said that the increasing average age of people in the state is becoming a matter of concern. Families should have at least two or more children. In the coming times, only those who have two or more children will be able to contest local body elections.

The state government will soon make a law for this. Naidu further said that there are many districts in Andhra Pradesh where only elderly people are left in the villages. The fertility rate is continuously falling in the southern states. While the average fertility rate in the country is 2.1, this figure has fallen to 1.6 in the southern states. Is India really getting old? The young population is decreasing. According to the Centre's Youth in India-2022 report, by 2036, only 34.55 crore of the population of the country will be young, which is more than 47 per cent right now. Currently, 25 crore youth in the country are between 15 and 25 years of age. In the

next 15 years, it will fall even faster.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

IMMIGRANTS FACE UNCERTAINTY

Madam — The escalating diplomatic row between India and Canada will have the more than 4 lakh Indian students studying in Canada worried and concerned about their future. Many have sold everything they owned in India to study in Canada, which is seen as a gateway to a better future. The 20 lakh Indians will wonder what their future is going to be. The first thing the government needs to do is reassure the immigrants that their interests will be protected by the government of India. The Indian media too should stop bashing Justin Trudeau the way they have been doing. India needs also to be worried that other nations like America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand have come out in support of Canada over the plot to assassinate Canadian citizens on its soil.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Seeking validation: A necessity more than an add-on to our vanity

Though contentment offers a deep sense of inner peace, validation serves as a crucial motivator

Much to the contrary of the popular belief about happiness being commensurate with the degree of material success, my late father asserted that the key to happiness lies in contentment. Both views have their share of advocates, the former often relying on validation from outside, and the latter, a more philosophical contention anchored in an irrevocable sense of self-assurance.

The philosophy of contentment is a long shot for many of us embroiled in making it materialistically big, and we tend to seek a lot of external validation to determine our core worth. Maybe, the philosophies are based on two entirely different life principles and the value of neither can be dismissed. Success has its sweet trimmings and contentment has its merit, and both may be equally coveted.

What distinguishes one from the other is the element of endorsement we crave for our endeavours. Even the most self-assured person looks for acceptance and recognition, and there is no shame in it. Validation from



others is indeed required for us to stay on course, not simply for the ego boost it brings but also for the motivation it gives us to strive and march forward in making a mark in the world. The more sagacious ones among us may, however, hold a different view. I have heard several suggestions that we should not seek approval from others and instead rely solely on our inner convictions.

While this notion seems noble, it underestimates a fundamental human need—to feel seen, heard, and acknowledged by those around us.

To deny the significance of external validation is to ignore an essential part of the human experience. Whether we realise it or not, the approval we seek from others has a

profound impact on our self-perception and our efforts to succeed.

When someone validates our work, it serves as a confirmation that we are on the right track. It is a form of recognition that can affirm our abilities, encourage us to push further, and give us the confidence to take risks that we might otherwise avoid.

Take, for instance, the world of creative endeavours. Writers, artists, musicians—those of us in professions where the outcomes are subjective—often look to their audiences for validation. It's not just about ego or pride. When someone appreciates a piece of art or writing, it signals to the creator that their expression has resonated with others, creating a connection.

It is this recognition that gives an artist the courage to continue crafting, to improve, and to share their innermost thoughts with the world. Without that validation, their passion might wither in isolation. In professional contexts, validation can often come in the form of promotions, awards, or even just a simple "well done." These

acknowledgements are crucial motivators.

They tell us that our efforts matter, that our contributions are recognised, and that we are moving in the right direction. While self-belief is vital, external acknowledgement adds weight to that belief, making it more tangible. It confirms that our skills and efforts are seen as valuable by others, which can propel us toward even greater heights. Furthermore, seeking validation is not just about personal gain—it also creates a cycle of mutual encouragement.

When we validate others, we lift them, creating a supportive environment where everyone's contributions are acknowledged.

It doesn't just boost their morale; it strengthens their commitment to the work they're doing. Of course, we must also be wary of relying solely on external validation. The danger lies in over-dependence, where we begin to measure our worth only by what others say.

(The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

FIRST COLUMN

THE PATH TO TRUE GROWTH

Constant comparison overshadows cooperation, empathy and joy of life



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us, whether we like it or not, have to compete from the time we are born until the time we die. Though most of us indulge in healthy competition all the time, nevertheless, one thing common to all kinds of competitions is the underlying desire to win a victory for the self or to defeat others. While competing, a person brings out their skill, ability, art, acumen, or talent to show that they are superior, stronger, better, more powerful, more skilful, more learned, or more competent than others. It is this habit of making comparisons with others that creates the competition background.

That is why we always see this subtle desire in people who are winners, to hear some words of praise about themselves or their performance. To fulfil this ultimate objective of massaging their egos, one does not care if the other person feels disappointed, depressed, defeated and even humiliated, ridiculed, or booted. This drive to be recognised as "better" than others sometimes overshadows the simple joy of participating or improving oneself. To understand this kind of behaviour, one needs to understand human psychology because the roots of comparison and competition have been sown into our minds since our childhood days. From school grades to sibling rivalries, we are conditioned early to pit our success against others' failures. Hence, they become more rigid with time. We need to understand that the core objective behind the competition is not simply the desire to win, but it is intertwined with the motive of laying aside the softer and nobler sentiments of cooperation, kindness, and gentleness, even if only for a while. In competition, one puts all energies and talents into bogging down or defeating another person, leaving them behind in the race while making a forward thrust to reach



the goal before anyone else. As the famous philosopher Schopenhauer said, "The world is a battle of will and intellect." But in this battle, one often loses sight of empathy and connectedness, which are essential for human growth.

It may also put a limit on one's spirit of giving, helping, cooperating and sacrificing. Remember! Anything small and insignificant in the beginning has the potential to grow and become big. Hence, we must not forget that even though a spark or flame of fire may be small to start with, it can reduce a big apartment with valuables to ashes if it grows into a big fire. Thus, we should be careful and vigilant, because if the whole society catches this contagion or infection of selfishness or rivalry, it may spoil the charm of life and the atmosphere in society. Some people link competition to motivation and developing an attitude toward high performance. But they fail to understand that this evil trait to defeat others, which may look like a harmless thing initially, may eventually develop into a spirit of revenge, feelings of hatred or enmity, bitter jealousy, confrontation, hostile attitudes and ugly outbursts. These effects are not limited to the individuals involved but spill over into communities, organisations and even nations. Look at global politics or corporate boardrooms, and you will see this principle at play on a massive scale. Hence, it all depends upon the emotional maturity of a person whether or not he or she is affected. Because this seed of evil, as it grows, takes the form of a big tree with many branches; so, too, does selfishness or the spirit to downgrade others to gain ascendance for the self. It may proliferate into many evils or obnoxious habits. Hence, one must try to curtail selfishness and give up the ambition of winning by vengeance for the applause and praise of the self. Remember! The only competition that should matter to us is the one that takes place within ourselves. Hence, it is better to defeat one's inner demons first and become victorious from within to be an example for others to follow.

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

NEP 2020: A blueprint for transformative education



GURMEET SINGH

While NEP promises radical changes through holistic learning and flexible assessments, implementation challenges continue to hamper its progress

NEP 2020 was founded on the guiding principles of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. This was primarily to prepare the young ones to face the diverse national & global challenges for the present & future. The Policy aims to lead to a multi-disciplinary, holistic under-graduation syllabus, create wider choices of combinations of Subjects, Integration of Vocational Education with regular Subjects and multi-entry and multi-exit points with regular appropriate certification at various stages. The aim is to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth, economy and/or background. This should eventually lead to transformative changes which shall change the lifeline of education in our country. The emphasis is going to be on holistic education, early childhood care, flexible assessments, skill development, integration of technology, teacher training and higher education reforms. These are aimed at designing a learner-centric and inclusive education for a future-ready system:

By embracing these India is poised to provide quality education to everyone with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the 21st century. The motto has been to provide "Equitable and Inclusive Education" to ensure that no child should be denied quality education because of their socio-cultural background and 100 per cent GER is reached by 2030. Looking at all the facts presented alone, one gets a feeling that this is going to be a real game changer in the education system of our country but the reality remains that it has not taken off even after three years of its approval. The major reason is that a majority do not understand the spirit of this very meaningful policy. If implemented in letter and spirit then our country shall be comparable to the best in the world in the field of education. An in-depth analysis and exploring what lies ahead; One can divide this whole NEP-2020 into four main capsules which this Policy envisages:

Teaching in the mother tongue or spoken language, Learn to leave, Teach to Transform and Educate to Empower. These highlighted Capsules shall completely sum up the entire NEP-2020, which none has so far put appropriately and completely. Elaborating each one of these shall drive home all the points: **Teaching in spoken language:** The importance of this cannot be undermined. Original thinking comes only in the mother tongue (spoken languages) and this advantage has never been given to our students in any of our earlier policies. English has always been overemphasised and a wrong notion has been created that English is knowledge whereas the fact remains that it is just a language and not knowledge. Knowledge can always be acquired by knowing a language. Our beginners have always been worried about learning English rather than developing an understanding of a concept in their way, therefore majority of the students are lost in this learning of the English language rather than focussing on the original thinking. This has been given an appropriate weightage under NEP. A student shall learn to



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develop an understanding of what subjects to learn and what to pick up eventually in higher classes which has not been the case so far. A course used to be thrust upon them. This very important facet has been very appropriately addressed in this.

Learn to Leave: Having decided what course to take up for secondary and higher education, a student used to be trapped forever whether one liked the subject/course or not. (In the older education system for example if one had opted for Physics or Sanskrit: one was stuck with that forever whether one liked these subjects or not) There was no way to move out unless one gave up higher education or started afresh. The other difficulty was that due to some odd circumstances if one had to discontinue the education there was no way to restart unless you lose years/ time, but in this, one could leave anytime or rejoin anytime (Comes under Multi entry/ Multi exit system).

In the present system if one stayed away for a few years one could not come back to education in desired subjects but under NEP-2020 one can restart anytime one's education by including the credits earned before leaving. Therefore, under the present NEP, no one shall stay away or be denied education because of circumstances. This was not the case in the older system.

Education to empower: Under this education is to give due benefits to society by developing the right kind of skill. For Example, an electronic engineer is not able to do even basic electrical repairs or a mechanical engineer is not in a position to rectify even a basic fault. Integration of vocational courses with regular ones to provide practical skills for employment, benefiting students with diverse academic interests or lim-

ited access to traditional pathways or linking them with one another are some of the hallmarks of the present system.

This is to develop the right syllabus to reduce disparities. Emphasis in this is on equitable access to quality education. Essentially NEP 2020 shall be attempting to reduce unwanted syllabus for comprehensive understanding towards skill-based education.

Teach to transform: the teaching in the older system was not of any speciality. One acquires the right skills through one's efforts to be useful to society. Under this, it shall be essential to train teachers and educational staff to deliver child-centred education for job placement, which shall be an important feature so far lacking to a large extent.

Challenges: One of the biggest features of this has been the wide choice of subjects that one could take. Now this wide spectrum of subjects will be possible to be taken by students if there is a way to keep a record of a student's movement and subjects taken. In a Country like ours which has more than 39K colleges, about 1000 Universities and 4.33 crores students (Nearly 80 per cent are in graduation and the remaining 20 per cent are from post-graduation classes), it shall be impossible to maintain a record of this kind unless there is a mechanism similar to computerised banking arrangement which maintains all types of record impeccably. For this an Academic Bank of Credit has been proposed where every institution shall be registered to enable a record of these movements of students, subjects taken and credits earned can be maintained like what is done in banking.

Biggest flaw so far: Unfortunately, to date, not even 50 per cent of Institutions have reg-

istered themselves in this (in ABC) which is the real key to the success of this policy. This is a way to keep records of students' subjects, their movements and credits earned.

Sharing of resources: Under NEP a wide umbrella of choice of subject, record of early education, movement from one institution to another and credits cleared/earned by a student shall be possible only if the resources are shared by various institutions.

It will be impossible for any particular college to offer all subjects and to offer teaching in a variety of courses unless there is a huge staff to do this. It will be humanly impossible to achieve all this unless sharing is done particularly when online teaching has now come in a big way in our university system.

Similarly, the resources for science laboratories, libraries research facilities as well as Entrepreneurship schemes can be very effectively shared to make the education truly inclusive as per the aims of NEP 2020. Therefore, in conclusion, this policy shall succeed if: Every institution registers with ABC (Academic Bank of Credit) Sharing of resources starts in a big way in earnest in all areas like teaching, especially in online modes, libraries, Laboratories and instrumental facilities; Open schooling system for all without any conditions and Establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India immediately to monitor the registration of ABC etc. It shall not become a roaring success unless all agencies like MOE, UGC etc take concerted efforts to bring about a radical change.

(The writer is a Former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University and Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul; views are personal)

Revolutionising India's food security: Route optimisation cuts costs, carbon emissions

With over 81 crore beneficiaries, the Govt is now leveraging advanced data-driven route optimisation tools as part of the PM GatiShakti master plan

The Government of India provides free food grains to more than 81 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) making it the largest food security programme in the world. This vast operation—from sourcing food grains from farmers to delivering them to ration cardholders—relies on a complex, decades-old supply chain. The Food Corporation of India (FCI), state procurement agencies, millers, transporters, warehouses, and Fair Price Shops (FPS) all play a critical role in this network. However, its design has historically been shaped by administrative convenience more than scientific optimisation. Supply routes were planned manually by



SANJEEV CHOPRA

state officials, a process prone to sub-optimality, bias and human error. In October 2021, the Prime Minister launched the PM GatiShakti Master Plan aiming to enhance multimodal connectivity and optimise logistics across the country. One of its key pillars, "Optimisation", envisions selecting the most efficient routes for transporting goods,

thereby saving time and reducing costs. In line with this vision, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) launched a national route optimisation exercise in March 2023, in partnership with the World Food Programme (UNWFP) and the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) from IIT Delhi. This exercise, targeting the annual transportation of 6.8 crore metric tons of food grains through the PDS, marks a transformative step towards building a more efficient and cost-effective food supply chain. The process was comprehensive: geo-locations of warehouses and FPS, along with their capacities and road distances, were collected from each state. Using this data, cus-

tom algorithms were developed for each state to determine the most optimal supply chain routes. More than 50 physical workshops were held by DFPD and FITT officials to guide states in data collection and demonstrate the benefits of route optimisation. These optimised routes were then validated on the ground to ensure they accounted for local conditions, and a state-specific intra-state optimisation tool was developed to allow for adjustments in the supply chain—such as adding or modifying entities like warehouses or FPSs. For instance, Bihar developed an annual movement plan based on its PDS requirements, food grain volume, and monthly transport routes. The customised algorithm factored in different



possibilities of local procurement within the state and the grain required to be sourced from the FCI. This gave the state a clear view of its yearly logistics, allowing for cost-saving adjustments. By choosing the optimal option, Bihar reduced transport distances by 19 per cent, saving over Rs 3.09 crore per month. Similarly, Mizoram optimised its routes by eliminating unnecessary transfers of food grains

between warehouses, achieving a 50 per cent reduction in distance and saving an estimated Rs 1.27 crore monthly. A significant milestone in this effort was the integration of the route optimisation tool with the GatiShakti platform, which now houses geo-locations of FPSs and warehouses across all states. This integration enables the platform to generate the shortest possible motorable routes from FCI godowns to state godowns, and further from state godowns to FPSs. The platform also allows real-time route re-optimisation based on updated infrastructure data (such as new roads) from other ministries. Since March 2023, route optimisation assessments have been completed for 30 out of 31 states, with intra-

state route optimisation tools developed for 15 states so far. Early results from 12 states show tremendous promise, with transportation costs reduced by an estimated Rs 112 crore annually. Once fully implemented across all states, savings could exceed 250 crore per year. This initiative is not only an economic win but also an environmental one. Global food miles—representing the distance food travels from production to consumption—account for nearly one-fifth of total food system emissions. Optimising India's food distribution routes can contribute significantly to reducing CO2 emissions, aligning with the country's climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement and its Conference of Parties (COP) targets. The

reduction in fuel consumption will also help conserve foreign exchange reserves. Looking ahead, DFPD is exploring the possibility of earning carbon credits under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), offering states an added incentive to complete the route optimisation process and earn tradable carbon credit certificates. This step would not only strengthen India's commitment to a climate-smart supply chain but also potentially generate financial benefits. In conclusion, The integration of advanced technologies and data-driven tools is setting the stage for a smarter future in public distribution, one that safeguards both our resources and the planet. (The writer is Secretary, Food & Public Distribution, Govt of India; views are personal)

Blinken arrives in Israel as US looks to renew cease-fire efforts

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on Tuesday on his 11th visit to the region since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. The US hopes to revive cease-fire efforts after the killing of top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, but so far all the warning parties appear to be digging in. Israel is still at war with Hamas more than a year after the militant group's Oct 7 attack, and with Hezbollah in Lebanon, where it launched a ground invasion earlier this month. Israel is also expected to strike Iran after its ballistic missile attack on Oct 1. Blinken landed just hours after Hezbollah launched a barrage of rockets into central Israel, setting off air raid sirens in the country's most populated areas and its international airport, but causing no apparent damage or injuries. The Israeli military said it intercepted most of the five projectiles, with one landing in an open area. Another 15 projectiles were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel at around the same time, the military said. Blinken is expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials. Following Israel,

Hezbollah fires rockets into central Israel

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Hezbollah launched a barrage of rockets into central Israel on Tuesday, setting off air raid sirens in the country's most populated areas but causing no apparent damage or injuries, a few hours before US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the region on a mission to restart stalled Gaza ceasefire talks. The Israeli military said five projectiles were fired from Lebanon into Israel and said most were intercepted by Israel's missile defense system. One landed in an open area. The rocket fire came as Israel stepped up its strikes in Lebanon, targeting a Hezbollah-run financial institution, and as the US pushed to

resume cease-fire talks in Gaza following the death of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to annihilate Hamas and recover dozens of hostages held by the group. Hamas says it will only release the captives in return for a lasting cease-fire, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the release of Palestinian prisoners. On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians.

He's expected to visit a number of Arab countries, likely to include Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. "Secretary Blinken will discuss the importance of bringing the war in Gaza to an end, securing the release of all hostages, and alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement. Blinken will also discuss planning for when the conflict ends and "the need to chart a new path forward that enables Palestinians to rebuild their lives," Miller added.

He said Blinken also would underscore the need for a dramatic increase in the amount of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza, something that Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin made clear in a letter to Israeli officials last week. That letter reminded Israel that the Biden administration could be forced by US law to curtail some forms of military aid should the delivery of humanitarian aid continue to be hindered. Blinken's previous trips have yielded little in the way of ending hostilities, but he has managed to increase aid deliveries to Gaza in the past.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have brokered months of talks between Israel and Hamas, trying to strike a deal in which the militants would release dozens of hostages in return for an end to the war, a lasting cease-fire and the release of Palestinian prisoners. But both Israel and Hamas accused each other of making new and unacceptable demands over the summer, and the talks ground to a halt in August. The US has also tried to broker a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah, but those efforts fell apart as tensions spiked last month with a series

of Israeli strikes that killed the militant group's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and most of his senior commanders. Israel is currently waging another major operation in already-devastated northern Gaza, which has killed hundreds of Palestinians over the last two weeks, according to local health authorities. In Lebanon, Israel has carried out waves of heavy airstrikes across southern Beirut and the country's south and east, areas where Hezbollah has a strong presence. Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets, missiles and drones into Israel, including some that have reached the country's populous centre. Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 250 hostage. Around 100 of the captives are still held in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded tens of thousands, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were combatants but say more than half were women and children. It has also caused massive devastation across the territory and displaced around 90% of its population of 2.3 million.

Two men plead guilty to murder of Air-India bombing suspect

PTI ■ OTTAWA

Two men accused of killing Ripudaman Singh Malik, a Sikh man acquitted in the tragic 1985 Air India Kanishka terrorist bombing case, have pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in a Canadian court, according to media reports. Tanner Fox and Jose Lopez entered the pleas in the British Columbia (BC) Supreme Court on Monday on the eve of their trial for the killing of 75-year-old Malik, who was shot several times outside his family business on the morning of July 14, 2022. Malik was shot dead in Surrey, British Columbia in 2022. He and co-accused Ajaib Singh Bagri were acquitted in 2005 of mass murder and conspiracy charges related to the two bombings in 1985 that killed 331 people. In the court in New Westminster on Monday, both Fox and Lopez pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of second-degree murder, the Global News reported. The court heard an agreed statement of facts that revealed the two men had been hired to kill Malik, the report added. "What we know from the agreed statement of facts is that there was some type of financial incentive that was involved in the commission of this

crime, but in terms of any other specifics, it is another one of those situations where unfortunately it is just something that we as people on the outside will probably never know," Lopez' lawyer Gloria Ng told Global News. "One of the things we certainly have in the forefront of our minds is the youth of our client — Lopez is a very young man and we are certainly hopeful with prospects for rehabilitation." In a statement, Malik's family described him as a "father, brother, husband and grandfather as well as a tireless community leader," the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported on Monday. "While we are grateful that the shooters are being brought to justice, we know that nothing will erase the pain that we have gone through losing a family member in this way," the family said. "However, the work is not complete. Tanner Fox and Jose Lopez were hired to commit this murder. Until the parties responsible for hiring them and directing this assassination are brought to justice, the work remains incomplete." The family called on the killers to "co-operate with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in bringing those that hired you to justice."

Crown and defence lawyers have agreed that Fox and Lopez should not be eligible for parole for 20 years. And they will next appear in court on October 31 for sentencing. The 1985 Air India bombing is among the worst terrorist attacks in Canadian history and in the history of the airline. On June 23, 1985, Air India flight 182, carrying 329 people, including 268 Canadian citizens and 24 Indian citizens, flew from Toronto and stopped in Montreal from where it was en route to London and then onwards to its final destination Bombay. The plane was flying 31,000 feet above the Atlantic Ocean when a suitcase bomb exploded in the front cargo, killing all on board. Another bomb was meant to be planted in an Air India flight scheduled to take off from Japan but it exploded at Tokyo's Narita airport killing two baggage handlers. Inderjit Singh Reyat was convicted on various charges and spent 30 years in prison for helping to make the bombs, and for lying during trials, including Malik's. He was released in 2016 after serving two-thirds of his perjury sentence. Reyat was the only person convicted for the Kanishka bombing.

China holds live-fire drills opposite Taiwan

AP ■ TAIPEI

China is holding live-fire drills off the coast of its southern Fujian province facing Taiwan, just a week after a massive air-and-sea drill it called punishment for Taiwan's recent rejection of Beijing's claims of sovereignty. The live-fire drills were being held near the Pingtan islands off Fujian province, according to a notice from the Maritime Safety Administration. It warned ships to avoid the area. It did not offer additional details. Taiwan's Defence Ministry said China's drills were part of an annual exercise and was tracking them. "It cannot be ruled out that it is one of the ways to expand the deterrent effect in

line with the dynamics in the Taiwan Strait," the statement added. Taiwan is a self-ruled island that Beijing claims is part of China. Tensions around the issue have flared in recent years. China has increased its presence in the waters and skies around Taiwan. It now increasingly sends large amounts of warplanes and navy vessels in military exercises near Taiwan and its coast guard carries out patrols. Last week, China held a one-day military exercise aimed at practicing the "sealing off of key ports and key areas". Taiwan counted a record one-day total of 153 aircraft, 14 navy vessels and 12 Chinese government ships. In response to Chinese moves,

the US has continued what it calls "freedom of navigation" transits through the Taiwan Strait. On Sunday, the destroyer USS Higgins and the Canadian frigate HMCS Vancouver transited the narrow band of ocean that separates China and Taiwan. Germany sent two warships through the Taiwan Strait last month as it seeks to increase its defence engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. China has also exerted diplomatic pressure on Taiwan, poaching its allies. South Africa, which does not recognise Taiwan as a country, asked the island last week to move its liaison office outside the capital, Pretoria, as a concession to China. Taiwan on Monday said it would fight the request.



Rescue workers search for victims at the site of Israeli airstrikes that destroyed buildings facing the city's main government hospital in a densely-populated neighborhood, in southern Beirut, on Tuesday. AP/PTI

COMMENTS ON HASINA'S RESIGNATION

Protesters demand removal of B'desh president

PTI ■ DHAKA

A prominent students' organisation, which spearheaded the protests against Sheikh Hasina's government in Bangladesh, on Tuesday staged demonstrations in Dhaka, demanding the removal of President Mohammed Shahabuddin over his comment on the resignation of the deposed prime minister. In an interview with Bangla daily Manab Zamin last week, Shahabuddin said he does not have any documentary evidence of Hasina resigning as prime minister before she fled the country in August amidst student-led mass protests. The Anti-discrimination Student Movement, which spearheaded the campaign that led to the ouster of Hasina, rallied in front of the Central Shaheed Minar here, demanding Shahabuddin's resignation. "The president is an ally of fascism. He was in favour of genocide. We demand his resignation," Nasir Uddin Patwari, a protest leader, said. Some of the protesters also said that the president might face a campaign against him. A group of protesters under the banner of Shadinota-Shorbobhoumotto Rokkha Committee (Committee to protect independence and sovereignty) also staged a sit-in protest at the Dhaka University campus, demanding Shahabuddin's resignation and calling for the termination of the Constitution and the formation of a "revolutionary government". The protesters also demanded the disbanding of Hasina's Awami League party and its allies from political activities. They later marched towards Bangabhaban, the president's official residence. A prominent leader of the group, Rafiq

Khan, called Shahabuddin a "culprit" as he was "unlawfully" appointed by "killer Hasina". "We request him to resign immediately and vacate the Bangabhaban. Otherwise, we will start another movement like the one in July," he said. In his interview with the Bangla Daily, Shahabuddin said he heard that Hasina had resigned as prime minister before she fled Bangladesh, but he does not have documentary evidence. Despite numerous efforts, the president said, he had failed to find any documents. "Perhaps she did not have the time," Shahabuddin said. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, 84, became Bangladesh's interim government's Chief Adviser on August 8 after Prime Minister Hasina fled to India on August 5. Narrating the events of August 5, Shahabuddin told the daily that at around 10:30 am, a call came to Bangabhaban from Hasina's residence, informing him that Hasina would meet him. However, "within an hour, another call came, saying she was not coming". Shahabuddin said before he administered the oath of office to Yunus and his advisory council members on August 8, he had sought the opinion of the Supreme Court, which advised him to go ahead in view of the extraordinary situation. The interim government's Law Affairs Adviser Asif Nazrul on Monday accused the president of "falsehood", saying his remarks were "tantamount to violation of his oath of office". He said if Shahabuddin remained firm on his comments, the interim government would need to think whether he was still qualified to hold his office.

S Korea warns it may supply arms to Ukraine

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea warned Tuesday it could consider supplying weapons to Ukraine in response to North Korea allegedly dispatching troops to Russia, as both North Korea and Russia denied the movements. The South Korean statement is apparently meant to pressure Russia not to bring in North Korean troops in its war against Ukraine. South Korean officials worry that Russia may reward North Korea by giving it sophisticated weapons technologies that can boost the North's nuclear and missile programs that target South Korea. In an emergency National Security Council meeting, top South Korean officials condemned North Korea's alleged dispatch of troops as "a grave security threat" to South Korea and the international community. They described North Korea as "a

criminal group" that forces its youths to serve as Russian mercenaries for an unjustifiable war, the South Korean presidential office said in a statement. The officials agreed to take phased countermeasures, linking the level of their responses to progress in Russian-North Korean military cooperation, according to the statement. Possible steps include diplomatic, economic and military options, and South Korea could consider sending both defensive and offensive weapons to Ukraine, a senior South Korean presidential official told reporters on condition of anonymity in a background briefing. The official said North Korea could attempt to get high-tech Russian technologies to perfect its nuclear missiles. The official said Russia's possible help for North Korea's efforts to modernize its outdated conventional weapons sys-

tems and acquire a space-based surveillance system would pose a serious security threat to South Korea as well. North Korea and Russia intensify cooperation. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, South Korea has joined U.S.-led sanctions against Moscow and shipped humanitarian and financial support to Kyiv. But it has avoided directly supplying arms to Ukraine in line with its policy of not supplying weapons to countries actively engaged in conflicts. South Korea's spy agency said last week it had confirmed that North Korea sent 1,500 special operation forces to Russia this month. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said his government had intelligence that 10,000 North Korea soldiers were being prepared to join invading Russian forces. North Korea and Russia have been sharply boosting their cooperation in the past two

years. In June, they signed a major defense deal requiring both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. South Korea said at the time it would consider sending arms to Ukraine, a similar statement that it made Tuesday. South Korea's spy agency said that North Korea had sent more than 13,000 containers of artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia since August 2023 to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles. North Korea and Russia have denied the North Korean troop deployment as well as the purported weapons transfer. At a UN Security Council meeting Monday, Russia's UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzia dismissed the South Korean assertion as well as Western allegations of Iran supplying Russia with missiles and China providing arms com-

ponents. He accused the West of "circulating scaremongering with Iranian, Chinese and Korean bogeymen, each one of which is more absurd than the one before." At a separate UN committee meeting, a North Korean diplomat said his delegation feels no need to comment on the troop dispatch, calling it "groundless, stereotype rumors aimed at smearing the image" of the North and undermining the legitimate cooperation between two sovereign states. The US and NATO haven't confirmed North Korea's troop deployment, but they warned against the danger of such a development if true. US deputy ambassador to the UN Robert Wood said that if true, the North Korean troop dispatch marks "a dangerous and highly concerning development" and noted that the US was "consulting with our allies and partners on such a dramatic move."

Pollution affects Lahore most

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's cultural city Lahore has been declared the most polluted city in the world, with an alarming Air Quality Index (AQI) of 394, and the Pakistan's Punjab government has planned for artificial rain to mitigate smog impact. The AQI is a measure of the concentration of various pollutants in the air. An AQI above 100 is considered unhealthy and above 150 "very unhealthy". The smog crisis has been fuelled by crop residue burning and industrial emissions. The hazardous smog has led to widespread health issues among the city residents, including coughing, breathing difficulties, eye irritation, and skin infections. "Yesterday Lahore was declared the most polluted city in the world. We have taken a number of initiatives to address the matter and now we are planning for an artificial rain in the city," Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari told a press conference here on Tuesday.

Japanese police chief apologises to man acquitted after 50 years on death row

AP ■ TOKYO

A Japanese police chief on Monday apologised in person to Iwao Hakamada for his decades-long suffering that started from an overbearing investigation and wrongful conviction that had kept him on death row until last month, when he was acquitted in a retrial. The 88-year-old Hakamada, a former boxer, was acquitted by the Shizuoka District Court, which said police and prosecutors had collaborated to fabricate and plant evidence against him, and forced him to confess with violent, hours-long closed interrogations. The acquittal was finalised earlier this month

when the prosecution waived its right to appeal — though it complained about the ruling — finally ending Hakamada's nearly 60-year legal battle to prove his innocence. Shizuoka Prefectural Police chief Takayoshi Tsuda on Monday visited Hakamada at his home and offered an apology in person. As he entered the room where Hakamada, his sister Hideko Hakamada and their supporter waited, Hakamada silently rose from his sofa to greet him. "We are sorry to have caused you unspeakable mental distress and burden for as long as 58 years from the time of the arrest until the acquittal



Former Japanese death row inmate Iwao Hamakada (left) on being released from prison

was finalized," Tsuda said, as he stood straight in front of Hakamada and bowed deeply. "We are terribly sorry," Tsuda promised a "meticulous and appropriate investigation." Hakamada, who has difficulty carrying out conversation due to his mental condition from the decades of death row confinement, responded: "What it means to have the authority ... Once you have the power, you're not supposed to grumble." Hakamada's 91-year-old sister, who had stood by her brother through the long process to clear his name and now lives with him, thanked the police chief for visiting them.

"There is no use complaining to him after all these years. He was not involved in the case and he only came here as his duty," she told reporters afterward. "But I still accepted his visit just because I wanted (my brother) to have a clear break from his past as a death row inmate." He was arrested in August, 1966, in the killing of an executive at a miso bean paste company and three of his family members in Hamamatsu, central Japan. He was initially sentenced to death in a 1968 district court ruling but was not executed because of the lengthy appeal and retrial process in Japan. It took nearly three decades for the Supreme Court to

deny his first appeal for a retrial. His second appeal for a retrial, filed by his sister in 2008, was granted in 2014. The court ordered his release from his death row solitary cell but without removing his conviction, pending the retrial process. Hakamada was the world's longest-serving death row prisoner and only the fifth death row inmate to be acquitted in a retrial in postwar Japan, where criminal trials take years and retrials are extremely rare. His case and acquittal have triggered calls for more transparency in the investigation, legal change to lower hurdles for a retrial and debate over death penalty in Japan.

Pak's special parliamentary panel to nominate new chief justice

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

October 25 and under the old rule, senior puisne judge, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was set to be the next chief.

Under amendments to clause 3 of Article 175A, instead of the president appointing the "most senior judge of the Supreme Court" as the chief justice, the top judge will now be "appointed on the recommendation of the Special Parliamentary Committee from amongst the three most senior" judges of the Supreme Court.

After Justice Shah, the next two senior apex court judges are Justices Munib Akhtar and Yahya Afridi.

Under a new clause 3C of Article 175A, the first nomination after the Amendment was in force is to be sent "within three days prior to the retire-

ment" of the outgoing CJ, which sets the deadline for nomination by tonight.

The SPC comprises eight members of the national assembly and four senators nominated by their respective parliamentary leaders. Political parties have representation in the committee based on their strength in the parliament. The attorney general is also part of the committee.

But the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf decided to stay away from the meeting of the SPC. "Of course, we will not be part of any parliamentary committee. We believe not only the amendments but in the manner they were passed itself was illegal," PTI leader Zulfi Bukhari said in a statement on X. "Why would we legitimise

Yellen says isolationism 'made America and world worse off'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is telling world financial leaders that the US economy has grown stronger because the Biden administration rejected isolationism, offering a barely veiled criticism of former President Donald Trump's policies two weeks before the US election.

Yellen was opening the IMF and World Bank annual meetings on Tuesday by highlighting US economic growth since the nation was in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without mentioning Trump by name, she said in an advance draft of her remarks that the Biden administration had ended a period of international isolationism that "made America and the world worse off".

"We went from millions having lost their jobs to a historic labour market recovery," Yellen says. She said US economic growth has been "almost twice as fast as most other advanced economies this year and last, even as inflation came down sooner".

The IMF released its international outlook on the global economy on Tuesday morning and upgraded its economic outlook for the United States

this year while lowering its expectations for growth in Europe and China.

The IMF expects the US economy — the world's largest — to expand 2.8 per cent this year, down slightly from 2.9 per cent in 2023 but an improvement on the 2.6 per cent it had forecast for 2024 back in July.

Growth in the United States has been led by strong consumer spending, fuelled by healthy gains in inflation-adjusted wages.

The meetings mark the last major international finance gathering held during the Biden administration and come as economic issues are a top concern for American voters.

Republicans have blamed the Biden-Harris administration for inflation that reached a 40-year high before dropping.

Trump campaign press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement that the Biden-Harris administration "created an inflation crisis, record-high gas prices, skyrocketing mortgage and interest rates resulting in the lowest consumer and small business confidence in decades".

Voters remain largely divided over whether they prefer the Republican nominee, Trump,



Former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left) receives the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at Bellevue Palace, Berlin on Tuesday.

Sweden to honour Blinken

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and former NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg will be knighted in Sweden for their role in enabling the Scandinavian country to join the world's largest military alliance.

It was a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape triggered by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Blinken and Stoltenberg along with former Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and former Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto will receive the Royal Order of the Polar Star, given to foreign citizens and stateless persons "for extraordinary efforts for Swedish interests."

"The awards are an expression of our great gratitude for the efforts of these people in connection with Sweden's membership in NATO," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said Tuesday.

Sweden joined almost a year after Finland. Both ended decades of post-World War II neutrality and centuries of broader non-alignment with major powers.

Initial report shows Liam Payne had cocaine in his system when he died

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

An initial toxicology report for ex-One Direction singer Liam Payne, who died last week after falling from a third-floor hotel balcony in Buenos Aires, showed that he had cocaine in his system after his death, an Argentine official said.

The final toxicology results are not expected to be made public for some weeks. But the preliminary toxicology report of the wildly famous boy band star, handed to local prosecutors on Monday, suggested evidence of exposure to cocaine, the official said, stressing that these initial results don't offer an accurate reading of just how much was circulating in his blood when he died.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief journalists. The preliminary report was

widely reported in local media on Monday.

Argentina's public prosecution is investigating the case — which is not uncommon when a death is sudden or unexpected.

Payne's autopsy concluded that the traumatic injuries that caused his death were consistent with his three-story fall from the hotel window. Prosecutors have ruled out anyone else being involved.

Argentine investigators found what appeared to be narcotics and alcohol strewn about broken objects and furniture in 31-year-old Payne's hotel room, leading the public prosecution to surmise Payne had suffered a substance abuse-induced breakdown around the time of his fall. The prosecution said Payne could have plunged from his hotel room balcony in a state of "semi or total uncon-

Mystery of downed cargo airplane in Sudan deepens

AP ■ DUBAI

The mystery surrounding a crashed cargo plane in Sudan purportedly downed by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces deepened on Tuesday as authorities insisted the aircraft had been de-registered in Kyrgyzstan.

Just who was flying the Ilyushin Il-76 at night over war-torn Darfur remains in question. The aircraft previously was linked to an effort by the United Arab Emirates to arm the paramilitary force known as the RSF, something the UAE has strenuously denied despite evidence to the contrary.

But the plane's crash early Monday highlights the chaos gripping Sudan since April 2023, when the RSF and Sudan's military went to war.

Their conflict has killed over 24,000 people, forced millions to flee their homes and has left some families eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive as famine sweeps parts of the country.

Mobile phone footage posted online showed RSF fighters among the plane's burning wreckage, claiming they shot it down with a surface-to-air missile.

Identity documents shown included a Russian passport and an ID that linked to a UAE-based company, whose phone number was disconnected.

The Russian Embassy in Sudan since Monday has been investigating.

A crumpled safety card, also purportedly from the aircraft, identified the plane as flown by New Way Cargo of Kyrgyzstan.

However, Zuurakan Kadyrova of New Way Cargo told The Associated Press on Tuesday that her firm's lease of the aircraft expired at the end of 2023.

"Since that time, we have no records regarding the aircraft," she said. "We are saddened by the news of the incident that occurred in Sudan and express our condolences to the crew and their families."

Kyrgyzstan's state-run Kabar news agency separately reported, citing the country's Foreign Ministry, that the plane had been removed from its aircraft registry in January this year "and transferred to the registration of the Republic of Sudan".

No Kyrgyz nationals died in the crash, the report said.

For its part, the RSF maintained

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Indrajit Singh S/o Kishan Singh R/o. DDA MIG Flat No. 107, Ground Floor, Pocket-23, Sector-24, Rohini Delhi, Mob. 9882585752. Email: indrajit77@gmail.com. The owner of the DDA MIG Flat No. 107, Ground Floor, Pocket-23, Sector-24, Rohini Delhi. The original papers i.e. Demand Letter, Possession Letter, Possession Slip, WOC for Electricity and Water Connection etc. executed by DDA of above-said property has been lost. A FIR to this effect has been lodged to police station dt. 30/09/2024. Any person(s) claiming any right, having any objection or found in possession of original document may write/contact with above named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice & can personally contact - Deputy Director (MIG Housing) D-Block, 3rd Floor, DDA Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

"MAMTA"

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD, DELHI

Plot No. 5, PSP Pocket, Sector-8, Dwarka, New Delhi

TEL: 011-45681521 / 8383818700

FOUND CHILDREN-DISPLACED FROM PARENTS

Name: Arradhya
Sex : Female
DOB : 6 Years
DOA : 21/06/2024
Complexion: Fair
Height: 125 cm

If anyone has any information of the child please contact the above Address

Germany detects first mpox case

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany's disease control center said Tuesday that a new, more infectious variant of the mpox virus has been detected in Germany for the first time. The Robert Koch Institute said the person was infected abroad but didn't give any further details, including on where the case was being treated.

The institute said it "is monitoring the situation very closely and adjusting its recommendations if necessary".

The first case of the mpox virus variant outside the African continent was confirmed in Sweden in mid-August. A case was also reported in Thailand.

The World Health Organisation has declared that the increasing spread of mpox in Africa is a global health emergency.

So far, the vast majority of cases have been reported in Congo. Outbreaks of mpox are currently affecting 18 out of 55 countries in Africa and officials there reported there had been 1,000 deaths as of last week.

The total number of suspected cases in Africa since the beginning of the year now stands at 42,438, with 8,113 confirmed as mpox, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

RFP FOR CONDUCTING INVESTMENT GRADE ENERGY AUDIT

E-Tender Notice No.: EL/29/15_2024/K/834; dated: 17-10-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No: 15_2024; Name of work: Request for Proposal (Rfp) for conducting Investment Grade Energy Audit (IGEA) at Kathihar Division (Phase-II). Tender Value: ₹ 36,84,000. Earnest Money: ₹ 16,80,000. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 11-11-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024 in website www.ireps.gov.in

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice hereby given to the General Public that of Mrs. Phandish Saini is the owner of THIRD FLOOR, WITH ROOF/TERRACE RIGHTS, AREA MEASURING 79 SQ. YARDS, BUILT-ON PROPERTY BEARING NO 152 AND 152-A, OUT OF KHASRA NO. 52, SITUATED IN THE COLONY OF VILLAGE NAWADA, DELHI, AND THE BLOCK WESTAREA, UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110059, by virtue of Notarized GPA, ATS & WILL dated 01.02.2023, executed by Mr. Rakshabh Bahja and same property to be sold to Intending Borrower i.e. Mr. Ajay Saini to be financed by SMEG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. General public hereby informing that if anybody has any change/interest/inde in the said property of any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. **Rajal Raj Pathak, Advocate** (Sole Agent) C/o Associates (Law Firm) PF 18, Lotus Pad Plaza, Vaidhyan Khanda, Indraprastha, Ghaziabad (UP) E-mail: spssocaterajal@gmail.com, Ph: 911171766, 0120444030

SIGNALING WORK

E-Tender Notice No.: N-2024-K-23; dated: 18-10-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SL No.1: Tender No. N-2024-K-23: Name of the work: Signalling work for BG TTR (P) of the existing 60 Kg rail 1 in 12 (FS) by 60 kg 1 in 12 (TWS) Pt No. 101 at Ambari Falakata yard, Pt No. 111, 113, 115, 116 at Belakoba yard, Pt No. 121, 122 at Ratinagar Jalpaiguri yard, BG TTR (P) of the existing 52 kg rail 1 in 8.5 (FS) by 60 Kg 1 in 8.5 (FS) Pt No. 107, 108 at Panjipara yard, Pt no. 108, 111 at Gaisal yard, BG TTR (P) of the existing 60 kg rail 1 in 12 (FS) by 60 Kg 1 in 12 (TWS) with sleeper Pt No. 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 125, 124, 123, 122, 121, 127 at Ambari Falakata yard, Pt No. 101, 105, 106, 103 at Belakoba yard, Pt No. 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 126, 124, 125, 127, 131 at Ratinagar Jalpaiguri yard under the jurisdiction of DEN/Line/Kathihar. Tender Value: ₹ 78,48,286.81; Earnest Money: ₹ 1,57,000.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>**

ESCORTING, OPERATION AND TROUBLESHOOTING OF AC COACHES

E-Tender Notice No. EL/29/16_2024/K/835 Dated: 17-10-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No. 16_2024. Name of work: At Kathihar Division:- Escorting, operation and troubleshooting of AC coaches from source to destination and back in Primary based Trains at Kathihar/Balrughat/New Jalpaiguri/Kishanganj depot for three years. Tender Value: ₹ 5,73,35,744.31/-; Earnest Money: ₹ 4,36,700/-; Date & Time of Closing of Tender: 15:00 hrs. of 11-11-2024 and opening at 15:30 hrs. of 11-11-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 11-11-2024 in website www.ireps.gov.in

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION

Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile - 9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client Sh. Manish Garg Owner of the First Floor LHS Side Without Roof Right Area 1391 Sq Ft Property No-30 And 31-A, Area 125.45 Sq Mtrs Kharsa No-28/10 Village Kakrola, Bharat Vihar A-Block, Kakrola New Delhi and Sh. Manish Garg Purchase Plot From Sh. Hans Raj Goyal Vide Notarized GPA, ATS And Will Dated 08.05.2024 thereafter Sh. Manish Garg execute Conveyance deed (PM Authorized Colonies in Delhi Area Adhikar Vojana Cell) in his favour by DDA vide conveyance deed no. 2024/16/1971 dated 23.07.2024. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION

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Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile - 9899013918

CORRIGENDUM NO-2 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO. N_7_HQ_EPC_EI_2024-25 DTD. 18-10-2024

Corrigendum No. 2 has been issued against Tender No. N_7_HQ_EPC_EI_2024-25. New Item Added: Document Description: SN-1: Corrected EPC Document; File Name: CorrE118_10_20241.pdf; SN-2: Tentative Drawing for SNT Service Building; File Name : EISEERVICEBUILDINGTYPICAL DRG1.pdf. For details please visit in website www.ireps.gov.in

GM(S&T), Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Asha Pandey who Mr. Ram Pandey and Mr. Ram Pandey s/o Mr. Mohan Ram Pandey who is owner of Entire Second floor, with roof rights part of Property No. 315 and 316, area measuring 54.35 Sq. Mtrs., Situated at Katra Munshi, Gauri Shanker, also known as Naya Katra, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, owned the same by virtue of Sale Deed dated 10.04.2019 (vide Document No.3574) and intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from UCR Capital Limited. (Sale Deed dated 10.01.1997 executed by Mrs. Chameli Devi Kandola in favour of Mrs. Anita Dawar, vide Document no.201, Book no.1, Volume no.7417, pages no.78-82, dated 10.01.1997 and 2) Sale Deed dated 17.04.2008 vide Document no.2602, Book no.1, Volume no. 2520, on pages 142-150, dated 17.04.2008 are Lost/Misplaced/Not available. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, with his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. **Lucem Legal LLP** Plot No.136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049>Contact# 011-44064316

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Harinder Yadav who is intending to purchase the Plot No. A-55, Block No. A, measuring 150 Sq. Yds., Kharsa No.660, Situated at Modern Railway City, Village Durgay, Pargana & Tehsil Dadr, Distt. Gautam, Buidh Nagar, U.P. from Mrs. Pushpa Devi who became owner vide Sale Deed dated 08.12.2022 (Doc. No.42590) executed by Mrs. Anshu Aggarwal and same to be finance & mortgage by Ummed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. (Noida), That, in Sale Deed dated 08.12.2022 (Doc. No.42590) Plot no. A-56 wrongly mentioned instead of Correct Plot No. A-55, executed by Mrs. Anshu Aggarwal in favour of Mrs. Pushpa Devi. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, with his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. **Lucem Legal LLP** B-338, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2, Noida. U.P. 201301>Contact#0120-4269379

OFFICE OF THE RETURNING OFFICER OF THE MAESTRO MULTI STATE COOPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD.

D-24, GREENVIEW APARTMENTS, SECTOR-9, ROHINI, DELHI-110085

Election Program for the Board of Directors

Sr.No.	PARTICULARS	DATE	TIME
1.	Publication of Provisional List of Members eligible	16th October, 2024 (Wednesday)	11:00 a.m.
2.	Time Window for Raising Objections to the Provisional List	17th-18th October, 2024 (Thursday to Saturday)	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Every Day)
3.	Scrutiny of objection received to the Provisional List (if any)	20th-23rd Oct., 2024 (Sunday to Wednesday)	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Every Day)
4.	Publication of Final List of Member Eligible to Vote	24th October, 2024 (Thursday)	3:00 p.m.
5.	Issue and Filing of Nomination Form	25th-28th October, 2024 (Friday to Monday)	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Every Day)
6.	Display on Notice Board of Society (at a conspicuous place) Nomination Forms received by Returning Officer	28th October, 2024 (Monday)	5:00 p.m.
7.	Scrutiny of received Nomination Forms	29th October, 2024 (Tuesday)	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
8.	Publication of List of Valid Nominations	29th October, 2024 (Tuesday)	5:00 p.m.
9.	Withdrawal of Nominations	2nd-6th Nov., 2024 (Saturday-Wednesday)	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Every Day)
10.	Publication of Final List of Contesting Candidates	6th November, 2024 (Wednesday)	5:00 p.m.
11.	Date of Polling if Necessary	10th November, 2024 (Sunday)	08:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and all those who have entered the polling station at 2:00 p.m. or before will be allowed to cast vote.
12.	Counting of Votes	10th November, 2024 (Sunday)	Immediately after the polling
13.	Declaration of Results of Board of Directors	11th November, 2024 (Monday)	After approval of Cooperative Election Authority New Delhi on Format 19M
Election Program of Office Bearers			
14.	Announcement of Election Schedule: (i) Time window for filing Nomination (ii) Time window for withdrawal (iii) Display of list of the Contesting candidate	14th Nov., 2024 (Thursday) 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 2:00p.m. to 3:00 p.m. 3:15 p.m.	After Declaration of Result of Board Members' Election
15.	Meeting of Newly Constituted Board & Publication of List for valid Nominations, Polling (if necessary)	15th November, 2024 (Friday)	11:00 a.m. onwards
Declaration of Result of Election of Office Bearers		After approval of Cooperative Election Authority, New Delhi on Format 19N	

Returning Officer, DM, North West Delhi

India well positioned to capitalise growth opportunities: FM Nirmala Sitharaman

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The global economic environment may present challenges but India is well positioned to capitalise on new growth opportunities, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said, underlining that as nations re-evaluate their supply chains, India hopes to become a key partner for many countries seeking to diversify their sources of goods and services.

Sitharaman made these remarks on Monday while delivering a special lecture on 'India's Economic Resilience and Prospects Amidst A Challenging and Uncertain Global Environment' at Columbia University here. She said that India is looking towards boosting domestic capacities, and building resilience against external shocks.

"While the past decades saw global growth led by broad multilateral trade, the coming years, I think, will likely be defined by strategic economic partnerships and India is very well poised to take advantage of this transition."

She said that the global economic environment may present challenges, but "India is well positioned to capitalise on new growth opportunities."

"The shift towards a more fragmented global economy, characterised by redefined alliances and changing trade patterns, could in fact work to



India's advantage. As nations re-evaluate their supply chains, India hopes to become a key partner for many countries seeking to diversify their sources of goods and services," she said at the lecture organised by the Deepak and Neera Raj Center on Indian Economic Policies at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs.

Sitharaman arrived in New York Sunday from Mexico where she had chaired the Tech Leaders Roundtable in Guadalajara. She had also visited the TCS headquarters in Guadalajara.

In New York, she addressed a Roundtable on 'Investment Opportunities in India' at the New York Stock Exchange and participated in a fireside chat on India's decadal

economic reforms and economic growth with IBM Chairman and CEO Arvind Krishna.

From New York, Sitharaman will head to Washington DC to participate in the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the 4th G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governor (FMCBG) Meetings, besides the G20 Joint Meeting of FMCBGs, Environment Ministers, and Foreign Ministers; and G7 - Africa Ministerial Roundtable.

Sitharaman noted that it may be an understatement that "we are living through times of profound uncertainty, which is steadily rising before us."

"The world today grapples with multiple challenges, such

as the conflict in the Middle East and between Russia and Ukraine. There's also a possibility of other destabilising events such as the dollar liquidity shocks, increases in global tariffs due to trade wars and oil price shocks - all at the same time. In addition to these events, the emergence of a veritable China terms of trade, and that as a shock, has made it necessary for countries to take measures to safeguard their domestic production," she said.

Sitharaman stressed that despite an increasingly complex global environment, India's macro-economic fundamentals remain "sound", acting as a strong foundation upon which to build future growth.

She said that in 2013, India

was the 10th largest economy and presently, it is the fifth largest economy.

The International Monetary Fund has projected it to become the third-largest economy by 2027. "India's contribution to global growth is projected to see an increase of 200 basis points in the next five years," she said.

She further stressed that India's trade policies have also undergone significant reform, with a focus on facilitation and greater integration with key economic partners. India is fostering a more competitive and export-oriented economy by pursuing free trade agreements with nations like the UAE and Australia, alongside initiatives such as the Production Linked Incentive schemes and One District One Product schemes.

"Furthermore, India must continue to strengthen its position in the geopolitical landscape. As the world undergoes a realignment of power dynamics, emerging economies like India would need to navigate complex international relationships. This would require a nuanced approach to diplomacy where economic interests are balanced with strategic concerns," she said adding that as countries look inwards, globally there is the added risk of regress towards de-industrialisation.

She said India's rise in the

Global Innovation Index and its growing influence in sectors like high-end capital goods, renewables and pharmaceuticals, signal its potential to become a vital player in global markets.

"Another vital aspect of the policy agenda has been the strengthening of India's financial sector. The soundness of our banking system marked by low levels of NPAs (nonperforming assets) and enhanced provisioning for bad loans reflects the reforms we have undertaken to improve asset quality," she said.

She added that by 2047, as India celebrates 100 years of independence, "we will have a chance to define a new era of prosperity, not just for our own citizens, but for the global community as well."

"India's role in the world is expanding, and we stand ready to engage constructively with the international community, sharing our innovations and contributing to global peace and prosperity," she said, as she cited the example of the COVID-19 pandemic during which India supplied vaccines developed and manufactured by it to nations across the world. "The coming decades will be defined by how effectively India manages its demographic dividend, strengthens its global partnerships, and navigates the complexity of a rapidly changing world," she said.

Insurance industry can use e-commerce, telecom network to distribute policies: LIC chief



PTI ■ MUMBAI

State-owned life insurance behemoth LIC's chief executive and managing director Siddhartha Mohanty on Tuesday pitched for using the e-commerce and telecom network to distribute policies deep in the country.

"As we are serious about 'insurance for all', we must rethink how we distribute and market insurance products," Mohanty said, speaking at an event organised by CII here.

He said the current channels, including agents, brokers, and bancassurance have been effective, but fraught with its own limitations given the challenge of taking insurance to each citizen of the country. Specifically, the current models have "limitations" to taking insurance to the vast and underserved rural market, the LIC executive said, adding that the future is in opening non-traditional channels.

"Collaborating with non-traditional players, such as telecom companies, fintech firms and e-commerce platforms, we can significantly

increase our outreach," he said.

"These organisations have unparalleled access to remote and underbanked communities. By partnering with them, we can ensure that affordable and accessible coverage is available to all," he added.

Adopting a newer approach will hugely increase the spectrum of insurance products across the insurers that will be available for sale to meet the varied needs of the customers, he said, stressing that reaching over a billion people "is no easy task".

Mohanty also said that digital technologies should be a key to reaching rural and low-income groups and sought regulatory support to ensure that any innovations are "nurtured and scaled appropriately".

Technologies and platforms like artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation are revolutionising the entire insurance sector and making it more customer-friendly, he said.

Consumers worried about data breaches: PwC India survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Consumers are worried about data breaches, and a large number of them are not aware of their rights related to personal data, according to a PwC India survey.

The PwC Survey on Data Privacy offers vital insights from 3,233 consumers and 186 organisations across India, exploring the awareness and implementation gaps concerning the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA), the consultancy firm said.

As per the survey report titled 'How aware and prepared are Indian consumers and businesses to navigate the new era of digital privacy?? A survey of India's data privacy landscape', 42 per cent of consumers are not sure if they will continue using the services of a company post a data breach.

"This rate is higher in Tier-1 cities at 46 per cent. Although 52 per cent of organisations are planning additional security controls around personal data, technology alone won't solve the compliance issue," PwC India



understanding of the basic tenets of privacy among all," Krishnan said.

The survey also found that 56 per cent of consumers are not aware of their rights related to personal data and 69 per cent are not aware of their rights to take back their consent.

Anirban Sengupta, Leader and Partner, Business and Technology Risk, PwC India said that in India, sectors that are regulated and direct-to-consumer show maturity in privacy mechanisms yet, express concerns about data privacy laws and enforcement.

"The need of the hour is a cultural shift towards prioritising data privacy, necessitating active participation from both businesses and consumers to foster a privacy-conscious environment," Sengupta added.

PwC India said the survey also throws light on the urgent need for e-commerce, social media and technology sector to focus on educating the age group of 18-30 years on digital privacy, consent management, protection of personal information and consequences of data sharing without thought.

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Reliance Infrastructure to launch Dhirubhai Ambani Defence City



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reliance Infrastructure on Tuesday announced setting up of Dhirubhai Ambani Defence City (DADC) the largest integrated project for Manufacturing of Explosives, Ammunition and Small Arms in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.

The company has been allotted 1000 acres of Land in Wataid Industrial Area of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra to develop DADC. It will be the largest GREENFIELD project in Defence Sector in India by any Private Sector company.

Reliance Infrastructure will invest over Rs. 10,000 Cr over the next 10 years. Reliance Infrastructure through its subsidiaries has exported defence equipment worth more than Rs. 1,000 Cr over a period of time.

Reliance Infrastructure's wholly owned subsidiaries Jai

Armaments Limited and Reliance Defence Limited already have license from Govt of India for manufacturing of Arms and Ammunition. The proposed Projects envisage potential Joint Ventures with up to six leading Global Defence Companies.

Ammunition range to include Small, Medium & Large Caliber and Terminally Guided Munition (TGM). Small Arms portfolio will address the export markets, both Civil and Military applications Reliance already has successful Joint Ventures (JVs) at MIHAN, Nagpur, Maharashtra with two of the leading Global Defence companies Dassault Aviation and Thales of France.

Dassault Reliance Aerospace Limited (DRAL) and Thales Reliance Defence Systems (TRDS) export 100% of their production.

India likely to grow at 7.2 per cent: RBI Deputy Governor

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India's GDP growth is projected at 7.2 per cent in 2024-25, around 7 per cent in the next fiscal, and after that, there is a strong likelihood that the growth will revert to the 8 per cent trend, said Reserve Bank of India deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

He was speaking at the New York Fed Central Banking Seminar organised by the Federal Reserve Bank here on Monday.

"...I do believe with all the strength of my conviction that India's time has come," he said, and highlighted the country heads into its future with the youngest population in the world with a median age of 28 years.

Unlike in many parts of the world, the working age population is growing -- every sixth working age person is an Indian.

Patra said that since independence in 1947, India's growth path has undergone three structural shifts with trend growth, having risen to 7 per cent during 2002-2019. After the severe contraction



during the pandemic, a new growth trajectory averaging 8 per cent seems to be forming during 2021-24, he said.

India is now regarded as the fastest growing major economy in the world.

Already the fifth largest economy in terms of market exchange rates, it is poised to become the third largest economy by 2030, the senior RBI official said and added the country is already the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity.

"Our projections show that India's real GDP growth will be 7.2 per cent in 2024-25 and around 7.0 per cent in 2025-26 in a cyclical correction to the rebound from the pandemic. Thereafter, there is a strong likelihood that India's growth will revert to the 8 per cent trend," Patra

said.

On inflation, he said it is projected to average 4.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 4.1 per cent in 2025-26.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation fell below target during July-August but rose to 5.5 per cent in September on the back of a pickup in price momentum in some food items and adverse base effects inherent in year-on-year measurement.

"Our projection indicates that these price pressures will persist in October and November before headline inflation realigns with the target from December 2024 and remains aligned in 2025-26," the deputy governor said. He also emphasised that India is emerging as a world leader in leveraging digital technologies for transformative change.

Adani Group to acquire Orient Cement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani-led Adani Group on Tuesday said it will acquire CK Birla group firm Orient Cement at a valuation of Rs 8,100 crore, as part of its expansion drive.

With this acquisition Adani Cement will achieve a capacity of 100 MT (million tonnes) per annum by end of FY25 and a gain of 2 per cent in the overall market share in the country.

Adani Cement has signed a binding agreement for the acquisition of Orient Cement Ltd (OCL) at an equity value of Rs. 8,100 crore.

As per that, its step down unit "Ambuja will acquire 46.8 per cent shares of OCL from its current promoters and certain public shareholders", according to a joint statement. The acquisition will be fully funded through internal accruals, it added.

The latest acquisition will add 16.6 MTPA capacity to the



growth-hungry Adani group firm, which operates through Ambuja Cements in the sector.

Besides, this deal will also help Adani group, which is aspiring to have 140 MTPA capacity by FY28, reduce the overall logistics costs for the cement business and improve market share.

In June, Adani had announced the acquisition of Hyderabad-based Penna Cement at an enterprise value of Rs 10,422 crore, which

added 14 MTPA capacity to the country's second largest cement manufacturer.

In December last year, it completed the acquisition of Saurashtra-based Sanghi Industries Ltd at an enterprise value of Rs 5,185 crore.

Commenting over the latest development Ambuja Cements Director Karan Adani said: "This timed acquisition marks another significant step forward in Ambuja Cements' accelerated growth journey, increasing

cement capacity by ~30 MTPA within two years of Ambuja's acquisition."

By acquiring OCL, Ambuja is poised to reach 100 MTPA cement capacity in FY25, he added.

"The acquisition will help to expand Adani Cement's presence in core markets and improve its pan-India market share by 2 per cent," Adani added.

"The acquisition will help to expand Adani Cement's presence in core markets and improve its pan-India market share by 2 per cent," Adani added.

OCL has 5.6 MTPA of clinker capacity and 8.5 MTPA of cement capacity along with the statutory clearance to increase the clinker capacity by another 6.0 MTPA and cement capacity by another 8.1 MTPA.

C K Birla, Chairman of Orient Cement and the CK Birla Group, said, "The CK Birla Group is continuously reallocating capital to sharpen its focus on consumer-centric, technology-driven and service-based businesses."

"We are confident that the Adani Group, with its strong

focus on cement and infrastructure, is the ideal new owner to drive continued growth at Orient Cement for our people and stakeholders," he said.

Adani Group entered into the cement sector in September 2022 after acquiring controlling stakes in Ambuja Cement from Swiss firm Holcim for cash proceeds of USD 6.4 billion (about Rs 51,000 crore). Ambuja Cements owns a 51 per cent stake in ACC Ltd.

Later it also launched a Rs 31,000-crore open offer for the acquisition of 26 per cent additional stakes from public shareholders.

According to data from the Cement Manufacturers Association, the country has a total of 541 metric tonnes (MT) of installed cement capacity.

The Indian cement market is led by Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement Ltd, which has a consolidated capacity of 152.7 MTPA.

Power Grid board approves raising up funds via bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power Grid Corporation's board on Tuesday approved a proposal to raise up to Rs 5,000 crore through issuance of bonds on private placement basis.

The base issue size of the bonds is Rs 1,000 crore with additional 'Green Shoe Option' of Rs 4,000 crore.

Committee of Directors for bonds in their meeting held today i.e. On 22nd October, 2024 approved the raising of bonds as unsecured, non-convertible, non-cumulative, redeemable, taxable, POWERGRID Bonds..Up to Rs 5,000 crore on private placement basis," it stated.

Bonds are redeemable at par at the end of 10th year and interest payment on yearly basis. The bonds will be listed on BSE/NSE.

INBRIEF

JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE-LECTURE SERIES II AT GNDU

AMRITSAR: Jallianwala Bagh Chair of Guru Nanak Dev University has started the Lecture Series on the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. The Second Lecture was delivered by Prof. Sukdev Singh Sohal, Former Prof. & Head, Department of History & Chairperson Ghdar Chair, Guru Nanak Dev University, Jallianwala Bagh Chair initiated Jallianwala Bagh Lecture Series with a new focus on the events associated with the Massacre on April 13, 1919.



N. F. RAILWAY TO OPERATE FOUR DIESEL SPECIAL JOYRIDES



MALIGAON: The Northeast Frontier Railway has decided to operate four Diesel special Joyrides under the toy train service of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) between Darjeeling and Ghum from 21st October to 05th December, 2024 on daily basis to cater the passenger rush during the peak season. It may be noted that DHR, a UNESCO World Heritage Site witnesses footfall of thousands of local as well as foreign tourists during this peak season.

India eye Paris revenge against Germany in Test series as international hockey returns to Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

International hockey will return to the capital after a 10-year gap when Olympic bronze-medallists India take on world champions Germany in a two-Test bilateral series starting here on Wednesday, aiming to test some new faces and extract revenge for a recent heartbreak inflicted by the visitors.

For the last 10 years, the capital's Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, once considered the spiritual home of the game, has not hosted any international match. The last game played here was the 2014 Hero World League Final, although inter-departmental hockey has been held here occasionally. But the two Tests against the world No.2 and Paris Olympics silver-winning outfit on Wednesday and Thursday would be a perfect comeback for the sport. It has been learnt that over 12,000 fans have already registered for the free tickets on offer through a private ticketing portal. The National Stadium has a seating capacity of just over 16,000. The two Tests hold great



significance for Indian hockey, which is on an upswing following back-to-back Olympic bronze medals in Tokyo and Paris. In the French capital, the Indians, under the talismanic and in-form Harmanpreet Singh's leadership, lost 2-3 to Germany in a closely-

contested semifinal. "This series is not just about the two teams playing; it's about reviving the spirit of hockey in Delhi. We hope this will inspire more young players from the region to take up the game," Harmanpreet had said after the rubber was announced.

That sentiment aside, India also has a very good opportunity to avenge their loss in Paris. But the Germans will be a hard nut to crack as they are the reigning world champions and displayed that fortitude in Paris, going down only in the shoot-out to Netherlands in

the gold medal match. Going by rankings, the Germans are favourites as India are currently placed fifth in the world but in modern hockey, there is hardly any difference between the top 10 teams and anyone can beat a high-placed rival on their day. In the last five encounters between the two sides, India hold an edge, having won three and lost two.

India have been on a high since the Paris Olympics. A new-look team retained the Asian Champions Trophy title in September, beating hosts China 1-0 in the final. That was India's fifth ACT title. The Indians have fielded a mix of youth and experience for the two matches, thereby highlighting chief coach Craig Fulton's vision of planning for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The most notable inclusion in the squad is defender and drag-flicker Varun Kumar, who is returning after a sabbatical from the game that was forced by allegations of sexual harassment by a junior volleyball player. His name has since been cleared in the matter.

The Indians will be led by star drag-flicker Harmanpreet, who is enjoying the form of his life and mid-fielder Vivek Sagar Prasad will be his deputy.

The hosts, however, will continue to miss the services of mid-fielder mainstay Hardik Singh, who is still recovering from an injury he sustained at the Olympics.

Fulton drafted in some new faces in mid-fielder Rajinder Singh and striker Aditya Arjun Lgale, who will be making their international debut. Besides Vivek, veteran Manpreet Singh will be in charge of the mid-field. Striker Mandeep Singh, who was rested for the ACT, will look to dazzle upfront in the company of Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, and Dilpreet Singh among others. The Indian goal will be manned by Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera, who lived up to expectations in the ACT in Hulunbuir, China after the legendary PR Sreejesh's retirement. The two matches will provide the newcomers and comeback-men a chance to prove their mettle in front of the team management and national selectors.



American Sofia Kenin advances to second round at Pan Pacific Open in Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

Former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin has extended her perfect record against Wang Xinyu, beating the 10th-seeded Chinese player 6-1, 6-4 in a first-round match at the Pan Pacific Open on Tuesday. The 25-year-old American, who won the Australian Open in 2020 and was a French Open finalist the same year, won her fourth straight match over Wang. Her previous victories over Wang were twice at Wimbledon - in 2021 and 2023 - and at Auckland, New Zealand last year. Kenin beat Garbiñe Muguruza in the Melbourne Park Grand Slam singles final

in 2020 and lost to Iga Swiatek in the French Open final a few months later. After her Australian Open win, she achieved her highest ranking of No. 4, but a series of injuries over the past several years has seen her ranking slip to her current No. 155. She also had to withdraw from the 2021 US Open due to COVID-19. Kenin was joined in the second round by Canadians Bianca Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams for the US Open title in 2019, and Leylah Fernandez, who won their opening matches Monday. The top-seeded player in the Pan Pacific this year is Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen.



Zverev sympathises after routing local wild card in Vienna

AP ■ VIENNA

No. 3-ranked Alexander Zverev was sympathetic for Joel Schwartzler after hammering the 18-year-old wild card in his hometown debut at the Erste Bank Open. Zverev won by a quick 6-2, 6-2 then gave 347th-ranked Schwartzler, appearing in his second ATP tour-level match, encouragement when they met at the net. "When you come to your home tournament and probably the biggest crowd you have played in front of, as an 18-year-old and you're playing the world No. 3, it's not the easiest thing in the

world," Zverev said. "I've been there. I did that as a 17-year-old in Hamburg, where I got to the semifinals and all of a sudden had a sold out stadium and was playing against a certain David Ferrer. The match was over half an hour later and I won one game. I know exactly how (Schwartzler) feels. It's not an easy situation to be in but he's a wonderful player and he's going to have a wonderful career." Zverev's 60th win of the year equalled his season best from 2018. In other matches, Italians Matteo Berrettini and Flavio Cobolli were also winners.

Hockey, shooting, cricket, badminton among major sports axed from 2026 Glasgow CWG

PTI ■ LONDON

In a body blow to India's medal prospects in the Commonwealth Games, key sports such as hockey, badminton, wrestling, cricket and shooting have been dropped from the 2026 edition by host city Glasgow, which unveiled a pruned roster of 10 disciplines to keep the event budget-friendly. Table tennis, squash and triathlon have also been axed in a bid to limit the cost and streamline logistics given that only four venues will host the entire showpiece. The total number of events at the Games will be nine fewer compared to the 2022 Birmingham edition. "The Games will include 10 sports - striking a balance between ensuring the event has a multi-sport feel and the need to manage financial and operational risk," the Commonwealth Games Federation said in a statement. "The sports programme will include Athletics and Para Athletics (Track & Field),

Swimming and Para Swimming, Artistic Gymnastics, Track Cycling and Para Track Cycling, Netball, Weightlifting and Para Powerlifting, Boxing, Judo, Bowls and Para Bowls, and 3x3 Basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball," the Commonwealth Games Federation said in a statement. The 23rd edition of the Games is scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 2, marking Glasgow's return as host after 12 years. "The Games will take place across four venues -- Scotstoun Stadium, Tollcross International Swimming Centre, Emirates Arena - including the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, and the Scottish Event Campus (SEC). Athletes and support staff will be housed in hotel accommodation," it added. The roster is a massive setback to India's medal prospects given that bulk of the country's medals came from the removed disciplines in the past editions. Shooting was never expected to return



after being dropped from the Birmingham programme four years ago, owing to logistics. While announcing the Glasgow schedule, the CGF said "Glasgow 2026 will feature a 10-sport programme concentrated across four venues within an eight-mile corridor". This ruled shooting out of the roster as the Barry Buddon centre in Dundee -- the venue during the 2014 CWG -- is more than 100km away from Glasgow. Also, archery

continued to be ignored. The sport last featured at the Games in the 2010 Delhi edition. Glasgow Green and the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, which hosted hockey and wrestling in 2014, has been dropped from the list of venues, while Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, where badminton was held that year, will be used only for cycling this time. Aside from cost, hockey's exclusion could also be down

to the fact that the Games are being organised close to the World Cup that is scheduled two weeks later from August 15 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands. The Australian state of Victoria was the original host of the 2026 edition but pulled out last year due to rising costs. Scotland then stepped in to save the Games. Hockey's omission from the Games would be a significant blow for India. The men's team has won three silver and two bronze medals, while the women have also shone, clinching three medals, including a historic gold in the 2002 Games. In badminton, India has racked up an impressive 31 medals -- 10 gold, eight silver, and 13 bronze. Notably, the nation was to enter the 2026 edition as defending champions in men's and women's singles, as well as men's doubles. Shooting was a stronghold for India, with a staggering 135 medals to its name. The count included 63 gold, 44 silver, and 28 bronze.

The wrestling competition has yielded 114 medals for the nation, including 49 gold, 39 silver, and 26 bronzes. After the cricket's reintroduction in 2022, the Indian women's team claimed a silver. Para-athletes have been a part of the Games since the 2002 Manchester edition and will continue to be there in the 2026 edition as well. "Para sport will once again be fully integrated as a key priority and point of difference for the Games, with six Para sports included on the sport programme," CGF said. The CGF said that the Games will deliver over 100 million pounds of "inward investment into the city" and is expected to add an economic value of over 150 million pounds for the region. The body asserted that all this would be possible thanks to a model "that has been specially designed to not require public funding for the delivery of the Games."



Neymar back after a year out and helps Al-Hilal in Asian Champions League

AP ■ AL AIN

Neymar returned to action after a year out through injury and helped Al-Hilal beat Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates 5-4 in the group stage of the AFC Champions League Elite. Neymar signed for the Saudi Arabia club in August 2023 but played only five times before tearing an anterior cruciate ligament last October. He came off the bench 369 days later for the four-time Asian champion with 13 minutes remaining at Al Ain. He almost scored

immediately when his low shot from left of the area shaved the post. In a thrilling match between Al-Hilal and the defending champion, Renan Lodi gave Al-Hilal the opener after 26 minutes. Soufiane Rahimi, the tournament top scorer last season, leveled soon after. By the break, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Salem Al-Dawsari put Hilal 3-1 ahead. Mateo Sanabria pulled a goal back just after the hour but Al-Dawsari scored twice more to complete a hat trick, and Rahimi achieved the same feat to make it 5-4.

The win maintained Al-Hilal's perfect record in Asia after three games. Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli won at Qatar's Al-Rayyan 2-1 thanks to goals from Gabri Veiga and Firas Al-Buraikan. Iraq's Al-Shorta drew with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor 0-0, and Qatar's Al-Sadd defeated Iran's Persepolis 1-0. Al-Nassr and Cristiano Ronaldo are in action on Tuesday against Esteghlal of Iran. The game was moved from Tehran to Dubai due to the security situation in Iran.

India eye top spot, Bangladesh seek crucial draw in SAFF showdown

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

With a semifinal spot already secured, India will look to reaffirm their dominance when they take on Bangladesh in their final Group A match of the SAFF Women's Championship here on Wednesday. For Bangladesh, a win would hand them the top spot in Group A. As things stand now, India lead the table with three points, while second-placed Bangladesh have a superior goal difference (0) against Pakistan (-3), with both teams sitting on one point each.

A draw would leave Bangladesh as group runners-up with two points. The Blue Tigresses clinched their place in the semifinals with a commanding 5-2 victory over Pakistan but now their focus shifts to topping the group and avenging a painful memory of 2022. In that edition, Bangladesh dealt a shocking blow on India by ending their unbeaten streak in the championship with decisive 3-0 win in the group stage. It marked the first time India had lost to their South Asian rivals in SAFF history, and the Blue Tigresses will be eager to



set the record straight. "We have faced Bangladesh before, and we watched their last game against Pakistan. Our sole focus now is to win this match," skipper Bala Devi said. "We have both senior and young players and we are prepared to push for a win. We have had productive training sessions, and I hope we can put what we have practiced into action." "As the captain, I aim to lead by example and support the team in every way. Bangladesh has some fast and

youngful players, but I believe our mental strength gives us an edge, which will be crucial in tomorrow's game," added the 34-year-old from Manipur. Head coach Santosh Kashyap has led the team through five days of training in Kathmandu, preparing for the challenges that lie ahead against Bangladesh. He has carefully assessed all the potential threats posed by the opposition. "Tomorrow's match will be challenging, as Bangladesh are a strong side with a

foreign coach and have solid tactical plans. Although we have already booked a spot in the semi-finals, we are taking it one game at a time, aiming to win every match. "I prefer playing attacking football because it's not only effective but also entertaining for everyone. It's a style that I, as well as the players, enjoy, and we will try to maintain that momentum," Kashyap said. Defender Dalima Chhibber, who was named the Most Valuable Player in the 2019 SAFF Women's

Championship, is making her return to the tournament after missing the 2022 edition. She was absent last time due to playing three seasons in Canada, but now she's back and ready to compete in the SAFF Championship once again. Bangladesh and Pakistan are currently tied on one point each after a 1-1 draw in their group-stage match. For Bangladesh, the absence of coach Golam Rabbani Choton, along with key players like defender Akhi Khatun and Anai Mogini, will be felt. However, the team have brought in fresh talents, including young players such as Afeida Khandakar, Matsushima Sumaya, and Airin Khatun. "We are coming up against an Indian team, who, in my opinion, are probably the best team in the tournament," Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler said. "They are very disciplined and organised in their manner and their demeanour of actually how they walk around the hotel. I think it'll be quite an attacking game. The most important thing is to try and share out the workload with all our players."

NO POINT SUGARCOATING, THERE'S FIGHT FOR A SPOT BETWEEN RAHUL AND SARFARAZ: TEN DOESCHATE

PTI ■ PUNE

India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said on Tuesday that middle-order batters KL Rahul and Sarfaraz Khan are locked in a selection battle for the second Test against New Zealand here even though head coach Gautam Gambhir is keen to give the former, a long rope.

With India looking to bounce back from the eight-wicket thrashing at Bengaluru in the opening Test, focus will be on the team combination with Washington Sundar being added to the squad. Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant are both aiming to shake off injury concerns for the match starting Thursday.

"Yeah, there's no point in sugarcoating it, there's a fight for a spot," ten Doeschate told the media when asked if Rahul and Sarfaraz were battling for a place in the team, here at the MCA Stadium ahead of India's training session.

"Sarfaraz was obviously brilliant in the last Test. I went to KL after the last Test (and) said how many balls do you play at (and) miss at? He didn't play at (and) miss at one ball and that's what tends to happen when you're not getting runs.

"There's certainly no concerns about KL, he's batting nicely, he's in a good mental space. But we are certainly



going to have to fit seven pieces into six spots for this Test and look at the pitch now and decide what's going to be best for the team," he said.

Sarfaraz scored a second-innings 150 in the Bengaluru game, while Rahul remained off-colour in both innings.

While admitting that it is difficult to keep Rahul out of the equation in the Test format, ten Doeschate said head coach Gautam Gambhir is "keen to" give him a long rope.

"It's not like we're worried about his

form. If you go on just the past three months since Gauti has been in here, he's been to give him (Rahul) as much rope as we can. We have a lot of faith in him," he said.

"But at the same time, it's a very competitive environment, with Sarfaraz getting 150 plus runs (222 not out) in the Irani Trophy final. The decision will be what's best for the team, but we'll certainly back all the guys in," he added.

Pant, who did not keep wickets for a significant part of the opening Test,

and Shubman Gill, who missed the match due to stiffness in his neck, are close to attaining their full fitness.

"Rishabh is pretty good. I think Rohit (Sharmna) touched on it the other day. He was having a little bit of discomfort at the end range of his movement with the knee. But fingers crossed, he'll be good to keep in the Test as well," he said.

"He (Gill) looks so (available for this Test). He has batted last week in Bangalore, he had a few nets, he's got

a little bit of discomfort, but I think he'll be good to go for the Test," he added.

Ten Doeschate said the addition of Washington Sundar is "no desperate measure" but to add a bowling option who would take the ball away from the Kiwis left-handers.

"Definitely not. They (New Zealand) are filled with four left-handers in the XI. We've had Washy around the white-ball squad for a while and we like the way he operates. It's also nice to see that guys are getting rewarded for Ranji Trophy performance as well."

"We just want to make sure we're absolutely prepared for conditions here and if that does mean taking the ball away from the left-hander, we want that option," he added.

Ten Doeschate said Mohammed Siraj could be going through a "wicket-drought" but there was nothing to suggest that he was struggling for rhythm.

"Siraj bowled beautifully in the second innings. That hour of Test match cricket on the last morning was really high quality," he said.

"It maybe wasn't a nicking wicket, which is obviously his big strength, particularly to left-handers when he moves the ball across. There's nothing there to say like he's not bowling well or his rhythm is not good."



Cook backs Root to surpass Sachin Tendulkar as leading run-getter in Test cricket

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former England captain Alastair Cook feels Joe Root has the potential to surpass the legendary Sachin Tendulkar as the leading run-getter in Test cricket thanks to his insatiable hunger and incredible talent.

The 33-year-old Root currently has 12716 Test runs and is 3205 short of the Indian icon (15921).

Root occupies the fifth spot in the leading run-getter's chart at the moment with Rahul Dravid (13,288), Jacques Kallis (13,289) and Ricky Ponting (13,378) and Tendulkar ahead of him.

"I think Joe Root could set a mark, certainly on an English side, that'll be very hard to beat. But, you just never know," Cook was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"I hope he can get very close, if not be the first person who scores 16,000 Test runs. It'd be a great achievement."

Root overtook Cook as England's leading run-scorer in the longest format during the Multan Test against Pakistan earlier this month.

Having watched his compatriot go past him to become England's most decorated batter, the 39-year-old Cook struggled to express his feelings and called up Root to congratulate him for his massive feat.

"I watched the moment, then I rang him after the end of the play. I couldn't think of the right words to write in a text message," Coon said.

"So, I thought I'd just ring him, see what he was up to, and make sure he had a beer in his hand, which I think he did."

Root's remarkable form over the past four years has seen him score more than half of his total 35 Test centuries in that period, averaging close to 60.

Cook believes that he is currently the best batter in the world with New Zealand's Kane Williamson coming close to matching him.

"I think at this precise moment in time, I find it hard to see anyone playing as well as Joe Root. Over the last year or so, of the so-called 'Big Four', I think Williamson and him are probably in the best form at the moment.

"They're all wonderful, wonderful players, all very different, actually, in their methods and ways of playing. But one thing, which kind of unites them is that hunger and desire to keep improving and keep churning out the runs," Cook said.

Root will look to continue to amass big scores and add to his tally during the third Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi, beginning on Thursday.

Moving to another topic, Cook has expressed his support for England's 'Bazball' style of play in Test cricket.

"I think the game has certainly made a big jump forward in what is now deemed possible in Test cricket.

"I think the jump happened in one day cricket first, probably. The fundamental change, certainly from the English point of view, is when Owen Morgan took the side forward in 2015. And obviously the Ben Stokes era has changed the mentality of what was possible."

We're here to make amends: Cummins

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Australian skipper Pat Cummins is determined to "make amends" against India in the upcoming five-match Test series, as he aims to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in over a decade.

The two teams will face off in a five-match series starting November 22 in Perth. India will come into the contest with the Border-Gavaskar Trophy firmly in their grasp, having held it for nearly a decade and winning two consecutive series in Australia. "We've had a bit of a break, so I'm excited for the five match Test series. Excited to get into it," the 31-year-old said in Star Sports' Press Room. "We haven't had a lot of luck against India over the last few Test series, but we always pride ourselves on playing well here in Australia."

Inglis earns maiden call-up as NZ name squad for Women's ODI series against India

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Wicketkeeper-batter Polly Inglis earned her maiden call-up as recently-crowned Women's T20 World champions New Zealand announced their 15-member squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against India, beginning in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Inglis, 28, was rewarded for consistent performances with both bat and gloves for Otago Sparks in the women's Super Smash and New Zealand A, leading to her first New Zealand Cricket central contract in June.

"We're really excited to introduce Polly for her first tour," Head coach Ben Sawyer said in a statement. "She put her hand up in last season's Hallyburton Johnstone Shield one-day



competition and throughout the New Zealand A series against England, so it's a great next step for her."

Lauren Down also returns to the squad after resuming international cricket in July following a maternity break.

Rosemary Mair, who sustained a serious back injury earlier this year, has been rested as part of her long-term rehabilitation.

Mair and off-spinner Leigh Kasperek are the only two players missing from the

squad that won the T20 World Cup in the UAE.

"Touring India is one of the great experiences in world cricket," Sawyer said.

"It's such a special place to come and I know everyone is looking forward to the

challenge ahead.

"Alongside trying to win the series, the tour will serve as important preparation for next year's ODI World Cup in India."

New Zealand won the Women's T20 World Cup in Dubai with a 32-run win over South Africa.

"It's been an amazing 24 hours for this group becoming T20 World Cup champions," said Sawyer.

"We're relishing the win but when we get to India we'll need to refocus and set our sights on the next challenge."

New Zealand Women's ODI squad: Sophie Devine (C), Suzie Bates, Eden Carson, Lauren Down, Izzy Gaze, Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Polly Inglis (WK), Fran Jonas, Jess Kerr, Melie Kerr, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuhu.

Williamson ruled out of 2nd Test against India

PTI ■ PUNE

Senior New Zealand batter Kane Williamson will not be available for the second Test against India here as his rehabilitation from a groin strain is still not complete, the country's cricket board announced on Tuesday.

New Zealand lead the three-match series 1-0 after winning the first game by eight wickets in Bengaluru. The second match will start here on Thursday.

Williamson, who is yet to join the squad here, suffered the injury during the recent Test series against Sri Lanka.

Blackcaps head coach Gary Stead said Williamson was not yet ready even though he



has made significant progress.

"We're monitoring Kane and he's tracking in the right direction, but isn't yet 100 per cent fit," said Stead in a statement issued by New Zealand Cricket (NZC).

"We're hopeful to see further improvement over the

coming days and have him available for the third Test.

"We'll give him as much time as possible to get himself ready, but certainly continue to take a cautious approach," he added.

The third Test is scheduled in Mumbai from November 1.

Shaw left out of Mumbai squad for next Ranji Trophy clash due to fitness and disciplinary issues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Top order batter Prithvi Shaw has been left out of the Mumbai squad for their next Ranji Trophy match against Tripura owing to fitness and disciplinary issues.

The match is scheduled to be played in Agartala from October 26 to 29.

The right-handed opening batter, who has played five Tests, six ODIs and one T20I for India, seems to have run into trouble.

It is reliably learnt that the 24-year-old does not regularly attend the team's training sessions and has also appeared a "little overweight".

"You have to look at his fitness and his running when he is on the field. The MCA has a rich history and there cannot be exceptions for a certain



player," an official from Mumbai Cricket Association told PTI.

Shaw's form has been a concern given that he has scores of 7, 12, 1 and 39 not out in the two rounds of Ranji Trophy. The decision to drop him has been

taken by the Mumbai senior men's selection panel owing to his fitness and "general conduct".

The Mumbai selectors have named 29-year-old left-handed opening batter Akhil Herwadkar as

replacement. Herwadkar has played 41 first-class matches and averages 36.51 with seven centuries and 10 fifties.

Also, middle-order mainstay and India's T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav has been rested from the Mumbai squad. Suryakumar scored seven in his only outing for Mumbai in their nine-wicket win over Maharashtra.

Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Akhil Herwadkar, Shreyas Iyer, Siddhesh Lad, Suryansh Shedge, Hardik Tamore (wk), Sidhaant Addhatrao (wk), Shams Mulani, Karsh Kothari, Himanshu Singh, Shardul Thakur, Mohit Avasthi, Juned Khan, Royston Dias.

MI, KKR among five IPL franchises bidding for teams in The Hundred: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants are among the IPL franchises who have submitted bids to acquire teams in the English Cricket Board-run The Hundred, according to a report.

The GMR Group, recently named the new owner of Hampshire, and Avram Glazer, co-owner of Manchester United Football Club, also submitted bids before the ECB's October 18 deadline for potential investors,

ESPNcricinfo. The ECB has invited bids for a 49 per cent stake in each of the eight franchises, with the board retaining majority control.

"Expressions of interest could be for all eight teams, which would be culled to four in the next step which will start in November when the investors get to meet the host counties of each Hundred franchise," stated the report.

"Following that, investors would need to prune their wishlist to four teams, as part of the second stage, which will then come down to two teams of which they



would need to make their final choice."

The ECB is aiming to finalise investors by early 2025 but is committed to a deliberate approach to avoid "underselling what it believes is a valuable product".

ECB chairman Richard Thompson has also mentioned the possibility of a "hybrid" ownership model, where some teams remain under ECB control while others are sold to private investors.

The report further says while several IPL franchises showed early interest, not all followed through with bids.

"Punjab Kings opted out, while there has been no confirmation on whether five-times IPL champions Chennai Super Kings and equity major CVC Capital Partners, which owns Gujarat Titans, have submitted bids," it added.

"Global sports investors INEOS, owned by Jim Ratcliffe, which owns a 27% stake in Manchester United and run the football club's operations wing, have also opted out of bidding."

One of the main concerns for IPL franchises was whether they would be "happy being passive investors".