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# Disengagement complete at LAC

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Troop disengagement process at two friction points in Depsang Valley and Demchok at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh is complete. Patrolling by India and China will commence soon as agreed upon between the two countries. The two sides will exchange sweets on Thursday on the occasion of Diwali. Giving this information here on Wednesday, sources said the local commanders of the level of Brigadier from both the sides will continue their talks. The two officials will decide on patrolling modalities in the two areas, they said. India on October 21 announced that the two countries have reached an agreement on patrolling. Sources said that verification post-disengagement is in progress and patrolling modalities are to be decided



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

between ground commanders. On October 25, sources here said the disengagement process was likely to get completed by October 28-29. The agreement framework was signed first at the diplomatic level and then military-level talks took place, they had said, adding the nitty-gritty of the agreement was worked on during the Corps Commander-level talks which was signed last week. Adhering to agreements between the two sides, Indian troops then began to pull back equipment to rear locations in these areas. The process follows the agreement firmed up between the two countries on patrolling and disengagement of troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, a major breakthrough to end the over four-year standoff.

Ties between the two Asian countries had nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. Sources earlier said the areas and patrolling status were expected to be moved back to pre-April 2020 level. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on October 21 had said in New Delhi the agreement was finalised following negotiations over the past several weeks and that it would lead to a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020. On October 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping endorsed the agreement on patrolling and disengagement along the LAC in eastern Ladakh during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan in Russia.

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# Delhi's 'Anywhere Registration Policy' will end touts' careers!

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has approved a policy titled 'Anywhere Registration Policy', with this the sale and purchase of properties in the National Capital can be registered at any sub-registrar's office. The move will help the thousands who have to visit Sub-Registrar Offices, at different locations, and is also aimed at curbing corruption and harassment. Under the policy, buyers can now take an online appointment at any of the 22 Sub-Registrar Offices, across the National Capital for their property registration. They do not have to physically visit any sub registrar office to register the sale/purchase deed of their properties. The policy will save people from long queues for property registration, thus promoting transparency to help curb corruption. Traditionally, to buy or sell property in Delhi, people need to visit a designated Sub-Registrar Office. Whether it's a property transaction or registering the property through other means, one has to go to the Sub-Registrar Office. However, this process often led to challenges, including long waiting lines and delays in booking appointments at certain offices, while others remained underutilised. All Sub-Registrars in Delhi will now function as joint sub-registrars and their jurisdiction will cover the entirety of Delhi. The new registration software, National Generic Document Registration System, now allows people to upload the necessary documents required for the registration of sale deeds, power of attorney and wills from the comfort of their homes, make payment and take appointments at the sub-registrar office to complete the remaining formalities. "So, anyone residing in Delhi can make an online appointment for property registration at any of the 22



Sub-Registrar Offices in Delhi," said a sub registrar official. According to an estimate, nearly 2,000 documents of 28 different categories are registered at 22 Sub-Registrar offices on a given working day. Some offices get 50 applications and there are a few which receive up to 150 documents in a day. In 2022, 1.25 lakh documents were registered at the offices of the sub registrar. While Janakpuri, Kashmere Gate, Model Town and Pitampura are among the most-crowded offices, Sarojini Nagar, Preet Vihar and Defence Colony witness the least number of applicants. The Delhi government recently appointed joint sub-registrars at six of its most crowded offices to ease the rush. Explaining this, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi said that the 'Anywhere Registration' policy is being introduced to resolve these problems. "Under this policy, anyone seeking property registration can go to any sub-registrar office in Delhi. Residents will no longer be limited to just one designated office for property registration," Atishi added. The government has received a number of complaints and suggestions to improve the functioning of the sub registrar office which is one of the major departments to contribute to the state's financial health.

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# Why did Punjab cops give 'studio' to Lawrence?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

In a scathing remark, the Punjab and Haryana High Court said that police officers in Punjab provided a studio-like facility to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi to facilitate his interview with a news channel. A Bench of Justices Anupinder Singh Grewal and Lapita Banerji made the remark while hearing a suo motu matter related to inmates' use of mobile phones within jail premises. The High Court ordered further probe, rejecting the report of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) and directed the Director General of Police (DGP) to file an affidavit in this regard. "The police officers allowed the criminal to use electronic devices and provided a studio like facility to conduct the interview which tends to glorify crime with the potential to facilitate other crimes including extortion by the criminal and his associates. Involvement of the police officers may suggest receipt of illegal gratification from the criminal or his associates and constitute offences under Prevention of Corruption Act. Therefore, the case requires further investigation," the Court said in an order dated October 28. The Bench made the remarks while questioning the SIT's decision to file a cancellation report in a case related to the interview given by Bishnoi.

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# Rash and drunk drivers may lose their licences soon

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to tackle problems regarding road safety and discourage habitual offenders, the Delhi Traffic Police has written to the Secretary of the Delhi Transport Department to cancel the driving licences of owners of vehicles, which have had three violations relating to dangerous driving and drink and driving or more than five relating to normal challans. This comes in the light of a recently released Delhi road crash report of 2023, which revealed that a pedestrian or



a motorist travelling on the roads of the National Capital are among the most prone to road fatalities as data reveals

that they constitute 43 and 38 per cent of such casualties respectively. "In 2023, 622 pedestrians died in 618 fatal crashes caused by all types of vehicles as compared to 629 pedestrian deaths in 2022. The maximum pedestrian casualties were caused due to car, jeep and taxis which have increased to 76 this year compared to 69 in 2022," the report read. It also revealed that two-wheeler riders have emerged as second most fatal crash-prone victims. "The above figure shows 538 fatal crashes of two-wheelers in 2023 as compared to 539 in

2022. These two-wheelers were the worst hit by Heavy Vehicles (HTVs) (89) followed by Car/Jeep/Taxis (66) in 2023," it stated. According to the report, prepared by the traffic police and released by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, the number of deaths in road crashes has however decreased from 1,264 in 2022 to 1257 in 2023 despite the increase in the number of vehicle registrations. Moreover, the number of drivers booked under traffic violation has increased from 4,38,052 in 2022 to 6,39,097 in the Year 2023.

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# LIGHTS, PEACE PROSPERITY



A view of the Saryu river on Deepawali eve

PTI

# SIT to probe tusker deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ UMARIA (MADHYA PRADESH)

Three more elephants have died in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, taking the toll to seven, while the condition of three other tuskers was serious, a forest official said on Wednesday. The forest department has ordered a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the death of the tuskers and asked officials to ensure strict action against culprits. According to BTR's deputy director Prakash Kumar Verma, prime facie, the elephants seemed to have died after consuming Kodo millet, but the exact cause



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

will be known after the autopsy. Four wild elephants were found dead in the BTR on Tuesday while four others, part of the same herd of 13 tuskers, were found ill during routine patrolling, officials earlier said. Verma on Wednesday said so far seven elephants have died. They were part of the herd of 13 pachyderms, he informed. The condition of three other jumbos was serious and they were being treated, while the BTR teams were monitoring the movement of remaining elephants that were part of the herd, he said.

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# Bomb Threat Assessment Committee set up

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the multiple hoax bomb threat messages to airlines, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, along with security agencies, has come up with new protocols and guidelines to evaluate bomb threats on Indian airlines, especially those emerging via pseudonymous social media accounts. The guidelines are structured to more effectively distinguish between credible threats and hoaxes. As per the new protocols, the Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) will establish the identity of the person or organisation making the threat, check their credentials to see if they belong to a terrorist or proscribed outfit, and ascertain the motive and specific socio-economic and political situation within the country or around the globe that could be linked to the threat.

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# When brake lights lit up peak traffic chaos

Serpentine snarls were witnessed across the National Capital on Diwali eve

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

The festival of lights is here, and for thousands of commuters it also means the brake lights of the scores of vehicles in front of them. It was difficult to enumerate the number and location of these serpentine traffic snarls that were witnessed across the National Capital on the eve of Diwali. The roads were jammed, the pavements had been taken over as shops set up display counters outside, and inside buyers stood six rows deep waiting for their turns. Many others made a beeline for malls, to grab just the perfect gifts to make the festival of lights a memorable affair for their loved ones, creating significant delays and inconvenience to commuters. Even as traffic police made arrangements to minimise inconvenience to commuters, social media was rife with tales of commuting woes. Videos on social media showed long lines of vehicles stuck in traffic in Laxmi Nagar, Chirag Dilli, Kashmiri Gate, Kamla Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Market, Karol Bagh, Sarai Kale Khan and several other parts of Delhi.

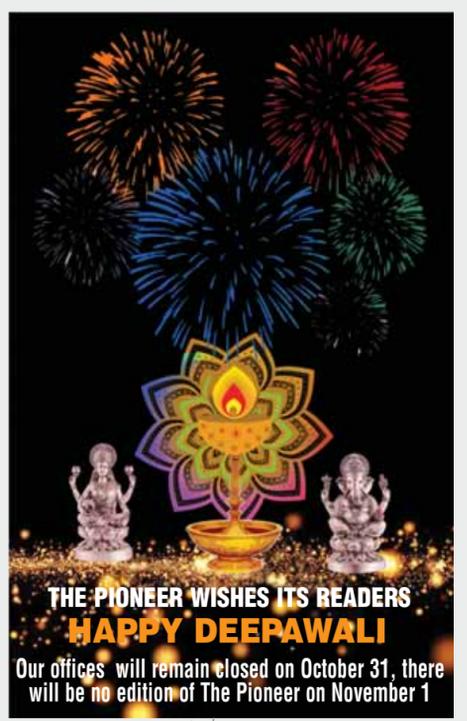


Expressing frustration over the significant jams against the Delhi Traffic Police, a commuter said, "Please deploy your teams on the roads. There is not a single traffic police available on roads in Delhi despite heavy festive rush. From Sheikh Sarai flyover to Moolchand flyover, traffic is choked." Another commuter travelling around the Laxmi Nagar area said, "Delhi is experiencing

significant traffic congestion due to the festive season, causing delays for commuters. A big reason has also been the mismanagement of traffic despite authorities knowing well in advance that such a situation will arise." The other massive congestion reported at Dhaura Kuan, Khajuri Khas, Model Town, Sadar Bazar, Rohtak Road, Kishan Ganj,

Chandni Chowk, Connaught Place, Mangolpuri, Rajouri Garden and Najafgarh. "Nangloi-Najafgarh road is seeing very heavy traffic and no traffic police are available here. I am stuck for the last hour. Should we enjoy Diwali by sitting in our cars?" Commuters took to X saying the traffic was heavy at several places including Badarpur flyover, CV Raman Marg, Punjabi Bagh,

Mehrauli Badarpur Road, Taimur Nagar-Maharani Bagh Road, Ashram and Yamuna Vihar. This situation remains despite the Delhi Police saying that they have made elaborate arrangements for smooth flow of traffic. A senior traffic police officer said they have intensified checking on the road. "We have deployed personnel on bikes to check the encroachment on busy roads which could lead to traffic congestion in the area. People who are coming to the markets are also informed that they should park their vehicles at designated places," it said. "The personnel have loud speakers on their bikes to make the flow of traffic smooth. Non-destined vehicles are not being allowed to enter the national capital. Continuous anti-encroachment drives are also being carried out in the crowded places," the officer said. In view of the festive season, the Delhi Metro also stated that it will introduce additional 60 trips on Tuesday and Wednesday in a bid to enhance commuter convenience and ease congestion. There are around 4,000 daily Metro trips.



THE PIONEER WISHES ITS READERS  
HAPPY DEEPAWALI  
Our offices will remain closed on October 31, there will be no edition of The Pioneer on November 1

# Maha Yuti blues: BJP throws lot with MNS' Amit Thackeray in Mahim

T N RAGHUNATHA ■  
MUMBAI

In a development that exposed lack of consensus among the constituents of the ruling MahaYuti on certain issues Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Wednesday that the BJP was committed to supporting MNS chief Raj Thackeray's son Amit Thackeray in Mumbai's Mahim constituency where his party's ally - the Shinde Shiv Sena - has put up a candidate. To make matters more complicated, Raj went to town

claiming that after the polls, the MNS -- which is not part of the pre-poll grand alliance -- would be part of the MahaYuti government headed by a BJP chief minister. The positions taken by Fadnavis and Raj - in state-ment interviews of a Marathi television channel have led to intense speculation within the state government that the BJP would no longer back current chief minister Eknath Shinde for the current term. If anything, Fadnavis' open declaration that the BJP "want to support Amit Thackeray" in Mahim constituency --

where the Shinde Sena has fielded sitting party MLA Sada Sarvankar in Mahim constituency against Amit Thackeray - has set the cat among the pigeons. On his part, Fadnavis claimed that there was consensus between him and Eknath Shinde on supporting MNS candidate Amit Thackeray, who is making an electoral debut from Mahim. "I am told that leaders from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena argued that if the party does not contest the election, its traditional voters would shift to the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT). As far



as we are concerned, we would like to support Amit. The BJP is still firm on its stand," Fadnavis said.

Fadnavis, however, hastened to add: "When we (leaders of Mahayuti) meet, we will discuss and try to find a solu-

tion". Raj and Fadnavis have enjoyed close rapport over the years. The Raj Thackeray-led MNS, which did not contest the recent Lok Sabha polls, had extended its unconditional support to the BJP-led NDA in the LS polls. If the Shinde does not withdraw the candidature of its candidate Sada Sarvankar - who is adamant on contesting the polls, then it will be a triangular contest among the Amit Thackeray, Sarvankar (Shide Sena) and Mahesh Sawant of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena. On the other hand, while

participating in a television programme, expressed confidence that the BJP-led MahaYuti would return to power in the state. "The political situation in Maharashtra has changed vastly during the last three months. It now appears that the MahaYuti will come back to power in the State in the 2024 polls. One of the factors that contributed to the improved chances of the MahaYuti is the BJP's victory in Haryana". The pre-poll alliance among the ruling MahaYuti and Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) notwith-

standing, "friendly fights" are being witnessed between the Yuti and MVA partners in at least 13 constituencies across the state. Full Clarity will come after the withdrawal of nominations on November 4. From the MahaYuti, the ruling BJP is contesting 152 seats, while its allies have fielded candidates in 80 and 50 constituencies respectively. On the MVA front, the Congress is contesting 102 seats, while the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and NCP (Sharad Pawar) have nominated 96 and 87 seats respectively.

## Now rural Bengal rebels against Didi Government

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After the doctors it is the turn of rural Bengal to rebel. Villagers deprived of pucca houses under the rural housing scheme have rebelled in a number of districts against alleged corruption in allocation of funds for housing. Angry villagers from Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Burdwan West, Birbhum, East Midnapore, Malda districts demonstrated outside respective panchayat and block development offices alleging corruption and favouritism on the part of Trinamool Congress leadership in enlisting eligible recipients of houses under the Banglar Baari (House of Bengal) scheme. The project has been floated by the Mamata Banerjee Government as an alternative to the central Prime Minister Awaas Yojna scheme alleging discrimination by the Centre in allocation of funds. "We had submitted all the requisite forms and necessary certificates but our names have not appeared in the list of recipients," said Asma Khatoun a homemaker from Canning in South 24 Parganas. Her neighbor Azizul, Rehmat and Bilasi too



raised similar questions. At Mathurapur in the same district villagers like Swapna, Anima and Dipti too agitated before the panchayat and block offices asking "why should we not get houses when people who already have two-storey pucca houses and toilets are getting them?" Earlier the State had decided to construct houses for villagers who had been left out of the Centre's housing scheme. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who had been crying hoarse for the past couple of years alleging deprivation by the Centre on account of releasing funds to the tune of Rs 1.50 lakh crore on account of 100-days' work, PM Awaas, rural roads and other schemes had on Tuesday

"The state government has decided to build houses for all people in the state who have been deprived under the central scheme," the Chief Minister had told the officials in a meeting and asked State Panchayat Minister Pradip Majumdar to take stock of the people who had yet to receive houses. The Centre had blocked funds following widespread complaints of corruption from the villagers in distribution of houses. "The Centre has been sending funds but these are going to the pockets of the TMC leaders ... and their relatives and cronies ... so the Centre is asking to account for the previous funds before releasing subsequent tranches," State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said.

## Ayodhya shines bright with record-breaking Deepotsav

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/  
KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■  
AYODHYA

Ayodhya dazzled on Wednesday, carving its name in history with a new Guinness World Record by lighting 25.12 Lakh earthen lamps along the serene banks of the Saryu River as part of the grand Deepotsav celebration for Diwali. The awe-inspiring display, the largest of its kind, surpassed last year's record of 22 lakh lamps, capturing the world's attention and etching Ayodhya into the global spotlight. Guinness World Records officials were on site to validate the achievement, presenting a certificate of recognition to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who accepted it on behalf of the city. The event was meticulously documented through drone footage to ensure adherence to Guinness's exacting standards. "More than 30,000 volunteers, largely university students, worked tirelessly to organize and light the lamps with precision, ensuring they burned for the required duration," said Dr. Pratibha Goyal, vice-chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh



University, who played a key role in coordinating the volunteer efforts. The 25 lakh diyas cast a spell-binding glow along the 55 ghats spanning 1.5 kilometers on the Saryu, their flames holding steady for over five minutes to secure Ayodhya's seventh consecutive world record for the largest display of oil lamps. Nearly 91,000 liters of mustard oil fueled this breathtaking spectacle, which brought the holy city to life. Alongside the lamps,

Deepotsav also included a grand Maha Aarti, performed by 1,100 priests along the riverbanks, as well as an eco-friendly fireworks display over the Saryu Bridge. This year's celebration holds a special significance as it is the first Diwali since the consecration of the idol of Lord Ram (Pran Pratishtha) in January. The celebration extended beyond the ghats, with thousands of students helping arrange lamps along Ram Ki Paidi, the steps lead-

ing to the Saryu River. A vibrant laser show depicting scenes from the Ramayana added to the immersive experience, transporting visitors back to the age-old epic. Volunteers successfully completed the synchronized lighting in under 30 minutes, with the final five minutes crucial for Guinness record verification. Ayodhya's streets were adorned with traditional decor, featuring grand arches and gates along the main routes, capturing the joyous

atmosphere. Folk performances enriched the celebration, drawing both pilgrims and dignitaries alike to join the festivities. Security was heightened across Ayodhya, with paramilitary commandos, bomb detectors, dog squads, face-recognition technology, and real-time monitoring drones ensuring a peaceful festival, according to Senior Police Officer Rajkaran Nayyar. In anticipation of the large crowd, authorities arranged extra trains to help those journeying back home for the holiday. Yet, while Ayodhya's Deepotsav spotlighted eco-friendly 'green' fireworks, air quality experts expressed concerns that Diwali celebrations across India could contribute to a temporary surge in pollution levels. "Air quality is expected to decline after the celebrations conclude on Thursday," warned meteorologist OP Gupta. With its world-record achievement, Ayodhya has once again captured the heart of the Diwali season, celebrating the mythic return of Lord Ram from exile in a spectacle that continues to inspire devotion and wonder for millions worldwide.

## Why did Punjab cops give...

From page 1

The gangster is facing charges in the murder of Punjabi singer Shubdeep Singh Sidhu alias Sidhu Moosewala. His interview was telecast by a news channel in March 2023. In the interview with ABP News, he said he knew about the murder plot. The Court said that the interview had taken place within the premises of CIA Staff Kharar, in the presence of senior officers of the Punjab Police. "The office of the Officer Incharge of the Police Station was used as a studio to conduct the interview. The official Wi-Fi at the premises of the CIA staff had been provided for conducting the interview which is a pointer towards the criminal conspiracy. The report indicates that roznaamcha was also forged and fabricated. The matter calls for further investigation as to for what consideration this was done and the various aspects towards offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act besides other offences need to be examined," said the High Court blaming the Punjab police. Special DGP, Punjab State Human Rights Commission, Prabodh Kumar told the Court that the SIT did not

have the mandate to look into other offences including those under the Prevention of Corruption Act. However, the Court did not agree with this, and ordered a further probe into the matter. "We direct that a new SIT headed by Mr. Prabodh Kumar and also comprising of Mr. Nageshwar Rao, ADGP, Provisioning and Mr. Nilabh Kishore, ADGP, STF to carry out further investigation towards criminal conspiracy, abetment, forgery, offences under Prevention of Corruption Act, Information Technology Act and also under any other offence. The SIT shall file a status report within a period of 6 weeks." The Court was earlier told that seven Punjab police officers including two gazetted officers have been placed under suspension, and departmental proceedings have been initiated against the 8 officers. It was also submitted that Inspector Shiv Kumar, then officer-in-charge of the CIA Kharar police station, who had been given extension in services, had been terminated. Observing that it had specifically directed that action should be taken against the senior officers who had facilitated the interview and the lower level officers should not be

made scapegoats, the Court said. "No action appears to have been taken against the senior officers of the District. By order dated 24.09.2024, we had also directed the State to inform us by filing an affidavit of the competent authority as to why the interviewee had been kept in the premises of CIA Staff Kharar for a long period of time, and whether the repeated demands to keep the interviewee there was a deliberate attempt to keep him at the same station for extraneous reasons or whether he was generally required for investigation. Explanation was also sought as to why Shiv Kumar, the then Incharge CIA was given extension and posted there," said the Court asking the DGP for further probe. The Court also asked the DGP to explain his statement in an earlier press conference that the interview had not taken place in any jail in Punjab. "The fact that the interview had been conducted within the premises of CIA staff Kharar, District SAS Nagar makes it even worse as it appears to have been conducted in connivance with the police officers," said the Court directing the interview videos to be deleted from the internet.

## SIT to probe tusker...

From page 1

On Tuesday, Verma informed that four elephants were found dead in Salkhan and Bakeli areas under Khitoli range of the reserve, a popular tourist attraction, during routine patrolling by forest guards. In a social media post late Tuesday night, Forest Minister Rawat said the untimely death of the precious elephants in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve was saddening and heart-breaking. In view of the seriousness of the issue, officials have been directed to immediately constitute an SIT and take strict action against the culprits, Rawat said.

## Happy Diwali at Depsang...

From page 1

In Kolkata, Ambassador of China to India Xu Feihong on Wednesday called the recent meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of BRICS Summit at Kazan in Russia "very important". The diplomat qualified the talks, the first formal one between the two leaders in the past five years, had reached an important understanding and set guidelines for further development of relations between the two neighbours. Speaking at a session organised by the Merchant Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Chinese diplomat said both the leaders reached important common understandings on improving and developing Indo-China

relations and set the course to steer bilateral ties back on the path of steady development. The meeting between Modi and Xi was held in Russia's Kazan on October 23. Responding to a question on the completed Indo-China border disengagement in Eastern Ladakh, the Chinese Ambassador said, "I hope that under the guidance of this consensus, relations will be moving forward smoothly in the future and not be restricted and interrupted by specific disagreements between the two sides. The most important thing is how to handle the differences." Referring to the resumption of direct flights between China and India, he said, "As an Ambassador, I am looking forward to this as it saves time. I am also looking forward to smooth

cooperation not only in politics but also in business." Meanwhile, PTI reported from Beijing, China on Wednesday said the Chinese and Indian militaries are implementing the "resolutions" concerning the disengagement in eastern Ladakh along the LAC in an "orderly" manner. China and India have reached resolutions on issues concerning the border, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here replying to a question on the progress of the disengagement. "At the moment, the Chinese and Indian frontier troops are implementing the resolutions in an orderly way," he said and declined to provide any details. In another related development, PTI reported

from Washington, the United States has said it welcomes any reduction in tension along the India-China border and noted that it has been briefed by New Delhi in this regard. "We are closely following the developments (between India and China). We understand that both countries have taken initial steps to withdraw troops from friction points along the Line of Actual Control. We welcome any reduction in tensions along the border," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news conference on Tuesday. Responding to a question, Miller said that the US has played no role in this. "We have talked to our Indian partners and been briefed on it, but we did not play any role in this resolution," Miller said.

## Bomb Threat Assessment Committee...

From page 1

Some additional questions will now be answered by the BTAC before categorising a threat as specific, that would lead to triggering of established security protocols of diverting an aircraft, sending it to an isolation bay upon landing or just before taking off, and conducting fresh anti-sabotage checks of passengers and their belongings. The protocols are designed to swiftly analyse and neutralise digital threats based on their severity, responding effectively to the alarming trend of threats proliferating through social media and online platforms.

Despite being hoaxes, the threats caused significant flight delays and financial losses for airlines, estimated at Rs 13-17 lakh per hour, with average disruption costs of Rs1.5- Rs 2 crore per domestic flight, escalating further for larger aircraft and international routes. On Wednesday, a message claiming a bomb had been placed on Air India's flight from Delhi to Mumbai via Indore was posted on a social media platform, which later turned out to be a hoax. Under the revised Bomb Threat Contingency Plan, the process now begins with an immediate review of flight details upon receiving a threat. This initial check

focuses on identifying any VIP passengers such as politicians, bureaucrats, diplomats, scientists, senior officials of the sensitive department and celebrities who may have been specifically received threat recently. If any such passengers are confirmed, all security protocols will be promptly activated. As per the guidelines, the BTAC will adopt a multilayered approach to distinguish between specific threats and hoaxes, saving operational resources. As per the current practice, BTAC is convened at a designated airport to analyse a bomb or security threat issued against an airline,

airport or any part of the aviation ecosystem that decides to declare it "specific" or serious or "non-specific" or hoax. The committee comprises officials from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), local police, airport operator and airline officials and representatives of some other agencies. Identifying the origin of the threat is crucial, as it allows officials to assess the reliability of the source. A verified source may elevate the priority of the threat. If the threat is received via email, message, or letter, analysing the language,

phrasing, and writing style can provide valuable insights into the sender's background or intent. In cases where the threat is received by phone, voicemail and call records can offer clues, such as geographical location or identifiable background noise. Capability of the person / organisation giving threat, "key component in threat evaluation, this factor involves assessing whether the organisation or individual has the practical means, resources, or technical skills required to carry out the threat. Assessing the capability of a person or organisation making a threat involves evaluating their

resources, intent, past actions, and potential to carry out the threat. This assessment provides insights into how serious the threat might be and what preventive measures are necessary. Also, its key considerations include financial capability, as wealthier organisations have financial resources that could support the threat, and also investigate if the person or group has access to firearms, explosives, digital hacking tools, or other equipment that might be needed to act on the threat. The likelihood of a follow-through based on past behaviours," it said. The BTAC, as per the new

guidelines notified on October 19, will adopt a "multi-layered" approach to assess threats and determine the "credibility and seriousness" of such threats issued on social media and satisfy themselves about the "credibility" of the source of information. Some additional questions will now be answered by the BTAC before categorising a threat as specific, that would lead to triggering of established security protocols of diverting an aircraft, sending it to an isolation bay upon landing or just before taking off, and conducting fresh anti-sabotage checks of passengers and their belongings.

## Delhi's 'Anywhere Registration...

From page 2

One complaint was that in some sub-registrar offices, there were long queues and consequently, it takes a long time to book an appointment, whereas in some other offices, there were no excessive crowds. Another complaint was that corruption was prevalent in many sub-registrar offices. There are middlemen outside the offices, who demand money from people wanting to register their property. People were often forced to pay these middlemen to get their registrations done in these offices. The move will also increase transparency, since if officials in a certain office demand bribes, people will have the choice to go to other offices. The 22 Sub-Registrar Office in Delhi register over 20 different types of documents, including sale deeds, lease, conveyance deeds, power of attorneys, and all other documents that need to be compulsorily registered under law. Each year, the 22 sub-registrars together register around 3.5 lakh to 4 lakh documents.

# BJP leaders announce decision to pursue legal action to implement Ayushman Bharat scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, along with all state BJP MPs, announced their decision to pursue legal action to implement the Ayushman Bharat Scheme in the capital amid the AAP's Convenor and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal calling the scheme as a 'major scam'. The BJP leaders criticized the AAP government and claimed that they are denying healthcare access to the elderly and underprivileged by not implementing the scheme. Addressing a press conference, Sachdeva stated, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's disappointment over the non-implementation of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme in Delhi and Bengal clearly

shows that Kejriwal is depriving citizens of free healthcare purely for political reasons." He claimed that in 2021, Manish Sisodia pledged to implement the scheme, but three years later, nothing has been done. "While 6 crore people nationwide have benefited, Delhi remains deprived," Sachdeva added. Union Minister Harsh Malhotra called Ayushman Bharat a visionary scheme, with over 50 crore registrations and 6 crore beneficiaries and alleged that Kejriwal's political rivalry with BJP is causing harm to Delhi's citizens. "The Supreme Court had criticized the condition of Delhi's public hospitals, describing them as worse than slaughterhouses," South Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri claimed.



Ranjan Dimri

New Delhi BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj shared a case from September 2023, where a patient in need of a hip replacement had to approach the High Court for financial aid. "The High Court's lawyer revealed how poorly the Delhi Arogya Scheme functions, with patients being forced to run from pillar to post for assistance," she remarked. Meanwhile, Kejriwal called the scheme a 'major scam' and claimed that it is backed by the findings of a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, pointing out serious discrepancies against the BJP government's scheme. "This is not merely his opinion, as the CAG report points to corruption within the scheme," the AAP chief stated. Retorting the statements of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi over the Delhi government not implementing the scheme in Delhi, the AAP leader urged the Prime Minister to study Delhi's healthcare model. Citing a CAG report's finding, Kejriwal claimed, "The CAG itself has reported multiple scams within the Ayushman Bharat scheme. The Ayushman scheme offers coverage up to Rs 5 lakh but only if you are hospitalized. In contrast, Delhi's healthcare model ensures free treatment for all, whether for OPD or IPD services." The AAP Supremo asserted, "Every resident of Delhi, whether they have a simple cold or need hospitalization, receives all treatment, medication, and tests free of charge—no limits, no caps. In Delhi, whether it's a five-

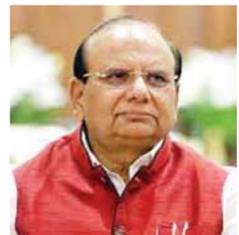
rupee tablet or a treatment costing 50 lakh or even one crore rupees, everything is provided free of charge." Arvind Kejriwal called for an end to the segregating practices as central and state healthcare schemes and said, "Yesterday, I requested the Prime Minister to study Delhi's healthcare model and consider implementing it across the nation. It's not about whose scheme it is; it's about ensuring quality healthcare for every citizen." "In Delhi, if someone requires surgery costing twenty lakh rupees, we cover it fully. If someone visits a Mohalla Clinic, their entire treatment is free. How can we even think of stopping such a system that brings affordable, effective healthcare to everyone?" he asked.

## LG attacks Kejriwal over his remarks against Ayushman Bharat scheme

### LG calls Delhi's health model web of illusion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the AAP Convenor and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over his remarks against the Ayushman Bharat scheme and called Delhi's health model a web of illusion created by your powerful propaganda machinery. In a tweet, Saxena said, "Dear Former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, I do not take cognizance of your baseless statements, but this post is about a very people-oriented scheme of the Government of India - Ayushman Bharat, which benefits crores of Indians. You have kept lakhs of people of Delhi deprived of this scheme till now only because of the fear that its implementation may reveal the truth of the false health model being promoted by you and your habit of taking false credit for everything



may get exposed." He alleged that the AAP chief opposed the scheme to be associated with it in some way or the other. "While the Delhi government recommended implementing this scheme in public interest in view of its benefits and the then Health Minister had given permission to implement the scheme, in August 2018, AAP government talked about naming the Ayushman Bharat scheme as 'Chief Minister Aam Aadmi Health Insurance Scheme Ayushman Bharat,'" the LG stated.

"The Government of India, which bears most of the cost of this scheme, has also agreed to your self-glorification by simply asking you to use your name after 'Ayushman Bharat,'" he said, adding in the Budget Speech for 2020-21, the then Deputy Chief Minister / Finance Minister also announced that your Government will implement 'Ayushman Bharat Jan Arogya Yojana'. "Despite this, your narcissism and hunger for publicity has not allowed the Delhi government to implement this scheme till now," he said. Further, he attacked the AAP government's health department and said, "I would now like to draw your attention to your so-called health model, which is nothing but a web of illusion created by your powerful propaganda machinery. You have been suppressing the CAG reports of the Health Department for years."

Saxena claimed that despite him trying to draw Kejriwal's attention to the poor healthcare system in Delhi, he did not even take cognizance of it. "You will easily know how much benefit the people of other states are getting from the Ayushman Bharat Yojana if you take the trouble of visiting hospitals like AIIMS, Safdarjung, RML, Sir Ganga Ram located in Delhi," he said. "As far as your suggestion to implement the 'Delhi Health Model' at the national level is concerned, it will lead to nothing but chaos, corruption and a terrible condition of the patients. I hope that you will leave politics, accept the truth and implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme for the people of Delhi as soon as possible. Since you are no longer the Chief Minister, now you probably will not feel the need to name the Ayushman Bharat scheme after the Chief Minister," he said.

## Amanatullah opened unauthorised bank account soliciting funds for Delhi riot victims: ED chargesheet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said in the chargesheet that AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan opened an "unauthorised" bank account soliciting funds for Delhi riot victims and some of this public money was withdrawn in cash and handed over to him. The anti-money laundering probe agency filed the supplementary prosecution complaint against the legislator and his second wife Maryam Siddiqui before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Delhi on Tuesday. The case has been listed for hearing on November 4. The money laundering case of ED pertains to alleged irregularities committed during Khan's tenure as the chairman of the Delhi Waqf Board between 2016-2021. The 50-year-old MLA represents the Okhla seat in the Delhi Assembly. The agency also accused Khan of not disclosing "complete details" about depen-



details in his election affidavit. "Amanatullah Khan, without taking any approval from the Delhi Waqf Board, floated 'Delhi Waqf Board Relief Committee'." "In order to solicit funds in the name of Delhi riot victims, Khan opened an unauthorised bank account in the name of Delhi Waqf Board Relief Committee and some of the funds obtained from the public were withdrawn in cash under the directions of Khan and were handed over to him," the agency said. The Delhi riots took place in February, 2020. Khan, according to the ED, did not furnish "the complete

Haider". The agency alleged that Khan along with his associates like Haider and Daud Nasir were "managing" the "ill-gotten money" of the MLA during his tenure as the chairman of the Delhi Waqf Board and used the same to make "cash payments" via Kausar Imam Siddiqui (Khan's alleged fund manager) for purchasing a property at 275-276, TTI Tikona Park in Okhla area. This property belonged to Jawed Imam Siddiqui. The ED claimed a seized white diary "handwritten" by Kausar Imam Siddiqui showed that cash payments to the tune of Rs 27 crore were made by the close associates of Khan for the purchase of this property at Tikona Park. The agency said it found "huge amounts of suspicious cash deposits" in the bank accounts of seller Jawed Imam Siddiqui and his wife. Khan, Haider, Daud Nasir, Kausar Imam Siddiqui and Jawed Imam Siddiqui were arrested in this case by the ED and they are lodged in jail currently under judicial custody.

## ₹47 crore penalties imposed for PUC certificate violations this October

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a rise in air pollution levels in the national capital, the traffic police have imposed penalties to the tune of Rs 47 crore on motorists between October 1 and 24 for pollution certificate violations, an official said on Wednesday. The traffic police have issued over 47,000 challans to motorists. A fine of Rs 10,000 is imposed on motorists for not having a valid pollution under control (PUC) certificate. These challans get released from courts. According to the data provided by the Delhi Traffic Police, a special drive was launched this month in which 47,363 challans for PUC violations were issued to motorists between October 1 and 24. An official said the number of vehicles has increased significantly in the



city, causing pollution. "Special drive was conducted at different locations, including ITO Chowk, Peeragarhi, Ashram Chowk, Anand Vihar and Mehrauli this month by traffic personnel and around 47,343 motorists were caught without pollution or expired PUC certificates till October

24," the official said. He said the drive is underway and the officials have been asked to keep conducting surprise checks of vehicles. The data has also revealed that this year till October 24, a total of 2,50,761 challans have been issued for PUC violation. Last year, the tally was 2,32,885

and in 2022 it was 1,64,638 during the same period. The officer said the number of challans mentioned in the data involves all types of vehicles, including heavy transport vehicles. The spike in the number of violations highlights the persistent challenge of vehicular pollution in the

city which is notorious for its alarming levels of air pollution, the officer said. The national capital's air quality on Wednesday morning was recorded in the 'poor' category with an AQI (Air Quality Index) of 278, up from 268 recorded a day earlier, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. The Delhi Traffic Police said that by rigorously monitoring and enforcing PUC regulations, they aim to cultivate a culture of compliance with emissions standards among motorists. "It is crucial to recognise that vehicular emissions significantly contribute to air pollution in urban areas like Delhi. Therefore, cracking down on vehicles without valid PUCs is imperative to mitigate the adverse environmental effects associated with unchecked emissions," the officer said.

## Delhi Government approves 24-hour operations of restaurants in Aerocity

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a push to enhance tourism and drive economic growth, the Delhi government on Wednesday granted approval for 24-hour operations of restaurants in Aerocity, a prominent hospitality zone near the IGI Airport. Already home to some 4-star and higher-rated hotels operating around the clock, Aerocity will now see its restaurants follow suit, offering greater access to diverse dining options. The initiative mirrors a similar policy in Haryana's Gurugram, where restaurants have seen revenue gains by operating extended hours in exchange for extra fees. According to an official statement, Chief Minister Atishi approved the proposal aimed at attracting more tourists and increasing government revenue through



enhanced licensing fees. This 24x7 model is not only expected to enhance visitor experiences but also contribute significantly to the state's revenue, the statement added. This move aims to increase Delhi's revenue. As a major tourist destination, Delhi has immense potential for revenue growth, and with this decision, an increase in revenue through licensing fees is expected. Notably, restaurants in Gurugram are already allowed

extended hours in exchange for extra fees, which has contributed to revenue growth there. Some 4-star and higher-rated hotels in Aerocity already operate 24 hours a day. Earlier on Tuesday, the Delhi government approved 24-hour operations for an additional 111 shops and commercial establishments. With this latest round of approvals, the number of establishments allowed 24-hour operations has now crossed 700.

## Punjab based agent arrested for arranging fake Mexican visa

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested a 36-year-old Punjab based agent for arranging a fake Mexican visa for a passenger. According to the police on Wednesday, the Indra Gandhi International Airport police station arrested a fraudster agent namely Lukesh Kumar for arranging a fake Mexican visa on the passport of the passenger for his journey to Mexico. DCP IGI airport Usha Rangani said, "On April 17, one 25-year-old pax Parwinder Singh, resident of Punjab, holding an Indian passport arrived at IGI Airport from Turkey as a deportee. During scrutiny of his travel documents, it was found that he had departed to Mexico via Turkey from IGI Airport but during transit in Turkey, one fake Mexican visa was found affixed on his passport and he was deported back to India." He intended to travel on a passport containing fake visa and cheated Indian Immigration. A Case under section 318(4), 336(3) and 340(2) of BNS and



12 PP Act was registered and investigation of the case was taken up. On interrogation, Singh disclosed that some of his friends had gone abroad for a better livelihood so he also decided to go any abroad country for earning quick money. "Thereafter he came in contact with one agent namely Sunny who assured him to arrange his journey to America and a job there with the help of his associates, in lieu of Rs 30 lakhs. Thereafter, on the directions of the agent Sunny, he gave Rs 5 lakhs in cash and his passport to another agent Lucky as and advance amount and it was

decided that remaining payment would be given after reaching at the destination point," the DCP added. Lucky arranged tickets and Mexican visa for his journey but he was caught at Istanbul Airport during scrutiny of his travel documents. Lucky was nabbed from one of his hideouts in Ludhiana and arrested in the case. "Investigation of the case is in progress to unearth the involvement of other agents and to scrutinize bank accounts of the accused persons and to trace their possible involvement in other similar complaints also," Rangani said.

## Delhi Government to build affordable, modern infra facilities to boost independent food outlets

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi government will establish affordable and modern infrastructure facilities to boost independent food outlets, streamline licensing, and expand employment opportunities, a statement said on Wednesday. A new policy has been proposed to boost the growth of independent food outlets and enhance employment opportunities in the sector on the occasion of Diwali. This initiative is expected to take effect within the next 15 days, it said. Delhi Industries Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "The policy introduces a pioneering approach to support the growing segment of independent food businesses, including cloud kitchens, ghost kitchens, and other non-dine-in delivery outlets." "Designed to simplify business operations and promote sustainable growth, the policy will be effective from 2024 to 2029. It aims to reduce regulatory hurdles, streamline licensing processes, and create opportunities for job growth and skill development



throughout the National Capital Territory," he said. In response to the growing demand for food delivery services, the Delhi government's new policy provides a robust regulatory framework that addresses the specific needs of non-dine-in food outlets, currently numbering over 20,000 in the capital, the statement said. This initiative aims to enhance ease of doing business, streamline compliance, and improve operational efficiency, fostering an environ-

ment that supports entrepreneurial growth, skill enhancement, and employment opportunities, it said. The policy introduces a dedicated single window portal for licensing, facilitating hassle-free approvals and simplifying compliance. This portal is designed to make it easier for independent food outlets to establish and operate efficiently, it said. Outlets with a floor area under 250 square meters are exempt from requiring a fire

department NOC, provided they meet essential fire safety standards through self-certification. The labour department will permit approved food outlets to operate around the clock, processing applications within 30 days for swift approvals, the statement said. "Through the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), the city government will establish affordable and modern infrastructure

facilities within industrial areas. These will include shared kitchens, food testing labs, temperature-controlled warehouses, and co-working spaces, all aimed at supporting small businesses and start-ups," the statement said. This policy seeks to create a fertile ground for independent food businesses, equipping them with essential resources and simplifying regulatory demands, thereby unlocking growth potential across the sector, it stated. The Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) will be instrumental in delivering targeted training and skill development programs for both entrepreneurs and employees, offering a 75 per cent subsidy on training costs for recognised outlets, it said. To drive excellence and encourage best practices, the policy introduces an annual awards program. Independent food outlets demonstrating exemplary standards in hygiene, compliance, and safety will be acknowledged with top awards, including cash prizes of up to Rs two lakh, it added.

# Rajnath Singh to inaugurate Museum of Valour, Sardar Patel statue in Tawang, celebrate Diwali with soldiers

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI/ITANAGAR

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Tawang district in Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday to inaugurate the Museum of Valour dedicated to Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing and unveil a statue of Bharat Ratna Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the border district. He will also celebrate Diwali with soldiers stationed along the India-China border. Army Chief General Uppendra Dwivedi will also be present. Manipur Chief Minister N

Biren Singh will also join the event. Sharing the information on social media, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu welcomed both Rajnath Singh and the Manipur Chief Minister to the state. "The inauguration of Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing Museum of Valour and unveiling of Desh Ka Vallabh, the statue of Bharat Ratna Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at Tawang, by him in the august presence of Hon'ble Manipur CM Shri @NBirenSingh ji and other dignitaries will be cherished by

us for ages to come," Khandu posted in the micro-blogging site. "The heroic deed of Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing, who bravely led an expedition in February 1951 to bring the Indian administration to Tawang, has no parallel in human history. What 'Iron Man' Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel did as India's first Home Minister by integrating several princely states into the country leaves us forever indebted to him. I on behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh heartily welcome Hon Defence Minister Shri @rajnathsingh ji



on the pious land of dawn-lit mountains," the chief minister said. The two monuments dedicated to two great and brave souls will always remind us of their critical contributions to our country's integrity and sovereignty, the chief minister said in another social media post. Set against the backdrop of the eastern Himalayas, Tawang has long symbolised India's commitment to securing its borders. Rajnath's visit comes at a time when India and China reached a breakthrough in patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)

in Eastern Ladakh. Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, will be in Andaman and Nicobar to participate in festivities with soldiers deployed there. Navy chief, Admiral Dinesh Tripathi, will celebrate with naval troops in Gujarat's Porbandar, while Air Chief Marshal AP Singh will celebrate with soldiers in Jammu and Kashmir. The tradition of celebrating Diwali with troops was started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he came to office. In his first Diwali as prime minister, Modi visited Siachen,

while the following year, he was in Punjab's Amritsar. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, he went to Hiamchal Pradesh's Kinnaur, Gurez sector (Jammu and Kashmir) and Harsil in Uttarakhand, respectively. In 2019, the prime minister was again in Jammu and Kashmir, as he celebrated the festival with jawans in Rajouri. Next year, he was in Rajasthan's Longewala and in 2021, he was back in Jammu and Kashmir (Nowshera). He spent the next two Diwalis with troops in Ladakh's Kargil and Lepcha, Himachal Pradesh respectively.

## Scheme launched to train 2.37 lakh young volunteers across country as first responders to disaster relief

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan has launched a special scheme to train 2.37 lakh young volunteers in 315 districts across the country as the first responders to disaster preparedness and response. The 'Yuva Apada Mitra Scheme' was launched at the 20th formation day function of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) here on Monday, an official release said. According to the plan, under the 'Yuva Apada Mitra Scheme', 2,37,326 young volunteers from the youth organisations such as National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BS&G) and National Service Scheme (NSS) will be trained in 315 districts of 28 states as a first responders to



disaster preparedness and response. Besides, 1,300 trainers will also be prepared under the up-scaling of 'Aapda Mitra Scheme' with an estimated total cost of Rs 469.53 crore. The theme of the formation day event was 'Empowering Communities for Disaster Risk Reduction through Awareness for Behavioral Change'. During the event,

the union home secretary launched seven guidelines, SOP and handbook on disaster management. In his address, he urged the Himalayan and Northeastern Region (NER) states to put up their projects on Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) in consultation with respective stakeholders according to national programme on GLOF, the release said.

## Congress seeks immediate probe into deaths of seven elephants in MP

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The death of seven elephants in Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve has sparked outrage, with Congress leader Jairam Ramesh calling it "absolutely shocking". He has sought an immediate probe into the mortalities stating that this loss represents about 10 per cent of the reserve's elephant population. The Congress general secretary in-charge communications said, "The news from the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve that seven elephants have died while two or three more are critical, is absolutely shocking." "This wipes out some 10 per cent of the elephant population in the reserve at one go. A full inquiry must take place immediately and preventive measures must be instituted," the former environment minister said on X, tagging Environment Minister



Bhupender Yadav. According to reports, State Forest Minister Ramniwas Rawat has ordered a Special Investigation Team probe, while officials are investigating potential causes, including the consumption of Kodo millet. The situation remains critical, with three more elephants in serious condition. A forest official said three more elephants have died in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, taking the toll to seven. "The condition of three other tuskars was serious," the official said.

Madhya Pradesh's Forest Minister Ramniwas Rawat has ordered a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the death of the tuskars and asked officials to ensure strict action against culprits. BTR's deputy director Prakash Kumar Verma said prime facie, the elephants seemed to have died after consuming Kodo millet, but the exact cause will be known after the autopsy. Four wild elephants were found dead in the BTR on Tuesday while four others, part of the same herd of 13 tuskars, were found ill during routine patrolling, officials earlier said. Verma on Wednesday said so far seven elephants have died. They were part of the herd of 13 pachyderms, he informed. The condition of three other jumbos was serious and they were being treated, while the BTR teams were monitoring the movement of remaining elephants that were part of the herd, he added.

## Apologise to country: BJP to Congress after EC rejects Haryana irregularities charge

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday asked the Congress to introspect and apologise to the country after the Election Commission (EC) rejected its allegation of irregularities in the just-concluded Haryana assembly polls as "frivolous and unfounded". In a strongly-worded letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, the poll panel on Tuesday dismissed the party's allegations of irregularities in Haryana polls and said it was raising "the smoke of a generic doubt" about the credibility of an entire electoral outcome like it did in the past. Such "frivolous and unfounded" doubts have the potential of creating "turbulence" when crucial steps like polling and counting

are in live play, a time when both public and political parties' anxiousness is peaking, the EC had said. Attacking the Congress over the issue, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said, "In 1,642 pages, the Election Commission has given a detailed reply to the Congress over its baseless and preposterous allegations. The party stands completely exposed now. It does not have faith in any of the democratic systems and is ready to go to any extent to weaken the systems in India." In the manner the Congress is trying to "demean" the dignity of the Constitutional bodies, it is not just ridiculous but suspicious, he charged. "Hence, after the Election Commission's reply, the Congress should apologise to the country and introspect," the BJP spokesperson added.

## India accounts for 26 per cent of global TB burden: WHO

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

India's ambitious goal to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, five years ahead of the global target, appears challenging with a new World Health Organization's (WHO) report pointing out that India accounts for 26% of the global TB burden, the highest among 30 high-burden countries. As per the Global Tuberculosis Report 2024, globally, TB also emerged as the leading infectious disease killer in 2023, surpassing COVID-19. The WHO reported about 8.2 million new cases of TB, marking the highest incidence since monitoring began in 1995. While India led the list was followed by Indonesia, China, the Philippines, and Pakistan. This also represents a notable



increase from 7.5 million reported in 2022. The top infectious disease was found to be most common among men (55 per cent). Women accounted for more than 30 per cent, while 12 per cent were children and young adolescents. "The fact that TB still kills and sickens so many people is

an outrage, when we have the tools to prevent it, detect it and treat it," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, in the report. He called on countries to "make good on the concrete commitments they have made to expand the use of those tools, and to end TB". The report identifies five key

risk factors for TB: undernutrition, HIV infection, alcohol use disorders, smoking, and diabetes, stressing the need for multisectoral action to address these issues. The report said, MDR-TB poses a significant obstacle. Despite treatment success rates reaching 68%, only 44% of those estimated to have MDR-TB were diagnosed and treated in 2023. "Of the 400 000 people estimated to have developed MDR/RR-TB, only 44 per cent were diagnosed and treated in 2023," the report said. The complexities involved in managing these cases make eradication efforts more difficult. While the coverage of TB preventive treatment has been sustained for people living with HIV, multidrug-resistant TB remains a public health crisis. The report calls for increased

funding for TB research and sustained efforts to improve treatment success rates for multidrug-resistant TB, which have reached 68%. "Critical determinants like poverty and GDP per capita also require coordinated multisectoral action," said the report, while calling for increased funding for TB research. On the positive front, meanwhile, the report noted a decline in the gap between the estimated number of new TB cases and those reported. It narrowed to about 2.7 million, down from Covid pandemic levels of around 4 million in 2020 and 2021. In March 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a commitment to eliminate TB from India by 2025, as the rest of the world aimed to achieve the TB-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets by 2030.

## Diwali an opportunity to help deprived and needy: President Murmu

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu Wednesday greeted citizens on the eve of Diwali and said the festival is also an opportunity to help the deprived and needy and share happiness with them. On the auspicious occasion of Diwali, "we should illuminate our conscience, adopt virtues of love and compassion, and promote social harmony", she said. This festival is also an opportunity to help the deprived and needy, and share "our happiness with them", the President said in a message issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Diwali is a festival of happiness and enthusiasm, she said. "This festival symbolises the victory of knowledge over



ignorance and good over evil. Various communities in India and abroad celebrate this festival with great zeal," President Murmu said, adding that this festival also kindles hope for a brighter future. "Let us be proud of the glori-

ous heritage of India. With faith in goodness, let us celebrate a pollution-free Diwali and pledge to build a healthy, prosperous and responsible society," she said while extending Diwali greetings to all Indians living in the country and abroad.

## Centre's panel on exam reforms mull reduced outsourcing, online exams

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Minimising outsourcing of staff and examination centres, holding maximum entrance examinations online and capping the number of attempts in major entrances are among the measures being contemplated by a high-level panel set up by the Centre to review functioning of National Testing Agency (NTA). The Centre had on October 21 sought two weeks time from the Supreme Court to submit the final report of the panel led by former ISRO chief R Radhakrishnan. "The report is almost ready. Several recommendations are being made to streamline the functioning of NTA and the conduct of major entrance exams in the country," a source said. Among the recommendations that the panel is likely to make are reducing offline exams or opting for hybrid exams where switching to online mode completely is not feasible; capping the number of attempts in major exams including medical entrance NEET and reducing the role of outsourced staff and centres to ensure sanctity of exams is not affected. "The panel held 22 meetings to address the complexities involved in conducting such large-scale exams, the risks and the security measures.



The panel had also sought suggestions from stakeholders including students and parents and took into account over 37000 suggestions received," the source said. In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination NEET and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had in July set up the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by NTA. While NEET was under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam had been compromised. Both matters are being probed by the CBI. Two other exams - CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG - were cancelled at the last moment as a pre-emptive step. The panel also includes for-

mer AIIMS Delhi director Randeep Guleria, Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor B J Rao, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras K Ramamurthy, People Strong co-founder and Karmayogi Bharat board member Pankaj Bansal, IIT Delhi Dean of Student Affairs Aditya Mittal and MoE Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal. The committee was also tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for various examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system. The panel had also opted two IIT Kanpur academicians as members - Amey Karkare, professor of Computer Science and Engineering and Debapriya Roy, assistant professor.

## Scientists develop luminescent ink with advanced security features

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Scientists at the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST) have developed a groundbreaking luminescent ink with advanced security features to combat counterfeiting in currency, certificates, branded goods and medicines among a few others. The INST is an autonomous Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Union Science and Technology Ministry. Counterfeiting is a growing problem worldwide and researchers are trying to find unique ways to prevent it. Luminescent properties of rare earth ions and the characteristic emissions of bismuth have long been known. However, this is a first of its kind security ink based on luminescent nanoparticles with rare earth doping, enabling excitation dependent luminescence (Under both UV and NIR light it gives Visible emission). By utilising rare earth ions and bismuth, this ink emits different colors under specific light wavelengths—vibrant blue, pink, and orange-red—making it difficult to duplicate, said a statement from the DST.



"Its unique properties allow for clear verification of authenticity in currency, certificates, medicines, and branded products. This innovative solution promises to enhance product integrity and consumer trust, providing a powerful tool against counterfeiting." The ink can overcome the limitations of current covert tags, which are security features usually visible only under UV light and can be easily duplicated. "Specifically, the ink appears vibrant blue under 365 nm light, pink under 395 nm light, and orange-red under 980 nm near-infrared (NIR) light and remains effective under a range of light, temperature, and humidity conditions," said the statement. The luminescent nanomaterial was synthesised using a simple co-precipitation

method at 120°C. After synthesis, the nanomaterials were dispersed into commercially available PVC ink using sonication (process of dispersing nanoparticles into solvent by applying sound energy). This mixture was then used to create patterns and letters through a screen-printing technique. These printed patterns, when exposed to different wavelengths of light, clearly showed the desired colour changes, proving the effectiveness of the ink, said the statement. By combining rare earth ions with well-known luminescent properties and bismuth with characteristic emissions, the team was able to enhance the encryption and decryption capabilities of the ink, improving its security potential.

## Autonomous vessel to sail 1,500 km from Mumbai to Tuticorin



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

In an effort to showcase the technological advancements achieved through innovation led by startups, the Indian Navy launched Sagarmala Parikrama on Wednesday, navy said here. Giving details, officials said Matangi- an Autonomous Surface Vessel developed by Sagar Defence Engineering was flagged off by Defence Minister Rajna Singh here during the Plenary Session of Swavlamban 2024 at Bharat Mandapam. The sea transit from Mumbai to Tuticorin spans a distance of 850 nautical miles or 1500 kilometers. During the transit Matangi will proceed in

Autonomous mode without human intervention, using the indigenously developed 'navigation and collision avoidance software'. Matangi has successfully completed the first leg of the Autonomous mode transit from Mumbai to Karwar covering about 600 km (350 nm) passage at night. Nearly 1,000 km more are to go to Tuticorin for the expedition, they added. Startup's and MSMEs lead the way to successful development and validation of niche technology embodying the spirit of Swavlamban 2024. Strength and power through innovation and indigenization to make science, technology and innovation a revolutionary idea in the country is the objective.

# Assam CM reconsiders plan to cut down century-old trees for flyover

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Amidst ongoing public outcry, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the government will reconsider its plans to fell dozens of century-old trees in Guwahati to make way for a flyover.

On Tuesday, prominent personalities and residents criticised the BJP-led government for planning to chop around 25 trees-some as old as 200 years-along the banks of Dighalipukhuri tank for the project. The protests continued on Wednesday, with college students, citizens, and local leaders gathering at Dighalipukhuri to voice their concerns.

"I want to assure you that the government is deeply committed to preserving our city's heritage and environment while advancing infrastructure. In constructing the flyovers from Dighalupukhuri to Noonmati, we are sincerely working to protect the old trees in the area. I urge all stakeholders to allow the Public Works Department a few days to explore an alternative proposal and



assess its feasibility," Sarma said in a post on X.

The government is constructing a four-lane 5.05 km long flyover, the longest in the city, from Dighalipukhuri to Noonmati at a cost of Rs 852.68 crore. It is scheduled to be operational by 2026. People hit the streets on Tuesday and protested the government's move to cut the trees on the banks of the iconic pond for the ongoing construction of the flyover. Later, they submitted a petition to the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court and requested him to take suo

motu cognisance of the matter, which is very important for the welfare of the environment. At night, hundreds of people, including singers, actors and students of Cotton University, held a vigil in the area to prevent the administration from cutting the trees.

"Following the public protest during the day, we formed a group called 'Save Dighalipukhuri'. We will hold this night vigil till the High Court takes a decision on the PIL," SPI state secretary Sangita Das said. Netizens also took to social

media to criticise the government's decision, highlighting the trees' importance as habitats for numerous resident and migratory birds.

"It's a good sign that there is a lot of anger among people against the government's stubborn decision to cut down trees. However, if this protest does not translate into votes, it will yield no results," eminent neurosurgeon Navanil Barua said on Facebook.

The government may yield to public pressure or "high profile protests" in Guwahati, but it will not change its destructive character, he added.

"Where there is little or no protest, such irrational acts will continue," said Barua, also a renowned political commentator. Bollywood playback singer Papon, who hails from Assam, expressed his dismay over the loss of heritage, saying, "If we prioritise building the 'new' at the expense of the old, then it will become a historically very young place. Beautiful cities worldwide are celebrated for their greenery and historic

architecture, yet here we are losing trees that are over 150 years old in the name of 'development'."

"Because of my love for trees, I have been constantly hurt for years when I see century old trees being brought down to widen roads etc. In the past I have gone to ask the law, only to be told that, apparently development comes before environment!" he said on Facebook.

BJP MLA Mrinal Saikia applauded the public outcry against the government's move and said when a tree is cut in a rural area, another grows, but the same never happens in urban areas.

"I don't know whether it is right or wrong to cut trees for the sake of human development... But personally I am happy that some foresighted people are coming out to protest against cutting down of trees in #Dighalipukhuri, #Guwahati, #Assam," he posted on X. According to an RTI reply, the Public Works Department, which is looked after by Sarma, stated that the authorities have decided to go ahead with uprooting the trees surrounding the historic

Dighalipukhuri without carrying out any environmental impact assessment and public hearing.

As per popular legend, the Dighalipukhuri was constructed by King Bhagadatta, who led the Kaurevas in the Battle of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata, during the 'swayamvar' of his daughter Bhanumati.

Historically, the pond was used by the Ahoms as a naval dockyard, especially during the 1671 'Battle of Saraighat' on Brahmaputra.

Its access to Brahmaputra was eventually closed during colonial times. The connecting portion was further filled, on which the Circuit House was built and later the Gauhati High Court came up. Besides, several other landmark structures like the state museum, district library, Rabindra Bhawan, Reserve Bank of India, a part of Cotton College (first college of Northeast), Handique Girls' College (first women's college of NE), Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Hall and district courts.

# EC exposed their lies on election rigging: Haryana CM



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

The Congress' lies have been exposed and its attempts to undermine the election process thwarted, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said here on Wednesday, a day after the Election Commission(EC)rejected allegations of rigging in the Haryana Assembly polls. The EC on Tuesday rejected Congress' allegations of irregularities in the conduct of the polls, saying the party was raising "the smoke of a generic doubt" like it did in the past.

"...The Hon'ble Election Commission has exposed that lie of Congress," Saini told reporters on the sidelines of the 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' oath-taking ceremony at the

Haryana Civil Secretariat. Saini said in the run-up to the polls he maintained that the Congress was not visible anywhere on the ground, even though its leaders claimed there was a "Congress wave".

"They looted the country, indulged in corruption, and scams in the country, they made people stand in queues for days just to get a gas cylinder," he said.

On Tuesday, in a strongly-worded letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, the poll panel said such "frivolous and unfounded" doubts have the potential of creating "turbulence" when crucial steps like polling and counting are in live play and political parties' anxiousness is peaking.

# Assam CM slams Jharkhand Government for inaction against Congress minister's derogatory remarks

PTI ■ BAHARAGORA/JHARKHAND

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday slammed the JMM-led government in Jharkhand for failing to take action against Congress minister Irfan Ansari over his alleged derogatory remarks about BJP leader Sita Soren. Sarma claimed that the government hesitated to act against Ansari due to concerns about angering infiltrators.

Speaking at a mahila sammanan in Baharagora, where he sought votes for BJP candidate Dineshanand Goswami, Sarma said, "Recently, Congress minister



Irfan Ansari made derogatory remarks against Sita Soren, the sister-in-law of chief minister Hemant Soren, but yet no action has been taken because it might upset infiltrators." Sita Soren and Ansari are both contesting from Jamtara seat. The National Commission

for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) also took cognisance of Ansari's remarks and issued a notice to Jharkhand government, seeking a report on the matter.

Sarma, who is the BJP's election co-in-charge, said Bangladesh infiltrators have been entering the state every day. "They are occupying lands and posts of mukhiyas by marrying tribal girls here. Jharkhand politics is gradually going into the hands of infiltrators but the JMM government is doing nothing against them," Sarma said.

He alleged that infiltrators have ruined the social fabric of Santhal Paraganas.

He vowed that if the BJP comes to power in Jharkhand, infiltrators would be chased away.

The Assam CM also criticised the JMM government for not fulfilling promises made during the 2019 elections, including providing 5 lakh jobs.

He pledged that a BJP government would offer jobs, sell LPG cylinders at Rs 500 with two free per year, build 21 lakh houses for the poor, and provide Rs 2,100 to women under the Gogo Didi Yojana.

Elections for the 81-member assembly will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20, with counting scheduled for November 23.

# Jan Suraj founder urges people to stop voting for 'jaat and bhaat'

PTI ■ RAMGARH/BIHAR

Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor on Wednesday urged the people of Bihar to give up supporting political parties in the name of 'jaat' (caste) and 'bhaat' (free ration), blaming the voting behaviour for the state's chronic backwardness. Kishor, the political strategist-turned-activist, came out with the catchy rhyme at a rally in the Ramgarh assembly segment where a by-poll is scheduled next month.

The IPAC founder, who has worked with political leaders of all hues in a professional capacity, claimed that his home state has been given a raw deal by successive regimes in Bihar as also the Narendra Modi government

at the Centre.

"Lalu and Nitish kept the whole of Bihar trapped in 'jaat' for 35 years. For the past 10 years, Modi has been short-changing you in exchange for five kgs of bhaat. You must stop voting for 'jaat' and 'bhaat' if you want a better future for yourself and your children," Kishor said at the rally.

Kishor, whose fledgling party hopes to hold its own in Ramgarh which the RJD wants to retain and the BJP is trying to wrest back, also asked the people not to vote for the saffron party "which has made clear it will back Nitish Kumar for another term in office after assembly polls due next year." "Nitish Kumar has replaced

the terror of criminals during the Lalu era with the terror of an unbridled bureaucracy. The ongoing land survey has led to turmoil. People are also witnessing excessive bills for electricity and disconnections without warning ever since the smart pre-paid meters have been made mandatory. "If you support BJP, it will strengthen the hands of Nitish and your woes will continue", alleged the Jan Suraj founder which is contesting all four assembly seats of Bihar where by-polls will take place on November 13.

Besides Ramgarh, by-elections will be held in Imamganj, Belaganj and Tarari assembly constituencies.

# Odisha police cracks down on interstate cyber fraud



PTI ■ CUTTACK/ODISHA

The crime branch of Odisha Police arrested 24 interstate cyber fraudsters in connection with the cheating of a corporate employee who lost Rs 6.28 crore.

The Additional Director General (ADG) of crime branch, Vinaytosh Mishra, said police froze Rs 16.85 lakh from the suspects' bank accounts and returned Rs 6.8 lakh to the victim.

According to the complaint, the victim was added to a fraudulent WhatsApp group and lured into investing a large sum for promised high returns.

Following the complaint, seven teams were formed to probe the interstate fraud ring.

The police teams arrested nine accused from Tamil Nadu, eight from Gujarat and seven from Rajasthan, Mishra said.

Speaking about the modus operandi of the fraudsters, the crime branch officer said that the arrested people are not the real kingpins. They may be termed foot soldiers of a major syndicate that cheats people.

The victim was initially given shares worth Rs 19 each, which quickly inflated to Rs 110, raising the fund value to Rs 25 crore, Mishra said.

When the complainant wanted to withdraw the money, the group admin allowed him to withdraw Rs 23 crore on August 21, 2024.

When he made an attempt to withdraw his funds, he was removed from that WhatsApp group and the application used for transactions was deactivated.

From the bank details and other documents collected during the investigation, the police identified 24 accused people from three states, Mishra said.

"As of date the team has apprehended nine accused persons from Tamil Nadu, eight accused from Gujarat and seven from Rajasthan," he said adding that six of the accused were produced before a court on October 28 and 11 will be produced before a court on Wednesday.

Another seven accused are being brought to Odisha from Rajasthan on transit remand, he said, adding that the investigation is in progress.

# Belgian paraglider killed in mid-air collision

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A Belgian paraglider was killed after colliding mid-air with another paraglider in Bir-Billing while they were practising for the upcoming Paragliding World Cup 2024 in the Himachal Pradesh town, police said on Wednesday.

The accident took place on Tuesday when the two paragliders took off separately. Feyarets' body has been spotted but is yet to be recovered from the forest. The other paraglider, who suffered injuries and has been taken to hospital, got entangled in the trees and was rescued.

His nationality is yet to be ascertained, police officials said.

Feyarets, known only by one name, was a free flying paraglider in his mid-sixties, they said.



This is not the first time tragedy has struck the famed slopes of Bir-Billing.

In October last year, Polish paraglider Andrez died during a solo flight from Bir-Billing.

Kangra Superintendent of Police Shalini Agnihotri said police has directed authorities to register paragliders, adhere to designated routes and ensure they don't fly over military areas.

"A proposal to install special towers in high mountains to pinpoint the crash sites in case of accidents is in the pipeline," said Avinash Negi, director of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (ABVIMAS) in Manali.

The November 2-9 World Cup will see participation from 130 paragliders from 50 countries.

# BJP MP urges JPC chief to hear out Karnataka farmers' in land dispute with Waqf Board

PTI ■ BENGALURU

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya has requested Chairperson of Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024 Jagdambika Pal to invite farmers from Karnataka's Vijayapura district as witnesses to discuss their land disputes with Waqf Board.

The Lok Sabha member from Bengaluru South, who is a member of the Committee, recalled his recent meeting with a delegation of farmers from the district and other areas in the vicinity.

"These farmers, who have cultivated their lands for nearly a century, maintain records dating back to the



1920s and 1930s. In recent months, however, many of them have been served notices declaring their lands as Waqf property,

without any accompanying evidence or explanation.

The scale of these claims is substantial, with nearly 1,500 acres being designated as Waqf property in their village alone," he alleged in his letter to Pal.

According to him, the farmers claimed that apart from being served notices, changes have been made in the RTC (Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops), 'pahani' and mutation registers for some of the land parcels without following the due process of law.

"I, therefore, request that you invite the delegation of affected farmers to appear as witnesses before the Committee. Their testimony will provide

valuable insights into the local implications of the proposed amendments and the pressing issues faced by the farming community in this regard," the letter stated. Surya also requested Pal to visit the affected regions in Karnataka to receive complaints and grievances and also have a public hearing with the farmers adversely impacted by the Waqf Board's action.

Following allegations by a section of farmers from Vijayapura district that their lands were marked as Waqf properties, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said none of them will be evicted, and notices issued to them will be withdrawn.

# UP prepares for Maha Kumbh 2025, 500 projects underway for 42-day mega event

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Authorities are racing against time to put things in place before the 2025 Maha Kumbh - the 42-day mega religious event - unfolds in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj on the banks of the Ganga with the first 'shahi snan' being held on Makar Sankranti or January 14.

About 500 projects of central and state governments involving various departments, 15 of them from Uttar Pradesh alone, are at different stages of completion, officials said.

During his October 6 visit to Prayagraj, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had announced extension of the project-completion deadline by 15 days to December 15, ostensibly to make up for extended rainfall and higher-than-normal water levels of the Ganga.

Usually during the Kumbh Mela, the water level of the Ganges is about 10,000 cusecs to facilitate devotees and saints from across the globe to take the holy dip in



the holy river. "However, when the chief minister had visited Prayagraj on October 6, the water level of the Ganges was about 1.25 lakh cusecs. The water level has now started receding and this has helped speed up various projects," an official associated with various

Kumbh projects said. "Usually the water level of Ganga starts receding around September 15. This time, however, it happened a month late," Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand told reporters while expressing confidence that all the projects would be completed within the

deadline. "The size and budget of the Maha Kumbh this time is almost three times that of the 2013 Maha Kumbh," another official said.

According to officials, the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Indian Institute of Information Technology Prayagraj and

Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology have also been roped in for providing inputs for various Kumbh Mela projects.

While officials appear confident of completing Kumbh projects in time, there are complaints of even road widening projects getting delayed.

"Widening of the road from Bairhana crossing to the CMP Dot bridge is necessary. This work has been pending since the last Kumbh (2019)," Colonelganj Corporator Anand Ghildiyal said.

"Widening of other roads leading to the Maha Kumbh area from Prayagraj railway junction - Leader Road and from Johnsonganj crossing to the station too - haven't been completed. If these are not completed in time, the devotees may have to face difficulties," he added.

Anand, the Kumbh Mela Adhikari, said that the entire Kumbh Mela will be set up in an area of more than 4,000 hectares.

"The Mela area will be divided into 25 administrative sectors for efficient crowd management. Apart from this, 2,300 CCTV cameras are being installed."

Officials said that about 99 temporary parking spaces and 1.5 lakh toilets are being set up in the fair area.

The Public Works Department is constructing 30 pontoon bridges on the Ganga, they said.

Gupta, superintending engineer (Kumbh Mela) of the Electricity Department, said 67,000 LED lights and 2,000 solar hybrid lights are being installed for the first time in the Mela area.

An Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam official said that the department is laying down 1,249 km of pipeline to ensure drinking water supply in the entire fair area.

About 200 water ATMs and 85 water pumps would be installed in the area.

Regional Manager of Uttar Pradesh State Transport Corporation Manoj Kumar

Trivedi said that about 7,000 buses would operate for the Kumbh Mela while another 550 shuttle buses would operate from the Kumbh Mela area to the surrounding areas.

Similarly, the Railways has made preparations to run 825 trains especially when the Kumbh traffic peaks during bathing rituals.

Divisional Railway Manager Himanshu Badoni said that there is a plan to run 825 trains on peak days during the fair. These would be short distance (up to 200 km) trains. Besides, the North Central Railway has approved running 400 trains for long distance.

Badoni said that a toll free number - 18004199139 - will be operational from November 1 to enable passengers to get information about different facilities in Kumbh Mela area in their native language.

Officials requesting anonymity said that the Maha Kumbh would cost over Rs 6,000 crore to the government.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Traffic mayhem

On the eve of Diwali, Delhiites found themselves stranded for hours as traffic jams clogged major roads

Diwali is the biggest festival in Delhi. It is awaited eagerly by one and all. While the festivities galore it is also during this time, the Delhiites suffer the most; high pollution levels and traffic jams dampen the festive spirit. On the eve of Diwali, thousands of commuters in Delhi found themselves trapped in an unending traffic nightmare. With the festive season in full swing, the city's roads, particularly around popular market areas, became scenes of frustration as vehicles moved at a snail's pace, leaving commuters stranded for hours. Despite pre-announced traffic measures by Delhi Police, congestion overwhelmed key roads, with frustrated citizens questioning the effectiveness of traffic management efforts. Heavy traffic jams were reported across several areas, including the DND flyway, Ashram Marg, and Sarai Kale Khan, stretching into congested points such as Karol Bagh, Taimur Nagar-Maharani Bagh Road, Punjabi Bagh, and Badarpur Mehrauli Road. As the festive rush built up on



Dhanteras, shoppers headed to market areas in droves. Many took to social media to share images and videos of the gridlocked streets, sparking discussions about the city's recurring traffic woes. In a bid to curb the chaos, Delhi Police had announced intensified road checks, anti-encroachment drives and measures aimed at keeping traffic flowing smoothly. Additionally, non-essential vehicles were restricted from entering the capital, and shoppers were instructed to park only in designated areas.

Despite these efforts, the measures seemed insufficient against the overwhelming crowd of festival shoppers. Sarojini Nagar, Sadar Bazar, and Khan

Market saw an enormous influx, leaving shop owners struggling to manage both security and traffic. In some areas, the traffic snarls dampened the Diwali spirit. Ironically, the unexpected security measures, intended to reduce congestion, left sections of the market unusually empty on Dhanteras. As commuters endured bumper-to-bumper delays, voices of discontent grew louder and many people vent their spleen on social media. With Diwali celebrations continuing, these issues are likely to persist. Despite attempts to bolster security and traffic regulation, the administration's efforts seem to have fallen way short, leaving commuters to bear the brunt of another chaotic festive season on Delhi's streets. The traffic jams reflect poorly on the administrations capability to handle it. No denying that more cars are on the roads and given the limited capacity of roads, traffic jams cannot be completely eliminated. But having said that it is also true that the preparedness to deal with such a scenario were inadequate. At places there was no traffic police personnel to control the traffic and many signal lights reportedly did not work. We actively campaigned to bring this issue to the attention of relevant departments through a series of reports well in advance, right before the festive season began. Yet, as always, complacency prevailed.

### PICTALK



Artists dance on the Rampath ahead of Deepotsav celebrations, in Ayodhya

# 'Trophyisation' of weapon platforms



BHOPINDER SINGH

In the propaganda war, the symbolic power of "trophy" weapons extends far beyond the battlefield, reshaping the narratives of geopolitical rivalries

If Ukrainians made a public spectacle of captured Russian weaponry, the Russians did likewise in flaunting captured Western military hardware, from the American M1 Abrams tank, German Leopard tank or the British Husky tactical support vehicle etc., in a public park. The symbolism supports the Russian narrative that the 'West/NATO is attacking Russia, and yet the Russians are triumphing. However, the ground truth is more complex as the Russians had invaded Ukraine and the war status is a stalemate at best, as the envisaged '10-day operation' has gone on for over a year and a half. Such displays are common across militaries, and they understandably do not sit well with the other side.

Now, the Chinese have got riled over similar symbolism as the US Navy plans to exhibit a warplane, albeit of its own, that harks back to the 2001 Hainan Island incident that involved a midair collision of a Signal Intelligence aircraft i.e., EP-3E Aries II of the UN Navy, and a Chinese Air Force F-8 fighter plane. Flying over the tense and disputed South China Seas, the US plane had taken off from its Kadena Air Base in Japan and was intercepted by two F-8 fighters midway between the Hainan Islands and Paracel Islands. Whilst making aggressive passes, one of the Chinese fighter planes collided with the American plane and the Chinese fighter plane broke. The Chinese fighter pilot's body was never recovered. The damaged American plane along with its 24 crew members made an emergency landing at China's Hainan Airbase without authorization and its crew were detained. There was a counterclaim by the Chinese that the American plane had deliberately hit the Chinese fighter plane, but it was never substantiated, even though the Chinese had the data from the flight recorders of both planes. 10 days of hectic diplomatic parleys ensued with each side blaming the other for provocation and unreasonable conduct.



China insisted on the illegality of the American plane's presence claiming the region to be part of its exclusive economic zone as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS)—whereas the Americans claimed patrolling rights under its right of Freedom of Navigation. But embarrassing delays in securing the release of American crew were publicly distracting from the more pressing foreign policy issue of launching the 'War on Terror' for the then US President, George Bush, in Afghanistan, following 9/11. A due 'letter of the two sorries' (for the death of the Chinese fighter pilot and unauthorized landing) from the American side led the same to be conveniently interpreted as a 'letter of apology' by the Chinese media, and the same led to the release of American crew and the return of the disassembled aircraft. 23 years later, the Americans are bringing back the same plane i.e., EP-3E Aries II, at its Pima Air & Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona, for public display. The 'trophyisation' will be accompanied by a backstory explaining its significance in a historic incident that was fraught with risks of further escalation, for public consumption. The Chinese fear an American



THERE WAS A COUNTERCLAIM BY THE CHINESE THAT THE AMERICAN PLANE HAD DELIBERATELY HIT THE CHINESE FIGHTER PLANE, BUT IT WAS NEVER SUBSTANTIATED, EVEN THOUGH THE CHINESE HAD THE DATA FROM THE FLIGHT RECORDERS OF BOTH PLANES

narrative of 'capitulation' that paints the Chinese reaction in a dim light, even though it had the American plane and its 24 crew members, on its soil. As a riled Chinese social media commentator reacted, "It is not 2001. Wake up! It's 2024" — as if to suggest that the Chinese PLA was no minnow any longer, and it would give a befitting reply. The unofficial mouthpiece of the Chinese regime i.e., Global Times, captured the reactionary mood in China, "Chinese people saw the incident as a painful memory for the nation and the reported plan to display the US warplane at a sensitive moment when China-US relations are delicate and face uncertainties, is like 'rubbing salt into the wound' and reflects an unfriendly stance by the US toward China". However, the situation in the choppy South China Seas has not changed much with the Chinese belligerence continuing and growing by the day, and with the Americans still conducting reconnaissance air sorties and naval exercises to counter the same. Countries like Taiwan, Japan and most recently Philippines, are in the direct line of competing territorial claims, against China. Symbolism with the conceptualisation of con-

cepts like QUAD (Quadrilateral of Sino-wary, Japan, US, Australia and India) or Naval Exercises are part of vital international optics and narrative building. In a dictatorial country like China where propaganda has been elevated to a fine art, Beijing understands the power of public perception, hence its discomfort with the re-positing of the Hainan incident, entailing the return of EP-3E Aries II in public imagination. The Chinese pipedream would like the new US exhibit to include, "calls from China and other countries worldwide to end US reconnaissance operations near their borders", but as the most encroaching, expansionist, and coercive neighbour — it would know better than to expect the American exhibit to be kind towards China's propaganda position. With many famous defections of fighter pilots towards 'enemy' countries (especially from China to Taiwan), the 'trophyisation' of weapon platforms is an old hat, and in that context, the thin-skinned and hyper-reaction by the Chinese recently is churlish. (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

### Revisit West Asia policy



The editorial on the looming war clouds in West Asia (Oct 28) should resonate more deeply with India than with other nations, given India's critical stakes in the region. For decades, attacks and counterattacks in West Asia have been common, but the current wave of violent escalations and genocides on both sides has far-reaching implications globally. India, in par-

ticular, faces a dilemma. The current administration leans ideologically toward supporting Israel, despite India's historical support for the Palestinian cause. Additionally, India benefits from affordable crude oil sourced from Russia, although these savings are primarily enjoyed by select private players in the oil sector rather than reaching the public. However, as tensions intensify, potentially drawing in the US and Russia, nations worldwide may find themselves compelled to align with one side. This situation could pressure the government to prioritize ideological support for Israel or risk trade disruptions that could affect India's economic stability—already challenged by an unfavorable trade balance. India, surrounded by a region of strained relations, cannot afford isolation in such turbulent times. It is essential for prudence to prevail.

AG Rajmohan | Anantpur

them easy targets.

These foreign-based numbers make tracing the criminals more challenging. While the Digital India initiative launched in 2015 has successfully propelled the nation toward digital empowerment, it has also exposed more citizens to cybercrime. This calls for increased caution, particularly among the elderly and those less familiar with digital technology. Only by staying vigilant can we protect ourselves from these evolving digital threats.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

### RISING CASES OF STROKES AMONG YOUNG

Madam — Countries worldwide are making significant investments to position themselves at the forefront of the semiconductor industry, with India setting aside \$11 billion and considering an additional \$5-10 billion. These are sizable figures, particularly when compared to the relatively lower investment in labor-intensive industries like leather and handicrafts. But what is the government's ultimate goal with such a massive investment? Is it to establish a base

for a larger electronics sector, or to support the expanding automobile supply chain? Unfortunately, the government's response has been unclear and less than satisfactory, with an emphasis on promoting "aatmanirbharta" or self-reliance. However, self-reliance may not be entirely practical given the complex nature of global supply chains. Reducing dependence on allied nations like South Korea and Taiwan may not be necessary; rather, the focus could be on lessening reliance on China. A key challenge for the government in implementing this plan will be securing a skilled workforce. A more strategic approach would be to target specific, scalable segments of the supply chain, such as fabrication, design, assembly, and packaging. Instead of focusing solely on self-reliance, India should aim to establish itself as a key player in the global semiconductor supply chain, maximizing the impact of this significant investment.

Pratyush Tiwari | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## The benefits and reality of organic food choices

From freshly harvested crops to packaged foods, the organic label now commands a premium price; is it for real or just a sales gimmick

In recent years, a remarkable trend has emerged, with organic products now prominently displayed on supermarket shelves and featured on packaging across the board. It encompasses everything from freshly harvested crops to essential packaged goods. And, given that the organic brand will cost significantly more, people are questioning if it is worth it. Organic foods offer health, aetiology, and environmental benefits. This type of food is promoted as a more wholesome and righteous option. The concept is straightforward: reduce pesticide use, eliminate synthetic fertilisers, and avoid genetically modified organisms. For numerous individuals, opting for cleaner and more organically cultivated produce justifies the expense. And yet, aren't we, in our way, being chipped away at our true worth as customers? Years ago, before the rise of industrial farming, vegetables like ladyfingers (okra) were a lot less predictable. We often found worms inside, an unpleasant but



natural reminder of the environment in which they grew. These "flaws" assured us that the produce was authentic, untouched by synthetic chemicals. Fast forward to today, and the produce is picture-perfect, but the trade-off has been significant. Our vegetables, once vibrant and full of flavour, are now coated in pesticides that strip them of their natural essence. We've all noticed it: the tomatoes don't taste like they used to, and a bell pepper is just... bland. With the essence of fresh vegetables fading from our experience, many sought refuge in the convenience of pre-packaged meals.

The appeal and taste of fast food or packaged snacks overshadow the presence of vegetables offered alongside them. It's hardly unexpected that many individuals find themselves torn between the less appealing, time-consuming superfoods and the quicker, more delicious meal alternatives. Yet, what is the price to pay? Here's the point: it's not about flavour or ease—it's about well-being. Even minimal exposure to pesticides has been linked to a variety of health issues, including hormone disruption and neurological complications. As time passes, these substances may build up within the human body, and despite increasingly stringent regulations, the long-term consequences remain largely unclear. This justifies the higher price tag, reinforcing the value of organic foods. Is the price: it's not about flavour or ease—it's about well-being. Even minimal exposure to pesticides has been linked to a variety of health issues, including hormone disruption and neurological complications. 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## FIRST COLUMN

### WHERE DO WE GO WRONG?

It is essential to recognise the diverse spiritual paths that humanity traverses



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I am referring to our relationship with God. To understand this properly, clarity must be there about different classes of men. There are two main ones. The first one is of majority. In this, there are five types. Many do not know God, those who are living in the wilderness, and do have not much connection with civilization. The next are those, who are aware but have no opinion about God. They take a neutral stance in this matter. They are called agnostics. The next level is of those, who are aware of God, but are too lazy to have anything to do with Him, i.e., they don't do any spiritual practices to develop a link with God. The fourth category is of those, who are envious of God. Why is God superior to us, why should we take His shelter, why does He control everything, etc.? And the last category is atheists, who forcefully deny God's existence. Now I come to those, who have faith in God and His instructions, but are of different levels.

The first level is of those who do some spiritual practices as rituals. For example, someone has a murti of Lord Krishna in his home, which he has placed on a shelf. He lights an 'agarbatti' every morning after bath and places it near the murti. Someone else may be chanting Gayatri Mantra three times a day. Or someone maybe worshipping Suryadeva every morning with water. These are very nice activities and bring benefits, which are limited in extent. The worshiper has certain material desires, which he is keen on. He is superior to an ordinary man carrying out his material activities in pur-



suit of material goals like wealth, power, fame, etc. The next level is those who do some rituals and also have some faith in the Lord's instructions, as given in bonafide spiritual texts like the Bhagavad-Geeta. But they restrict themselves for two reasons what they can get from God. They don't do more to please God and become deserving, but displease God by their lusty, greedy, angry, hateful, etc. activities. Is this intelligent?

They end up gaining some material benefits for the spiritual acts done, and also punishments for bad acts done. They don't cancel out, i.e., both come to fruition. The next level of faith is better. They do rituals and try to gain purity in action through their minds, senses, and words. This helps them enhance their mode of goodness. They reap many benefits as a consequence. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 14.6) Then, comes the next level, who can be called devotees. They desire to please God in addition to their senses, minds and bodies. They have faith in God's instructions, i.e., try to act accordingly. But they also don't go far enough. This happens due to many reasons like fault in nature (svabhava) and not great 'sanskars' (cultural training).

They only come to a stage described by Lord Krishna. (6.41) Now we come to the highest level of devotees; he is helplessly attracted towards God due to practice done in the previous life. He transcends the ritualistic part of the Vedas. (6.44) Let us, therefore, not go wrong. We should stop ourselves from denying the existence of God staying neutral or being feeble about connecting with God. We have so much to gain even if we are not thinking of gaining liberation. God has so much to offer like opulence of all six kinds including success.

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

# India's shift toward competency-based hiring



DINESH SOOD

The focus on competency over credentials promises not only to improve employability but also to foster a more inclusive workforce



India is moving towards skills-based hiring over degrees, marking a significant shift in the job market. Companies increasingly adopt competency-based hiring practices, focusing on practical skills and inclusivity rather than traditional degrees. This change is influenced by the growing importance of industry-relevant competencies in today's digitised business landscape. IBM India is a notable example of this trend, as it has implemented a 'skills-first' policy, where a college degree is no longer a prerequisite for recruitment. Similarly, companies like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro are also shifting towards skills-based hiring, investing heavily in training programs in the digital economy.

This shift has broad implications for India's education sector, prompting universities and educational institutions to incorporate more industry-relevant training and competency-based curricula. Many Indian universities are partnering with businesses to offer specialized training in artificial intelligence, data analytics, cyber security, and beauty and wellness.

Recently, Medhavi University collaborated with Orane International, a pioneer global institute in beauty-wellness. Such collaborations aim to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry requirements, ensuring graduates are job-ready from day one. Reports have shown that such partnerships have significantly increased employability in specialized fields, highlighting the importance of aligning education with industry needs. Competency-based hiring is revolutionising university education and professional development in India. In today's technology-driven economy, continuous learning and upskilling are crucial for career advancement.

Companies like IBM, TCS, and Infosys



THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL TO NATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. AS REFLECTED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION BUDGET, SIGNIFICANT FUNDING HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARDS DIGITAL PROJECTS TO PREPARE YOUNG INDIANS FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE

heavily invest in training programs on the digital economy. These programs often include online courses, certifications, and micro-credentials, enabling employees to acquire new skills efficiently.

The Indian government recognizes that skills development is critical to national performance and economic growth. As reflected in the 2024 education budget, significant funding has been directed towards digital projects to prepare young Indians for a digital future.

Over the next five years, approximately 2 million young people will receive skills training. Additionally, 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) will be modernized, with updated course content tailored to industry needs.

This government support is crucial for India's ambition to remain a talent hub. India stands at a critical juncture in its economic journey, with immense potential for growth but facing a significant challenge in bridging the unemployment-employability gap. As the world's fifth-largest economy, India's vision for "Viksit Bharat" by 2047 hinges on effectively skilling its youth to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving job market.

The Union Budget 2024-25 has highlighted this priority, allocating substantial funds for education, employment, and skilling initiatives. However, the task ahead is daunting, with nearly 73% of workers aged 15-59 years lacking formal or informal vocational training. A multi-pronged

approach is essential to harnessing India's demographic dividend and fueling economic growth. This includes bolstering institutional support, strengthening industry-academia connections, and leveraging innovative financing solutions like impact bonds. As India navigates this crucial phase, the success of its skill development efforts will play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's future and realizing its economic potential.

Competency-based hiring transforms the job market and creates opportunities for diverse groups often excluded.

In India, many individuals seeking to re-enter the workforce—often in remote or part-time roles—benefit from this approach. During the pandemic, many women took online courses in digital marketing, content creation, and I.T. services while balancing home responsibilities. This shift towards skills-based hiring opens doors for a more inclusive and diverse workforce and paints an optimistic picture of the future of employment in India, full of opportunities and potential for growth.

India's thriving start-up culture is a testament to the adaptability and practical experience valued in skills-based hiring. Startups, often operating with limited resources, place less emphasis on educational background and more on the skills and potential of their employees.

As a result, startups are setting the pace in adopting skills-based hiring practices, inspiring more giant corporations to follow suit

and revolutionise the job market. Their innovative approach to hiring is not only inspiring but also a sign of the changing times in the Indian job market. Transitioning to skills-based hiring comes with challenges, including the need for accurate and unbiased skills assessments.

Traditional hiring, reliant on academic qualifications, is relatively straightforward. In contrast, evaluating practical skills requires sophisticated testing and assessment techniques. Additionally, companies must train their H.R. teams to recognize and nurture talent based on skills rather than credentials.

Acknowledging these challenges is the first step towards overcoming them, and it prepares us for the future of hiring. By acknowledging these challenges, we can better prepare for the future of hiring and ensure a more effective and inclusive job market.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of competency-based hiring are evident. Companies can access a broader and more diverse talent pool by focusing on skills, including individuals overlooked by traditional hiring processes. This approach helps fill critical skills gaps and fosters a more inclusive and innovative workforce.

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)

## Reviving Bihar's libraries: Bridging the gap between tradition and technology

A well-conceived hybrid model could revitalise Bihar's libraries, providing a space where traditional and digital learning coexist

In today's era of rapid digital transformation, libraries in Bihar and across India are facing a critical challenge: how to remain relevant in a world increasingly dominated by digital content and online resources. Historically, libraries have been pillars of knowledge and learning, preserving history, culture, science, and philosophy for generations. However, with the rise of the internet, mobile technology, and social media, the traditional role of libraries is being questioned, especially in rural areas and smaller towns. The digital revolution has reshaped the way people, especially the youth, consume information. Where libraries were once the sole custodians of knowledge, the



RINKU KUMARI

Internet now offers instant access to vast amounts of data. E-books, online courses, and educational videos are available at the click of a button, challenging the need for physical spaces to access information. While this shift has opened new avenues for learning, it has also contributed to the neglect and decline of public libraries, particularly in states like Bihar. Bihar's once-thriving

library culture has dramatically deteriorated. Where there were once 540 public libraries in the state during the 1950s, only 51 remain today, according to a 2022 report from the Bihar Library Committee.

Entire districts, including Arwal, Kaimur, Banka, Sheohar, Kishanganj, and Sheikhpura, now have no public libraries at all—neither in rural areas nor in urban centres. The closure of these institutions reflects a deeper cultural shift, where reading and communal learning spaces are no longer central to the lives of many. Muzaffarpur, highlights the concerning reality of the fading library tradition. Its few remaining libraries, such as

the Gandhi Smriti Library and Nav Yuvak Samiti Trust Library, are either poorly resourced or neglected. In a city of this size, there isn't a single well-functioning library that caters to literature lovers or cultural enthusiasts, leaving little hope for their counterparts in rural areas. Yet, as the world embraces digital transformation, the role of libraries must evolve rather than disappear. The challenge lies not in replacing libraries but in reimagining them as hybrid spaces—integrating digital resources with the physical charm and purpose of traditional libraries. Libraries, with their rich legacy of providing knowledge, can be transformed into community hubs that offer more than just



books. They can become centres for digital literacy, e-learning, and skill development, especially in areas where access to the internet and technology is still a challenge. In this context, Vinay, a social worker from Muzaffarpur, suggests a forward-thinking solution: modernizing libraries to meet the needs of the current generation. Libraries should be equipped with computers, internet access, and resources

for career counselling and education. "We need to reconnect young people, who are lost in the virtual world, with the world of books," he explains.

Libraries can offer both—the serenity and richness of traditional books and the practicality and excitement of digital resources. This transformation would not only make libraries more accessible but also relevant to today's youth, who are accustomed to

consuming knowledge digitally. The success of such an initiative would depend on concerted efforts by local leaders, communities, and governments. For instance, establishing a digital library in every Panchayat would bridge the urban-rural divide, bringing digital literacy to the forefront while preserving the cultural and intellectual heritage libraries represent. Panchayat representatives and village intellectuals can play a critical role in promoting the use of these modernized libraries, ensuring that the younger generation has access to both digital and physical forms of knowledge. The ongoing digital revolution has created an urgent need to rethink the purpose and structure of

libraries. The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, one of the few libraries still thriving in Bihar, is a testament to the potential of such institutions. However, unless libraries across the state are modernized to embrace digital tools and resources, their future seems uncertain.

The decline of libraries in Bihar isn't just about the closure of physical spaces—it reflects the broader societal changes driven by technology. But rather than view this as the end of the library's role, it should be seen as an opportunity to redefine its importance in a digital-first world. (The writer is an educator in Muzaffarpur Bihar; views are personal. Charkha Features)

# Israel must step in if it bans UNRWA, says UN

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations stressed Tuesday that if Israel puts in place new laws cutting ties with the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the Israeli government will have to meet their needs under international law.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a letter obtained by The Associated Press that there is no other alternative to the agency, known as UNRWA. It has been a lifeline during the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, and the Israeli legislation "will have devastating consequences for Palestinian refugees" in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, he said.

The UN agencies for children, health and migration also stressed that UNRWA is the "backbone" of the world body's operations in Gaza, where people have relied on its emergency food aid and health centers during the more than year-long war, which has killed tens of thousands and left much of the enclave in ruins.

The United Nations is heartened by statements of support for UNRWA from all quarters and countries, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, and "we would very much appreciate efforts by any member state to help us get over this hurdle."

Israel has alleged that some of UNRWA's 13,000 staffers in Gaza participated in the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas that sparked the war. It's also accused hundreds of UNRWA staff of having militant ties and

said it has found Hamas military assets in or under the agency's facilities.

**Israel's new laws:** Two laws passed Monday could prevent UNRWA from continuing its work. Even the US, Israel's closest ally, joined many governments and humanitarian organizations in opposing the legislation, which doesn't take effect for three months.

Guterres sent the letter Tuesday to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu outlining his concerns.

As an occupying power, under international humanitarian law, Israel is required to ensure the needs of the Palestinians are met, including for food, health care and education, Guterres said. And if Israel isn't in a position to meet those needs, it has an obligation to allow and facilitate the activities of the UN, and "UNRWA is the principal means by which assistance is supplied to Palestinian refugees," he said.

If UNRWA's activities are restricted or halted, the secretary-general said, Israel would have to fill the vacuum "to ensure the needs of the population are met."

"Otherwise, it would be in violation of international law," said Dujarric, the UN spokesman.

Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon responded to the letter by saying, "Rather than condemning UNRWA for turning a blind eye to terrorism and in some cases participating in terrorism, the UN instead condemns Israel."

He claimed in a statement that

UNRWA isn't interested in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, calling it "nothing but an arm of Hamas operating under the guise of the United Nations."

"Israel will continue to facilitate humanitarian aid in Gaza according to international law," Danon said, "but UNRWA has failed in its mandate and is no longer the right agency for this job."

**Dismay from UN agencies:** World Health Organization spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said UNRWA health workers have provided over 6 million medical consultations over the past year. They also offered immunizations, disease surveillance and screening for malnutrition, and UNRWA's work "couldn't be matched by any agency - including WHO," he said.

Jeremy Laurence, spokesman for the UN human rights office, said that "without UNRWA, the delivery of food, shelter, health care, education, amongst other things, to most of Gaza's population would grind to a halt."

UNRWA was established by the UN General Assembly in 1949 to provide relief for Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes before and during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment, as well as their descendants.

**Israel faces criticism:** Timed to the Israeli laws, Norway announced Tuesday that it will ask the 193-nation General Assembly to request a ruling from the top United Nations court about whether Israel is obligated to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to

Palestinians by international organizations, including the UN.

The International Court of Justice in July condemned Israel's rule over the Palestinian territories, declaring its occupation unlawful. The nonbinding opinion called on Israel to end its occupation and immediately halt settlement construction.

Norway's foreign minister, Espen Barth Eide, told the AP that Israel's policy is making it increasingly difficult for Palestinians to access life-saving assistance. He said Norway will argue that even if Israel's occupation is illegal, it has obligations, "and we believe that these are not met."

Guterres told Netanyahu that while the Israeli laws prohibit any activity by UNRWA "within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel," the UN considers Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem part of the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel has no sovereignty because of its occupation.

Meanwhile, at the UN's regular Security Council meeting on the Middle East - this month open to all UN members - speakers supported UNRWA and virtually all called for immediate cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield expressed deep concern at the Israeli legislation, saying, "right now there is no alternative to UNRWA when it comes to delivering food and other life-saving aid in Gaza."

# Spanish authorities say 63 dead from devastating flash floods



AP ■ BARCELONA

At least 63 people have died in Spain's eastern region of Valencia after flash floods swept away cars, turned village streets into rivers and disrupted rail lines and highways in the worst natural disaster to hit the European nation in recent memory.

Emergency services in the eastern region of Valencia confirmed the death toll on Wednesday.

Rainstorms on Tuesday caused flooding in a wide swath of southern and eastern Spain. Floods of mud-colored water tumbled vehicles down streets at frightening speeds. Pieces of wood swirled with household articles. Police and rescue services used helicopters to lift people from their homes and cars.

Authorities reported several missing people late Tuesday, but the following morning brought the shocking announcement of dozens found dead.

Over 1,000 soldiers from Spain's emergency response units were deployed to the devastated areas.

"Yesterday was the worst day of my life," Ricardo Gabaldón, the mayor of Utiel, a town in Valencia, told national broadcaster RTVE. He said several people were still missing in his town.

"We were trapped like rats. Cars and trash containers were flowing down the streets. The water was rising to three meters," he said.

Spain has experienced similar autumn storms in recent years, but nothing compared to the devastation over the last two

days.

The death toll could easily rise with other regions yet to report victims and search efforts continuing in areas with difficult access. In the village of Letur in the neighboring Castilla La Mancha region, Mayor Sergio Marín Sánchez said six people were missing. A high-speed train with nearly 300 people on board derailed near Malaga, although rail authorities said no one was hurt. High-speed train service between Valencia city and Madrid was interrupted, as were several commuter lines.

Valencian regional President Carlos Mazón urged people to stay at home so as not to complicate rescue efforts, with travel by road already difficult due to fallen trees and wrecked vehicles.

"The neighborhood is destroyed, all the cars are on top of each other, it's literally smashed up," Christian Viena, a bar owner in the Valencian village of Barrio de la Torre, said by phone. "Everything is a total wreck, everything is ready to be thrown away. The mud is almost 30 centimeters deep."

Spain's central government set up a crisis committee to help coordinate rescue efforts. The rain had subsided in Valencia by late Wednesday morning. But more storms were forecast through Thursday, according to Spain's national weather service.

Spain is still recovering from a severe drought earlier this year. Scientists say increased episodes of extreme weather are likely linked to climate change.

# Biden calls Trump supporters garbage, sparks backlash

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden sparked a controversy when he compared supporters of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump to garbage. Biden was commenting on a racist joke a comedian made at a Trump rally days earlier likening Puerto Rico to an "island of garbage."

"The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters, his demonisation of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American. It's totally contrary to everything we've done, everything we've been," Biden said in his remarks on a campaign call for Latino voters on Tuesday.

"Just the other day, a speaker at his rally called Puerto Rico a 'floating island of garbage.' Well, let me tell you something. I don't know the Puerto Rican that - that I know - or a Puerto Rico, where I'm from - in my home state of Delaware,

they're good, decent, honorable people," he said.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio raised this issue in front of thousands of Trump supporters in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Trump, the former president, was also quick to condemn it. Trump, who was holding a rally in Allentown, described Biden's remarks as "terrible," and likened them to Hillary Clinton's comments calling some of Trump's supporters "deplorable" in 2016.

"So, you have to remember Hillary [Clinton]-she said 'deplorable' and then she said 'irredeemable,'" Trump said. "Garbage? I think is worse."

In a damage control exercise, Biden later tried to explain his remarks on X.

"Earlier today I referred to the hateful rhetoric about Puerto Rico spewed by Trump's supporter at his Madison Square Garden rally as garbage—which is the only word I can think of

to describe it," Biden wrote.

"His demonisation of Latinos is unconscionable. That's all I meant to say. The comments at that rally don't reflect who we are as a nation," Biden said.

Trump's running mate Ohio Senator JD Vance described it as disgusting.

"This is disgusting. Kamala Harris and her boss Joe Biden are attacking half of the country," he wrote on X.

"There's no excuse for this. I hope Americans reject it," he added.

Karoline Leavitt, the Trump Campaign's National Press Secretary, said in a statement that Trump is backed by Latinos, Black voters, union workers law enforcement officers, border patrol agents and Americans of all faiths.

"(Kamala) Harris, (Tim) Walz and Biden have labelled these great Americans as fascists, Nazis, and now, garbage," Leavitt said.

# China successfully launches new crew to space station

PTI ■ BEIJING/JINQUAN

China on Wednesday successfully launched its spaceship sending three astronauts, including the country's first female space engineer on a six months' mission to fine tune its low orbiting space station.

The Shenzhou-19 crewed spaceship was launched by a Long March-2F carrier rocket, early Wednesday from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China.

About 10 minutes after the launch, the Shenzhou-19 spaceship separated from the rocket and entered its designated orbit.

The crew members are in good shape and the launch is a complete success, the CMSA announced.

The spaceship will perform a fast, automated rendezvous and docking with the front port of the space station core module Tianhe in about 6.5 hours, forming a combination of three modules and three spacecraft. China built its space station

after it was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army, (PLA).

It is currently the only country to have a space station.

The ISS is a collaborative project of several countries. Observers say China's space station may become the only one of its kind in orbit once the ISS retires in the coming years.

The two robotic arms of the station, especially the long one which has the ability to grab objects including satellites from space, drew international concerns.

Early this month China announced its plans for the further development of space programmes which included launching a manned lunar mission, construction of a lunar space station, exploration of habitable planets and extra-terrestrial life to expand its space programme in the next few decades.

Besides building its space sta-



tion, China has launched a number of space missions including a lunar probe that collected samples for the first time from the far side of the moon and brought them back to earth for scientific studies.

The Shenzhou-19 crew consists of mission commander Cai Xuzhe, and astronauts Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze. Wang is currently China's only female space engineer and the third Chinese woman partici-

pating in a crewed spaceflight mission, the CMSA said.

The tasks for new crew included conducting space science and application tests, performing extravehicular activities, installing protective devices against space debris, and managing the installation and recycling of extravehicular payloads and equipment.

Lin Xiqiang, CMSA spokesperson told a press conference on Tuesday that the crew will

carry out 86 space science research and technology experiments, covering various fields including space life science, microgravity fundamental physics, space material science, space medicine and new space technologies.

The Shenzhou-19 astronauts will complete in-orbit rotation with the trio currently manning and stay at the space station for approximately six months.

Wang Haoze explained that she will be mainly responsible for space experimental projects, cargo management, and space station operation management. China is also engaging in discussions to select and train astronauts from partner nations, inviting international counterparts to join its space station flight missions, Lin said.

Considering the close ties, an astronaut from Pakistan was expected to join in future space station missions.

"No matter which country participates, it is humanity's collective quest to unravel the mysteries of the cosmos," Lin said.

# NY rally was an absolute lovefest: Trump

AP ■ ALLENTOWN

Urged by some allies to apologise for racist comments made by speakers at his weekend rally, Donald Trump took the opposite approach on Tuesday, saying it was an "honour to be involved" in such an event and calling the scene a "lovefest" - the same term he has used to describe the Jan. 6 insurrection at the US Capitol.

Trump gathered supporters and reporters to his Mar-a-Lago resort two days after a massive rally at Madison Square Garden featured a number of crude remarks by various speakers, including a set by comedian Tony Hinchcliff in which he joked that Puerto Rico was a "floating island of garbage." Some of Trump's top Republican allies have condemned the remarks, and his campaign took the rare step of publicly distancing itself from Hinchcliff's joke, though not the other comments.

But given the opportunity to apologise at multiple events and in interviews Tuesday, Trump instead leaned in. Speaking at his Florida resort, he said that "there's never been an event so beautiful" as his Sunday rally in his hometown of New York.

"The love in that room. It was breathtaking," he said. "It was like a lovefest, an absolute lovefest. And it was my honor to be involved."

On Tuesday night, he told Fox News' Sean Hannity that he knows nothing about Hinchcliff but said, "I can't imagine it's a big deal."

With just a week before Election Day, some Trump allies have voiced alarm that the rally, which was supposed to highlight the Republican presidential nominee's closing message in grand New York fashion, has instead served as a distraction and even a liability, given the electoral importance of Puerto Ricans who live in Pennsylvania and other key swing states.

"This is not a time to have anyone criti-



cize Puerto Rico or Latinos," former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who challenged Trump for the GOP presidential nomination and later endorsed him, said in an interview with Fox News Channel.

Trump later held a rally in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a city with a large Hispanic population, where Puerto Rico's shadow U.S. senator, Zoraida Buxo, joined him and defended the former president's record.

"We need this man to be our commander in chief," said Buxo, who cannot vote in the Senate because Puerto Rico is not a state. "He will make us feel safe and he will protect us."

Still, there was anger in Allentown. Ivet Figueroa, 61, stood outside the rally venue holding a trash can with the words "Trash Trump" on it.

She said of the insult and Trump: "The person who said it was vetted by him. So that's what he allowed, so he has to take responsibility for what he said. Now it's too

late for saying sorry. I don't want an apology. I want justice, and justice is on Nov. 5."

The fallout from the Madison Square Garden event risked highlighting voters' concerns about Trump's rhetoric and penchant for controversy in the closing stretch as both campaigns are scrambling for votes.

Speakers at the rally also made racist comments targeting Latinos, Black people, Jews and Palestinians, along with sexist insults directed at Trump's Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

In an interview with ABC News earlier Tuesday, Trump claimed to not know Hinchcliff but did not denounce what he said.

"I don't know him. Someone put him up there. I don't know who he is," Trump said, according to the network, insisting that he hadn't heard Hinchcliff's comments.

When asked what he made of them, Trump "did not take the opportunity to denounce them, repeating that he didn't hear the comments," ABC reported.

In the Hannity interview, Trump said people were trying to make the comedian's appearance into a "big deal" when it "has nothing to do with the party, has nothing to do with us."

The comments have drawn outrage from Puerto Rican leaders.

The archbishop of Puerto Rico called on Trump to disavow them, saying it wasn't enough for the campaign to say the joke didn't reflect Trump's views. The president of Puerto Rico's Republican Party called the "poor attempt at comedy" by Hinchcliff "disgraceful, ignorant and totally reprehensible."

In Pennsylvania, where Trump campaigned Tuesday night, the Latino eligible voter population has nearly tripled since 2000. More than half of those are Puerto Rican voters.

# Trump is unstable, obsessed with revenge: Harris

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris launched a fierce attack on her Republican rival Donald Trump, describing him as "unstable" and "obsessed with revenge" while urging Americans to reject his chaos and division.

Making a passionate appeal to her countrymen, Vice President Harris used the last major speech of her campaign to present herself as a fighter who would usher in a new generation of leadership.

"Donald Trump intends to use the United States military against American citizens who simply disagree with him. People he calls - 'the enemy from within.' This is not a candidate for President who is thinking about how to make your life better," she said.

"This is someone who is unstable, obsessed with revenge, consumed with grievance, and out for unchecked power," Harris said. Harris, 60, will take on Trump, 78, in the November 5 election.

Addressing thousands of people at the Ellipse in Washington, DC, where Trump told his supporters on January 6, 2021, to "fight like hell," shortly before they ransacked the US Capitol, Harris described the election as an existential choice between the liberties and the "chaos and division."

"He has an Enemies List of people he intends to persecute. He says one of his highest priorities is to set free the violent extremists who assaulted those law enforcement officers on January 6," she said.

Harris said it was time to stop pointing fingers and start locking arms.

"It is time to turn the page on the drama



and conflict, the fear and division. It is time for a new generation of leadership in America," she said.

"And I am ready to offer that leadership as the next President of the United States," she said.

In discussing her policy plans, she cast herself as a president who would expand Medicare to cover home health care, who would back women's reproductive rights and a president who would prize compromise.

"I am someone who has spent most of my career outside of Washington. So I know that not all good ideas come from here. I am not afraid of tough fights against bad actors and powerful interests," she said.

Harris said her mother instilled in her a drive to hold accountable those who use their wealth or power to take advantage of other people.

"The drive to protect hard-working Americans who aren't always seen or heard, and deserve a voice. That is the kind of president I will be," Harris said.

When elected, Harris said she would walk into the Oval Office, with a To-Do list.

"Full of priorities on what I will get done for the American people. And I will work with everyone - Democrats, Republicans, and Independents - to help Americans who are working hard and still struggling to get ahead," she said.



# South Korea's military says the North appears poised to conduct nuclear, ICBM tests

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's military intelligence agency told lawmakers Wednesday that North Korea has likely completed preparations for its seventh nuclear test and appears to be preparing to test a long-range missile capable of reaching the United States. In a closed-door hearing, the agency also said some advance units of North Korean troops sent to Russia may have arrived at battlefronts as the forces prepare to move to the Kursk region, where Russia has struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion, according to two lawmakers who attended the meeting. Earlier this month, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told The Associated Press that he expects North Korea to stage major provocations like nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests around the US election to dial up pressure on Washington and its allies. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has also flaunted his military nuclear programme in recent months, testing various missile systems and disclosing a secretive facility for producing weapons-grade uranium in September. The agency believes that North Korea has finished preparations to conduct a nuclear test at its testing ground in the north-eastern town of Punggye-ri, with the detonation likely to be

carried out at tunnel No. 3, said Lee Seong-kweun, one of the lawmakers who attended the hearing. North Korea conducted its sixth and last nuclear test in 2017. The agency also said it's detecting signs, including the placement of launch vehicles, that the North is preparing to test launch an ICBM designed to reach the US mainland, said Lee and Park Sun-won, another lawmaker. The agency believes the ICBM test could take place sometime in November. "We cannot specify the exact location but the transporter-erector launcher has been deployed at a certain area where it could be anticipated that an ICBM test aimed at verifying atmospheric re-entry technology could be conducted," Lee added. All of North Korea's ICBM tests since 2017 have been conducted at a high angle to avoid the territory of neighbours. Experts have said the North may eventually seek to flight test its weapons at an angle closer to a normal ballistic trajectory to verify whether the warhead would survive the harsh conditions of atmospheric re-entry. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have worsened since 2022 after Kim used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a distraction to accelerate the growth of his nuclear weapons and missile programme.

# North Korea's top diplomat in Moscow for talks on troop deployment

AP ■ MOSCOW

North Korea's top diplomat is set to hold talks in Moscow on Wednesday following reports that Pyongyang has sent thousands of troops to Russia to support its action in Ukraine. Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui's arrival followed the Pentagon's statement that North Korea has deployed about 10,000 troops to Russia to fight against Ukraine within "the next several weeks." Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said Tuesday that a "relatively small number" of North Korean troops are now in the Kursk region, where Russia has struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion, adding that it's yet to be seen how Moscow and Pyongyang will use them. Western leaders have described the North Korean troop deployment as a significant escalation that could also jolt relations in the Indo-Pacific region. Neither Moscow nor

Pyongyang have specified the agenda for Choe's talks in Moscow, but in a closed-door hearing at South Korea's parliament, the South's spy agency said Choe may be involved in high-level discussions on sending additional troops to Russia and negotiating what the North would get in return. South Korean and Western officials have voiced concern that Russia may offer technology that could advance the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programme. Moscow and Pyongyang have responded vaguely to South Korean and Western claims of the North Korean troop deployment to Russia, emphasising that their military cooperation conforms with international law, without directly admitting the presence of the North's forces in Russia. The US and its allies also have accused North Korea of providing millions of artillery shells and other equipment to Russia to fuel its military action in Ukraine.

# UK budget proposes US\$ 50b in tax hikes

AP ■ LONDON

British Treasury chief Rachel Reeves told lawmakers Wednesday that taxes will rise by 40 billion pounds (USD 52 billion) in order to plug a hole in the public finances and investment projects to boost growth. In the Labour Party's first budget since returning to power earlier this year for the first time in 14 years, Reeves said she will use the money to "invest, invest, invest" and get the economy growing. Reeves said the tax increases are needed because of the economic "black hole" left by the previous Conservative government. "I am restoring stability to our public finances and rebuilding our public services," she said. The centre-left party was elected July 4 after promising to

banish years of turmoil and scandal under Conservative governments, get Britain's economy growing and restore frayed public services. The budget could set the tone for the length of the current parliament, which runs until 2029, and the party's ability to win a second term at the next election. Reeves pledged to put "more pounds in people's pockets," give a much-needed financial boost to public services, such as schools and hospitals, and get the economy growing. All this has to be done within the confines of stretched public finances, which the government has said are in a much worse state than thought when it was elected in July. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has warned that the budget will reflect "the harsh light of fiscal reality" but that there will no

return to the austerity that marked the early years of the previous Conservative government after it was first elected in 2010. Reeves argued that higher taxes and limited public spending increases are needed to "fix the foundations" of an economy that it argues has been undermined by 14 years of Conservative government. The Conservatives say they left an economy that was growing, albeit modestly, with lower levels of debt and a smaller deficit than many other Group of Seven wealthy nations. Pumping money into health, education and housing is a priority of the new government, made harder by a sluggish economy, hobbled by rising public debt and low growth. The government also says there is a 22 billion pound (USD 29 billion) "black hole" in the

public finances left by the Conservative government. Labour has pledged not to raise the tax burden on "working people," a term whose definition has been hotly debated in the media for weeks. The Treasury has announced that about 3 million of the lowest-paid workers will get a 6.7 per cent pay increase next year, with the minimum wage rising to 12.21 pounds (USD 15.90) an hour. Reeves — Britain's first female chancellor of the exchequer, a position that has existed for some 800 years — also said she is tweaking the government's debt rules so that she can borrow billions more for investment in the health system, schools, railways and other big infrastructure projects, and to raise money by hiking tax paid by employers, though not employees.

# Iran lifts its ban on imports of new iPhone

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iranians will soon be able to get their hands on iPhones 14, 15 and 16 after authorities lifted a ban on new smartphone models by the US tech giant Apple, according to an announcement Wednesday. The ban on new iPhone models had been in place since 2023 but now, the country's telecommunications minister said authorities are allowing the registration of the new models. The minister, Satar Hashemi, said on X that the problem of registering new iPhone models on the Iranian market was "solved" and that Iran's Supreme Masoud Pezeshkian backed the efforts of the communication ministry toward that goal. Hashemi did not elaborate but said the import measures would be announced, soon. Following the 2023 ban, iPhone 13 and older versions could still be imported amid high demand for an item that remains a status symbol for many young Iranians. While the ban was in place, an iPhone 14, 15 or a newer model brought into Iran would stop

working on Iran's state-controlled mobile phone networks after one month, the time span for tourists allowed to visit the country. The ban spurred a parallel economy for the older handsets, jacking up prices for the devices as many sought to put their depreciating Iranian rials into any physical commodity. It was a sign of the economic woes plaguing Iran after decades of Western sanctions. Imports of iPhones have long been a contentious point — government statistics suggest that about a third of Iran's entire USD 4.4 billion mobile phone import market consisted of iPhones before the ban. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2020 pointedly criticised iPhone imports though he had previously slammed what he described as all American luxury goods. "Excessive imports are something dangerous," Khamenei said at the time, according to a transcript on his official website. "Sometimes this import is a luxury product, meaning there is no need for it,

I've heard about half a billion dollars were spent to import one type of American luxury cellphone." However, other foreign

smartphone brands such as Motorola, Samsung, Nokia, Xiaomi and Huawei remain widely available in Iran.

# New sanctions target Myanmar's military suppliers

AP ■ BANGKOK

Opponents of Myanmar's military government on Wednesday welcomed the latest sanctions imposed by the European Union, the UK and Canada on individuals and entities supplying aviation fuel and equipment to the army,

which has stepped deadly airstrikes. The army is currently on the defensive against ethnic militias in much of the country as well as hundreds of armed guerrilla groups collectively called the People's Defence Forces, formed to fight to restore democracy after the military

seized power from the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, 2021. Over the past year, the army has suffered unprecedented battlefield defeats, and has been increasingly relying on indiscriminate air and artillery strikes.

"The human rights violations taking place across Myanmar, including airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, by the Myanmar military is unacceptable and the impact on innocent civilians is intolerable," Britain's minister for the Indo-Pacific, Catherine West said in the statement.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform to the General Public at large that my clients (1) Sh. Vikas Vishwakarma S/o Sh. Sudeshan Vishwakarma and (2) Smt. Kamla Devi W/o Sh. Vikas Vishwakarma both R/o H.No. 70, Gali No.25, A-Block, Daxx Garden, Baroda, Nagdigh, Delhi-110043, have severed all their relations socially, financially in all respects with their son Sh. Sandeep Vishwakarma because he is not obedient to my clients and misbehaved with my above said clients and harassing my above said clients for his greed. Therefore, my above said clients have severed all kinds of relationship with their son Sh. Sandeep Vishwakarma and have debarred and disowned him from inheriting any movable and immovable properties owned by my above said clients. Any person dealing with them will do so at his/her/their own risk.  
Pardeep Kumar (Advocate).

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform to all concerned that w.e.f. 01<sup>st</sup> October 2024, the name of NEXGEN Financial Solutions, a partnership firm having its principal office at 709, Madhuban Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 has been changed to NEXGEN Foundation for all future purposes.  
For NEXGEN Financial Solutions Sd/-  
Sanjeev Gupta  
Partner  
Dated : 01.10.2024

**PROVISION OF LIFTS AT ABSS STATIONS**  
**Tender Notice No.: AP/EL/20/24-25.**  
**Dated: 28-10-2024.** E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:  
**Tender No.: AP/EL/20/24-25; Name of Work :** At Alipurduar Jn. Division- Provision of lifts at ABSS stations under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme including Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC) for the period of 10 years. **Advised Tender Value: ₹8,73,48,000/- Earnest Money : ₹5,86,700/-** Date & times of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 21-11-2024. For details please visit in website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)  
DRM/Elect. (G), Alipurduar Jn. NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is hereby informed to the General Public that Mr. Aseem Takyar S/o Late Sh. Ram Chander Takyar & Mrs. Renu Takyar W/o Mr. Aseem Takyar both R/o House No. 4061 Sector 23 A Gurugram, Haryana 122017 had purchased a residential House No. A-554 C size measuring 173 Sqyds. Situated at Ansal's Palam vihar Gurugram Haryana 122017. That Mrs. Renu Takyar unfortunately had expired on 31/07/2024 at Gurgaon & left her son Mr. Arman Takyar as her only legal heir along with her husband Mr. Aseem Takyar in the family. Mr. Aseem Takyar had approached to M/s Ansal properties and Infrastructure Limited for addition of his son named Mr. Arman Takyar as a co-owner for House No. A-554 C at Palam Vihar Gurugram Haryana.

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, Pankaj Kumar, S/o. Sunil Kumar, House Number - B-2/541 J.J.Colony, Raghurib Nagar Tagore Garden Delhi - 110027. I, have changed my name from Pankaj Kumar Gihara to Pankaj Kumar, all purposes.  
PD(889)C

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Anzar Ahmed had acquired property bearing No. B-14/61, area 66 sq. yds., Kharsa No. 535, situated at Village Ghonda Gujran Khadar in the abadi of B-Block, Gali No. 11, Suhanshi Vihar Bhaganpura, Illaga Shahdara, Delhi vide G.P. Dt. 15.04.2004 along with A.T.S & Will executed by Mr. Mohd. Kamal, Now Mr. Anzar Ahmed is the undisputed owner of the said property.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Reg. Second Floor and Third Floor with roof rights referred to as "said floor" of Property bearing Municipal No. A-62, measuring 208.33 sq. yds., Block-A, Situated in the layout plan of Gujranwala Co-Operative House Building Society Ltd., situated at Village Raj Pur Malikpur (Chhauhan), now Known as Gujranwala Town, Part 1, Delhi-110009; Hereinafter referred to as "said property".  
Notice is hereby given to the general public including Banks, Financial Institutions, etc. that, as informed by our client, Mrs. Kumud Khanna, she is the sole and absolute owner of the said floor. In this connection, she has informed that the said property was owned by Mr. Dev Raj Khanna, Dharam Pal Khanna, and Mr. Sham Sunder Khanna vide conveyance Deed executed by POI thru DDA in their favour and the said deed is registered as Document No. 7906 on 03.10.1994. Later on, a Partition Deed was executed amongst them and the said Partition Deed is registered as Document No. 221 Book No. 1 Vol No. 07, pages 14-130 on 25.03.1998 (SRO Delhi). According to the said partition deed, the said floor (alongwith 1/3<sup>rd</sup> undivided share of the said property) fell to the share of Mr. Dharam Pal Khanna. Mr. Dharam Pal Khanna expired leaving behind his following legal heirs viz., Mrs. Kumud Khanna and Mr. Ashish Khanna. However, in terms of the Will registered as Doc. No. 386 Book No. III, Vol No. 432, pages 111-115 on 01/02/2016 (SRO-VIA) executed by Mr. Dharam Pal Khanna, the said floor was mortgaged by Mrs. Kumud Khanna. Thus, she is the sole and absolute owner of the said floor. Now, our client intends to mortgage the said floor with IDFC FIRST Bank Limited for availing loan facility.  
If any person, society, bank, financial institution or other institutions have any objection against the ownership of our client on the said floor and subsequently notified mortgage of the said floor in favour of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited by our client, IDFC FIRST Bank Limited by our client, may raise his/her/their objections, in writing, by Registered AD copy, to the undersigned, within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received by the notice-holder in this connection, the Attorney-holder in respect of the said portion shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our client/purchaser, in any manner whatsoever.  
SHIVKANT ARORA, ADVOCATE  
M/S INTELECTIVE LAW OFFICES,  
A-74, LGF, Defence Colony,  
New Delhi -110024

**JASCH INDUSTRIES LIMITED**  
Regd. Off. : 502, NDM-II, NSP, Pitampura, Delhi - 110034 CIN NO. L24302DL1985PLC383771  
Website : [www.jaschindustries.com](http://www.jaschindustries.com), Email : [accounts@jasch.biz](mailto:accounts@jasch.biz)  
Extract of Reviewed Ind AS Financial Results for the Quarter & Half Year Ended on 30th September 2024 (Standalone Financial Results under Regulation 47(1)(B) of Listing Regulations) (₹ in Lakh)

| Sl No | Particulars   | Standalone    |           |                      |           |                      |                    |
|-------|---|---------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|
|       |   | Quarter Ended |           | Six Months Ended     |           | Year Ended           |                    |
|       |   | 30.09.24      | 30.06.24  | 30.09.23             | 30.09.24  | 30.09.23             | 31.03.24           |
|       |   | Unaudited     | Unaudited | Unaudited (Restated) | Unaudited | Unaudited (Restated) | Audited (Restated) |
| 1     | Total Income from Operations.   | 4308.44       | 4185.67   | 4629.43              | 8494.11   | 8544.79              | 17231.31           |
| 2     | Profit before Interest, Depreciation & Taxes (EBITDA)   | 299.46        | 358.07    | 471.45               | 657.51    | 831.84               | 1582.52            |
| 3     | Net Profit for the Period (before Tax and Exceptional Items)  | 178.24        | 253.25    | 376.72               | 431.49    | 648.37               | 1202.77            |
| 4     | Net Profit for the Period before Tax (after Exceptional Items)  | 178.24        | 253.25    | 376.72               | 431.49    | 648.37               | 1201.81            |
| 5     | Net Profit for the period after Tax (after Exceptional Items)   | 133.38        | 189.51    | 273.20               | 322.89    | 476.45               | 900.09             |
| 6     | Total Comprehensive Income for the period [(Comprising Profit) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | 133.38        | 189.51    | 273.20               | 322.89    | 476.45               | 900.09             |
| 7     | Equity Share Capital  | 679.80        | 679.80    | 679.80               | 679.80    | 679.80               | 679.80             |
| 8     | Reserves  | 5291.07       | 5157.69   | 4549.61              | 5291.07   | 4549.61              | 4968.19            |
| 9     | Earnings Per Share (of ₹10/- each) Basic & Diluted:   | 1.96          | 2.79      | 4.02                 | 4.75      | 7.01                 | 13.24              |

**Notes :**  
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly financial results filed with BSE under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the aforesaid results is available on the website of the BSE i.e. [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and also on the website of the Company i.e. [www.jaschindustries.com](http://www.jaschindustries.com).  
2. The financial results of the Company have been prepared in accordance with Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS)  
3. Figures for the previous periods have been regrouped, wherever necessary, to conform to the current period's classification.  
**Sonipat, 29.10.2024**

**JASCH GAUGING TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED**  
Regd. Office : 502, NDM-II, NSP, Pitampura, Delhi - 110034 CIN: L33111DL2021PLC381513  
Extract of un-audited standalone Ind AS financial results for the quarter & half year ended on 30th September 2024 (under Regulation 47 (1)(B) of SEBI Listing Regulations) (₹ in Lakh)

| Sl No | Particulars   | Standalone    |           |                      |           |                      |                    |
|-------|---|---------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|
|       |   | Quarter Ended |           | Six Months Ended     |           | Year Ended           |                    |
|       |   | 30.09.24      | 30.06.24  | 30.09.23             | 30.09.24  | 30.09.23             | 31.03.24           |
|       |   | Unaudited     | Unaudited | Unaudited (Restated) | Unaudited | Unaudited (Restated) | Audited (Restated) |
| 1     | Total Income from Operations.   | 1460.95       | 1361.06   | 1423.56              | 2822.02   | 3161.75              | 6314.88            |
| 2     | Profit before Interest, Depreciation & Taxes (EBITDA)   | 515.02        | 469.10    | 330.62               | 984.13    | 1014.28              | 2249.70            |
| 3     | Net Profit for the Period (before Tax and Exceptional Items)  | 490.72        | 444.99    | 308.26               | 935.72    | 967.37               | 2151.90            |
| 4     | Net Profit for the Period before Tax (after Exceptional Items)  | 490.72        | 444.99    | 308.26               | 935.72    | 967.37               | 2151.90            |
| 5     | Net Profit for the period after Tax (after Exceptional Items)   | 367.25        | 332.99    | 234.51               | 700.25    | 724.06               | 1604.44            |
| 6     | Total Comprehensive Income for the period [(Comprising Profit) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | 367.25        | 332.99    | 234.51               | 700.25    | 724.06               | 1604.44            |
| 7     | Equity Share Capital  | 453.20        | 453.20    | 453.20               | 453.20    | 453.20               | 453.20             |
| 8     | Reserves  | 7987.41       | 7613.55   | 6514.55              | 7987.41   | 6514.55              | 7287.15            |
| 9     | Earnings Per Share (of ₹10/- each) Basic & Diluted:   | 8.10          | 7.35      | 5.17                 | 15.45     | 15.98                | 35.40              |

**Notes :**  
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly financial results filed with BSE under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the aforesaid results is available on the website of the BSE i.e. [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and also on the website of the Company i.e. [www.jasch.net.in](http://www.jasch.net.in).  
2. The financial results of the Company have been prepared in accordance with Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS)  
3. Figures for the previous periods have been regrouped, wherever necessary, to conform to the current period's classification.  
**Sonipat, 29.10.2024**

**Jai Kishan Garg**  
Chairman & Managing Director

**छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल**  
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

**// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //**  
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय की ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के अंतर्गत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि (1.) मेसर्स लाईम स्टोन क्वारी (प्रो.- श्री सीरेश कुमभार), खसरा क्रमांक- 865/1 (पार्ट), 865/2 (पार्ट), 868, 869 (पार्ट), 873 (पार्ट), 888/3, 888/4, 888/5, 888/6, 889, 890, 891/1, 891/2, 891/4, 891/5, 891/6, 891/7, 892/2 (पार्ट) एवं 892/3 (पार्ट) लीज एरिया- 4.23 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता- 2,00,025 टन प्रतिवर्ष ग्राम- डौर, तहसील- पाटन, जिला-दुर्ग (2) मेसर्स लाईम स्टोन क्वारी (प्रो.- श्री हरिश्चक्र कुमभार), खसरा क्रमांक- 149, 260, 257/1/257/2, 254, 256, 279/2, 279/3, 262/1, 262/2, 265/3, 261/1, 263/2, 279/1, 279/4, 270/2, 270/3, 269/3, 271/3, 271/1, 271/2, 276, 275, 432, 433/2, 433/1, 438, 439, 443/1, 443/2, 445, 441/1, 441/2, 446, 269/2, 270/1, 265/1, 264/1, 282 एवं 265/2, लीज एरिया- 12.38 हेक्टेयर, खदान उत्खनन क्षमता- 5,00,010 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-चुनकड़ा, तहसील- पाटन जिला-दुर्ग के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई बाबत मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त परियोजनाओं के संबंध में आप्रति/सुझाव/विचार/टीका टिप्पणी, इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 15 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला- दुर्ग के कार्यालय में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजनाओं के लिए संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 21/11/2024 को समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे, स्थान- आदिवासी सामुदायिक भवन, ग्राम पंचायत चुनकड़ा, ग्राम-चुनकड़ा, तहसील- पाटन, जिला-दुर्ग (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि:-  
1. लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों को फिजिकल / सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करना अनिवार्य होगा।  
2. लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों द्वारा मास्क का प्रयोग किया जावेगा तथा समय-समय पर सेनेटाइजर का प्रयोग किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।  
3. लोक सुनवाई स्थल पर सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों की बैठक व्यवस्था कम से कम 02 मीटर की दूरी रखना अनिवार्य होगा।  
4. कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।  
ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन 14 सितम्बर 2006 (यथा- संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के अवलोकन / पटन हेतु ड्राफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरव्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर, छत्तीसगढ़, कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, दुर्ग, जिला-दुर्ग, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, दुर्ग, जिला-दुर्ग, मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, दुर्ग जिला- दुर्ग, सरपंच / सचिव, ग्राम पंचायत चुनकड़ा, तहसील पाटन, जिला- दुर्ग, सरपंच/ सचिव, ग्राम पंचायत डौर, तहसील- पाटन, जिला-दुर्ग, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर में पूर्ववत् रखी गई है।  
सदस्य सचिव  
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,  
नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

**छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल**  
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

**// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //**  
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 2006 (यथा- संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स मुद्दीपार लाईम स्टोन क्वारी (प्रो.- श्री रमेश वर्मा), ग्राम- मुद्दीपार, तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार - भाटापापार (छ.ग.) स्थित खसरा क्रमांक- 279/2, 3, 4, 282/1, 2.3, 284/1, 2.3, कुल क्षेत्रफल - 2 हेक्टेयर में पूर्व से संचालित चूना पत्थर (गौण खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता- 28,346.2 टन प्रतिवर्ष, मेसर्स मुद्दीपार लाईम स्टोन क्वारी (प्रो.- श्रीमती विजयलक्ष्मी वर्मा), ग्राम- मुद्दीपार, तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार - भाटापापार (छ.ग.) स्थित खसरा क्रमांक- 126/1, 126/5, 127/1, 127/5, 128 / 1 एवं 128 /5, कुल क्षेत्रफल -4.607 हेक्टेयर में पूर्व से संचालित चूना पत्थर (गौण खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता- 40,976.95 टन प्रतिवर्ष, मेसर्स लाईम स्टोन क्वारी प्रोजेक्ट (प्रो.- श्री दीनदास अग्रवाल), ग्राम मुद्दीपार, तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.) स्थित खसरा क्रमांक- 44, 52, एवं 53/2, कुल क्षेत्रफल - 0.927 हेक्टेयर में पूर्व से संचालित चूना पत्थर (गौण खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता- 10,903.75 टन प्रतिवर्ष, मेसर्स वर्मा मटेरियल सप्लायर (प्रो.- श्री परसम वर्मा, मुद्दीपार लाईम स्टोन क्वारी) ग्राम- मुद्दीपार, तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.) स्थित खसरा क्रमांक - 264 (पार्ट), 265 (पार्ट), 272 (पार्ट), 261/1 (पार्ट), 267, 270/1, 270/2, 271/1, 266/1, 266/2, 273 / 1, 273 / 2, 273 / 3 एवं 273 / 4 कुल क्षेत्रफल - 1.079 हेक्टेयर में पूर्व से संचालित चूना पत्थर (गौण खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता - 46,867.47 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति बाबत संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 02/12/2024 को प्रातः 10:00 बजे से ग्राम मुद्दीपार स्थित खसरा नंबर 118/1/घ, रकबा 1.011 हेक्ट. (गोठान) तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरैण्डम F. No. 22-25/2020-IA, III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वाईरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन कराय जाना अनिवार्य होगा।  
ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 14 सितम्बर, 2006 (यथा- संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के अवलोकन/ पटन हेतु ड्राफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अरव्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.), कार्यालय कलेक्टर बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.), मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.), मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.), मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जनपद पंचायत- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.), कार्यालय सरपंच / सचिव, ग्राम पंचायत भद्रपाली (आश्रित ग्राम मुद्दीपार), तहसील- बलौदाबाजार, जिला- बलौदाबाजार-भाटापापार (छ.ग.), क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, न्यू ऑफिस बिल्डिंग, सिंग रोड नं.- 2, टाटीबंध, रायपुर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।  
सदस्य सचिव  
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,  
नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

# Petrol, diesel commission hiked; no change in prices

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Commission paid to petrol pump dealers on sale of petrol and diesel has been hiked without change in retail price but rates will go down in several places in states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Himachal Pradesh on account of intrastate freight rationalisation.  
Commission on sale of petrol has been hiked by 65 paise a litre and that on diesel by 44 paise per litre. Alongside, the state-owned firms also rationalised intrastate tariffs which could lead to a reduction in rates of up to Rs 4.5 a litre in some parts.  
Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) -- the state-owned market leader -- on October 29 wrote to dealers informing of an increase in dealer margin for all categories.  
"Considering the hardship of retail outlets selling less than Rs 170 per kilolitre per month, special care has been taken to alleviate the same," it said. "You will be entitled to an upward revision of dealer margin of approximately Rs 0.65 per litre for petrol and Rs 0.44 a litre of diesel."  
This is the first revision in commission paid to dealers in nearly eight years.  
All the three state fuel retailers -- IOC, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) -- took to X to announce the revision in dealers' commission.  
"IndianOil is pleased to announce a revision in the dealer margins (effective from



30th October 2024), following the resolution of a pending litigation. This will have no additional impact on the Retail Selling Price of products," IOC said in a post on X.  
BPCL in a post said the revised commission will be effective October 30. This would be "at no additional cost to consumers".  
"On the auspicious occasion of Deepawali, HPCL is happy to announce revision in dealer commission effective 30th October 2024. This will have no additional impact on the Retail Selling Price of Petrol & Diesel," HPCL said. "Thru this revision, HPCL aims to strengthen the ability of our dealer network in delivering superior customer experience and enhanced service standards for millions

Himachal Pradesh. "Further, demonstrating the core value of Nation First, our endeavour to provide affordable petrol and diesel across the length and breadth of the country on a sustained basis has come to fruition. #IndianOil has undertaken intrastate rationalisation of freight which will reduce variation of retail selling price of product across various markets within a state, except in geographies where Model Code of Conduct is in place," IOC said.  
BPCL said intra-state freight rationalisation will reduce price disparities in petrol/diesel, benefiting consumers, especially in remote areas.  
"Simultaneously, we have also undertaken intrastate rationalisation of freight thus benefiting customers at remote places, far from our supply locations, except in areas under model code of conduct," HPCL said.  
Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri welcomed the intra-state freight rationalisation which he said will "benefit consumers located at remote locations (far from petrol and diesel depots of oil marketing companies) which will result in a decrease in petrol and diesel prices in several parts of the country. (Decision in poll-bound states and constituencies will be implemented later)".  
In a post on X, he cited the example of Kunanpally and Kalimela in Odisha's Malkangiri where petrol price will reduce by Rs 4.69 and Rs 4.55, respectively; and diesel

# BRICS+ group's share in global goods exports can overtake G7 by 2026

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The share of BRICS+ grouping in global merchandise exports can overtake the G7 bloc by 2026, EY India said on Wednesday. The October edition of EY Economy Watch reveals a significant shift in global trade dynamics, with the BRICS+ group rapidly increasing its share in merchandise exports and imports.  
From 2000 to 2023, the BRICS+ group's share of global merchandise exports has risen from 10.7 per cent to 23.3 per cent, marking an impressive increase of 12.6 percentage points.  
In contrast, the G7's share has seen a notable decline, dropping from 45.1 per cent to 28.9 per cent. Meanwhile, the rest of the world has maintained a relatively stable share, increasing slightly from 44.2 per cent to 47.9 per cent.  
G7 is a grouping of advanced economies -- the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom.  
This trend highlights the growing prominence of the BRICS+ group in the global trade arena, suggesting a potential shift towards a multipolar global economic landscape, EY India said.  
"Given the present trends and the likelihood of several new members joining the BRICS+ group being strong, the share of BRICS+ in global merchandise exports can overtake that of the G7 group by 2026," EY India Chief Policy Advisor DK Srivastava said.



high-tech market, it added. In addition to trade dynamics, the currencies of BRICS+ nations are gaining traction in the global economy. The Yuan has remained stable, with slight appreciation, while the Indian rupee has faced depreciation, particularly since 2018. Notably, the share of the US dollar as a global reserve currency has declined from 71.5 per cent in 2000 to 58.2 per cent in 2024, signalling a potential shift toward a more multipolar currency framework.  
"As geopolitical tensions continue, the coordinated policies among BRICS+ members may challenge the established dominance of the G7 and the US dollar, paving the way for a new multipolar global economic landscape," Srivastava said.  
The BRICS+ group is establishing a platform for conducting international trade and investment transactions, which could become a low-cost alternative to the existing SWIFT platform.  
The group is also developing a trade and reserve currency, backed by gold and other select commodities, Srivastava added.

# Businesses expect resounding sales this Diwali

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The roads are jammed and shops chock-a-block as people make beelines for malls and markets to grab just the perfect gift to make the festival of lights a memorable affair for their loved ones.  
Dinner sets, beauty hampers, gourmet food baskets, electronic gadgets, and the ever reliable chocolates and mithai, the options are endless for the fervent Diwali shoppers but the task is to balance budgets with big expectations.  
Khanna, a homemaker in her 30s, knows it too well as she treads the fine line between temptation and staying within budget.  
"The temptation to give innovative and expensive gifts to your near and dear ones is always there but one can't go out of budget too. The key is in finding the right balance," Khanna told PTI.  
On her shopping list is an eclectic mix of home decor for friends, smartwatch for her husband, board games for children and home appliances

for house helps.  
"Gifting during the Diwali festival comes with a huge responsibility. I guess zeroing in on budget and what to give to whom is never easy, and I doubt if anyone has mastered it," she added.  
The festive season has always been the favourite time of the year for businesses and this year is no different as leading players in the online and offline retail sector are expecting "resounding sales".  
While Bikano, a leading name in the traditional snack market, has set a mammoth "Rs 300 crores plus" year-end target in the festive season, Surya Roshni, a lighting and consumer durable company, explained how a large proportion of their sales, accounting to about "30 per cent", happens during this period.  
"When it comes to the festivities, most people tend to spend more than usual, which is somewhat of a distinct period when the purchasing tendencies flout all the rules," Jitendra Agrawal, ceo of Surya Roshni,



said. He added that it's not just the urban centres but the semi-urban centres have also been "recording steady growth" in the festive period.  
Chirag Gupta, founder and ceo of premium snacking company 4700BC, is upbeat about this year's demand, witnessing a "20-25 per cent" increase for its festive gourmet hampers.  
The festive season has set the cash registers ringing for brands selling their wares online. And like previous years, the online sector continues to garner strong demand.  
For instance, online marketplace Snapdeal

witnessed a "1.8X growth" in order volumes during the festive sale.  
"Women's fashion (2.5 X growth), children's fashion (2X growth) and home decor (1.6X increase) are among the categories that saw significant increase compared to the previous year," a Snapdeal spokesperson said.  
In addition to buying physical gifts, shoppers have come to rely on digital gift cards that offer minimum inconvenience and enticing discounts.  
Gift cards are not just hassle free for the ones gifting but also allow the recipients the freedom of choice.  
Tata Neu's gift card

marketplace, which offers a diverse range of gifting options from high-value electronics to everyday essentials like food and travel, said the category has become very popular on their platform with "over 50 per cent" of existing customers returning frequently to make purchases.  
Revering in the festive spirit are also the alcohol brands, with many ditching conventional gift choices such as bed linen or crockery sets for spirits.  
Major players in the breweries and distilleries industry, such as DeVANS Modern Breweries Ltd and Radico Khaitan, are witnessing growing demand and bumper sales. They have launched new variants and festive packs for their premium products.  
Mocktail brand Swizzle has also recorded a noticeable uptick of 25 per cent in the sales last month.  
Last year, according to figures by the excise department, 64 lakh liquor bottles worth about Rs 121 crore were bought by people in Delhi in

# 3F Oil Palm inks pact with Karnataka Government to empower farmers

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
The 3F Oil Palm on Wednesday said it has signed a pact with the Karnataka government to advance sustainable agriculture in rural communities.  
This partnership will provide farmers access to advanced agricultural technologies, training programmes and essential resources to enhance productivity and support Karnataka's growing horticultural sector, according to a statement.  
A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Department of Horticulture of Karnataka with an aim to increase palm



oil productivity, create economic growth and empower farmers with sustainable knowledge, offering a model for long-term agricultural success for oil palm cultivators in Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Sedam taluk of Gulbarga district, the company said in a statement. The company plans to introduce cultivation practices, focusing on sustainable growth and community empowerment.

# Piyush Goyal meets Schneider Electric CEO; discusses investment plans

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday held a meeting with Peter Herweck, CEO of energy management and automation major Schneider Electric, in Riyadh and discussed the company's investment plans for India.  
The minister is in Saudi Arabia to discuss ways to further deepen the strategic partnership between the two countries and explore new avenues of trade, investment and economic cooperation.  
"Held a meeting with Mr Peter Herweck, CEO of @SchneiderElec, a global company specialising in energy management and digital automation with a strong presence in our country. Discussed the company's investment plans for India and how it can leverage the nation's talent pool and government support to provide high-tech, sustainable, and energy-



efficient solutions to the world," Goyal said in a post on social media platform X.  
In March this year, Schneider Electric said that it will invest Rs 3,200 crore by 2026 to make India its manufacturing hub for domestic sales as well as exports.  
As part of this, the company will set up manufacturing facilities for its various products and solutions across India.  
Presently, the company has 30 factories across India. The minister also held a

# Suzuki to supply electric SUV to Toyota as collaboration expands

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Suzuki Motor Corporation will supply the all-new battery electric vehicle SUV model to Toyota Motor Corporation as the companies further expand their collaboration.  
The new model is scheduled to be manufactured at Suzuki Motor Gujarat from the early months of 2025, Suzuki Motor Corporation said in a statement.  
Maruti Suzuki India plans to launch the same model next year.  
Suzuki has around 58 per cent stake in Maruti Suzuki.  
"Suzuki will supply our first BEV (Battery Electric Vehicle) to Toyota globally. I am grateful that the collaboration between the two companies has further deepened in this way," Suzuki President Toshihiro Suzuki said.  
While continuing to be competitors, the companies will deepen collaborations toward solving social issues, including the realisation of a



carbon-neutral society through a multi-pathway approach, he added.  
Toyota President Koji Sato said by leveraging the BEV unit and platform that the companies have jointly developed, they will take a new step in the collaboration in the field of electrified vehicles.  
"This will allow us to deliver various choices that contribute to a carbon-neutral society to customers worldwide. We would like to learn from each other's strengths, compete, and further joint efforts based on a multi-pathway approach," he added.  
The BEV unit and platform

adopted for this model were jointly developed by Suzuki, Toyota, and Daihatsu Motor Corporation, utilising each company's strength.  
Both Suzuki and Toyota's businesses have their roots in Enshu - the western part of Shizuoka Prefecture - and both companies took on the challenge of switching their businesses from looms to the automobiles industry, the statement said. Suzuki and Toyota started exploring business partnerships in 2016. The fields of collaboration are diverse and include production and mutual supply of vehicles, and the spread of electrified vehicles.  
As a result, the market launch of collaboration vehicles has expanded to Japan, India, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.  
The new development marks the first BEV in the OEM relationship between the two companies. It will be launched worldwide, providing a BEV choice even in the SUV market, which is showing remarkable growth.

# INBRIEF

**VIT AP UNIVERSITY HONoured WITH BHARAT BLOCKCHAIN AWARD**  
**AMARAVATI:** VIT AP University is proud to announce that it has been awarded with Bharat Blockchain Academic Excellence Award 2024, representing the state of Andhra Pradesh.

**PRACTICAL EXAMINATION FROM NOVEMBER 04**  
**AMRITSAR:** The practical examination for all subjects of Guru Nanak Dev University affiliated colleges for BA/BSc Semester - First, Third and Fifth classes under Guru Nanak Dev University are commencing from November 04, 2024.

**GNDU EXTENDS LAST DATE FOR ODL AND ONLINE COURSES**  
**AMRITSAR:** Guru Nanak Dev University has extended the last date for admission to courses offered under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online mode until 15th November 2024 as per the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission- Distance Education Bureau (UGC-DEB) Notification.

**BLOOD DONATION CAMP AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY**  
**AMRITSAR:** Guru Nanak Dev University has extended the last date for admission to courses offered under Open and Distance Learning and Online mode until 15th November 2024 as per the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission- Distance Education Bureau Notification.

**GNDU CELEBRATED THE "DIWALI FESTIVAL - GREEN GLOW FEST"**  
**AMRITSAR:** The Department of Education of Guru Nanak Dev University celebrated the "DIWALI FESTIVAL" under the title "GREEN GLOW FEST" with great enthusiasm under the guidance of, Head, Department of Education.



## Ronaldo misses late penalty as Al-Nassr eliminated from Saudi cup

AP ■ RIYADH (SAUDI ARABIA)

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a stoppage-time penalty and Al-Nassr was eliminated from the King's Cup in a 1-0 loss to Al-Taawoun. The five-time Ballon D'Or winner has yet to win a major trophy since signing for the club almost two years ago. Playing at the round-of-16 stage of Saudi Arabia's premier knockout competition, Al-Taawoun took the lead on Waleed Al-Ahmad's header with 20 minutes remaining. Al-Ahmad was then whistled for a foul in the area in the 95th minute. Ronaldo had converted all 18 of his previous penalties for Al-Nassr but this time shot over the bar to the shock of the home crowd of 14,519. The defeat is the first for Stefano Pioli since the Italian succeeded Luis Castro as head coach in September. Ronaldo and Al-Nassr still have two chances at silverware this season but are already six points



behind leader Al-Hilal after eight games of the Saudi Pro League and have seven points from three games in the group stage of the Asian Champions League. "Technically we performed well but we couldn't win the game," Pioli said. "We feel disappointed to be out of the cup. But we still have two trophies to go for and we will give our best in them."



## Bopanna-Ebden advance to quarterfinals of Paris masters

PTI ■ PARIS

Veteran Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden advanced to the quarterfinals of the men's doubles event of the Paris Masters here. The Indo Australian pair eked out a 6-4 7-6 win over the Brazilian-German combine of Marcelo Melo and Alexander Zverev in one hour 16 minutes at the ATP 1000 event on Tuesday. Bopanna and Ebden won 91 percent of their first serve and hit four aces in the course of the match. The third seed Ind-Australian duo made a crucial break in the first game to take the opening set. The reigning Australian Open champions then had the opportunity to break their opponents in the fifth game of the second set but Melo and Zverev managed to hold with the match heading to a tie-breaker. Earlier this week, Bopanna and Ebden had clinched a spot in the prestigious season-ending ATP Finals.

## India to play international FIFA friendly against Malaysia on Nov 18 in Hyderabad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Winless in three matches after chief coach Manolo Marquez took charge as head coach, the Indian men's football team will play Malaysia in an international friendly in Hyderabad on November 18, national federation (AIFF) said on Wednesday. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) had last month announced that the

match will be played on November 19 but did specify the venue. On Wednesday, it advanced the match by a day and also announced the venue. "The FIFA Friendly match between India and Malaysia will be played on November 18, 2024, at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad, Telangana," the AIFF said. November 11-19 is the last FIFA international match window of this year. In international matches

scheduled during a FIFA window, clubs are mandated to release players for national duty. The Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad had also hosted the three-team Intercontinental Cup tournament last month. India had played out a goal-less draw with Mauritius on September 3 before losing 0-3 to Syria, the eventual champions, on September 9 in that tournament. India then travelled to Vietnam to play an

international friendly against the hosts on October 12. The match ended 1-1. The November 18 match will be Marquez's fourth match in charge of the national team and he would be looking for a win against a lower-ranked team, though it will not be an easy one. Malaysia are ranked 133rd in the FIFA chart while India are at 125th. The last time the two teams met was in October 2023 in the Merdeka Cup semifinal. India had lost 2-4.

## Brazil's Atletico Mineiro draws at Argentina's River Plate and reaches Copa Libertadores final



AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Brazil's Atletico Mineiro drew 0-0 at Argentina's River Plate and reached the final of the Copa Libertadores for the second time. The team of veteran striker Hulk had beaten its rivals 3-0 in the first leg of the semifinal. The festive atmosphere at the

full Monumental de Nunez Stadium with more than 80,000 fans did not affect the Brazilian side, which had some of the clearest chances to score. Atletico's rival in the decider will be decided on Wednesday, and it is very likely to be fellow Brazilian side Botafogo. The Rio de Janeiro-based team will play at Uruguay's Penarol after

winning the first leg 5-0. Brazilian teams have won the tournament for the past five years. The final will be played on Nov. 30 at the same Monumental de Nunez Stadium in Buenos Aires. Atletico's win also affected the race to be the last South American qualifier for the 2025 Club World Cup, as it eliminated Olimpia of Paraguay from contention. Olimpia would have advanced to the 32-team tournament in the United States had River Plate won this Copa Libertadores edition. River Plate already qualified based on its consistent results in the continental competition across four seasons. FIFA will make the draw for the June 15-July 13 tournament on a date in early December it has not yet confirmed.

## Alcaraz and Tsitsipas reach 3rd round at Paris Masters but Rublev loses temper and match

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz overcame some crusty moments on his serve to beat Nicolas Jarry 7-5, 6-1 and reach the third round of the Paris Masters. The second-seeded Spaniard was troubled by Jarry's strong forehand at times. The Chilean broke his serve in the ninth game and held for 5-5. But Jarry double-faulted in his next service game to lose the first set. "It was a little bit complicated, really happy to get through the first set," Alcaraz said. "I have to get used to the speed of the court. It's really fast for me." Alcaraz saved a break point in the third game of the second set with an ace and broke for a 4-1 lead with a crisp forehand winner.

Serving for the match, Alcaraz saved another break point with an ace to make it deuce and won the next two points, clinching victory when the erratic Jarry's two-handed backhand clipped the net and went out. "He's a really dangerous player on these courts," the 21-year-old Alcaraz said. "I'm super happy to win here." The four-time Grand Slam champion is looking for his fifth title of the year and next plays either 15th-seeded Ugo Humbert or American qualifier Marcos Giron. "It's been a great year so far," said Alcaraz, who won major titles at the French Open and Wimbledon. Tenth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece beat Alejandro Tabilo 6-3, 6-4 to stay in contention to reach the



season-ending ATP Finals for the top eight players. It is being held in Turin, Italy, next month. Seventh-seeded Casper Ruud of

Norway, a three-time Grand Slam runner-up, started well before losing 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-4 to unseeded Australian Jordan Thompson. In an earlier second-round match, sixth-seeded Andrey Rublev lost two tiebreakers and his temper as his hopes of qualifying for the Finals took a hit. Rublev lost 7-6 (6), 7-6 (5) to Francisco Cerundolo and was so frustrated at one point in the second set that he smashed his racket against his left knee at least seven times in succession and made it bleed. The Russian player held the eighth and final qualifying place in the race for the Finals and could be overtaken by rivals. U.S. Open runner-up Taylor Fritz became the fifth player to qualify

for the Finals. The big-serving American reached the season-ending tournament for the second time in three years. The indoor event takes place from Nov. 10-17. Fritz joined U.S. Open champion Jannik Sinner, Alcaraz, Alexander Zverev and Daniil Medvedev in the field. Sinner pulled out of the Paris Masters on Monday, citing a virus. The Italian player is guaranteed to finish the year as No. 1. He was the second high-profile player to pull out following seven-time champion Novak Djokovic. In remaining first-round play, Holger Rune - who beat Djokovic in the 2022 final - advanced with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Matteo Arnaldi. No. 9 seed Alex de Minaur beat Mariano Navone 7-5, 6-1 to stay in

outside contention for Turin, while No. 12 Hubert Hurkacz lost 6-1, 6-3 to Alex Michelsen. U.S. Open semifinalist Jack Draper won 7-5, 6-2 against Jiri Lehecka; American Ben Shelton beat Corentin Moutet 6-3, 6-7 (8), 6-3, and Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard hit 28 aces in defeating U.S. Open semifinalist Frances Tiafoe 6-7 (5), 7-6 (4), 6-3. Fresh from his title in Basel, Mpetshi Perricard next plays Karen Khachanov and will look to add to his 512 aces. Frenchman Arthur Fils also progressed by edging Croatian Marin Cilic 7-6 (5), 6-4 and next faces Jan-Lennard Struff. But veteran Richard Gasquet, who plans to retire after next year's French Open, lost 6-3, 6-4 to Zizou Bergs.

## Punjab FC, Chennaiyin FC clash following a string of good run

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In-form sides Punjab FC and Chennaiyin FC will square off in the Indian Super League here on Thursday as the battle for playoffs spots heats up. Punjab FC are placed fourth in the table after as many matches while Chennaiyin FC are positioned sixth with two victories and draws each in their five games thus far. They are arguably two definite contenders for the top-six and hence this fixture carries significance for both teams, giving them an opportunity to move up the standings and develop pressure on the higher-ranked opponents. So far, across both seasons, Punjab FC have scored 34 goals in the ISL - boiling down to 1.30 strikes per game. Impressively though, only once have they gone back-to-back



matches without finding the back of the net in the competition, which was a sequence of two clashes in December last year. Given that they didn't score in the previous game, Punjab FC run the risk of equalling that record, something that they would want to avoid especially with the coming game taking place at their home turf. In their last home match, Punjab FC held their own

against the Hyderabad FC attackers by winning 2-0. Never before in the ISL have Punjab FC managed to keep successive clean sheets at home though. They have a chance of scaling that feat against a dynamic Chennaiyin FC frontline that has netted eight goals in five games this season. Chennaiyin FC have put forth a unified front in ISL 2024-25, regularly dragging the team back from precarious positions

to achieve positive outcomes. For instance, they have won seven points from losing situations this season - the joint-most with Kerala Blasters FC. Contrastingly, Punjab FC have claimed no such points so far, highlighting the need of an early lead for the Marina Machans. The Owen Coyle-coached side have also emerged as a force to reckon with on the road. They are unbeaten in their last three ISL away games - winning twice and drawing once. The last time Chennaiyin FC registered a longer such streak was for five games from January-February 2020. Interestingly, they had made it all the way to the final that year, under the tutelage of Coyle. "We want to follow our style," Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris

expressed confidence by saying that he wants his team to take the lead in setting the tempo of the game regardless of the ideas and plans that Chennaiyin FC come up with. "The main topic before us this season is that we want to make the opponents follow our style of play. That's our biggest concern. Chennaiyin FC have good players and a good style of play but we want to follow our style," Dilmeris added. Chennaiyin FC and Punjab FC have faced each other twice in the ISL, winning once each. "I want us to believe we can win every game," Chennaiyin coach Coyle said. "I want my players to believe that they can win every game. That won't be possible. But the intent should be there always and that's the kind of players I like working with," Coyle added.



## Jürgen Klopp defends his decision to join Red Bull after fan backlash

AP ■ BERLIN

Jürgen Klopp has defended his decision to head up Red Bull's group of soccer clubs, saying he "didn't want to step on anybody's toes" after his decision prompted a backlash from fans of his former teams in Germany. Klopp is taking over as the drinks company's head of global soccer from January in what was widely seen as a surprise move. It will be his first job after leaving Liverpool at the end of last season. "I didn't want to step on anybody's toes, definitely not, and personally I love all of my ex-clubs," Klopp said in an interview released Wednesday on a podcast hosted by former Real Madrid and Germany midfielder Toni Kroos. Klopp suggested any decision he made to coach another club would also have disappointed

some fans. "I really don't know what exactly I could have done for everyone to be happy," he said. Red Bull, and especially its Leipzig team, are widely resented by many German soccer fans, who see the drinks company as an unwelcome corporate presence trying to buy success. Fans at Klopp's former clubs like Borussia Dortmund have criticized the move, and Mainz fans held up banners this month expressing their disappointment and questioning whether he was "crazy." Klopp spent 18 years at Mainz as a player and coach before joining Dortmund in 2008, where he went on to lead the club to two Bundesliga titles and the Champions League final. Klopp said he had never viewed Red Bull's involvement in soccer "so critically," and

suggested it played an important role in bringing high-level club soccer back to the former East Germany with the Leipzig project. Klopp previously said he planned to take a "long break" from soccer after leaving Liverpool, where he coached his last game in May after nine years with the club. "I'm 57 so I can still work for a couple more years but I don't really see myself on the sideline (as a coach) for the time being," he said. "But it was always clear that I wasn't going to do nothing at all. And then this story with Red Bull came into the picture, and for me it's outstanding." Klopp said he saw his Red Bull role primarily as an "adviser" working together with coaches at the clubs backed by the drinks giant. "I always had the feeling that the coach is very, very often the loneliest person at the club," he said.

## FIFA announces first Club World Cup sponsor with Chinese electronics firm branding VAR checks

AP ■ SHANGHAI

FIFA finally announced a first sponsor for its revamped Club World Cup on Wednesday in a deal that will brand video review checks at the tournament in the United States next year. The Chinese consumer electronics firm Hisense will have "branding appearing in the video operation room and on pitchside screens," FIFA said in a statement, when match officials study key incidents in the 32-team tournament being played in 11 American cities from June 15 to July 13. Though no previous FIFA

tournament has had a sponsor for video reviews since the technology was approved before the men's 2018 World Cup in Russia, Hisense was the official "VAR Screen Provider" for this year's European Championship organized by UEFA in Germany. Less than eight months before the Club World Cup opens - with Lionel Messi's Inter Miami hosting the first game of a tournament that sees Real Madrid, Manchester City and Bayern Munich play their first competitive games in the U.S. - it now has one sponsor but still lacks any broadcast deals. FIFA's talks for a global streaming deal with Apple+ stalled several

months ago and U.S. Sponsors have been more focused on deals for the men's 2026 World Cup that will be co-hosted with Canada and Mexico. Saudi Arabian sponsors are expected to sign soon and help FIFA President Gianni Infantino fulfil promises to clubs that the tournament's total prize money will run to hundreds of millions of dollars every four years. FIFA is set to confirm Saudi Arabia as the 2034 World Cup host on Dec. 11. The new Hisense deal "paves the way for further sponsorship deals for FIFA's new flagship club competition to be announced in the coming weeks," soccer's world body said. FIFA did not specify the value of the

deal sealed with Infantino at a signing ceremony in Shanghai. Reviews of referee decisions in key incidents - for goals, penalty awards and red cards - can extend to at least two minutes, despite FIFA's aim during trials in 2016 of completing checks in about 10 seconds. Hisense first signed up as a FIFA sponsor for the 2018 World Cup and it renewed for the 2022 edition in Qatar. The television and laptops manufacturer also signed its first sponsor deal with UEFA, when Infantino was still the European soccer body's general secretary, ahead of Euro 2016.

# EASWARAN, NITISH REDDY, PRASIDH TO BE UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY

**PTI ■ MACKAY (AUSTRALIA)**  
The outings of Abhimanyu Easwaran, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Prasidh Krishna will be the primary focal points of India A's four-day match against their Australian counterparts, starting here on Thursday. Easwaran, Nitish and Prasidh have been included in India's squad for the five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, beginning on November 22, and the thinktank will be eager to know how they fare in Australian conditions. Easwaran's performance will, however, have far more significance as the 29-year-old opener could potentially replace Rohit Sharma's replacement if the captain skips a match or two against Australia for personal reasons. Easwaran, who is also the vice-captain of India A here, is a vastly experienced campaigner having played 99 First-Class matches to score 7638 runs with 27 hundreds and 29 fifties. He has also been part of the India squad in the past but what inspires confidence is his recent form in First-Class

matches. The right-hander struck 157 and 116 for India B in the Duleep Trophy before making a 191 against Mumbai for Rest of India in the Irani Trophy and made another hundred in his final red-ball game before flying out to Australia - an unbeaten 127 against Uttar Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy. So, he has the body of work to feel in fine fettle ahead of the match against Australia A, though the conditions here will be vastly different from what he has experienced so far this season in India. On the other hand, Nitish does not boast of such impressive First-Class numbers, as he has been drafted into squad for his perceived ability as a pace-bowling all-rounder and, even in that, batting is his stronger suit. In the Duleep Trophy earlier this year, Nitish made two ducks with a highest of 40 in five matches while grabbing just two wickets. But the selectors have backed him ahead of senior names such as Shardul Thakur, who has resumed playing domestic matches after recovering from an injury.



INDIA A vs AUSTRALIA A

So, this will be a good opportunity for the selectors to check how the Andhra man measures up to a very capable Australia A side that includes the likes of Camrean Bancroft, Marcus Harris, Michael Neser, Cooper Connolly and Scott Boland. Prasidh is a late addition to the India A squad in place of initially picked up Yash Dayal, and the Karnataka pacer needs to find some rhythm here. Since his return from injury, Prasidh has picked up just seven wickets in as many innings across Duleep Trophy, Irani Cup and Ranji Trophy. But the selectors seemed to have been influenced by the theoretical advantage his height brings in on the Australian decks. Prasidh can use this opportunity to keep himself ready if he gets a call-up to the first eleven as the third seamer behind Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj or if the management wants to rest one of the frontline pacers as part of workload management during the tour. Other than this aforementioned troika, the likes of skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, top-order batter B

Sai Sudharsan, pacers Yash Dayal and Navdeep Saini and middle-order batter Devdutt Padikkal can look forward to churn out some good efforts to keep themselves on the periphery of selection in case of an eventuality in the senior side. Ishan Kishan, the wicketkeeper batter, too will be eager to make the most of this chance after a finding his favour back with the powers that be. **TEAMS (FROM):**  
**India A:** Rituraj Gaikwad (capt), Abhimanyu Easwaran (vice-capt), Devdutt Padikkal, Sai Sudharsan, B Indrajith, Abishek Porel (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Mukesh Kumar, Ricky Bhui, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Manav Suthar, Navdeep Saini, Khaleel Ahmed, Tanush Kotian, Prasidh Krishna.  
**Australia A:** Nathan McSweeney (c), Cameron Bancroft, Scott Boland, Jordan Buckingham, Cooper Connolly, Ollie Davies, Brendan Doggett, Marcus Harris, Sam Konstas, Nathan McAndrew, Michael Neser, Todd Murphy, Fergus O'Neill, Jimmy Peirson, Josh Philippe, Corey Rocchiccioli, Beau Webster.

## Need to be patient with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, says Nayar

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
India's assistant coach Abhishek Nayar on Wednesday insisted that they do not ask for tailor-made pitches in Tests and also backed out-of-form legends Virat Kohli and skipper Rohit Sharma, saying that they must be given "space and time to come back". After suffering their first-ever Test series loss at home in 12 years, India will strive to salvage their pride when they clash with New Zealand in the third and final Test from Friday.



Playing on a track that assisted spinners, India lost the Pune Test by 113 runs. It is being speculated that the pitch at Wankhede Stadium here could again favour the spinners. Nayar refuted suggestions that turning tracks are being made at the behest of the team. "I wish we could curate pitches, but we don't. The curators do. Whatever we're provided with, we go on and play (whether) that'd be a pitch that seemed or a pitch that turned. We don't try and get conditions according to what we want," Nayar said on eve of the final Test. Both Rohit and Kohli are woefully out of form, and that has impacted team's performance. Nayar said there is nothing wrong with the modern-day greats and all they need is just a bit of time and backing. "I've seen nothing but love for them all over. When a top player, when someone who's been through the journey, goes through a lull, a lot of times it's about giving them their space and trusting that they will come back. They will put in the work," he said. "Everyone's worked really hard, everyone wants to do well, whether you're Virat Kohli or Rohit Sharma or even someone as young as Shubman Gill. The effort is there." "Sometimes, sometimes you've got to be a little patient, even with the greatest of players,

and they can have tough times. I'm pretty sure sooner rather than later, we'll have more to praise about Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and everyone else as well," he said. Nayar said it would be "harsh" to say the current Indian batters do not play spin as well as those in the past. "That's a bit of a harsh statement. When you're trying to achieve something, there's always going to be a time when you take a certain dip because you're trying to play cricket in a different way and you're trying to push yourself out of the comfort zone," he said. "Sometimes the results don't go your way, but if you're patient enough and when that upward curve hits the team and hits an individual, then your purple patch lasts for really long. "We're hoping that the transition that we're trying to have in terms of the mindset and the approach of the players in Team India, (given) that we're facing this dip now, but once we start hitting the upward curve, it'll be a long curve." Nayar said the dressing room atmosphere hasn't changed over the last two matches. "There are going to be times when you don't do so well. When India lost the World Cup (final) in India, that was a low point in Indian cricket for everyone..." "In the same breath, a couple

(eight) of months later, we were world champions. Coming back is always a great journey. That's how stories and legacies are made. "Hopefully we can be part of creating something as special as that in the future, but the atmosphere is great. Still a lot of jokes and bubbly cricketers in the dressing room. You'll see our (training) sessions (are) filled with fun and nothing has changed. India have collapsed thrice so far in the series, starting with 46 all-out for lowest Test innings total at home in Bengaluru. After that, India made 156 in the first essay of Pune Test and crumbled to 245 all-out from 81/1. Nayar refused to read much into it and said, "I wouldn't call it a collapse, when you lose wickets in a bunch or when we pick wickets in a bunch - like we did in the last game as well, where we got seven wickets in 51 runs - I think that tends to happen in this game of cricket." "Sometimes it is the mindset. It may not be perceived from outside as trying to be aggressive or trying to have intent, but intent is not necessarily swinging at the ball. Intent is more about your approach towards the ball. "Is it worrying? Well, the only way we look at it is how we can get out of it. That's our thought process (and) mindset."

## India still have wood on New Zealand while playing on turning wickets: Ajaz Patel

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
A first ever series loss at home to New Zealand notwithstanding, India still have the "wood on us" while playing on turning wickets, said Kiwis spinner Ajaz Patel here on Wednesday. New Zealand have outplayed India on all fronts in their backyard so far in the three-Test series, particularly in the spin department as they head into the third and final match starting here on Friday with an unassailable lead of 2-0. While New Zealand hammered India in a rain-truncated opening Test at Bengaluru by eight wickets, exposing their shortcomings on a challenging pitch at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, the world No 2 side was given a taste of its own medicine on a spin-friendly track in Pune in the second Test, which the hosts lost by 113 runs. Ahead of the final Test at the Wankhede Stadium, another spin-friendly track is in making despite the struggles of the Indian batters. Patel hoped that New Zealand,

who have an opportunity to inflict a 3-0 whitewash on India, would need to continue to make all the right moves despite the hosts being more adept in playing on such tracks. "India still have the wood on us when it comes to playing on turning wickets, and traditionally, the Indian batters have done well in turning surfaces," Patel told the media after New Zealand's training session. "Obviously, they haven't had maybe as much success as they would have liked in this series so far but they're certainly an opposition that are very, very skilled and not the easiest to come up against." "Their skill set is very vast and for us as a spin group, especially it's about being able to control what we can control and making sure that we can apply pressure for long periods of time and making sure that we're delivering the best balls on a given surface," he added. New Zealand's accuracy and recentness in attack, both with the bat and the ball, has been the feature of their first-ever



series win in India and Patel acknowledged that the visitors will need to stick to the basics. "It is really about continuing to challenge them. As a batter it's not easy out there when you're facing a ball that's turning as much, and so it's about us making sure we put the balls in good areas for long periods of time," he said. "On the flip side, India have got phenomenal spinners so our batters are trying to do the opposite and they're trying to create opportunities to score runs," he added. Patel, who created history here

three years ago by claiming 10/119 to become only the third spinner in Test cricket to take all 10 wickets in an innings, said the pitch for the upcoming contest looked different from the one before. "Being back in Mumbai is always quite special and it's a place I call home as well. Having the opportunity to play out here again is quite special. To be honest, after my 10-wicket haul, I wasn't sure whether I'd get another opportunity to play out here again throughout my career," he said.

"To be honest with you my memory is very poor so I don't exactly remember the surface that well but one thing I do remember was it looked a lot drier to start with," he added. Patel, who had to play second fiddle to fellow left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner in the Pune Test, said he was happy to keep exerting pressure on India from the other end. "It's (about) looking at what roles you're playing for the team when it comes to a bowling perspective," he said. "Mitch (Santner) was bowling exceptionally well from the other end so for me it was really important that from my end while I'm still trying to take wickets, I'm also performing the holding role and trying to restrict as many runs as possible so that pressure doesn't come back on us. "The way Mitch was bowling, there was no real need for me to try too many things. It was about trying to keep it as simple as possible. Once again, going into a new surface and a new game that may completely flip again," he said.

## Retirement thought hit me after we lost to India in T20 WC: Matthew Wade

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**  
Former Australia wicketkeeper-batter Matthew Wade has revealed that his team's defeat to India in the T20 World Cup earlier this year was probably the moment that ended his career as it was the first time that the thought of retirement crossed his mind. India, led by skipper Rohit Sharma's superb 41-ball 92, defeated the Aussies by 24 runs in a crucial Group 1

Super Eight match at St Lucia to book a semifinal berth and eventually went on to bag the title. "It (the thought about retirement) probably hit home after we lost against India. That was when I really sat down and reflected that that was probably the end of my career. That was an emotional moment," Wade, who announced his retirement from international cricket on Tuesday, told cricket.Com.Au Wade, who generally batted



down the order in T20 Internationals, said the arrival of Josh Inglis as a wicketkeeper who could bat top of the order too influenced his decision. "The time was right for 'Ingo' (Josh Inglis) to come in. You can see what he's done in the last (few months) that he's been in the team as the No.1 keeper. He was certainly ready to come in and take that role. "They're looking for maybe someone who can bat more top to middle order now as well and that suits him really

well." The Tasmanian also said he is unlikely to participate in the upcoming IPL mega auction as it will be tough to make himself available for the entire duration of the event. Wade has been a part of Gujarat Titans over the last two seasons. "I'm doing the IIT20 which will be straight after the BBL. I'm doing the (Abu Dhabi) T10, which leads straight into BBL. "So, I'm going over to Dubai at the end of this month. I've got some Tassie (Tasmania) one-dayers that I've been playing as well. I won't be in the IPL," said Wade, who will be Australia's wicket-keeping and fielding coach during the white ball series against Pakistan.



## Shubman Gill takes pay cut to keep core in tact

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill has decided to take a pay cut and will be the second player retained by the IPL franchise ahead of the October 31 deadline. Gill led Titans for the first time this season and both he and the management are now keen to retain the core group of players. The first retention for the franchise would be star spinner Rashid Khan, followed by Gill, Sai Sudharsan and two uncapped players in Rahul Tewatia and Shahrux Khan. Titans will also have the option of retaining another squad member via the right to match card at the mega auction next month. Gill is seen a future leader in the Indian cricket setup. "Gill has decided to take a pay cut to ensure the core players are retained and build a stronger team," an IPL source said. As per the IPL retention

guidelines released ahead of the mega auction, a team will lose Rs 18 crore from the increased purse of Rs 120 crore for the first player retained, Rs 14 crore for second, Rs 11 for third while for the uncapped players, a team will have to shell out Rs 4 crore each. If a team retains five capped players, they will lose Rs 75 crore from the auction pot. The mega auction is likely to be held overseas in the last week of November. The auction purse has been increased to Rs 120 crore from the Rs 100 crore teams had at their disposal at last year's auction. The total salary cap now comprises an auction purse, incremental performance pay and match fees. The match fee, set at Rs 7.5 lakh per game, has been introduced ahead of the next season. The teams can retain up to six players, via retention or right to match, from the existing squad, the highest in IPL history.