



OPINION 6 RATAN NAVAL TATA: A GEM OF A PERSON

WORLD 9 3 SHARE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

MONEY 10 RBI CALLS FOR CHEAPER, FASTER REMITTANCES

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY OCTOBER 15, 2024; PAGES 12 3

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BEN STOKES RETURNS FOR SECOND TEST AGAINST PAKISTAN 12 SPORTS

Communal conflagration in Uttar Pradesh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Tensions escalated in Bahraich district on Monday, as protests and violence erupted following a communal clash during a Durga idol immersion procession in the Mahasi area. The violence, which broke out on Sunday, led to the death of a 22-year-old man, Ram Gopal Mishra, who succumbed to a gunshot wound during the incident. The clash reportedly began over loud music being played from a Durga procession as it passed through the Mahrajganj area of Mansoor village. The altercation led to further violence, including incidents of stone-pelting and gunfire, which left around six people injured. As tensions mounted, a local hospital and several shops were set ablaze on Monday morning, prompting the local administration to suspend internet services in an effort to curb the spread of rumors and restore order. Vrinda Shukla, the Superintendent of Police (SP) in Bahraich, confirmed that over 30 persons have been detained in connection with the violence. Police have been deployed in the affected areas to maintain order and prevent further escalation. A case has been registered against a man named Salman, from whose house, gunshots are believed to have been fired during the clash.



Security personnel deployed to maintain law & order in a violence-affected area, a day after a 22-year-old man was killed in communal violence during a Goddess Durga idol immersion procession, in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, Monday

Authorities, including Home Secretary Sanjeev Gupta and Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Amitabh Yash, have arrived in Bahraich to assess the situation and coordinate the security response. Police have conducted flag marches in the area to ensure a visible presence and to deter further unrest. Despite these efforts, sporadic protests continued, with locals raising slogans against police and administrative officials. In response to the violence, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya condemned the incident and warned against any attempts

to disturb the peace and harmony in Uttar Pradesh. He emphasized that the state government would take stringent action against those involved in the violence, assuring that the victims would receive justice. Maurya appealed to the public to maintain peace and patience during this sensitive time, stating, "The bright future of the state will not be allowed to be tampered with." Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed concern over the incident, criticizing what she described as the "inaction" of the administration. In a statement on X (formerly

Twitter), she called for immediate intervention by the state government and urged the public to avoid taking the law into their own hands. Vadra emphasized the need for the state administration to take the public into confidence and to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable. As the situation in Bahraich remains tense, the local administration is working to restore normalcy. The suspension of internet services is expected to remain in effect until the situation stabilizes, to prevent the spread of rumors and

misinformation. Authorities have also appealed to community leaders to help in maintaining peace. What had happened: The initial clash in Bahraich reportedly stemmed from a dispute over loud music being played during the Durga idol immersion procession. As tensions flared, the situation escalated dramatically after the death of Ram Gopal Mishra, which triggered outrage among local villagers. In retaliation, angry residents vandalized vehicles and set fire to several properties in the Mahrajganj market area. According to Mishra's family, he was shot while walking with the procession and was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. His death intensified the already volatile atmosphere in the area, leading to further acts of arson and damage to property. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath condemned the violence and assured that those responsible would face strict consequences. He directed authorities to ensure that the process of idol immersion continues smoothly, despite the communal tensions. The Chief Minister stressed the importance of coordinating with local religious organizations to carry out the immersions as planned, while also maintaining law and order.



Manic Monday for Air India

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a worrying trend, five hoax bomb threat messages to three international flights, a mail train and a university, made it a manic Monday for security agencies. Three separate international flights with 600 passengers on board departing from Mumbai received bomb threat messages early this morning. Besides, Gujarat based National Law University and Mumbai-Howrah mail train number 12809 also received bomb threat messages, which proved to be hoaxes. Since any threat is taken seriously, one flight Air India Mumbai-New York was diverted to Indira Gandhi international airport at New Delhi and two others delayed for being checked thoroughly before being allowed to proceed for their destinations. According to the Bureau of Civil Aviation (BCAS), the affected flights were AI 119, that was the Mumbai-New York Air India flight that diverted to IGI airport, IndiGo Mumbai-Muscat 6E 1275 and Mumbai-Jeddah

6E56. Hoax messages severely cripple flight schedules. On getting a threat like this airports/aircraft, passengers and baggage has to be thoroughly checked. Getting the all clear nod takes several hours and by then sometimes the maximum time for which crew can operate is about to lapse. "Flight AI 119 operating from Mumbai to JFK on October 14 received a specific security alert and on instructions of the government's security regulatory committee, (it) was diverted to Delhi," Air India said in a statement. "Staff on ground are working to minimise the inconvenience caused to our guests by this unexpected disruption, it said. All 258 people onboard the aircraft have disembarked and are currently undergoing security procedures. Once the security protocols are completed, the passengers will be moved to hotels, it added. There were 239 passengers and 19 crew members onboard the plane. The flight has been rescheduled and will now depart for New York from

Delhi on Tuesday morning, the airline said. "The aircraft was thoroughly checked at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, and all standard safety protocols were diligently followed to ensure the safety of the passengers and the crew on board," a senior police officer said, adding that nothing suspicious was found during checking. The Boeing 777 aircraft - VT-AER - departed Mumbai at 2:27 am, nearly 50 minutes behind its scheduled departure of 1:40 am, and landed around one-and-a-half hours later, according to flight tracking service Flightradar24. Passengers were made to deplane the aircraft at around 4:10 am, but were asked to leave their bags on board. The bomb threat was received through a post on the microblogging platform X and the handle is being verified, the officer said. Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol visited the Delhi airport to take stock of the situation. Continued on page 8



Opposition MPs boycott Waqf parliamentary committee meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several opposition MPs on Monday boycotted a meeting of the parliamentary committee examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill alleging that the panel is not functioning in accordance with rules, after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was accused by a deposer of being involved in Waqf land scams. The lengthy meetings of the Joint Committee of Parliament have been marked by the exchange of words between its Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Opposition members, and things turned especially stormy on Monday as the latter questioned the rationale behind calling members of Hindu groups for deposition on a law concerning Muslims. Opposition MPs walked out in protest against the submission of Anwar Maniyyad, a former chairman of the Karnataka State Minorities Commission and the Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation. He is also a former Karnataka BJP vice-president. Maniyyad named several Congress leaders from Karnataka, including Kharge and Rehman Khan, and others for their alleged involvement in embezzling Waqf properties. Continued on page 4

MHA hosts Meitei, Kuki, Naga MLAs meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hosted by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the direct supervision of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Manipur's Meitei, Kuki, and Naga legislators will meet on Tuesday, in a bid to restore peace in the strife-torn state. According to officials, three Naga MLAs will attend the meeting, while the exact number of Meitei and Kuki legislators is not yet clear. This is the first meeting convened by the MHA, since the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur last year. Among the Meitei representatives attending the talks are Thongam Biswajit, Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata, Thounaojam Basantakumar, Khongbantabam Ibomcha, Dr. Sapam Ranjan, Thokchom Radheshyam, and Tongbram Robindro. Representing the Kuki community are Letpao Haokip, Paolielal Haokip, and Haokholet Kipgen. Naga leaders such as Awangbou Newmai, L. Dikho, and Ram Muivah will also be part of the discussions. The dialogue will be the first face-to-face meeting between Kuki and Meitei leaders, signalling what some political observers described as "the



FILE PHOTO

central government's intent to secure a peaceful resolution." Some of the Manipur MLAs have welcomed the Home Ministry's initiative to restore peace in the strife-torn state. Over 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence in Manipur since May 2023. "From the Naga side, three MLAs - Awangbou Newmai, L. Dikho and Ram Muivah - will be attending the meeting in New Delhi. Muivah is currently in the national capital over a personal issue," an official source said. All three MLAs are from the Naga People's Front (NPF), an ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state. Several BJP legislators also left for the national capital on different flights from Imphal. "We have been asked to come to Delhi to discuss certain

things. I don't know the exact agenda now. We have been exploring all means for bringing peace," Water Resources Minister Awangbou Newmai told reporters at Imphal airport. NPF legislator L. Dikho said it is difficult to bring peace to Manipur unless all the communities and people are involved. The violence in Manipur began on May 3, 2023, when protests broke out against a Manipur High Court ruling that favoured granting the Meitei over a personal issue," an official source said. All three MLAs are from the Naga People's Front (NPF), an ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state. Several BJP legislators also left for the national capital on different flights from Imphal. "We have been asked to come to Delhi to discuss certain

Continued on page 8

SC tells govt to issue River Conservation Zone notification

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Centre and other agencies on a plea against unauthorised constructions and encroachments on the riverbeds, floodplains and catchments of all rivers. A bench of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra issued notices to the Environment Ministry, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Central Water Commission and the Central Pollution Control Board while seeking their replies within three weeks. The SC was hearing a plea filed by former IPS officer Dr Ashok Kumar Raghav seeking directions to demolish all unauthorised constructions and encroachments on the riverbeds, floodplains and catchments of all rivers, water courses and water channels, including the tributaries and restore the same to their original forms. The plea also sought directions to notify the 2015 draft of the River



Conservation Zone (RCZ) Regulation without any further delay and demarcation of the floodplains of all rivers, water courses and water channels within a time-bound period not exceeding three months. The draft River Regulation Zones (RRZ) notification proposes to establish River Conservation Zones (RCZs) to prevent encroachments on rivers and floodplains. Advocate Akash Vashishtha, appearing for the petitioner, submitted that increasing illegal and unauthorised constructions and encroachments on the floodplains and catchments of rivers and water courses have become the biggest cause of devastation across the country. Continued on page 8



Gasp! Delhi AQI is already over 200

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Air Quality Index (AQI) already crossed over 200 at several areas of the National Capital Region (NCR) for the second consecutive day, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Monday imposed restrictions, invoking the first stage of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to prevent further deterioration of air quality in entire Delhi and also in districts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan that fall under the NCR. The ban will be in force from 8 am on Tuesday. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index stood at 234 (poor category) as of 4 pm on Monday. Following Dussehra, the AQI in Delhi entered the "poor" category on Sunday, recording a reading of 224. This marked the first instance of poor air quality since September 25, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The GRAP's Stage 1 has a 27-point action plan, which includes sprinkling water on roads, using anti-smog guns, and ensuring proper disposal of construction and demolition waste. It also imposes a ban on the use of coal and firewood in hotels, restaurants, and open eateries. Continued on page 8



BY RAJESH KUMAR

Be it Laxmi Nagar to CR Park or Seelampur to Aerocity, e-rickshaws have become a ubiquitous sight across the capital, often seen wobbling slowly on roads overloaded with passengers, choking traffic on busy stretches. They congregate mostly at bus stands, metro stations, markets, malls and shopping centres. Experts say the design of e-rickshaws is inherently faulty and their operation by non licensed/untrained/underage drivers render them dangerous on the roads. They always park and travel on the wrong side. Another danger associated with e-rickshaws is the illegal charging of batteries which has caused fire and explosion in the past. According to the transport

official, the major complaints against e-rickshaws were clustering on the road that was leading to traffic jams and long tailbacks, improper parking, violation of restrictions on road use, one-way violations, overloading passengers and underage driving. Since they usually do not move until they pick up a certain number of passengers, they block roads and cause congestion. These vehicles also pose risk to people in different ways. Data showed there are approximately 120,000 registered e-rickshaws in the national capital. However, there are many plying on the road without valid registration causing congestion and safety hazards. Recently, a 40-year-old e-rickshaw driver died after being



PHOTO: RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

electrocuted at an illegal charging station in Shahbad Dairy. He was sitting in his vehicle while it was being charged. Last month, two men sustained serious injuries while a woman succumbed at the hospital after an e-rickshaw they were travelling in caught fire in north-east Delhi's Nand Nagri,

Besides, they not only cause traffic jams on most arterial roads and Inter State Bus Terminals but also engaged in power theft. In its report earlier, power Discoms flagged to government agencies that around half of these are engaged in power theft, resulting in a loss of 15-20 MW across the

city. This translates to an annual loss of around Rs 120 crore. Approximately 200 e-rickshaw charging locations, with a load of about 3 MW, are booked for theft every year in Delhi. These e-rickshaws were largely engaged in illegal charging

through direct theft and the use of sub-standard batteries, which posed significant safety hazards. Exposed electricity wires left open during illegal charging and non-adherence to safety standards often cause sparks and short circuits. These live wires also pose a danger to the public, especially children playing in these areas during the daytime. Such open wires have led to electrocutions in the past. The areas where such illegal businesses are proliferating include Sangam Vihar, Jamia, Kalkaji, Tughlakabad, Sarai Kale Khan, Paschim Vihar, Matiyala and Mahavir Enclave in south and west Delhi. In East Delhi, the breeding grounds for such activity are Shastrri Park, Karawal Nagar, and Mustafabad, while Civil Lines, Mukherjee Nagar and Rohini are

hotbeds in north Delhi. Officials say the number of e-rickshaws has been spiralling in the city. Though they have slowly progressed towards becoming a traffic hazard, there is almost no regulation with Delhi government and traffic police passing the buck to each other. The first e-rickshaws started plying in 2012. In the past 12 years, they have mushroomed on neighbourhood as well as arterial roads. The reason for the meteoric rise in their numbers can be attributed to first and last mile connectivity at pocket-friendly rates. Without any regulations, almost anyone can become an e-rickshaw driver. These vehicles have now become a major nuisance even on arterial roads, where they are not allowed to ply.

14-year-old girl gang-raped

A 14-year-old girl has been allegedly gang-raped in Chinhat, police said on Monday. She was found lying unconscious in the bushes, with her hands and legs tied, they added. She was later admitted to RML Hospital where her condition is said to be stable yet critical. DCP, East, Shashank Singh said in a video statement that the police were given a complaint by her parents, who said that the girl who had gone missing was found lying unconscious in thickets, with her hands and legs tied. "She has been admitted to a hospital where her condition is stable. Three teams have been formed to nab the culprits and an investigation is ongoing," he added. As per reports, the minor girl had gone out to answer nature's call early in the morning and later went missing. It surfaced during investigation that she was kidnapped by three boys of the village. The accused took her to the thickets, where they tied the hands and legs of the minor and took turns raping

her. They also tried to choke her to death with her dupatta. As she fell unconscious, they ran away, considering her dead. When the girl did not return home, the family members started searching for her. A woman from the family found her lying in the thickets on the roadside. She was rushed to the hospital. Police said that an FIR had been registered and three teams formed to arrest the accused. Meanwhile, a woman's lover abducted and killed her three-year-old child following a dispute with her in Meerut, police said on Monday. The incident took place in Partapur area on Sunday, when Saleem attacked Nazrana (30) with a sharp edged weapon and also abducted her child, they said. Additional Superintendent of Police Ayush Vikram Singh said that the woman was taken to a hospital by the police, where her condition was stated to be stable. The accused was arrested and during interrogation he revealed that the child's body has been buried in a field, Singh said. Based on his statement the body was recovered on Monday morning, he said. According to police said that Saleem had an affair with Nazrana and he killed the child after they had some dispute with her. Further investigation in the matter is underway.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

ANANYA SEHGAL S/o Ankur Sehgal R/o 601, Mansarovar Apartment, 7/90 D, Tilak Nagar Kanpur -208002 have changed my name to ANANY SEHGAL for all purposes.

NOTICE

I, MANVENDRA SINGH S/O OM PRATAP SINGH RESIDENT OF 45, MIR MIRAN PUR, MIRAN PUR, KARKASHA, DALMAU, RAEBARELI, UTTAR PRADESH 229207, DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT MY NAME IN EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA, INDIA IS SINGH MANVENDRA OM PRATAP ASHA MY NAME IS IN MY AADHAR CARD, VOTER CARD, PAN CARD, DRIVING LICENCE IS MANVENDRA SINGH. BOTH THE NAME OF MINE. THE ABOVE DECLARATION IS TRUE AND NO FACT CONCEALED BY ME.

सूचना

सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरी पुत्री का सही नाम राखन अक्षय मिश्रा पुत्र नवल किशोर मिश्रा है, जो कि उसके शैक्षिक अभिलेख में अंकित है। जुटिका मेरी पुत्री के आधार कार्ड सं 7287 7689 0587 में उसका नाम अक्षय मिश्रा अंकित हो गया है, जो कि गलत है। भविष्य में मेरी पुत्री को उसके सही नाम राखन अक्षय मिश्रा पुत्र नवल किशोर मिश्रा के नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये। एतद द्वारा यह भी प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि उपर्युक्त के संबंध में समस्त विधिक औपचारिकतायें स्वयं मेरे द्वारा पूरी की गयी हैं। नवल किशोर मिश्रा पुत्र श्री अवधेश कुमार मिश्रा पता- 645ए/185, जानकी विहार, जानकीपुरम, लखनऊ-226201 मो नं. 9415513754

सूचना

सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरी पुत्री का सही नाम दीक्षिता मिश्रा पुत्री नवल किशोर मिश्रा है। जो कि उसके शैक्षिक अभिलेख में अंकित है। जुटिका मेरी पुत्री के आधार कार्ड सं 7842 0110 1880 में उसका नाम काशीला अंकित हो गया है। जो कि गलत है। भविष्य में मेरी पुत्री को उसके सही नाम दीक्षिता मिश्रा पुत्री नवल किशोर मिश्रा के नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये। एतद द्वारा यह भी प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि उपर्युक्त के संबंध में समस्त विधिक औपचारिकतायें स्वयं मेरे द्वारा पूरी की गयी हैं। नवल किशोर मिश्रा पुत्र श्री अवधेश कुमार मिश्रा पता- 645ए/185, जानकी विहार, जानकीपुरम, लखनऊ-226201 मो नं. 9415513754

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE NOTICE is hereby given that, Smt Indushri W/o Sri Santosh Kumar Singh has informed that the Original Freehold deed dated 30.03.2003 registered at S. No. 8823 on 30.03.2003, Original Allotment letter and Original possession letter of the property i.e. House No. B-694 MIG Awasthi Vikash Scheme No. 2 Hansapuram, Kanpur Nagar has been lost somewhere and is not traceable. She is intended to sell the said property to Smt Bindu Singh W/o Sri Vivek Singh and she will mortgage the said property in favour of PNB Achal Gani, Unnao. As the PNB is going to grant finance facility to said Smt Bindu Singh W/o Sri Vivek Singh collaterally securing this finance by creation of Equitable Mortgage over property. The Punjab National Bank Achal Gani, Unnao intend to create Equitable Mortgage in respect of the above mentioned properties, details which are given in the notice. Any person claiming any interest or title in the property or otherwise having any objection can make representation to the Bank within seven days of such notice. After passage of that time period. No claim shall be entertained in future. Vinay Awasthi Advocate Chamber No. A-1, Gate No. 4, Near Registrar Office, Civil Court Compound, Kanpur Nagar-208001, Mobile: 9044717199

Man who set himself ablaze outside Vidhan Bhawan dies

Munna Vishwakarma, the 40-year-old man who had set himself on fire in front of Vidhan Bhawan in Lucknow on October, succumbed to burns at the SPM Civil Hospital on Monday. Facing severe financial hardship, Munna had resorted to the extreme step after repeatedly failing to receive payment for work he had completed at a tent house where he worked. A resident of Jhabaran Tola in Saadatganj, Munna had reportedly poured petrol over himself and set himself ablaze in front of Vidhan Bhawan and sustained 50 per cent burns. Munna worked for Bengal Tent House in Alambagh, owned by Ranjit Chakraborty. A long-standing dispute over unpaid wages had escalated, with Munna lodging complaints at Mawaiya police outpost and Alambagh police station. Despite his repeated complaints, no action was taken, and Munna had alleged that he was turned away from the police station. Following his self-immolation, police arrested Ranjit Chakraborty. Munna's financial struggles worsened when he could no longer afford his children's school fees. He had a daughter and a son, and in recent years, he had begun transporting goods using an e-rickshaw. His wife had left for

Self-immolation bid by family foiled

Police foiled the self-immolation attempt near Vidhan Bhawan by a family from Kasganj on Monday. As per reports, the family poured some inflammable liquid on themselves, but police officers present there acted swiftly, preventing the self-immolation attempt. According to ACP, Hazratganj, AK Verma, the family was protesting against what they claimed was the wrongful implication of their relatives in a case by the Kasganj police. The matter was referred to the Kasganj police, and the protesters were escorted back to their home. Eyewitnesses said that the family had brought bottles filled with inflammable liquid and were preparing to set themselves on fire near the Vidhan Bhawan. The police intervened in time, taking the family into custody for questioning. During questioning, the family expressed their demand for a fair investigation into the case by the Kasganj

police. One family member, Sanjeev Singh, revealed that he had previously written to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, outlining his grievances about the Kasganj police's conduct. Sanjeev alleged that the police had filed a false report in connection with their case and were colluding with criminals. He further accused the station house officer (SHO) of engaging in corrupt practices and claimed that the investigation was being influenced by bribes from criminals. He called for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe. Sanjeev also alleged that his son Ashish was forcibly summoned and threatened by police on December 19, 2023, and subsequently jailed on December 21 under the threat of a staged encounter. In addition, he reported that while the police had returned his son's scooter and some money, they were still withholding his mobile phone, which contains crucial evidence and recordings related to the case.

her maternal home in Barabanki just three days before he attempted self-immolation. In his dying declaration, Munna stated that the lack of money, particularly his inability to pay his children's fees, pushed him to take such a drastic step. He also made serious allegations against the Alambagh police, accusing them of ignoring his complaints and mistreating him during his visits to Mawaiya outpost. Munna's nephew Manoj Vishwakarma, confirmed that his uncle worked at Ranjit's tent house from 2017 to 2019, taking on contracts for installing lights. Munna was owed approximately Rs 7 lakh in unpaid wages. Manoj recounted that his uncle had repeatedly asked Ranjit for the money but was consistently turned away. As a result, Munna's financial condition deteriorated, leading him to purchase an e-rickshaw in hopes of earning a living. However, he struggled to pay the e-rickshaw's installments, which had accumulated to Rs 12,790. Despite his efforts to get his money and complaints to the police, Munna found no recourse. "Whenever he went to the police station, they would drive him away," said Manoj. He added that Munna had grown increasingly despondent due to the lack of any resolution or support.

Cambodia delegation in UP to explore Buddhist Circuit

Uttar Pradesh, globally renowned for its Buddhist sites and rich cultural heritage, attracts a large number of Buddhist pilgrims each year who come to explore landmarks associated with Lord Buddha. For followers of Buddhism, Uttar Pradesh is considered a spiritual haven. A 15-member delegation from Cambodia has arrived in the state to tour the Buddhist Circuit from October 14 to 19. The delegation includes Buddhist monks, tour operators, and bloggers-influencers, with the aim of exploring India's Buddhist heritage and promoting these sacred sites in Cambodia. They arrived in Delhi on October 13 before proceeding to Agra for sightseeing. The group will be visiting key sites such as Shravasti, Kapilvastu, Kushinagar, and Sarnath in Varanasi. "Uttar Pradesh holds immense historical and spiritual significance. In recent years, the state has ranked first in domestic tourism and developed 12 tourism circuits, with the Buddhist Circuit being particularly important. This circuit connects major sites linked to the life of Lord Buddha, who spent a significant portion of his life in this region," a senior tourism official said.

Key locations in the Uttar Pradesh Buddhist Circuit include Kapilvastu (where Buddha spent his childhood), Sarnath (where he delivered his first sermon), Shravasti (where he spent 25 rainy seasons), Sankisa (where he descended after teaching in heaven), Kaushambi (a regular retreat), and Kushinagar (where he attained Mahaparinirvana). Additionally, Devdah and Ramgram in Maharajganj, as well as Atanjkithera in Etah, are important spiritual heritage sites in the state. "The influx of foreign visitors not only fosters cultural exchange but also boosts the economy. With approximately 93% of Cambodia's population adhering to Buddhism, Uttar Pradesh is a significant pilgrimage destination for them," the official added. "Uttar Pradesh is rich in religious, cultural, and historical significance. We warmly welcome the Cambodian delegation, who will experience the uniqueness and depth of our Buddhist sites during this family trip. Our goal is to attract tourists from around the world to the unparalleled destinations in Uttar Pradesh. This visit presents an important opportunity for us to showcase our cultural heritage on a global platform, further strengthening the bonds between UP and Cambodia," Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said.

Private university student assaulted, threatened

A private university student in Chinhat was assaulted allegedly by a group of youths for refusing to cough up extortion money. The accused threatened him at the gun-point after he resisted their demands, warning of severe consequences if he failed to comply in the future. Despite the physical abuse, the youth stood his ground and refused to bow to the pressure. The attackers eventually fled, but not before leaving him with a stern warning. The accused had been demanding money from the student for a while, and when he protested, they intercepted him on the road, shattering his car windows. Following the attack, they threatened to kill him before fleeing the scene. The police have registered a case and are investigating the incident. The victim, identified as Sarvagya Gupta, a BCom student, recounted his ordeal. He reported that a week ago, a group of students from the same college had confronted

him, demanding money. "When I refused to give them any money, they beat me, but I managed to escape," he said. On Thursday, while on his way to college, Sarvagya was stopped by the same group, who had laid a trap for him. Ignoring their demands, he attempted to drive away, but the accused shattered the windows of his car. The situation escalated as the accused followed him into the college premises and assaulted him further. "They hit me on the head with a stick and belt multiple times, trying to force me to give them money," Sarvagya alleged. When he still refused to comply, the accused brandished a pistol, pressing it to his waist and threatening to kill him if he didn't pay up next time. Sarvagya has filed a complaint at the Chinhat police station against the accused, identified as Aditya Singh, Shubham Singh, Yuvraj Singh, and Hrihik Singh. The Chinhat police station inspector confirmed that an investigation is underway based on the victim's complaint.

Drunk loader driver breaches CM Yogi's security cordon

A drunk loader driver entered the security cordon of the chief minister's fleet in the PGI police station area around 11:45 pm on Sunday. The incident occurred near the Shaheed Path Utrathi railway overbridge as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was returning from the airport. The loader driver, identified as Anjan Kumar from Sevai Road in Barauna, abruptly entered the path of the CM's fleet. Traffic and local police quickly intervened, stopping the loader and clearing the way for the chief minister's convoy. Upon investigation, the police came to know that Kumar was intoxicated. The PGI police issued a challan and took him into custody, sending him for a medical test that confirmed he was under the influence. The loader was subsequently seized and sealed.

LMC to construct hostel for working women

The Lucknow Municipal Corporation (LMC) is set to begin construction of a working women's hostel in the city, marking the first initiative of its kind by any government department in the state capital. According to chief engineer Mahesh Verma, the project has been submitted to the state government under the 'Chief Minister's Vaishvik Nagaruday Yojana'. The total cost of the project is Rs 33 crore, with a focus on women empowerment. The hostel will be located in the Aurangabad area and will feature 108 rooms, along with essential facilities such as sports amenities, a canteen, a mess, and caretaker accommodations. "This will be a closed campus with a single entry gate," Verma said. Strategically situated near Shaheed Path, the hostel will provide easy access for nurses at SGPGI and other women

seeking accommodation. "We chose this location because we had the land available," he added. Verma mentioned that the project is currently undergoing modifications. "We are actively working on these changes," he said. He anticipates that construction will take about a year, with plans to start within three months. In addition, Verma discussed progress on the CM GRID project, which aims to develop roads with underground overhead services, green plantations, vending zones, parking spaces, and aesthetically designed pathways. "We will employ a new technique for the metal portions of the roads, incorporating plastic to replace ten per cent of the bitumen. This approach will be cost-effective and environmentally friendly," he explained. The first phase of the project has secured Rs 186 crore to construct 16 kilometres of roads across various areas in

Lucknow. "The 'bhumi puja' has been completed and tenders issued, while the construction will begin next week," he stated. Roads slated for restoration and construction under the CM GRID scheme include Park Road, Mandir Marg (from Kapoorthala crossing to Hazratganj crossing), Power House Road in Zone 8, IGNOU Road near Kanpur Road, and the road in front of Lucknow University. "We will restore and beautify these roads while making necessary adjustments to the services," he added. Regarding repairs to damaged roads after the recent rains, Verma noted that there are separate plans for pothole repairs and overall road restoration. "We aim to make 650 kilometres of roads pothole-free. We have achieved 70 per cent progress in our patchwork efforts, and restoration work is also advancing well. We hope to complete all work by the end of this month," he added.

'Ongoing drive against encroachment disappointing'

The ongoing anti-encroachment drive has seen disappointing results over the past three months, with only 15.50% of unauthorised structures demolished so far. This was highlighted by Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar during a review meeting on Monday, where he discussed the progress and outcomes of the initiative. The VC expressed difficulty in explaining the slow progress when questioned by senior officials about the drive's effectiveness. He urged officials and engineers to change their approach, emphasising the need for stronger enforcement despite potential local opposition. Kumar flayed the leniency on the part of the anti-encroachment squad, noting that they had allowed developers to postpone demolitions under false pretenses, potentially seeking relief from the government or the courts. He condemned this practice and instructed the squad to proceed with demolitions, as they had the official orders to do so. Regarding the introduction of an anti-encroachment policy for a more effective demolition strategy, the VC acknowledged the proposal but stressed that its success relies on the determination of the squad members.

Love people of Lucknow for their hospitality: Arbaaz

Actor-producer Arbaaz Khan expressed his admiration for the people of Lucknow and lauded them for their smiling demeanour and hospitality. He was in the city on Monday alongside Arshad Warsi and Meher Vij to promote his produced film titled 'Bandaa Singh Chaudhary'. Discussing his involvement with the film, Arbaaz mentioned that he was initially intrigued by the subject. "It's a film inspired by true incidents from Punjab, where the story has been dramatised for commercial appeal. It tells the tale of a common man fighting against the odds, driven by the basic concept of protecting his family. This relatable theme resonated with all of us as we became part of the project," he explained. When asked about his confidence in the film's success amid declining theatre attendance, Arbaaz shared an insight from a recent interview with director Ramesh Sippy. He noted that filmmaking has never been easy. "It's always been challenging to attract audiences to theatres. However, we believe in our subject. If people connect with the story, they will come to see it. While there are many entertainment options today, audiences still seek out big-ticket films for the theatre experience. We gauge reactions through trailers and songs, and although there's initial nervousness, we have to take that



chance. We're confident that people will appreciate this film," he elaborated. On when he might shoot in Lucknow again, Arbaaz said it would depend on finding the right subject. "Many films could be shot in Lucknow. It's a place that can attract diverse stories. Whenever we have the right project, I hope to bring our team here to shoot," he stated, adding that he enjoys the local cuisine and finds the people extremely hospitable. Arshad Warsi, discussing his character, mentioned that he doesn't adhere to method acting. "I've done serious films like 'Sehar', where I was joking just moments before a serious scene. One should only be serious when necessary; otherwise, it's important to stay smiling. I don't overdo my character; I perform within limits that the audience can understand," he said. Meher Vij, on her second visit to Lucknow, expressed her fondness for the city's architecture, roads, and food. "This city has a peaceful atmosphere, and the people are wonderful," she added.

150 tribals to participate in Deepotsav

Ayodhya (PNS): Preparations for the eighth Deepotsav celebrations being organised by the Yogi Adityanath government are in full swing. In addition to the administrative efforts, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia University has initiated its work at a rapid pace. This year's Deepotsav promises to be truly special, with 150 tribal representatives from Jharkhand joining as volunteers to light lamps at the ghats. Since its inception in Ayodhya in 2017 at Ram Ki Paidi, Deepotsav has consistently set new records year after year. This year, the chief minister has announced an ambitious goal of lighting 25 lakh diyas, for which 28 lakh diyas are planned to be placed along the banks of the river Saryu. Following this announcement, efforts to beautify the city of Ayodhya have begun. Local citizens will also be included in the festivities this year at Ram Ki Paidi, with wide-platform stairs being constructed to resemble a stadium. To accommodate the increased number of diyas, the total number of ghats has been expanded from 51 to 55, incorporating Chaudhary Charan Singh, Bhajan Sandhya Sthal, and other locations. Additionally, 90,000 litres of mustard oil is expected to be utilised for lighting the diyas. With the increase in diyas, arrangements for cotton wicks are also underway, with plans to use 40 lakh cotton wicks. Volunteers will commence laying diyas on the ghats of Ram Ki Paidi from the 25th of this month.

CITYBRIEFS

BRIGADIER PUNETHA VISITS CATC CAMP



Lucknow Group Commander Brigadier Neeraj Punetha visited the CATC camp, conducted by the 63 UP Bn NCC unit from October 8 to 17, at the 2 MT Bn AMC Training Centre. He was welcomed by Camp Commandant Lt Col Rakesh Tiwari and Sub Major Arvind Kumar Yadav, along with a guard of honour from the cadets. Brig Punetha praised the camp's high standards of training and discipline. He assessed training activities, interacted with cadets, and discussed their motivations for joining the NCC. He emphasised the significance of the NCC in shaping character and leadership qualities. The visit concluded with a cultural programme by IGC cadets, guided by Major Kavita C Ramdevputra, showcasing the rich diversity and talent of the cadets. MBBS, BDS STUDENTS ACCORDED WELCOME An induction programme for newly admitted MBBS and BDS students was held at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Scientific Convention Centre, KGMU, on Monday. The event, con-

ducted by Prof Kalpana Singh, provided students with an overview of KGMU's history. The dean administered the Charak oath, and Dr Saurabh Kashyap presented white coats to all students. KGMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Soniya Nityanand encouraged the students to be honest and respect their teachers.

KNOWLEDGE STEEZ AWARD

The Legal Aid Centre at the University of Lucknow received the 'Knowledge Steez Award of Excellence for Contribution in Social Justice and Legal Aid' on October 13 for its work in legal social services. The award was presented at the 13th International Conference on Human Rights and Gender Justice in New Delhi, organised by Knowledge Steez EDU HUB LLP. The centre secured fifth place among over 31 participating colleges. LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava attributed this achievement to the team's dedication to ensuring equal access to justice for all through free legal aid and promoting legal literacy, under the guidance of faculty members.

PUBLIC NOTICE I, Surendra Singh S/o Late Shri Kashi Prasad R/o 90, Babu Ganj, New Basti, Lucknow-226020. My Receipt No. 1418536 dated 15.05.17 for Rs.3,33,877.00, Receipt No. 1425421 dated 18.05.17 for Rs.10,96,332.00 and Receipt No.1425423 dated 18.05.17 for Rs. 6,21,381.00 and Agreement dated 22.11.16 against Customer ID: ORLS 856 respectively issued by Omase Limited have been misplaced somewhere. Any person who finds it, request you to kindly return it to the Company Omase Limited at - Omase Limited, Cyber Tower, 2nd floor, TC-34/72, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow or call on No. 9935092305.

Akhilesh lashes out at govt over violence in Bahraich

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, on Monday, hit out at the Uttar Pradesh government over Bahraich violence...



over the songs that were played on loudspeakers during the idol immersion on Sunday and said the government should have taken

note of the route of the procession. "When the procession began, the administration should have taken note of its route, adequate security on the route, and adequate police deployment..."

BJP unable to handle states: CPI leader

DEMANDS JUDICIAL PROBE

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Communist Party of India leader Dr Girish, on Monday, while reacting to the violence in Bahraich, said the Bharatiya Janata Party governments were unable to handle the states. He demanded a judicial inquiry into the Bahraich incident.

Dr Girish said the Bahraich violence, death of Dalit youth in police custody in Lucknow, murder of Nationalist Congress Party leader in Mumbai, unstoppable violence in Manipur and terrorist incidents happening every day in Kashmir were some of the glaring examples that proved that the rule of law could not be established by bulldozers but by neutral and unbiased actions.

Priyanka appeals for peace, UPCC chief demands CM's resignation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed deep concern over the violence in Bahraich. She stressed that no one should take law into their own hands and strict action should be taken against those who spread violence.

the situation could be brought under control. She said that it was necessary to assure the people that the administration was ready for their safety and was capable of preventing any kind of violence. Priyanka also made a humble appeal to the public and said that people should not take the law in their hands and maintain peace.

481st Bharat Milap in Varanasi... The chief minister should resign and go back to math," Rai said while accusing the government of failing to assess the situation in Bahraich.

Investors in Dubai attracted to Yogi's industry-friendly policies

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's development vision and his dedication to realising it through actionable strategies were at the forefront of the Uttar Pradesh Diaspora Investor Meet, hosted by Invest UP and UPDF Diaspora at the India Club in Dubai.

programme at the Iranian Sports Complex. Over a thousand migrants from Uttar Pradesh were inspired by the state's development narrative, filling the venue with the chants of 'Thank you, Modi, Thank you, Yogi'.

vision, the Dubai Cultural Forum of UPDF announced the publication of a book highlighting the struggles and successes of accomplished Indians and migrants from Uttar Pradesh living in Dubai.

11-year-old girl dies in wall collapse

PTI ■ ETAWAH

A wall of a house collapsed on members of a family in a village in Etawah district on Monday, killing an 11-year-old girl, police said.

Yadavan village in the Bharthana police station area on Monday afternoon when Rachna Devi (45), her daughter Sonali (11) and son Shiva were in the house, SHO Bharthana Devendra Singh said.

trapped in the debris and were somehow rescued by the neighbours, Singh said. The victims were rushed to a hospital, where Sonali was declared dead, the SHO said, adding that the injured woman and her son are stated to be in stable condition.

22-yr-old woman abducted from train, gang-raped

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

A 22-year-old woman was allegedly abducted from the Kota-Etawah Express and gang-raped by three men who held her hostage for five hours, officials said in Etawah on Monday.

kidnapped her, the officer said. After the woman regained consciousness, she found herself among the three men who had raped her and held her hostage for five hours, the SP said.

UP govt empowers girls with self-defence training initiative

Lucknow (PNS): Under the Mission Shakti programme run by the Yogi Adityanath government, the Rani Lakshmi Bai Self-Defence Training initiative aims to empower schoolgirls by teaching them self-defence techniques and raising their awareness about personal safety.

unsafe touch, helpline numbers, and the dangers of child marriage." However, these efforts are ongoing and will continue in the future. The goal is for all girls to receive self-defence training, empowering them toward self-reliance.

Govt to set up 10 tourism info centres in Prayagraj

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Yogi Adityanath government is preparing to welcome over 41 crore devotees and tourists who are expected to attend the Maha Kumbh in January 2025.

ground. According to Aparajita Singh, the Regional Tourism Officer of Prayagraj, these centres will be located at all railway stations, bus stations and temporary bus terminals in the city.

Nine key RTO services now accessible via Aadhaar authentication

Lucknow (PNS): In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directives, the Uttar Pradesh Transport department has launched nine vehicle-related services integrated with Aadhaar authentication, offering enhanced convenience to the public.

These services eliminate the need for in-person visits to transport offices, allowing vehicle owners to access essential facilities effortlessly from the comfort of their homes.

Indian Bank e-Auction notice for sale of immovable properties. Includes details for multiple properties with bank website, e-auction website, document, property location, video of property, and photo of property.

4 students among 5 killed in road mishap

PTI/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Five people, including four students of a private college, were killed when their car was crushed between two speeding trucks on the Ruma-Bhaunti flyover here on Monday, police said.

The car was reduced to a mangled heap of metal and the bodies of the students and the driver were pulled out after cutting through it, they said. The incident took place while the students — Ayushi Patel, Garima Tripathi, Satish Kumar and Prateek Singh — were headed to their college, Pranveer Singh Institute of Technology (PSIT). They had hardly reached Panki when their car got sandwiched between the two trucks, Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Rajesh Kumar Singh said. The drivers of both trucks fled the spot after the accident, leaving their vehicles behind. Both trucks have been seized, he said. While Patel was from Fatehpur, the other three students were from Kanpur. The driver, Vijay Sahu (52), also hailed from Kanpur, police said. The bodies have been sent for postmortem. Reports said there was a massive jam which could be restored after about 2.30 hours.

FARMER MURDERED: Following a dispute over tying buffalo on disputed land, a farmer was killed



The damaged car after the accident on Monday morning

allegedly by his cousin with a sharp-edged weapon in Sadh police area of Ghatampur late on Sunday evening. On hearing the noise, when kin of the farmer and villagers rushed to the spot, assailants escaped. Kin with the help of villagers took the injured farmer to Bhigargaon community health centre (CHC). From there, he was referred to LLR (Hallet) hospital, Kanpur, where doctors declared him dead. According to a report received here, farmer Athar Singh Yadav (40) of Gugura village, Sadh police area, had a land dispute with neighbouring cousin Kapoor Singh Yadav. The litigation is also pending in the High Court. Athar's wife Moni said on Sunday, Kapoor Singh allegedly forcibly tied his buffalo on the disputed land. When Athar Singh opposed

the move, Kapoor Singh and his sons Anmol, Om Prakash, Vinod and Sonu abused him. Around 5 pm, when Athar went to field, all the five accused reached there and attacked on him with the sharp-edged weapon. They brutally beat up as a result of which he fell unconscious on the floor. On being chased by the villagers and kin, assailants escaped from the spot.

At the LLR (Hallet) hospital, Athar Singh was declared dead by the doctors. Ghatampur ACP Ranjit Singh said two groups had clashed following land dispute which led to killing of Athar Singh. Assailants were found absconding from their house. After lodging an FIR, penal action would be initiated against them, he said. **TWO SHOPS BURGLIED:**

Two shops were burgled in Sarsaul village under Maharajpur police station area late on Sunday night. Miscreants took away cash worth around ₹1 lakh from the shops. On Monday morning the shopkeepers informed the police. Thereafter the police rushed to the spot and carried out investigation in the matter.

According to reports, Rakesh Gupta of Sarsaul, Maharajpur, said he runs his shop of cattle-feed on the ground floor of the house. On opening the shop on Monday morning, he was shocked to find the cash box open and cash worth around ₹30,000 missing from there. It was found that miscreants broke into his shop by dismantling the side wall. Miscreants also committed theft in the shop of neighbour Vinay Jaiswal and stole cash box containing around ₹71,000 and other important documents. Vinay said the cash kept to meet expenses on treatment of son Ayush in SGPPI was stolen.

Farmer Arvind Pal belonging to Nagra village, Sarsaul, said around 3 am, he saw four persons escaping towards the field. On being chased, they fired at him and caused injury. Station House Officer (SHO) Maharajpur Sanjay Kumar said investigation is on in the matter. CCTV footages are being examined and the case will be worked out soon

Joshi: Riots in Bagraich deplorable

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Former MP Prof Rita Bahuguna Joshi said that the incident of riots in Bagraich is deplorable. This should not happen. People of all religions should follow their religion peacefully. Law and order is the best in UP. We have to be cautious of those who conspire for riots. Whether it is a procession of Hindu religion or Muslims, peace should be maintained, she said during a cultural programme held at Hindustani Academy in Civil Lines on Monday. She said Prime Minister Modi and UP CM Yogi Adityanath are working under 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. Without naming anyone, she said everyone knows who the dividers are and attempts to polarise votes should be foiled. Joshi said many programmes will be organised in the memory of late Kamla Bahuguna in her birth centenary year. Joshi said the Culture Ministry of Uttar Pradesh Government will get a life-size bronze statue of Kamla Bahuguna installed in Bahuguna Market Nyay Marg here. The statue will be unveiled by Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister, Government of India, on the birth anniversary of late Kamla Bahuguna on December 30. The Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Smriti Samiti is organising a debate competition on the topic 'Can real equality be achieved by giving reservation to women in India' between October 15 and 30 in 40 universities and colleges of UP and Uttarakhand. She said almost all the important universities of Uttar Pradesh, including Banaras (BHU), Lucknow, Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Agra, Kanpur, Gautam Budh Nagar (Noida), Chaudhary Charan (Meerut), Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (Varanasi) and many private universities like Amity, Galgotias (Noida), Shobhit University, Subharti University, Mahavir University (Meerut), Babu Banarasi Das University, Ramswaroop Memorial University (Lucknow), Maharishi University (Lucknow), Integral University (Lucknow) and K.K.C. University of Lucknow, IT College, Gurunanak Girls College, SRIMT are organising the debates.

Nodal officer reviews public welfare schemes, hears problems of villagers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A public chaupal was organised at Parampur Composite School under Arzalines development block here on Monday under the chairmanship of Secretary (Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply Department) Dr Rajshekhkar, the nodal officer nominated by the government for the district. Parampur is also a village adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi under Sansad Adarsh Gram Vikas Yojana. During this, the nodal officer heard the problems of the people of the area and also resolved some matters on the spot. He also directed the concerned officers for an immediate solution.

During the chaupal, the nodal officer reviewed the public welfare schemes run by the government at the ground level and obtained information from the villagers. He heard the problems of the villagers one by one. Information about Pradhan Mantri Awas, ration, electricity, water, medicine, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, pension for the elderly, disabled pension, MNREGA, Kanya Sumangala, toilet, Ujjwala gas, Pradhan Mantri Awas was given in the Jan Chaupal.

Dr Rajshekhkar obtained information about all types of pensions. He emphasised that the eligible beneficiaries who are not able to get pension should apply online. He instructed the officials concerned to provide the benefits of the schemes to the beneficiaries by setting up camps during the chaupal organised in the village. During the public hearing, the nodal officer reviewed all the schemes run by the government point-



Secretary Dr Rajshekhkar holding a chaupal at Parampur in Varanasi on Monday.

wise and got the verification done. By asking the people present in the chaupal to raise their hands. The local people seemed satisfied with most of the works. He verified by raising hands the beneficiaries of electricity, hand pump reboing, tap in every house, pond construction under MNREGA, construction of lanes and drains, presence of teachers and Anganwadi in schools, disabled pension, ration distribution, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Nidhi, widow, old age pension etc whether they are getting the benefit of all these schemes or not, in which most of the people confirmed by raising their hands that they are getting the benefit of the schemes satisfactorily. He directed the officer concerned to get the cleaning work done in the village promptly and asked the villagers to cooperate by participating in their own way, so that the village can develop rapidly. According to him, the number of beneficiaries received Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana was 51, individual toilet 627, PM Kisan Samman Yojana 320, Ayushman Card 1,362, eligible household/Antyodaya Card

(family) 2717, PM Ujjwala Yojana 301, Har Ghar Jal Yojana 387, Old Age Pension Scheme 93, Disabled Pension Scheme 23, Destitute Women Pension Scheme 39, Child Service Scheme 6, Kanya Sumangala Yojana 102, Labour Department 26 etc.

Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, while explaining the purpose of the chaupal, said that all the district level officers were present to resolve problems of the villagers. Dr Rajshekhkar along with District Magistrate S Rajalingam, CDO and others also planted trees. Dr Rajshekhkar also inspected the primary school Narecha and saw the Smart Class and Anganwadi Centre. During this, he inspected the Ayushman Health Centre and gave necessary instructions. The nodal officer inspected the slum area of Parampur village and instructed the officials to ensure that cleanliness is maintained properly, dirt, sewer etc should not be visible anywhere, every house should be connected to tap water and fogging should be done regularly.

Intensive cleanliness drive conducted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An intensive cleaning campaign was carried out in the Design department in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Monday under the Swachhta Pakhwada and Special Campaign 4.0. During this cleanliness was encouraged by cleaning the offices as well as removing old records and unusable furniture. With the aim of increasing awareness towards cleanliness, a door-to-door public awareness campaign was also conducted in the BLW Colony area on the topic of 'No Single-Use Plastic'.

Scouts and Guides distributed pamphlets in Western Colony, St John's Ambulance Brigade volunteers in Kakaramta Colony and Civil Defence Organisation in Kanchanpur



Cleanliness awareness drive being held at BLW in Varanasi on Monday.

Colony and motivated people to reduce the use of plastic. The campaign was led by Chief Safety Officer (CSO) SB Patel. A large number of volunteers actively participated in the coordination of Deputy Chief Material Manager (Loco) and District Commissioner Scouts

Animesh Verma, Deputy Chief Material Manager (Engine) and Corps Commander St John's Ambulance Brigade, Abhishek Pandey and Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer (Spares) and Deputy Controller (Civil Defence) MP Singh.

Mason dies

Varanasi (PNS): A mason working in a house in Taktakpur under Cantt police station area died after falling at the construction site here on Monday. While the mason was working on the grill in the house of a retired employee, he lost his balance and fell straight into the street on his head, due to which he died on the spot. Along with mason Vinay Kumar (35), two more labourers and masons were also working. When Vinay fell, they ran down, but he was badly injured after falling on his head and died on the spot. He was a resident of Madwa area. On hearing the news of Vinay's death, his wife reached the spot. Vinay was the second among three brothers and two sisters and son of Rahul. On receiving information apart from the Cantt police, the ACP also reached the spot and inquired about the incident.

Clean Competition Day observed under cleanliness fortnight



A contest being held at a station of Varanasi division of NER.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Clean Competition Day was observed on Sunday under the ongoing Swachhta Pakhwada (Cleanliness Fortnight) being run on Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) along with the entire Indian Railways from October 2 to 15. The campaign is being run under the direction of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (EnHM) Abhishek Rai.

In this direction essay competitions were organised on the topic of Swachhta Pakhwada, Save Water and Save Life in the perspective of cleanliness awareness on Clean Competition Day in Varanasi divisional office and major offices, units and clubs of the division. In this sequence, a street play on the subject of cleanliness was staged at Varanasi City railway station. During this period, thorough inspection by nominated officials and senior supervisors was done to ensure the availability of separate dustbins for wet and dry waste in railway premises and railway residential colonies and suitable uniforms for

cleaning staff and proper disposal of abandoned waste at stations. In the same sequence, cleanliness and passenger convenience related services were provided by railway officials and employees in the circulating areas of small and big stations of Varanasi division.

With a view to spreading awareness about the responsibility towards cleanliness among the general public, the latter was made aware through films and jingles based on sanitation at stations. Cleaning and passenger facilities were provided by railway officials and employees in the circulating areas of all big and small stations of Varanasi division, including Prayagraj Rambagh, Banaras, Varanasi City, Ghazipur City, Ballia, Azamgarh, Khusasan Road, Mau, Belthara Road, Salempur, Bhatni, Deoria Sadar, Siwan and Chhapra. During this, pamphlets were distributed among the passengers on the importance of cleanliness in stations and railway premises and the harm caused by dirt. In order to spread awareness about the responsibility towards cleanliness the general public was made aware through films and jingles based on sanitation at the stations.

Kidney tumour weighing 13.5 kg successfully removed at SSH-BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

World's largest kidney tumour weighing 13.5 kg was removed in Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH), Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) successfully. About a month days ago, a 52-year-old male patient of Sujabad village (near Parao) was examined with a sizeable abdominal mass. The patient consulted Dr Lalit Kumar Agarwal on Thursday last in Urology OPD at SSH-BHU. On evaluation, the patient was found to have a 30x28x24 cms tumour in the left kidney. On October 11 the left kidney, along with the complete tumour, was taken out

safely without any complication under the able guidance of IMS-BHU Director Prof SN Shankhwar and Prof Sameer Trivedi. Dr Agarwal claimed that the removed kidney tumour was the world's largest one and added that the patient is fine now and will be discharged in one-two days.

The surgical team consisted of Dr Lalit Kumar Agarwal, Dr Yashasvi Singh, Dr Surendra, Dr Rohan, and Dr Vikas from the Urology Department, Dr Pratima, Dr Sancy, Dr Rajat and Dr Shivshankar (from Anaesthesia), Krishna (Nursing Officer), Shammii Akhtar and Kuldeep as OT technicians. The surgery was performed in less than ₹15,000. The patient's

attendants are happy after the excision of the tumour.

WORK PRESENTED

Head and Nodal officer of National Centre of Ageing, Department of Geriatric Medicine, IMS-BHU Prof Anup Singh presented his work in European Regional Congress of Fragility Fracture Network at Istanbul (Turkey) recently. His work on Sarcopenia was accepted by the conference for oral presentation. Prof Anup Singh, who has developed a fellowship in Geriatric Rheumatology course in Department of Geriatric Medicine, IMS-BHU, said musculoskeletal disorders are present in around 60-70 per cent of elderly.

12-year-old child dies of snakebite

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 12-year-old child died due to snakebite when he went to turn on the television in his room in Phoolpur area here on Monday. His mother thought that maybe a rat or a mole might have bitten him. After some time when the child started fainting, his family took him to a private hospital in Phulpur where the doctors declared him dead. After this, the family took him to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in the city, where the doctors also declared him dead. Aditya Kumar Patel, son of Arvind Kumar Patel, a resident of Chakmali village under IFFCO police-out post in Phulpur Kotwali area, went to switch on the television in the room in the morning when he was bitten by a poisonous

snake sitting in a hole in the wall of the room.

When the child told his mother Sushila Devi, she thought that he might have been bitten by a rat or a mole. After some time, the child started fainting. The family took him to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in the city. There too the doctors declared him dead. The family took the child to an exorcist in the Soraon area. When he was declared dead there to they took him to a vaidya in Kunda Pratapgarh. The vaidya also declared him dead. The father of the deceased child works in Delhi.

On receiving the information, he left from Delhi. The deceased child was the youngest and only brother among four sisters. On receiving the news of the death, sisters Anjali, Anchal, Aanshu and

Meenakshi are inconsolable. Phoolpur Station House Officer (SHO) Praveen Kumar Gautam said that he has received the information about a child had died due to snake bite. The body of the child was later sent for the postmortem.

In another incident a 35-year-old woman was killed while her husband and daughter sustained critical injuries when the motorcycle on which they returning home was hit by a speeding dumper on Mirzapur-Prayagraj Highway late on Sunday evening. Meanwhile the body of a 15-year-old girl was found floating in the drain of the check dam in Bendou village under Industrial Area police station of Yamunanagar on Sunday. The SHO said further action will be taken on the basis of the post-mortem report.

HMA Group India announces historic agreement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The HMA Group India of Unnao announced a historic agreement in which it has partnered with Dubai-based Snack Foodstuffs Trading LLC. Under this agreement, both the companies will jointly invest ₹2,000 crore in India's agricultural products. Famous business personalities of Dubai, Khalid Mohammed Sharif Alawhadi and Khalid Mohammed Amiri were also present on the occasion. This strategic partnership will give a new direction to the trade relations between India and UAE and the income of farmers of both the countries will increase substantially. An important aspect of this agreement is that HMA Group with its strong brand has joined this venture through local distribution chain in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, which will boost regional trade. HMA Group President Rafiq



HMA Group India of Unnao entering into agreement with Dubai-based Snack Foodstuffs Trading LLC.

Nadaf and the Group's Promoter/IRO also attended the ceremony, who expressed

their views on the occasion. General Manager of HMA Group, Khalid Mirza informed

that the company has always been working for the interest of the farmers and traders of the country and this agreement is also a step in that direction.

He also informed that HMA Group has been supporting social work with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund and every year it plants two lakh saplings for environmental protection. This investment will not only strengthen the trade relations between the two countries, but Indian farmers will get a new market, which will also improve their economic condition. Along with this, this agreement will also improve the quality and distribution of agricultural products. This agreement is an important step towards the international expansion of HMA Group and will open up the possibility of new opportunities for cooperation and development between the two countries.

Presentations on innovative tech for achieving energy efficiency in sugar mills

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Former Director, National Sugar Institute (NSI), Prof Narendra Mohan, and an eminent sugar technologist made two presentations on innovative technology for achieving energy efficiency in sugar mills during ISSCT workshop at Berlin, Germany. He made presentations on 'Adoption of septuple effect evaporator for steam economy' and on 'Managing energy efficiency in sugar industry while producing sugar-ethanol mix'. 'We have already commercialised these technologies and are working well in two prominent sugar groups of the northern India', informed Prof Mohan. The concepts about the technology presented by him drew attention of the delegates and Prof Mohan briefed them about

the economics, efficiencies attained and logic considered for the same. This has revolutionised the energy management system in the sugar factories and shall prove to be a game changer as it will lower the cost of production to significant extent, said Prof Mohan. Delegates from Germany, Australia, South Africa and many other countries expressed their keen interest in adopting such technologies in the sugar industry of their countries. 'We are going to further enhance the steam economy in Indian sugar industry with the use of 'mechanical vapour recompression systems' thus enabling saving of substantial quantities of bagasse for using it as raw material for many other value-added products viz. paper, compostable crockery, bio-chemicals and even ethanol', Prof Mohan added.

Nation needs well trained workforce: EA Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said the need for a "well-trained workforce" in different geographies is only going to grow further, and urged friendly nations to turn towards the Indian talent for sourcing workforce requirements in their countries.

In his keynote address after launching the eMigrate V2.0 portal and a mobile app here, he also said the government shall remain steadfast in the efforts to create safer and legal channels of emigrating abroad.

Union Minister of Labour and Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita also joined on dais, while ambassadors of several countries, among others, were present among the audience.

Mandaviya in his address said efforts are underway to integrate the eMigrate V2.0 portal with other digital platforms of his ministry to provide seamless access of relevant documents and profiles of skilled workers by potential employees sitting abroad.

The revamped version of eMigrate portal is more than just a digital platform. "It is a beacon of hope, a symbol of our commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of our work-



ers in foreign lands", Jaishankar said.

The enhancements in the portal reflect new realities and transformation that is being witnessed in so far as global migration dynamics are concerned, the external affairs minister underlined.

"There is a global need for workers who have domain specific knowledge in their particular fields. For several reasons, this need for a well-trained workforce in different geographies is only going to grow further," he said.

This is clearly reflected in the pace at which "we have undertaken negotiations with different countries" on migration and mobility since 2015, and

also in how the mobility ecosystem in India itself is taking shape, the EAM said.

In his address, Jaishankar said the government shall remain steadfast in the efforts to create safer and legal channels of emigrating abroad.

"I am sure that all the Protectors of Emigrants, empowered with technology and through their collective experiences, will gear to work relentlessly towards fulfilling our commitments to the public and to the nation," he said.

"I urge all the participants and particularly the ambassadors who have joined us today, in this inauguration programme, to turn towards the Indian talent and the demographic dividend

that India has to offer, for sourcing workforce requirements in your particular countries" the EAM said.

The eMigrate Version 2 portal has also been integrated with DigiLocker, and that is also a big step in digital transformation. This will enable the emigrants to submit various documents for obtaining clearances through DigiLocker in a paperless mode, as well as to store them securely, all their important documents like passports, employment contracts, are actually secured, he added.

The Ministry of External Affairs has leveraged the use of technology and digital systems to enhance the efficiency and efficacy of this portal.

Haryana Cong incharge offers to quit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress Haryana in-charge Deepak Babaria on Monday said he has offered to resign from his post, taking moral responsibility for the assembly polls defeat. Babaria said he offered his resignation to the high command soon after the result of the Haryana assembly polls came out last week but no decision has been communicated to him over the matter.

"Last week, after the results, I offered to resign. I offered to the high command that you can replace me. My health is not well and also it is my moral responsibility in the wake of the results. Keeping that in mind, I had told this to the high command that 'if you deem fit, you can replace me,'" Babaria said.

After the Lok Sabha polls also, I had offered to resign as in-charge of Delhi, but no decision has been taken on that. Similarly, no decision has been taken (for Haryana), but it was my responsibility to offer (to resign)," he said.

The Congress top brass last Thursday held a review meeting on the party's shock defeat in Haryana Assembly polls and decided to form a fact-finding team that will speak to all its candidates to find out the reasons for the debacle.

Sources said the leaders during the meeting discussed the possible reasons for the "unexpected" results in Haryana and decided to set up the team to ascertain the reasons behind such results and also look into complaints of "discrepancies" in



EVMs, as alleged by party candidates. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretary organisation KC Venugopal, AICC senior observers for the polls Ashok Gehlot and Ajay Maken, as well as AICC secretaries for the state, participated in the review meeting. AICC in-charge of Haryana Babaria joined the meeting online.

The Congress has also demanded a thorough probe into "discrepancies" found in some Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) during the counting of votes of the Haryana polls and demanded that such EVMs should be sealed and secured pending the inquiry.

A delegation of top Congress leaders comprising former chief ministers Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Ashok Gehlot and AICC leaders K C

Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Ajay Maken and Pawan Khera, besides Haryana Congress chief Uday Bhan, met with top Election Commission officials here on Wednesday. The Congress leaders alleged that there are at least 20 such complaints with many referring to EVMs functioning at 99 per cent battery capacity whereas the average EVMs were found to be operating at 60 to 70 per cent battery capacity during the counting.

The Congress appeared confident of dislodging the BJP dispensation which was in power for 10 years and facing anti-incumbency.

However, the BJP with 48 seats halted the Congress' comeback attempt and also proved several exit polls wrong which had predicted a comfortable win for the grand old party in Haryana. The Congress managed to muster 37 seats in the 90-member assembly.

Congress neck deep in 'bhu harap': BJP spokesperson

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Monday alleged that the entire top leadership of the Congress is involved in corruption relating to land transactions and suggested they should resign on moral grounds after being "exposed" BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi's sharp attack on the Congress came after a trust linked to its president Mallikarjun Kharge's family withdrew its request for the allotment of five acres of civic amenity site in Bengaluru to set up a 'Multi-Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre'.

The move by Congress president Kharge's son Rahul Kharge, who heads the trust, comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to the Mysuru Urban Development Authority after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law.

Trivedi said these decisions were triggered by adverse CAG reports and legal proceedings, and amounted to a virtual admission that the transactions were wrong. It was done to escape humiliation in legal proceedings, he claimed.

A party, which was once associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave's "bhu daan" (giving away land in charity), is now neck deep in "bhu harap" (land grab) under the "inspiration" of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, he alleged.

The BJP MP noted in the press conference that both Gandhis are accused in the National Herald case, which pertains to alleged capture of the company's properties at a highly nominal rate, and added that the probe began in the case on a court's direction before his party came to power in 2014. Such allegations involving land have been levelled against Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, both former chief ministers, and D K Shivakumar, the Karnataka deputy chief ministers among others, he added.

India strengthens drug testing network: Health Minister Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's network of drug testing labs, which includes 8 central labs, 38 state regulator labs, and 8 mini labs at key ports for rapid import testing, ensures the annual testing of over 100,000 samples, reinforces the country's commitment to public health and regulatory excellence, Union Health Minister J P Nadda said on Monday.

The Union Health Minister who inaugurated the five-day 19th International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities organised by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), said collaboration across borders, sectors and disciplines is essential for creating lasting health solutions. He underlined India's commitment to meeting the increasing demand for pharma products while adhering to global quality standards.

The event is being hosted for the first time in India by the CDSCO, Union Health Ministry in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), brings together regulatory authorities, policymakers, and health officials from over 194 WHO member states. Nadda also pointed out that in order to make drug supply chain robust, it has been made mandatory to provide bar code or quick response code (QR Code) on top 300 brands of drug products.

Similarly, QR code is mandatory on all API packs, either being imported or manufactured in India. Noting that India emerged not



only as a global leader in health resilience and innovation but also reaffirmed its role as the pharmacy of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister said the country rapidly expanded its healthcare infrastructure and scaled "The successful roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering over a billion people is a testament to the robustness of our healthcare system and the dedication of our healthcare workers and soundness of our policies," Nadda stated.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, who virtually joined the conference, commended India for hosting this crucial global regulatory forum and highlighted the importance of global cooperation in drug regulation, particularly in light of challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, the post-pandemic world, and the safe use of AI in healthcare.

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SC directs ED to seek HC stay vacate in trial against Madhu Koda

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Enforcement Directorate to approach the high court for vacation of stay on the trial against former Jharkhand chief minister Madhu Koda in a money laundering case.

The ED has challenged the November 8, 2023 order of the Jharkhand High Court which while admitting the plea of Koda against framing of charges under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, had

ordered for stay of further proceedings in the trial court.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Sanjay Kumar was told by Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, that 25 out of the 77 witnesses have been examined. The bench told Raju that he should have raised the grievances of the probe agency before the high court as the matter is still pending over there.

It suggested that the plea of ED before the top court will be kept pending and meanwhile the



agency can approach the high court for vacation of the stay on trial.

Raju agreed and sought direction for expeditious disposal of their application to be filed before the high court.

The bench directed for listing

here," the bench told Raju. The special PMLA court in Ranchi had framed charges against Koda and five others under provisions of the PMLA pertaining to around Rs 3,500 crore.

Koda was charged for money laundering and aiding the generation of the proceeds of crime between February 2005 and September 2006 when he was mines minister in Jharkhand and September 2005 and August 2008 during his tenure as chief minister of the state.

Chardham project 75 per cent complete, Centre to SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday informed the Supreme Court that almost 75 per cent of the awarded work of the strategic Chardham Project in Uttarakhand which goes up to China border, was complete. The strategic 900-kilometre project aims to provide an all-weather connectivity to the four holy shrines in Uttarakhand -- Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, informed a bench of Justices C T Ravikumar and Ujjal Bhuyan that the apex court-appointed oversight committee has submitted two reports to the top court.

According to Bhati, the apex court had appointed an oversight committee, chaired by



former top court judge Justice (retired) A K Sikri. Referring to the committee's report given in August, 2024, Bhati said, "Almost 75 per cent of the awarded work is complete." She further said there were two reports one in April, 2024 and the other of August 27 pertaining to the proposed project. The bench said the committee's

reports would be taken on record.

In December 2021, the apex court had allowed the double-lane widening of the Chardham Highway Project while setting up the oversight committee headed by the retired judge. The top court said the committee, formed to allay environmental concerns relating to the project, will not undertake a fresh environment assessment.

The committee was also extended the complete support of the ministries of defence, road transport and environment, the Uttarakhand Government and the district magistrates concerned. The committee was further directed to have representatives of the National Environmental Research Institute and the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.

Om Birla addresses 149th IPU in Geneva

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GENEVA/ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who is leading an Indian Parliamentary Delegation to 149th Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva, addressed the Assembly on the theme "Harnessing science, technology and innovation for a more peaceful and sustainable future." In his address on Monday, Birla illuminated the pressing global challenges of present time, presenting India's perspective with clarity. Emphasizing that India has always been a strong proponent of multilateralism, he noted that dialogue and cooperation amongst Parliaments in the field of science, technology and innovation was vital for common good. He expressed hope that through the forum like the IPU, Parliaments would be able to pave the way for inclusive development in the



world through shared action plans and joint efforts. He was unequivocal in stating that the collective endeavour of Parliaments across the world should be to in place to ensure fair and equitable distribution of the benefits of science, technology and innovation in the world.

He called for convergence of technological advancements, scientific research and innovative approaches so that the fruits of such advancements were shared equitably and leveraged responsibly to build

a future that is inclusive, resilient and peaceful.

Speaking on climate change and energy security, Birla referred to the idea of ONE SUN, ONE WORLD, ONE GRID - "OSOWOG", initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the last decade, India's renewable energy capacity has increased from 76 GW to 203 GW, he added. He also spoke about the initiatives like Green Hydrogen Mission, International Solar Alliance, Bio-Fuel Alliance underscoring India's commitment to address climate change. Mentioning the steps taken by the Parliament in this regard, he noted that the issues of climate change and Sustainable Development Goals had been discussed at length in Parliament. He also noted that utmost use of green technology had been ensured in the construction of the new building which speaks of our commitment to green energy.

Army Chief visits Japan to strengthen ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi is on a four-day visit to Japan with an aim to bolster defence cooperation between the two countries. During his visit from October 14-17, the Army chief will also visit Hiroshima, wherein he will lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Park and pay floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue at the Peace Park.

The visit marks a "significant step in bolstering defence cooperation between India and Japan," the defence ministry said in a statement here. On Monday, Gen Dwivedi will interact with Sibi George, India's Ambassador to Japan and would thereafter engage in a discussion on India-Japan relations at the Embassy of India in Tokyo.



He will engage in dialogue with the senior military leadership of Japan at the defence ministry in Ichigaya on Tuesday.

During his visit, the Army chief will hold meetings with Gen Yoshida Yoshihide, Chief of Staff, Joint Self Defence Force; Gen Morishita Yasunori, Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF); Ishikawa Takeshi, Commissioner of Acquisition,

Defence Studies. On Wednesday, the Indian Army chief accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Self Defence Force, will visit Fuji School, wherein he will engage in a conversation with Lt Gen Kodama Yasuyuki, Commanding Gen of Fuji School. Gen Dwivedi will be given a briefing at the School and he will also witness an equipment and facility display.

On the last leg of his visit, the general will visit Hiroshima on October 17, wherein he will lay a wreath at Hiroshima Peace Park and pay floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue at the Peace Park. The visit by Gen Dwivedi aims at strengthening cooperation between militaries of India and Japan, besides "exploring new avenues of collaboration" between the two nations, the statement said.

The itinerary also includes an interaction with senior hierarchy of the JGSDF and a visit to the National Institute of

India launches marine dolphin population estimation initiative

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Following the successful first population estimation of riverine dolphins in the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus river systems, India is now planning to conduct a similar estimation for marine dolphins.

This upcoming survey will target eco-sensitive areas to bolster conservation efforts, as marine dolphins face numerous threats, including hunting, entanglement in fishing nets, overfishing, climate change, tourism activities, toxic contamination, noise pollution, and habitat degradation among others, according to an official.

In fact, the Tamil Nadu Government announced is already implementing 'Project Dolphin' to strengthen the



marine ecology and overall health of the marine environment.

More than nine species of marine dolphins are found in the coastal waters including four types of dolphin species in the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve in the Southern State. The famous Ganges river dolphin is found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river

system and its tributaries spanning across India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. A small population of the Indus river dolphin, a close relative of the Ganges river dolphin, is found in the Indus River system in India.

"Under Project Dolphin, we have completed the estimation of riverine dolphins, the first of its kind in the world. The survey, conducted over two years,

covered 8,000 kilometres of the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus rivers. The results will be released soon," an official said. The exercise, led by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), covered two species the Ganges river dolphin and the Indus river dolphin. It will provide a baseline population of riverine dolphins in India for future assessments. A WII study found that small-

er rivers in the Ganga basin are a refuge for Gangetic dolphins and contribute to habitat diversity. It identified 620 kilometers of smaller rivers as a conservation priority.

The presence of dolphins indicates a healthy river system because they require clean, flowing water to survive. Their population helps scientists assess the overall health of a river.

Some of the threats to Gangetic dolphins include unintentional killing in fishing gear, poaching for dolphin oil, habitat destruction due to development projects, pollution, and overexploitation of prey. India launched Project Dolphin, a conservation initiative to protect dolphins in both freshwater rivers and coastal waters, in 2020.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Speeding up 'GatiShakti'

GatiShakti gets a fresh boost as PM Modi hails it as a game-changer for India's infrastructure

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lauded 'GatiShakti,' describing it as a transformative initiative poised to revolutionise India's infrastructure. Speaking on the third anniversary of 'GatiShakti' PM Modi hailed its potential to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the country's logistical network, thereby driving economic growth and development. The 'GatiShakti initiative,' introduced by the Central Government in 2021, aims to streamline and integrate various infrastructure projects across sectors, including roads, railways, ports and airports. The programme seeks to bridge gaps in existing networks, eliminate bottlenecks and promote the use of advanced technology and data analytics in planning and execution. GatiShakti goes beyond traditional infrastructure planning, as it involves the coordination of multiple departments and incorporates feedback from state governments, private sector stakeholders and local communities. The initiative is expected to transform



how infrastructure projects are conceived and executed, bringing about a paradigm shift in the country's growth trajectory. By fostering seamless integration of various sectors and improving the synergy between different modes of transport, GatiShakti is set to play a pivotal role in accelerating India's economic development.

By improving logistical efficiency, reducing costs and promoting seamless connectivity, the initiative can significantly bring down the cost of production. China's rapid economic growth provides a valuable lesson for India. Over the past few decades, China has focused heavily on large-scale infrastructure development, including extensive networks of high-speed railways, highways and ports. This not only improved connectivity but also drastically lowered logistics costs, making it easier for businesses to thrive. Following a similar path, 'GatiShakti' can serve as a catalyst for India's economic transformation, driving sustainable growth and helping the country achieve its ambition of becoming a \$5 trillion economy. While 'GatiShakti' promises to transform India's infrastructure, several challenges may hinder its implementation. Key impediments include land acquisition issues, where delays and disputes over land ownership can stall projects. Regulatory bottlenecks also pose challenges, with complex approval processes across different ministries slowing down progress. Additionally, financing constraints may arise, as large-scale infrastructure projects require substantial investment and public-private partnerships. To overcome these hurdles, the government can implement policy reforms to streamline land acquisition and simplify approval procedures, reducing bureaucratic delays. Incentivising private investment through tax benefits and offering risk-sharing models can attract more participation from the private sector. GatiShakti is the need of the hour and must be prioritised to realise India's growth potential.

PICTALK



Devotees carry the palanquin of the deities to participate in the Dussehra festival, in Kullu

Ratan Naval Tata: A gem of a person



BHOPIINDER SINGH

The passing of Ratan Tata has left the nation mourning not just an industrialist, but a rare leader who transcended divides, representing the 'Idea of India'

The year was 2000 and the list of Padma Awardees sent to the Rashtrapati Bhawan had included a list of super achievers. The scholarly constitutionalist in President K R Narayanan went through each name carefully, as he always did. The list had included luminaries like Pandit Hariprasad Churasia, Prof J B Bhagwati, Rajnikanth, Tarlok Singh etc., but one particular name brought a smile to the face of the otherwise reserved and ultra-correct Rashtrapati K R Narayanan, and it was the name of the then relatively young, 63-year-old Chairman of the Tata Group, Ratan Tata.

Arguably the most accomplished President ever, with a curriculum vitae of achievements that included recognition as the 'best diplomat of Indian Foreign Service', Ambassadorship to countries like USA, China etc., Vice Chancellorship of JNU, 3 consecutive wins as Member of Parliament, posts of Union Minister, Vice President of India, all on merit was no small achievement. Unbeknownst to many, his brilliant journey had the benefit of winds in his sails instilled by the Tata Group, long back! KR Narayanan had never forgotten what the Tatas had done to make its version of the 'Indian Dream' - the story from Uzhavoor in Kottayam to the Rashtrapati Bhawan had an unmistakably selfless, generous, and humble hand of the Tatas.

The topper from his school days who overcame unimaginable tribulations of financial and social nature fought against all odds and with the timely aid of the Travancore Royal family. In 1944, KR Narayanan was helped immeasurably by the Tata Scholarship to pursue his obvious genius in economics, politics and journalism at the London School of Economics - it was just the academic break that the precocious talent needed, and the rest as they say, is history. JRD Tata had heeded a recommendation letter stating that Narayanan had secured an MA at Travancore University, ranking first. He further noted that he achieved the distinction after surmounting many personal obstacles. Ironically, there



was yet another name in the 2000 Padma awardees who had a Tata hand in his own life story, the illustrious scientist, RA Mashelkar. Given his financial hardship, he too would attribute a large part of his success to the "Tata scholarship of 60 rupees per month for six years that helped me study".

He conflated his own story to that of KR Narayanan's, "Both of us were Tata scholars. We both left India, only to return when we were fairly young with a zeal to do more for our homeland". The surreal moment was described by Mashelkar, "Padma Bhushan, was bestowed on both me, a Tata scholar, and Ratan Tata, head of the house of Tatas. By whom? President Narayanan, another Tata scholar. This was the best endorsement of President Narayanan's remarks about moving from the 'sidelines of the society to the hub of social standing'."

As President Narayanan's Military Secretary, I was responsible for protocols et al, and I distinctly remember the President telling me that presumably Ratan Tata knew of the Tata connection in Narayanan's life, yet he had never sought any favour, consideration, or familiarity, out of any sense of entitlement.



HIS DEATH SHOWED WHAT A COLOSSUS HE WAS, WHOSE LOSS IS FELT BY ALL, WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTIONS. HE WAS UNBELIEVABLY ABOVE ALL POSSIBLE 'DIVIDES' THAT BESET A 5000-YEAR-OLD CIVILISATION AND DEMOCRACY CALLED INDIA

Always one for puns with languages, he suggested fondly that perhaps the Tata leaders were not 'Captains of the Industry', but more befittingly 'Generals of the Industry'.

As one from the 'Uniform' and knowing Narayanan personally, I knew immediately that the remark was not about seniority (ranks) but about leadership, inviolable values, and personal integrity, which is asked of an individual, as she/he is in a position to walk-the-talk. Much before expressions like affirmative action, corporate social responsibility or corporate trusteeship were defined - Tatas were already doing the same, with no vested interest, whatsoever. It was always about a larger purpose. It is with this sense of immutable responsibility that Ratan Tata stepped into the shoes of the legendary JRD Tata, who had been passed the baton by Nowroji Saklatwala and Jamsetji Tata. The silent dignity, grace, and magnanimity of the typical Tata way of doing things were upheld and reinforced by Ratan Tata - in his passing, the nation lost its most loved son and the 'Idea of India' its finest exponent.

The passing away of Ratan Tata has also exposed just how poor (in leadership) we have suddenly become. In

wounded and polarised times of bitter conflicts between the realms of majority-minority denominations, capitalist-socialist societies, agrarian-industry societies, and white collar-blue collar dimension - it is ironic that Ratan Tata was never ascribed to be working for a restricted denomination. His death showed what a colossus he was, whose loss is felt by all. He was unbelievably above all possible 'divides' that beset a 5000-year-old civilisation and democracy called India.

Today there are many leaders of political parties, communities, regions, corporations and even perhaps of causes - but none who can be said to be a leader of the inclusive and caring 'Idea of India'. In such desperate times, his passing away has also inadvertently posited the relevance of 'humility' and basic 'decency' that is so sadly missing in the national discourse. So, there may be leaders or even 'Captains of Industry', but 'General' of Leadership (and beyond) - absolutely none. Ratan Tata was the last of the knights, a first-rate hero.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RSS CALLS FOR HINDU UNITY

Madam - Apropos of the news 'Hindu be united, empowered, weakness not an option: RSS' (October 13). The message of RSS Sar Sangh Chalak for unity of Hindus amidst political subversion on caste lines has made a wide impact and sensitised Hindus to diminish caste lines. The media made it headlines like never before. This is highly worrisome, as religious conversions by Islamic and missionary institutions and consequent demography change are the most potent threats emanating from caste divisions. Kashmiri Hindus have faced the worst violence and mass exodus since independence and even before, which is yet another consequence of weakened and divided Hindus but which was taboo for a selected media and the intellectuals to even discuss.

Narratives have been set on caste divisions weakening and dividing Hindus for more than a century on misrepresentation of oppression bereft of any evidence, whereas the former rulers of various princely states, entrepreneurs of traditional businesses, and defeated warriors faced persecutions by the Mughal and British rulers and were reduced to penury and ruins and classified later as lower castes. Such narratives should be busted.

The movies and OTT platforms are equally responsible for inculcating inferiority complexes among Hindus selectively. Lately, there is a noticeably undercurrent among Hindus against those who are insulting Hindus and their Gods and undercutting their religious faiths. The constitutional term secular has been misused to the extreme for dividing Hindus. The demand for caste census selectively for Hindus only while excluding other religions, though not provided in the Constitution is yet another shot to divide Hindus and create vote banks. Sangh Pramukh's message is loud and clear.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

TRAIN CRASH SPARKS PANIC

Madam - Gruesome rail accidents in the recent past caused concern and created a

Md Siraj appointed as DSP



Star Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj has been appointed as Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) by the Telangana state. The post has been extended to him by the state government in appreciation of his exceptional and splendid achievement in international cricket. Siraj no doubt fought all odds to get into the national team and has carved a niche of his own with his superb

performance since his entry. The state in its declaration cited that the young cricketer has made Telangana proud and brought honours to the nation, hence this great honour for him. Among his noteworthy accomplishments are his participation in the Cricket World Cup series and the ongoing series with various teams before World Test Championship finals.

It has to be noted that the state made amendments in its regulations of appointments to felicitate and honour sports persons as heads of government departments. He now joins the likes of Joginder Sharma (Cricketer), Akhil Kumar, Jitender and Vijender (Boxers) and Hima Das (Athlete) to name a few who became police officers for their contributions to sports. This no doubt will attract more youngsters to sports and encourage them to showcase their best to bring laurels to the state and the nation.

M Pradyu | Kannur

BABA SIDDIQUE ASSASSINATED

Madam - Former Maharashtra minister and Nationalist Congress Party leader Baba Siddique was killed in Mumbai. He was shot outside his office by three unidentified men. Siddique, 66, was a key Muslim political leader in Maharashtra and also served as Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies, Labour and FDA. More than politics, Siddique was known for his social image and hosting grand iftar parties every year. During his time as an MLA, Siddique worked extensively on improving the infrastructure of his constituency, focusing on slum rehabilitation, upgrading healthcare facilities, and enhancing educational institutions. It is too premature to say anything as an investigation is going on. The law and order situation is deteriorating. This is not good for the city and state of Maharashtra. If the third shooter is also arrested, then we can make a breakthrough in this murder case.

M R Jayanthi | Trichy

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Navigating the complex path of integrity

In a world where honesty is often presented as situational, staying true to one's principles can be a daunting task



SANJAY CHANDRA

I caught snatches of an interesting conversation on the radio recently. The host and the guest were having a free-flowing discussion on the role of honesty and truthfulness in life. The conclusion was that honesty always pays, but a half-truth may be acceptable to avoid hurting the other person. I did not agree to subjective honesty as the situation demands. I remembered a few incidents while working in the government. These were lessons learned about integrity and honesty in public life. I was working on an arbitration case a few decades back. The advocate representing the contractor approached me to tilt the report in his favour for consideration. I told him that the case would be dealt with on merits. He was expecting elevation as a High Court judge, and I was warned of being hauled up in his court. I do not know if he was promoted. I was certainly not summoned. I moved to a government company in Delhi. I started commuting to work with my senior colleague in his official vehicle. New to the organisation, I claimed the



entitled conveyance allowance for the commute. He gently pulled me up and told me that I could not claim the money till the time he chauffeured me. I continued to travel with him till I was elevated and had been provided with an official vehicle. Another acquaintance from the private sector informed me about his promotion. Having received my congratulatory wishes, he hesitantly told me he was now in a position of authority to do something for me. I pointed out that I was better placed to do his company a favour, and not broach the subject again if he wished to remain a friend and a business associate. We continue to be friends. The word got around. I was not subject to any more proposals of illegal gratification.

A gentleman joined the dispute resolution board that I am part of only when he was assured by a former senior colleague about my proven integrity in public life. I am not vain, or at least try not to be demonstrative of my vanity, but I could not resist a proud smile. There were also incidents when I was on the receiving end. I did not live up to the standards that I had set. My father-in-law met an untimely death three decades back. A few days after the rituals were over, I accompanied my brother-in-law to the local post office to withdraw the savings. The dealing assistant's table was piled high with earlier case files. The work was done within the time frame promised, without his touching the money that we

were asked to put in the office drawer. I could have refused and waited out. I chose the easy way. I once read an article that corruption is a global phenomenon. It exists even in developed countries like America and Japan. The difference is that it is at the highest levels and does not affect the common man. I recently flew with a senior corporate leader who echoed exactly similar sentiments. This is the conundrum that I am unable to resolve. We should not be teaching our children conflicting lessons. To me, being truthful or honest are the two sides of the same coin. There cannot be two standards, be it in business, politics, personal life, or at the common man's level. American author, H Jackson Brown Jr said "Live so that when your children think of fairness, caring and integrity, they think of you." That will be the day when we will be truly proud of ourselves.

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE CHANGING FACE OF RAM LEELA

As traditional values blur, concerns grow about the erosion of cultural heritage of Ram Leela



VINOD TAKIAWALA

The connection between Delhi's residents and Ram Leelas is a deeply rooted tradition, with the historic Ramlila Maidan serving as a living testament to this cultural bond. Stories linked to the venue continue to be shared even today. During the Ram Leela performances, the atmosphere in Delhi and the NCR resonates with the chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Har Har Mahadev." As evening falls, families eagerly set out to partake in the festivities. I, too, had the opportunity to witness some of these performances. However, to my disappointment, the portrayal of Ram's story often appeared distorted, with dialogues sounding jarring and performances lacking in choreography. It seemed as though the actors, much like the director and scriptwriter, had little familiarity with the original Ramayana.

The Ram Leela I watched during my younger days has transformed into a commercial event, with little regard for the religious and cultural essence of this annual festival. It has become more of an entertainment spectacle than an exploration of the Ramayana's teachings. For some, it's a means to profit, while others use it as a platform to pursue their personal agendas. In the capital, the celebrations—including the enactment of the Ram Leela and the ritual of burning Ravana's effigy—frequently feature prominent figures such as politicians and businessmen as guests of honour. It often feels as though the Ram Leela is being staged to honour them, as the announcements from the stage are filled with praises for their greatness and importance.

Yet, I couldn't help but wonder whether any of them truly embodied the



virtues of Maryada Purushottam Ram. Whether ministers, political leaders, social workers, or other distinguished personalities holding official positions, none struck me as being worthy of comparison to Ram. I kept asking myself, "Is there anyone among them who genuinely understands Ram or upholds his ideals?"

Moreover, the management of the Ram Leelas raises several concerns. From the chaotic parking outside the venues to the giant advertisements plastered on temporary boundaries, the arrangements leave much to be desired. The presence of high-ranking officials, Delhi police, and businessmen with their families often overshadows the experience of the common people. Organisers are granted access to public spaces with government support, including subsidised electricity, water, security, and other amenities. Despite this, substantial funds are collected through donations for staging the Ram Leelas, though there is no clear accounting or auditing of these finances. Only God knows where the money goes.

At one Ram Leela in Delhi, the organisers spared no expense in creating luxurious settings for themselves, while visitors had minimal or no facilities. A statue of Lord Ram was placed in an open field, and the idols of other Hindu deities were carelessly laid out on the ground. Meanwhile, the organisers and their close circle enjoyed lavish facilities in opulent tents with exclusive arrangements for food, photoshoots, and private promotions. Ordinary visitors, who came with their families to enjoy the performance, often struggled to gain entry. Once inside, they were met with private security guards employed to serve the organisers' guests, who sometimes treated the common people poorly. Ram Leelas have now become major attractions and money-making opportunities, with little consideration for the people who come to witness them. The entire event is chaotic, and all one can hope for is that it concludes without any unfortunate incidents. The ideals of Ram seem to be the last thing on the minds of those who organise these events. The essence of Ram Leela has been overshadowed by the spectacle of wealth and status. Even the story of Ram is distorted, and the dialogues are awkward—but that is the reality of modern-day Ram Leela. (The writer is a freelance journalist; views are personal)

Why RBI should not look at food inflation



UTTAM GUPTA

Concerns over persistent food price volatility and the need for economic growth support have prompted the Reserve Bank of India to keep its options open



On October 9, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das announced the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its fourth bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY). It has kept the policy rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) unchanged at 6.5 per cent. However, it has altered its policy stance from "withdrawal of accommodation" to a neutral stance. In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalised framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates including the policy rate for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate in such a manner as to maintain the Consumer Price Index or CPI (it corresponds to a basket that includes food, fuel, manufactured goods and select services) within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). The RBI decides the policy rates once in two months during each FY. The mandate initially given for five years ending March 31, 2021, has since been extended till March 31, 2026. The other crucial policy instrument the banking regulator uses for targeting inflation is Liquidity - a jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system. Pumping more liquidity along with a reduction in the policy rate represents a scenario which in jargon is described as an 'accommodative' policy stance. The terminology was coined by Das in June 2019 when he started going for aggressive cuts in the policy rate and an increase in credit availability. Since June 2022 the RBI changed its stance to "withdrawal of accommodation" and has since stuck to it till date. From October 9, 2024, it has decided to go for what it terms a "neutral" stance. A "neutral" stance connotes that the RBI has vowed to keep its options flexible meaning it will neither squeeze liquidity by restricting credit availability and keeping policy rates high nor go



AS LONG AS FOOD (WHOSE PRICES ARE FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED BY SUPPLY-SIDE FACTORS) REMAINS A PART OF THE CPI BASKET, INFLATION TARGETING WILL ALWAYS REMAIN A PROBLEM

for unrestrained lending at low interest rates.

At the time of taking charge in December 2018, Das was confronted with a legacy of policy rate at a peak of 6.5 per cent, courtesy of a tight stance taken by his predecessor Urjit Patel. In February 2019, he initiated a process of aggressive cut that led to its plummeting to a low of 4 per cent by May 2020. It stayed at that level for over two years. Beginning May 2022, the RBI delivered a hike of 1.4 per cent during the first half of FY 2022-23 and another dose of 1.1 per cent during the second half.

A total hike of 2.5 per cent thus restored the policy rate to its earlier peak of 6.5 per cent by February 2023. Since then, the rate has remained unchanged to date.

Why hasn't RBI reduced the rate? Look at the trajectory of the CPI inflation. It had scaled to a high of 7.8 per cent in April 2022. During FY 2022-23, it hovered around 8 per cent. In the following FY, it started decreasing from 7.4 per cent in July 2023 to 5 per cent in September 2023, 4.8 per cent in October 2023 and 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. For the whole of FY 2023-24, it was 5.4 per cent. During the current FY also, the CPI inflation has kept low; 5.08 per cent in June 2024 and 3.54 per cent in July 2024. During FY 2024-25, the RBI expects the CPI inflation to be 4.5 per cent. Given the above, from the third quarter of FY 2023-24, the CPI inflation has remained well within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). Moreover, as per RBI's assessment, this position will be sustained till the end of the current FY.

There was thus a strong case for reducing the repo rate. This would have given a boost to economic

growth besides helping millions of borrowers reduce their EMIs and helping industries, especially MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) reduce the cost of servicing their loans. Yet, the RBI remains unfazed and has stuck to its stance of 'not reducing the policy rate'. This has to do with a mindset that was reflected in Das's observation while announcing the first bi-monthly policy of the current FY. He had said "The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest. We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis." Put simply, he meant there was no need to start reducing interest rates until inflation reached the target of 4 per cent and stayed at that level. If, that figure of 4 per cent was so sacrosanct, then why keep (+/- 2 per cent)?

The short point is the RBI is clamoring for a scenario that is unlikely and even if it is reached, it won't be possible to stay there for long. A potent reason for this is food inflation which has a weight of around 40 per cent in the overall CPI and is impacted predominantly by supply side/seasonal factors whereas monetary policy instruments work on the demand side.

Invariably, food inflation maintains an upward trend even as a small disruption in supply caused by seasonal factors can lead to spiralling prices. This, in turn, lifts the CPI inflation more so because of its high weight of 40 per cent. In July 2023, food inflation was 11.8 per cent which led to CPI inflation of 7.4 per cent. In October 2023, the former decreased to 6.6 per cent, and so did the latter to 4.8 per cent. At the start of the current year, food inflation spurted to around 8 per cent and by June 2024, it had fur-

ther moved up to 9.4 per cent. As long as food (whose prices are fundamentally affected by supply-side factors) remains a part of the CPI basket, inflation targeting will always remain a problem. There is an urgent need to exclude it while setting benchmark interest rates, an idea that was mooted by the Chief Economic Advisor in the Economic Survey (ES) for 2023-24. The CEA argued that monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply-side pressures. For instance, during 2021-22, wheat output was affected by unusually high temperatures. During 2022-23, rains accompanied by hailstorms acted as a spoiler. During the first half of FY 2023-24, food inflation went up due to a spike in the prices of vegetables caused by seasonal factors. The current inflationary trend in food prices also has to do with supply-side pressures only. The RBI can achieve little to control them by keeping the policy rate high.

The RBI should take the idea mooted in the ES - 2023-24 on board. Meanwhile, it should consider reducing the weight of food inflation in CPI to reflect the contemporary reality. The current 40 per cent weight is based on the Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) of 2011-12 whereas Summary Statistics from the 2022-23 CES point towards a significant reduction. While formulating its monetary policy, the RBI's prime responsibility is to ensure macro-economic stability its pivotal focus being on keeping inflation within reasonable bounds. However, it can't be oblivious of the dire need to support economic growth which could be adversely impacted if it keeps the interest rates high.

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

Laapataa Ladies: India's Oscar entry poised to captivate the world

This year's selection for Oscar marks a bold statement about the future of Indian cinema and its universal appeal

India is ready to stun the world once again, not only with its glamorous presence but also with its captivating storytelling at the 2025 Oscars. With Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies chosen as India's official entry for Best International Feature Film, the global stage is about to witness a film that exemplifies the power of Indian cinema where tradition meets modernity, and women's stories are told with gradation, strength and authenticity. From the grand stages of Cannes and TIFF to the prestigious halls of the Oscars, India's cinematic journey continues to break boundaries, capturing hearts across the globe. The selection of Laapataa Ladies



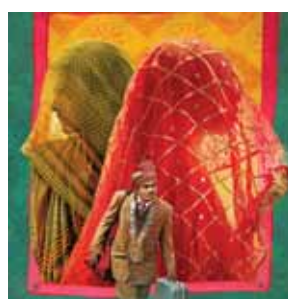
CHAITANYA K PRASAD

stands out as a justified move that speaks volumes about the direction the Indian cinema will take in the future. It signifies not just a bold statement but also a deeper narrative that India aims to convey to the world. The decision has stirred passionate discussions about the nature of Indian cinema, the evolving landscape of

global filmmaking, and the art of storytelling that resonates universally. It signifies not just a bold statement but also a deeper narrative that India aims to convey to the world. One characterised by powerful storytelling and emotional depth, laced with cultural authenticity that delves into the unique yet universally relatable experiences of women.

Kiran Rao's return to the director's chair after more than a decade has proven to be nothing short of a cinematic triumph of her evolution as a filmmaker. 'Laapataa Ladies' offers more than a film, it's an experience that beautifully blends humour and poignant social commentary and a fresh perspective on the complex-

ities of Indian womanhood. Set against the backdrop of rural India, the story revolves around two brides mistakenly swapped due to their veils, igniting a whirlwind of confusion and identity crisis. But beneath the surface, the film tackles deeper societal themes, portraying the often unspoken struggles women face while navigating tradition and personal identity. Rao's masterful storytelling elevates this from a simple narrative to a cultural dialogue, one that resonates with both Indian and global audiences. It's this jugalbandi of emotion, drama, and humour that makes 'Laapataa Ladies' stand out as a universal story about women's empowerment.



The film doesn't just reflect the plight of Indian women, it taps into the global consciousness of gender roles, the subtle acts of defiance, and the resilience required to reclaim one's identity in a patriarchal society. By sending 'Laapataa Ladies' to the Oscars, India is presenting the world with a film that balances entertainment with a serious undercurrent. This

is the kind of storytelling that Hollywood needs to see an authentic narrative that reflects the socio-cultural realities of a nation while remaining universally relatable. With well-written characters, immersive performances, and a storyline that oscillates between light-heartedness and gravitas, 'Laapataa Ladies' will serve as a testament to Indian filmmaking talent. The performances of Nitanshi Goel and Pratibha Ranta shine, their portrayals brimming with vulnerability and strength, making their characters relatable on a universal scale. This film is not just a story about two women but about the entire spectrum of Indian womanhood—its beauty, complex-

ity, and contradictions. The landscape of global filmmaking is undergoing a revolution. The world is slowly waking up to the storytelling brilliance that many nations like South Korea, China, Turkey and India have always possessed but are now showcasing with greater confidence and finesse. India's selection of 'Laapataa Ladies' is part of this global wave of cinema that is redefining the narrative structure, giving voice to local stories with universal appeal. Much like South Korea's Parasite, which used the backdrop of class disparity to tell a universally compelling story, 'Laapataa Ladies' uses rural India's traditions to explore gender,

identity and empowerment in a way that transcends cultural boundaries. As 'Laapataa Ladies' makes its way to the Oscars, it carries with it the hopes of millions who believe in the power of authentic storytelling. The film's emotional depth, paired with Rao's visionary direction, is set to make waves on the international stage, showing Hollywood and the world what Indian cinema is truly capable of. With 'Laapataa Ladies', India has not just sent a film—it has sent a message. (The writer is a former additional DG, DFF, and festival director at IFFI. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan; Views are personal)

J and K BJP to elect LoP soon

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After failing to realize its dream of anointing a Dogra Chief Minister in Jammu and Kashmir, the Bharatiya Janta Party has launched a preliminary exercise to zero in on the name of the leader of the opposition who can live up to the expectations of the masses in the region and can also give tough time to the ruling benches. As of now, several names are doing the rounds but the final selection is awaited. The BJP Parliamentary Board has appointed Union Minister, Prahlad Joshi and BJP national general secretary, Incharge J and K and Ladakh UTs, Tarun Chugh as Central Observers for Jammu and Kashmir to monitor the appointment of the Leader of the Opposition. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which swept the polls in the Jammu plains winning 29 seats, is second in terms of seats won as well as the number of first-time MLAs. The saffron party has 15 first-



time MLAs, accounting for more than half of its tally. J&K unit BJP chief Ravinder Raina felicitated the newly-elected party MLAs here on Monday and said the leader of the opposition will soon be selected after holding meetings with party leaders under the command of central observers. One name in the race for

Leader of Opposition is that of State General Secretary Sunil Kumar Sharma, who won from Padar Nagensi. He has become MLA for the second consecutive time. He was also a minister in the previous government after winning the Kishtwar seat. He enjoys the confidence of the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and worked close-

ly with him during the month-long campaigning in the region. Another name, Devendra Singh Rana, is also being considered as the leader of the opposition. Rana has become MLA from Nagrota for the second time. He is the younger brother of Union Minister and MP from Udhampur, Dr. Jitendra

Singh. He joined the BJP in October 2021. While remaining in the National Conference, he served as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's political advisor. He is very articulate and can give the ruling benches a tough time with support from the saffron party brigade. The name of Dr. Devendra Kumar Maniyal, who won from Ramgarh (SC) seat, is also being discussed for the post of the opposition leader. He won the 2014 assembly elections from Samba (SC) and was the Health Minister. Dr. Maniyal is currently holding the post of State General Secretary in the party. The party leadership is also discussing the name of Dr. Narendra Singh, the national secretary of BJP, for the post of the leader of the opposition. Narinder Singh became MLA for the first time in 2024 from RS Pura-Jammu South Assembly seat. He is also the face of PoK displaced people. He also has political experience at the national level.

Baba Siddique murder accused facing nine criminal cases: Cops

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police on Monday said Mohammad Yasin Akhtar, one of the suspects in the killing of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique in Mumbai, is facing nine heinous criminal cases, including for murder and attempt to murder. Akhtar (21) is a resident of Shankar village in Jalandhar's district, police said. A police official in Jalandhar said nine cases are registered against Akhtar alias Jessi alias Sikandar at different police stations. He is facing serious charges, such as murder, attempt to murder and dacoity, Nakodar Deputy Superintendent of Police Sukhpal Singh said. He added that Akhtar is facing two criminal cases in Haryana's Kaithal as well. Akhtar was arrested in a criminal case in June 2022. He had not visited his village after he



came out of jail in June 2024, police said. Akhtar is suspected to have links with gangster Vikram Brar. His father Mohammad Jamil Akhtar, who was engaged in the work of laying marble and tiles, and brother were not found in the village and their house was found locked. Akhtar's mother and sister have passed away. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Baba Siddique

(66) was waylaid by three persons at Kher Nagar in Mumbai's Bandra area, just outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office, and shot at on Saturday night. The Mumbai Police has arrested two of the alleged assailants -- Haryana resident Gurmail Baljit Singh and Uttar Pradesh native Dharmaraj Rajesh Kashyap - while the third one is on the run.

Doctors' meet with Government fails as fast-unto-death enters 10th day

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A crucial high-level meeting between the Bengal State administration led by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant and a delegation of different doctors' organizations, including Indian Medical Association (IMA) failed to produce desired results "for want of any concrete initiative from the government's side," the representatives of the doctors associations said. The meeting was hosted to end the present gridlock emerging out of the indefinite fast resorted to by a group of junior doctors demanding justice for the Kolkata doctor rape and murder victim and resolution of many other issues including the alleged "mafia and syndicate raj" in medical institutions. "We came out hopeless as there was no positive intent shown by the Government," said the IMA representatives ... the Government said that they are taking steps towards resolving issues ... but there was no concrete proposal ... there was no

show of intent ... nothing in writing was given to us ... only they said 'we are doing ... we are looking into it' ... the Health Secretary whose resignation the junior doctors have been asking for and who should have been present in the meeting was not present and we were told that he is absent ... this is the most insensitive Government that we have ever seen," the doctors emerging out of the meeting said. The meeting was held in the backdrop of the junior doctors' indefinite fast entering its tenth day on Monday with four doctors already having been shifted to hospital with their parameters falling drastically, sources said. "What illegality is there in the doctors' demands ... they are asking for justice for their lady colleague who was raped and murdered on August 9 inside the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital ... They are asking for a foolproof system including centralized real system with real time monitoring, enhanced security network, end of mafia and syndicate raj,



timely students' union elections so as to keep the corrupt authorities in check ... these can all be done. The doctors are ... The IMA reportedly gave in writing to the Government about the existence of a "mafia and syndicate raj" inside the government hospitals including the medical colleges --- of which the RG Kar incident was an upshot."

The senior doctors during their meeting with the Government representatives demanded immediate removal of the present Chairman of the Patients' Welfare Committee Dr Sudipto Roy who is also a Trinamool Congress MLA, besides they asked for the "dissolution of the State Medical Council which is the breeding ground of medical mafias" generating hundreds of crores, sources said. The doctors also demanded the "publication of a proforma from the Government wherein a mass resignation could be made legally tenable," the IMA representatives said adding, the State Government had earlier said that it was not taking the matter of mass resignation of the doctors seriously as there was no procedure for such mass resignations as "resignations are individual affairs." Referring to the meeting the Chief Secretary however said that the Government would deliberate over things at appropriate level. "In the meeting we told the doctors that we

have noted their issues and concerns and would intimate them at appropriate time ... we also told them that the main concern is the deteriorating health of the junior doctors ... we requested them to see to it that the fast should end immediately because the Government is concerned about the doctors," the Chief Secretary said. Meanwhile a delegation of the junior doctors backed by members of civil society on Monday marched to Raj Bhavan to see Governor C.V. Ananda Bose so as to draw his attention towards the alleged "inadequacy of the charge sheet submitted by the Central Bureau of Investigation" in the RGKMCH case. "We have seen that only one person has been named in the charge sheet whereas several other persons have been arrested on charges of tampering of evidence ... we want to know why their names were left out from the charge sheet," doctors asked. An eleven-member delegation was deliberating with the Governor when reports last came in.

Maha Yuti Government waives toll tax on light vehicles at five Mumbai entry points

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major sop doled out to people living in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, the BJP-led MahaYuti government on Monday announced complete waiver of toll tax for light motor vehicles (LMVs) at all the five Mumbai Entry Points (MEPs) with effect from Tuesday. The decision to waive the toll tax completely at the Dahisar, Mulund, Thane, Airoli and Vashi MEPs, was taken on Monday at a special State Cabinet meeting presided over by chief minister Eknath Shinde and attended by deputy chief Ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar and other ministers. Announcing his government's decision to waive the toll tax on LMVs, chief minister Eknath Shinde said: "Our government's decision is historic and people-friendly. This move will save commuters' time, and reduce pollution and traffic." Given that people living in MMR - who drive down to the country's commercial capital every day for their work -- have long been demanding the total waiver of toll tax, the decision has become a big relief to people using lighter vehicles like cars, jeeps, vans, and small trucks. Currently, the toll tax levied on motorists by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) is Rs 45 per single trip. The ruling BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP celebrated the state gov-

ernment's decision to waive toll tax for LMVs by distributing sweets among the people. In a related development, RTI activist Pravin Wategaonkar - who has long been crusading for discontinuation of the levy toll tax at five entry points of Mumbai and Bombay-June Expressway - welcomed the decision and said: "The decision has become a big relief to the vehicle users at five entry points of Mumbai. Inordinate delays at toll booths and poor condition of roads even after paying toll were some of the important grievances of these regular users. There would not be any financial burden on the vehicle users." "Given that all vehicle owners have paid one time Motor Vehicle Tax, there is no declaration of Total capital Outlay prior to issuance of toll notification and given the location of toll booths, the toll collection at five entry points was mala fide, arbitrary, capricious, illegal and violative of article 14 read with article 19(1)d of the Constitution of India especially as regards vehicle owners in thane; and ultra vires of Sec. 20 of Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Tax Act and articles 265 of the Constitution of India," Wategaonkar said. Welcoming the decision, MNS chief Raj Thackeray said: "We demanded that all roads should be toll-free. We were criticized for vandalizing the toll plazas, but extreme steps were necessary to draw the government's attention. At least, now the Mumbaiers shall be free of paying tolls and we are happy that our agitations were successful."

SC tells govt to issue River Conservation Zone notification

From page 1

Referring to the Composite Water Management Index report prepared by the Niti Aayog, the plea said India is suffering from the worst water crisis in its history. "According to a reply tendered by the

Minister of State for Jal Shakti in Lok Sabha on March 23 last year, the per capita water availability in the country is fast reducing due to increasing population. The writ petition seeks intervention of this court in granting legal protection to all the rivers, including the tributaries, thereof, as well

as water courses and water channels, and the floodplains and catchments, thereof, so as to ensure water and ecological security for the people of the country and seeks directions to the Central Government to notify the River Conservation Zone (RCZ) Notification, without any further delay," the plea said.

Left, progressive parties seek better deal in seat allocation in Maharashtra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

In effort to seek a better deal in the seat allocations for them in the forthcoming Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Left and progressive parties have asked the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leadership to adopt an "inclusive approach" towards seat-sharing and accepting pro-people policies. The Left and progressive parties - comprising Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP), Samajwadi Party, CPI, CPI-M and Satyashodhak Communist Party (SCP) --- are holding a state-level convention at Nashik in north Maharashtra on October 16 to impress upon the MVA leadership to adopt an "inclusive approach" and consider allocating the adequate number of seat to them. Like the MVA have already done, the Left and progressive parties will adopt resolution at their Nashik convention, vowing to defeat the BJP-led MahaYuti in the forthcoming State Assembly polls. Leaders of four Left and pro-

gressive parties which held an informal meeting on Sunday, also adopt a resolution asking the MVA leadership to involve the left nd progressive parties in fighting the ruling MahaYuti. Among other things, the Nashik Convention will also remind the MVA that although it won 31 out of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 elections in Maharashtra, with the broad support of all anti-BJP-RSS forces in the state, the difference in the voting percentage between the MVA and the NDA in the state in that election was merely 0.4 per cent (44% to MVA, as against 43.6% to NDA). The left and progressive parties will also ask the MVA leadership take inclusive and comprehensive steps to ensure that the coming Maharashtra assembly elections do not go the Haryana way. The progressive parties authorised Jayant Patil, ex-MLC (PWP), Abu Asim Zalmi, MLA (SP), Dr Ashok Dhawale (CPI-M), and Dr Bhalkhandra Kango (CPI) to hold discussions with the MVA leaders

Gasp! Delhi AQI is already over 200

From page 1

It also mandates the suspension of work at private construction and demolition projects of 500 sq m or more not registered on the portal of the respective State government for remote monitoring of dust mitigation measures. Under the GRAP stage one, it mandated traffic police to deploy more personnel for smooth traffic flow at all identified corridors with heavy traffic and congestion prone intersections; Strict vigilance and enforcement of PUC norms for vehicles and no tolerance for visible emissions stop visibly polluting vehicles by impounding and / or levying maximum penalty. The GRAP is a set of emergency measures taken to reduce air pollution. Under Stage 1, GRAP calls

for strict enforcement of the Supreme Court and National Green Tribunal orders on phasing out of overage diesel and petrol vehicles. The CAQM and weather forecasts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) comprehensively reviewed the air quality scenario in the region on Monday and decided to initiate Stage 1 control measures, according to an official statement. The CAQM said in a statement that there has been a sudden dip in air quality parameters in the last 24 hrs in the region which led to the AQI for Delhi moving into the POOR" category and the forecasts also predict air quality to mainly remain in "Poor" category in coming days owing to the unfavourable

meteorological condition. The GRAP is an emergency response mechanism that's triggered when the AQI reaches "poor" levels. The AQI is a measure of air pollution levels that indicates how air pollution can affect health. The severity of pollution for implementation of GRAP has been categorised into four stages, based on Delhi's AQI levels: Stage I - 'Poor' (AQI 201-300); Stage II - 'Very Poor' (AQI 301-400); Stage III - 'Severe' (AQI 401-450); and Stage IV - 'Severe+' (AQI > 450). Each stage outlines specific actions that must be implemented to curb pollution levels. It is noted that the State of Global Air 2024 by the Health Effects Institute highlighted alarming numbers on the deaths caused due to air pollution in 2021. Globally, in 2021, air pollution was found to

be the second-leading risk factor for death, accounting for roughly 8.1 million deaths. The high pollution levels and large population of India have led to 2.1 million of these deaths, out of which 237,000 were attributable to ozone exposure. A study by the Lancet Planetary Health in 2024 also estimated mortality in 10 cities of India because of ambient air pollution. Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Shimla and Varanasi have reported on an average more than 33,000 deaths every year, according to the findings. Delhi alone was found to have reported around 12,000 deaths which can be attributed to air pollution. These death figures highlight how urgently we need to take effective and sustained action.

Manic Monday for Air India

From page 1

"Upon landing in Delhi a while ago, took stock of the situation at Delhi airport regarding the diversion & emergency landing of flight AI 119, carrying 239 passengers. "While the due security checks & safety protocols are being diligently followed, directed the airport officials & the Air India staff to arrange all the necessary assistance as well as convenient accommodation for the passengers affected," he said in a post on X at 1 pm. Apart from the Air India flight, two IndiGo flights

originating from Mumbai received bomb threats on Monday. One IndiGo flight was headed to Muscat and the other to Jeddah. The IndiGo flights received the threats before they took off and the planes concerned were moved to isolation bays for security checks. "IndiGo flight 6E 1275 operating from Mumbai to Muscat had received a bomb threat. As per protocol, the aircraft was taken to an isolated bay, and following the standard operating procedure, mandatory security checks were promptly initiated," the Gurugram-headquartered budget airline said in a statement. On the Mumbai-Jeddah flight, it said, "The flight

had received a bomb threat. As per protocol, the aircraft was taken to an isolated bay, and following the standard operating procedures, mandatory security checks were promptly initiated." IndiGo, however, did not share other specific details such as the number of persons on board or the status of the two flights. According to the live flight tracking website Flightradar24.Com, the Muscat flight, which was to depart at 2 am on Monday, took off for its destination at 9.15 am, after a delay of more than 7 hours, while

flight 6E-57 (Mumbai-Jeddah) was scheduled to depart at 2.05 am and was showing an estimated departure at 12.15 pm. Not just planes, a train, the Mumbai-Howrah Mail (train no 12809, superfast train from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CMST) to Kolkata's HWH) received a threat to blow up the train with a timer bomb. No suspicious objects were found during the checking. After this, the train continued its journey to its destination, CPRO, Central Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer

said. Earlier on October 5, Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar International Airport located in Madhya Pradesh's Indore received a bomb threat email following which the police registered an FIR. The mail sender also threatened to blow up other airports in the country. Similarly, Vadodara Airport received a bomb threat via email, which promoted a thorough search on October 5. Meanwhile, security has been tightened following the received threat and authorities are currently investigating the matter. +

Opposition MPs boycott Waqf parliamentary committee meet

From page 1

The opposition MPs cited rules regulating the parliamentary committees' proceedings to claim that "unproven allegations" against "high dignitaries" cannot be made at the meetings of these panels. Maniappady, they said, also made an appeal to Muslims not to oppose the Bill, which too was out of line. An Opposition MP said allegations cannot be levelled against someone who is not there to defend himself. The chairperson of the committee, BJP leader

Jagdambika Pal, however, overruled their objections and allowed the deposition to continue. A BJP member said the deposition was relevant to the Bill as Maniappady's claims pertained to Waqf properties. Opposition MPs, including Gaurav Gogoi and Imran Masood of the Congress, A Raja of the DMK, Arvind Sawant of the Shiv Sena (UBT), AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, Samajwadi Party's Mohibbullah and Sanjay Singh of the Aam Aadmi Party, stormed out of the meeting and expressed strong sentiments against its proceedings.

MHA hosts Meitei, Kuki, Naga MLAs meeting

From page 1

Over 200 people have since been killed, and more than 60,000 displaced, as both communities engaged in violent confrontations. The conflict has led to widespread destruction of homes, villages, and places of worship, particularly targeting the Kuki community. Despite heavy deployment of central security forces, the violence has persisted, resulting in mounting casualties and

displacement. Relief camps are overflowing with displaced individuals, and both sides remain deeply distrustful of each other. The Centre's repeated efforts to bring the warring groups to the table have culminated in this critical meeting. As tensions continue to simmer in the state, this historic meeting offers a glimmer of hope for restoring stability and fostering dialogue between the divided communities.

3 share Nobel prize in economics

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

The Nobel memorial prize in economics was awarded Monday to Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson for research that explains why societies with poor rule of law and exploitative institutions do not generate sustainable growth. The three economists "have demonstrated the importance of societal institutions for a country's prosperity," the Nobel committee of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said at the announcement in Stockholm. Acemoglu and Johnson work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Robinson conducts his research at the University of Chicago. "Reducing the vast differences in income between countries is one of our time's greatest challenges. The laureates have demonstrated the impor-

ance of societal institutions for achieving this," Jakob Svensson, Chair of the Committee for the Prize in Economic Sciences, said. He said their research has provided "a much deeper understanding of the root causes of why countries fail or succeed." Reached by the academy in Athens, Greece, where he is due to speak at a conference, the Turkish-born Acemoglu, 57, said he was surprised and shocked by the award. "You never expect something like this," he said. Acemoglu said the research honoured by the prize underscores the value of democratic institutions. "I think broadly speaking the work that we have done favours democracy," he said in a telephone call with the Nobel committee and reporters in Stockholm. But he added that "democracy is not

a panacea. Introducing democracy is very hard. When you introduce elections, that sometimes creates conflict." Asked about how economic growth in countries like China fits into the theories, Acemoglu said that "my perspective is generally that these authoritarian regimes, for a variety of reasons, are going to have a harder time ... in achieving ... long-term sustainable innovation outcomes." Acemoglu and Robinson wrote the 2012 bestseller "Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty," which argued that man-made problems were responsible for keeping countries poor. In their work, the winners looked, for instance, at the city of Nogales, which straddles the US-Mexico border. Despite sharing the same geography, climate, many of the same ancestors and a common culture, life is very dif-

ferent on either side of the border. In Nogales, Arizona, to the north, residents are relatively well-off and live long lives; most children graduate from high school. To the south, in Mexico's Nogales, Sonora, "residents here are in general considerably poorer. ... Organised crime makes starting and running companies risky. Corrupt politicians are difficult to remove, even if the chances of this have improved since Mexico democratised, just over 20 years ago," the Nobel committee wrote. The difference, the economists found, is a US system that protects property rights and gives citizens a say in their government. Acemoglu expressed worry Monday that democratic institutions in the United States and Europe were losing support from the population. "Democracies particularly underperform when the population thinks they

underdeliver," he said. "This is a time when democracies are going through a rough patch. ... It is, in some sense, quite crucial that they reclaim the high ground of better governance." The economics prize is formally known as the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel. The central bank established it in 1968 as a memorial to Nobel, the 19th-century Swedish businessman and chemist who invented dynamite and established the five Nobel Prizes. Though Nobel purists stress that the economics prize is technically not a Nobel Prize, it is always presented together with the others on December 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death in 1896. Nobel honours were announced last week in medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and peace.

Armed man held at checkpoint near Trump's rally in Southern California

AP ■ LOS ANGELES



A Nevada man with a shotgun, loaded handgun, ammunition and several fake passports in his vehicle was arrested at a security checkpoint outside Donald Trump's rally Saturday night in the Southern California desert, authorities said. He was released the same day on \$5,000 bail. The suspect, a 49-year-old resident of Las Vegas, was driving an unregistered black SUV with a "homemade" license plate that was stopped by deputies assigned to the rally in Coachella, east of Los Angeles, Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said at a news conference Sunday afternoon. The driver claimed to be a journalist but it was unclear if he had the proper credentials. Deputies noticed the interior of the vehicle was "in disarray" and a search uncovered the weapons and ammo, along with multiple passports and driver licenses with different names, Bianco said. The man was arrested on suspicion of possessing a loaded firearm and possession of a high-capacity magazine, the department said in a statement. "This incident did not impact the safety of former President Trump or attendees of the event," the Saturday statement said. Trump had not yet arrived at the rally at the time of the arrest, the sheriff said Sunday. The suspect is scheduled to appear in court on Jan. 2, 2025, according to online records. Bianco declined to speculate about the suspect's motives or frame of mind. "We know we prevented something bad from happening, and it was irrelevant what that bad was going to be," Bianco said. The man made it past an outer security boundary and

was stopped at an inner perimeter patrolled by the sheriff's department, Bianco said. Another security checkpoint closer to the rally site was operated by the Secret Service. "The US Secret Service assesses that the incident did not impact protective operations and former President Trump was not in any danger," the US Attorney's Office said in a statement Sunday. "While no federal arrest has been made at this time, the investigation is ongoing." Media members, as well as VIP ticket holders, were routed through a number of intersections manned by state and local law enforcement officers before arriving at a large, grassy area where drivers were asked to open hoods and trunks, and each vehicle was searched by a K-9 officer. Other general ticket holders were directed to a site roughly 3 miles away from the rally, where they were boarded onto buses and driven to the site. Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the arrest. Security is very tight at Trump rallies following two recent assassination attempts. Last month, a man was indicted on an attempted assassination charge after authorities said he staked out the former president for 12 hours and wrote of his desire to kill him. The Florida arrest came two months after Trump was shot and wounded in the ear in an assassination attempt during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

EU condemns attacks on peacekeepers in Lebanon

AP ■ BEIRUT

The European Union on Monday condemned attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon and rejected Israeli allegations that the UN was keeping them there to obstruct military operations against Hezbollah. Five peacekeepers have been wounded in attacks that struck their positions since Israel began a ground campaign against the Hezbollah militant group, with most blamed on Israeli forces. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "their work is very important. It's completely unacceptable attacking United Nations troops." Israel has been escalating its campaign against Hezbollah after a year of exchanges of fire, while it is also at war with Hamas in Gaza. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were

fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people. It's been more than a year since Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed into army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. They are still holding about 100 captives inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead. The European Union condemned attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon and rejected allegations that UN Secretary-General António Guterres is responsible for obstructing the Israeli army. Sixteen EU countries are contributing to the UNIFIL peacekeeping force. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "their work is very

important. It's completely unacceptable attacking United Nations troops." Five peacekeepers have been wounded in attacks that struck their positions, with most blamed on Israeli forces. Speaking in Luxembourg before chairing talks between EU foreign ministers, Borrell underlined that the UN Security Council decides whether UNIFIL should be moved, "so stop blaming Secretary Guterres." Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, whose country is one of Europe's strongest backers of Israel, said the attacks are "simply unacceptable" and that UNIFIL will not be leaving. "No, they will not withdraw. Yes, they will continue to fulfil the mandate. And yes, we demand on each and every party to respect this mandate and respect the security and safety of our blue helmets," he told reporters.

4 killed in Hezbollah drone attack on Israeli army base

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA ATRIP)

A Hezbollah drone attack on an army base in central Israel killed four soldiers and severely wounded seven others Sunday, the military said, in the deadliest strike by the militant group since Israel launched its ground invasion of Lebanon nearly two weeks ago. The Lebanon-based Hezbollah called the attack near Binyamina city retaliation for Israeli strikes on Beirut on Thursday that killed 22 people. It later said it targeted Israel's elite Golani brigade, launching dozens of missiles to occupy Israeli air defense systems during the assault by "squadrons" of drones. Israel's national rescue service said the attack wounded 61. With Israel's advanced air defense systems, it's rare for so many people to be hurt by drones or missiles. Hezbollah and Israel have traded fire almost daily in the year since

the war in Gaza began, and fighting has escalated. Inside Gaza, an Israeli airstrike killed at least 20 people including children at a school Sunday night, according to two local hospitals. The school in Nuseirat was sheltering some of the many Palestinians displaced by the war. Meanwhile, explosions hit early Monday outside Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah. People were carried into the hospital. Hezbollah's deadly strike in Israel came the same day that the United States announced it would send a new air-defense system to Israel to help bolster protection against missiles, along with troops needed to operate it. An Israeli army spokesperson declined to provide a timeline. Israel is now at war with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon — both Iran-backed militant groups — and is expected to strike Iran in retaliation for a missile

attack earlier this month. Iran has said it will respond to any Israeli attack. **Bodies rot in the streets in northern Gaza:** Israel continues to strike what it says are militant targets in Gaza almost daily. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas and other armed groups because they operate in densely populated areas. In northern Gaza, Israeli air and ground forces have been attacking Jabaliya, where the military says militants have regrouped. Over the past year, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the built-up refugee camp, which dates to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, and other areas. Israel has ordered the full evacuation of northern Gaza, including Gaza City. An estimated 400,000 people remain in the north after a mass evacuation ordered in the war's opening weeks.

Seoul says North Korea prepares to destroy inter-Korean roads

AP ■ SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA)

South Korea said Monday it has detected signs that North Korea is preparing to destroy the northern parts of inter-Korean roads no longer in use, as the rivals are embroiled in soaring tensions over North Korea's claim that South Korea flew drones over its territory. Destroying the roads would be in line with leader Kim Jong Un's push to cut off ties with South Korea and formally cement it as his country's principal enemy. South Korea's military said Monday that it was observing various activities in North Korea that appeared to be preparations for demolishing the roads, such as installing screens. "They have installed screens on the road and are working behind those screens, preparing to blow up the roads," Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a briefing. He said the demolitions could be carried out as early as Monday.

Lee said that the South Korean military believes that the North could also attempt to launch a space rocket, which is viewed by the UN as a banned test of long-range missile technology. Lee said North Korea may conduct unspecified "small provocations" to ramp up pressure on Seoul. It's not clear how much parts of the roads North Korea would destroy. The development comes as North Korea has recently accused South Korea of launching drones to drop propaganda leaflets over Pyongyang three times this month and threatened to respond with force if it happened again. In a statement Sunday, the North's Defense Ministry said that the military had issued a preliminary operation order to artillery and other army units near the border with South Korea to "get fully ready to open fire." The spokesperson said that the entire South Korean territory "might turn into piles of ashes" following the North's powerful

attack. North Korea often releases warlike rhetoric when animosities with its rivals increase. Experts say it's highly unlikely for North Korea to launch full-scale, preemptive attacks as its military is outmatched by the combined US and South Korean forces. South Korea has refused to confirm whether it sent drones but warned it would sternly punish North Korea if the safety of its citizens is threatened. Last week, North Korea said it will permanently block its border with South Korea and build front-line defense structures to cope with "confrontational hysteria" by South Korean and US forces. South Korean officials said North Korea had already been adding anti-tank barriers, planting mines and reinforcing roads on its side of the border since earlier this year in a likely attempt to boost its front-line security posture and prevent its soldiers and citizens from defecting to South Korea.

China holds military exercises drills around Taiwan to 'warn against separatists'

AP ■ TAIPEI

China held large-scale military exercises surrounding Taiwan and its outlying islands Monday, deploying an aircraft carrier along with warplanes, in a move that underscores the tense situation in the Taiwan Strait. China's Defence Ministry said the drills were a response to the Taiwanese president's refusal to concede to Beijing's demands that self-ruled Taiwan acknowledge itself as a part of the People's Republic of China under the rule of the Communist Party. The drills came four days after Taiwan celebrated the founding of its government on its National Day, during which Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said in a speech that China has no right to represent Taiwan and declared his commitment to "resist annexation or encroachment." "Our military will definitely deal with the threat from

China appropriately" said Joseph Wu, secretary-general of Taiwan's security council at a forum in Taipei. "Threatening other countries with force violates the basic spirit of the United Nations Charter to resolve disputes through peaceful means." The Presidential Office of Taiwan called on China to "cease military provocations that undermine regional peace and stability and stop threatening Taiwan's democracy and freedom." A map aired on China's state broadcaster CCTV showed six large blocks encircling Taiwan indicating where the military drills are being held, along with circles drawn around Taiwan's outlying islands. China's Defense Ministry has not said how long the drills will last. China deployed its Liaoning aircraft carrier for the drills, and CCTV showed a J-15 fighter jet taking off from the decks of the carrier, though

the exact location of the carrier is unclear. The PLA's Eastern Theater Command spokesperson Navy Senior Captain Li Xi said the navy, army air force, missile corps were all mobilized for the drills, as it was an integrated operation. "This is a major warning to those who back Taiwan independence and a signifier of our determination to safeguard our national sovereignty," Li said in a statement on the service's public media channel. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it had deployed its warships to designated spots in the ocean where they'd carry out surveillance and stand at ready. It also deployed its mobile missile and radar groups on land to track the vessels at sea. As of Monday morning, they had tracked 25 Chinese warplanes and seven warships and four Chinese government ships, though it did not specify what types of ships they were.

China held similar large-scale exercises after Lai was inaugurated in May. Lai continues the eight-year rule of the Democratic Progressive Party that rejects China's demand that it recognize Taiwan as a part of China. Also on Monday, China's Taiwan Affairs Office announced it was sanctioning two Taiwanese individuals, Puma Shen and Robert Tsao, for their work in promoting Taiwan independence. Shen is the co-founder of the Kuma Academy, a nonprofit that trains civilians on wartime readiness. Tsao donated \$32.8 million to fund the academy's training courses. Shen and Tsao are forbidden to travel to China, including Hong Kong. China also held massive military exercises around Taiwan and simulated a blockade in 2022, after a visit to the island by Nancy Pelosi, who was then speaker of the US House. China routinely states that Taiwan independence is a

"dead end" and that annexation by Beijing is a historical inevitability. China's military has increased its encircling of Taiwan's skies and waters in the past few years, holding joint drills with its warships and fighter jets on a near-daily basis near the island. On the streets of Taipei, the capital, residents were undeterred. "I don't worry, I don't panic either, it doesn't have any impact to me" Chang Chia-rui said. Another Taipei resident, Jeff Huang, said: "Taiwan is very stable now, and I am used to China's military exercises. I have been threatened by this kind of threats since I was a child, and I am used to it." Taiwan was a Japanese colony before being unified with China at the end of World War II. It split away in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fled to the island as Mao Zedong's Communists defeated them in a civil war and took power.

Chinese premier arrives in Pak for SCO meet

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Monday arrived for a four-day visit during which he will attend the SCO summit and hold bilateral meetings with his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif and discuss issues of mutual interests, including the strategic CPEC. This is the first visit by any Chinese premier to Pakistan in 11 years and comes on the back of recent attacks on Chinese nationals working on infrastructure projects in Pakistan. Prime Minister Sharif received Li along with cabinet ministers at the Nur Khan airbase at Rawalpindi near here. Li and other foreign leaders will attend the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Islamabad to be held on Tuesday and Wednesday. Sharif later took to social media to welcome visiting Chinese premier by saying he was delight-

ed to welcome Li to Islamabad. "Looking forward to a historic & productive visit by my brother that will further strengthen and deepen our friendship," he said in a message on X. "We will review progress on existing initiatives, especially CPEC and also explore new avenues of mutually beneficial cooperation. Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership is a cornerstone of regional stability & prosperity." Earlier there were speculations about Li's participation in the wake of the killing of two Chinese workers in a suicide attack in Karachi and the ongoing agitation by the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party for the release of its jailed leader and former premier Imran Khan. State-run the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported ahead of Li's visit that he would be meeting Pakistan's civil and military leadership and attend the SCO summit during his October 14 to 17 visit.

Sharif and Li will lead their respective delegations to comprehensively discuss all aspects of Pakistan-China relations, including economic and trade ties and cooperation under the USD 60 billion CPEC. The two sides will also discuss regional and global developments. Premier Li will also call on President Asif Ali Zardari and hold meetings with parliamentary leaders. Li is accompanied by ministers and senior officials, including from the ministries of foreign affairs and commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission and the China International Development Cooperation Agency. Pakistan's Foreign Office termed the Chinese leader's visit as "an expression of the importance attached by Pakistan and China to their 'All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.'" Earlier last week, Sharif assured the Chinese of personally overseeing the investigation into the

Karachi attack, for which the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility. Later, on Friday, China said it had dispatched an inter-agency working group to Pakistan to review the security of scores of Chinese personnel working on the CPEC projects. Elaborate security measures are in place as Pakistan on Monday was gearing up to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit starting Tuesday here in Islamabad. Foreign delegations have started to reach Pakistan to attend the mega international event being held under the shadow of increased terror attacks across the country and the continued protests by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party threatening to disrupt the law and order situation. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and prime ministers of China and Russia among others are attending the two-day 23rd SCO Council of Heads of

Government (CHG) meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) here to discuss the ongoing cooperation in economy, trade and environment. The CHG meeting will discuss ongoing cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, environment, socio-cultural linkages and review the performance of the Organisation. The leaders will adopt important organisational decisions to further enhance cooperation among SCO member States and approve the budget of the Organisation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his capacity as the current Chair of the CHG, will preside over the upcoming CHG meeting. According to the Foreign Office, the SCO member States will be represented by the Prime Ministers of China, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as the First Vice President of Iran apart from Jaishankar.



China's Premier Li Qiang (left) walks Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (second left) upon his arrival at an airbase in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Monday. AP/PTI

RBI calls for cheaper, faster remittances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday made a case for reducing time and cost of overseas remittances, which are important for developing economies including India. According to the World Migration Report 2024 released by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), India's remittances surged to USD 111 billion last year, surpassing all other nations.

As per the Bank of England projection, the value of global cross-border payments is estimated to surpass USD 250 trillion by 2027.

The significant volume of crossborder worker remittances, the growing size of gross flows of capital, and the increasing importance of cross-border e-commerce have acted as catalysts to this growth, he noted.

"Remittances are the starting point for many emerging and developing economies, including India, to explore cross-border peer-to-peer (P2P) payments. We believe there is immense scope to significantly reduce the cost and time for such remittances," Das said in his keynote address at the conference on 'Central Banking at Crossroads'. Besides, he said, the feasibility of expanding real-



time gross settlement (RTGS) to settle transactions in major trade currencies such as dollar, Euro and Pound can be explored through bilateral or multilateral arrangements. India and a few other economies have already commenced efforts to expand linkage of crossborder fast payment systems both in the bilateral and multilateral modes, he said.

These include Project Nexus, a multilateral international initiative to enable instant crossborder retail payments by interlinking domestic Instant Payment Systems (IPSS) of four ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and

Thailand) and India. Under bilateral arrangements, cross-border payment linkages have already been established by India with Singapore, UAE, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, etc. The Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is another area which has the potential to facilitate efficient cross-border payments, he added. On November 1, 2022, the RBI started the wholesale pilot of CBDC for settlement in government bonds. A month later, the pilot of the retail CBDC kicked off.

Going forward, he said, harmonisation of standards and interoperability would be important for CBDCs for cross-border payments and

to overcome the serious financial stability concerns associated with cryptocurrencies.

"A key challenge could be the fact that countries may prefer to design their own systems as per their domestic considerations. I feel we can overcome this challenge by developing a plug-and-play system that allows replicability of India's experience while also maintaining the sovereignty of respective countries," he said.

Talking about the risk of digitisation, the RBI Governor said, in the modern world with deep social media presence and vast access to online banking with money transfer

happening in seconds, rumours and misinformation can spread very quickly and can cause liquidity stress.

Banks have to remain alert in the social media space and also strengthen their liquidity buffers, he said.

The RBI Governor also raised concerns over misuse of Artificial Intelligence in the banking space saying it could lead to more cyber attacks and data breaches.

"Banks and other financial institutions must put in place adequate risk mitigation measures against all these risks. In the ultimate analysis, banks have to ride on the advantages of AI and Bigtech and not allow the latter to ride on them," he said.

Observing that the global economy is more financially integrated than ever before, Das said, the divergence in global monetary policies monetary easing in some economies, tightening in a few, and pause in several other economies can be expected to lead to volatility in capital flows and exchange rates, which may disrupt financial stability.

Private credit markets have expanded rapidly with limited regulation, he said, adding, they pose significant risks to financial stability, particularly since they have not been stress-tested in a downturn.

Blockchain leaders discuss future opportunities

PTI ■ DUBAI

Participants from across the global blockchain and cryptocurrency community gathered at the Future Blockchain Summit 2024 to explore the latest advancements and opportunities within the blockchain ecosystem.

The event features a series of sessions under the theme 'Investments in Blockchain & Gaming.'

Marwan AlZarouni, CEO of AI, Dubai Department of Economy & Tourism led a session, highlighting Dubai's leadership in AI and blockchain innovation, as well as its approach to AI. "Here, you can engage with us and our regulators to bring your projects to life. If it can't be done anywhere else in the world, it can be done here," he said.

Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman & CEO, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), talked about the potential impact of AI, crypto and gaming in the future of trade.

"I think from 2026 you won't recognise your life. It will continue to change. Security will be the deciding factor of how far we go, but automated systems, AI and blockchain would be very well embraced," he said. The accelerated institutional



adoption of blockchain technology was a key focus area. John Fan, Venture Partner, Inception Capital, USA, Marcel Kasumovich, Deputy Chief Investment Officer, Coinbase Asset Management, Oliver von Wolff, Founder & CEO, Helion Edge, UAE and According to Mansoor Madhavji, Partner, Blockchain Founders Fund, UAE, "the UAE is rapidly becoming a global hub for blockchain innovation, with key industry players and potential founders converging here, especially during major conferences."

Mike Williams, Chief Communication Officer, Toobit shed light on the investment opportunities in blockchain technology. Projects are increasingly using blockchain to fractionalise traditionally

illiquid assets such as real estate and commodities, making them accessible to a broader audience, he said. "Today, crypto is not just an asset class, it is a growing community.

Geographically, we see regions like Southeast Asia, Middle East and Africa becoming key players in driving innovation and creating new crypto markets," Williams said.

Meanwhile, Blowfish Studios, a fully-owned subsidiary of Animoca Brands, showcased their AAA open-world space adventure with integrated blockchain technology as well as a new cooperative game mode where players can team up to complete objectives online, offering attendees a hands-on experience of the future of blockchain gaming.

Consumer Affairs Minister criticises air purifier false claims

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday criticised air purifier manufacturers for making false claims about their products, and called for increased consumer awareness ahead of winter when air pollution worsens in Delhi due to crop stubble burning in neighbouring states.

Addressing an event commemorating World Standards Day, Joshi expressed concern over misleading marketing tactics adopted by some air purifier companies.

"Discussion on air pollution has begun. Looking at Air Quality Index (AQI) on mobiles, people out of fear, go and buy air purifiers. Air purifiers make such false claims. ...We see air purifiers and so much is written but nothing is there in it. There is just a fan in it, yet claims are still made," the minister stated.

Joshi called for a collaborative approach involving the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the consumer affairs ministry and consumers to address the issue. While praising the BIS for their "exceptionally wonderful job" in recent years, the minister emphasized that more needs to be done.

"I do not blame BIS for this. BIS in the last few years has done an exceptionally wonderful job. But both BIS and the consumer affairs ministry and consumers together need to create



awareness. It is important, and I strongly feel (this way)," the minister said stressing the collective responsibility in combating misleading product claims. He emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring every Indian has access to safe, reliable, and high-quality products and services. These comments come as concerns grow about air quality in major Indian cities and expansion of the air purifier market.

Joshi also announced plans to make BIS standards mandatory for public procurement on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. "BIS standards are partially implemented on GeM. We'll try to make it mandatory."

The minister highlighted the government's focus on quality standards, noting that Cabinet proposals now include global standard notes.

"These days, the tradition has started in the Union Cabinet. Wherever a bill to be introduced in Parliament comes before the Cabinet,

the global standard note comes with it. That has been made mandatory for the Cabinet," he said.

This note mentions which countries perform best in the particular field, rules and how India can achieve it. "So, we have to match every Cabinet note with the global standards. This helps our government to make decisions to set high standards whether it is quality infrastructure or urban metro trains."

Implementation of standards at national level has been given a top priority by the government and is actively bringing more products under mandatory quality controls, he said.

He said that over 22,300 standards are currently in force, with 94 per cent harmonized with international standards. The number of Quality Control Orders has risen from 14 (covering 106 products) in 2014 to 174 (covering 732 products) now.

Also, 94 per cent of Indian Standards are harmonised with international standards.

Indian markets outperform China in last five years, says SEBI



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sebi Whole-time Member Ananth Narayan G on Monday reminded investors that Indian equities have consistently delivered 15 per cent returns over the last 5 years whereas the same has been zero or even negative in China.

Termining the Indian markets "sone pe suhaga" for delivering higher returns for lower risks, Narayan also flagged a few areas of caution for investors and asked them to be conscious of the risks.

"There's a lot of talk about China markets over the last few days. But over the last five years, while Indian markets have given around 15 per cent compound annual growth rate consistently, Chinese markets are nowhere close to that. It's almost zero. In fact, in some cases, like in Hong Kong, it's actually negative," Narayan said.

Speaking at an event marking the start of the Investor Awareness Week at NSE, Narayan said FY24 was a "remarkable" year for India, with the benchmark indices returning 28 per cent and the volatility just 10 per cent. "That's like 'sone pe suhaga'. It's like the best of all worlds: low risk and very high return," Narayan said, underlining that there are side effects of this as well. Making it clear that it will not be the same going forward and investors should not assume it to be a one-way street, Narayan said such handsome returns can lead to complacency and pointed to a lot of youngsters opening up demat accounts to join the bandwagon. Educating people about risks is very important, Narayan said, giving the analogy of driving a car. "There has to be a light push on the accelerator to get more investors to provide risk capital for the economic growth, we also need to be aware of risks and use the brakes if need be."

He said that 40 per cent of the small and midcap scrips have shot up by 5 times in the last five years, because of an imbalance between inflow of investor money and supply of new paper.

On its part, the capital markets regulator is trying hard to ensure that fundraising clearances are done early so that there is a steady stream of quality paper supply in the market.

From a broader, longer-term perspective, Indian markets will only go north from here given the economic growth prospects in the country, Narayan said, issuing specific advice to investors.

Investors need to have the right intermediaries to capitalise on this opportunity presented by India, and not fall for the unregistered and fly-by-night 'influencers' who might be driven by vested interests, he said.

Using the oft-repeated idiom of "all roads lead to Rome", Narayan remarked that Rome is not a traveller-friendly place and one may get scammed there as well. Therefore, it is important to seek advice from the right people for the investors, he said.

He also said that it is in investors' interests to trade less and stay invested for longer for higher returns, and added that studies prove the same.

Sebi, which has flagged certain areas like derivatives recently, is not against speculation or participants taking short-term trades, but it would want investors to understand the risks, Narayan said.



WPI inflation rises to 1.84 per cent in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price inflation rose to 1.84 per cent in September as food items, especially vegetables, turned costlier, as per the government data released on Monday.

The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation was 1.31 per cent in August. It was (-)0.07 per cent in September last year.

Inflation in food items shot up to 11.53 per cent last month against 3.11 per cent in August. This was led by 48.73 per cent inflation in vegetables as against (-)10.01 per cent in August.

Inflation in potato and onion continued to be high at 78.13 per cent and 78.82 per cent, respectively in September.

Fuel and power category witnessed deflation of 4.05 per cent in September against a deflation of 0.67 per cent in August.

"Positive rate of inflation in September 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, food products, other manufacturing, manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers & semi-trailers, manufacture of machinery & equipment, etc.," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which mainly takes into account retail inflation while framing monetary policy, kept benchmark interest rate or repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its monetary policy review earlier this month.

Mobius Foundation calls for Green Curriculums

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 6th International Conference on Sustainability Education (ICSE), organized by the Mobius Foundation in collaboration with key global organizations, concluded in New Delhi, sending a strong message on the urgency of incorporating sustainability into educational frameworks. The two-day event, which centered around the theme "Greening Education for a Sustainable Future," brought together over 500 educators, policymakers, environmentalists, and thought leaders from more than 20 countries.

The conference underscored the need for an education system that actively promotes eco-conscious living and sustainable lifestyles. Discussions

highlighted the critical role of the National Education Policy 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework 2023 in furthering sustainable education efforts.

The recognition of these policies as instrumental in embedding environmental consciousness into curriculums was one of the event's key takeaways. This year's ICSE focused on the emerging importance of "green education" and "green jobs" as essential components in driving future sustainability initiatives in India and beyond.

By advocating for the integration of these elements into educational systems. The conference aimed to foster a collective movement towards a more sustainable world.

Windy India 2024 set to propel wind energy growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The sixth edition of Windy India, a key international trade fair and conference for the wind energy sector.

It will be held from October 23-25, 2024, at the Chennai Trade Centre, Tamil Nadu. The event will host over 300 exhibitors from 25 countries, showcasing cutting-edge innovations and driving discussions on India's renewable energy future.

The conference, themed "Wind: Powering India's Energy Transition," will feature industry leaders, policymakers, and innovators addressing key topics such as: frameworks,

technology trends, and investment strategies.

India, a global leader in wind energy, ranks fourth in installations and aims to achieve 140 GW of wind power capacity by 2030.

The Union Cabinet recently approved 1 GW of offshore wind projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, with an investment of Rs 7,453 crore, highlighting the nation's commitment to its Net Zero 2070 goals.

Hosted by the Indian Wind Turbine Manufacturers Association (IWTMA) and PDA Ventures Pvt Ltd. Windy India 2024 is supported by the Ministry of Power, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and Niti Aayog.

BACL breaks ground on major Bengaluru Business Park

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bengaluru Airport City Limited (BACL), a subsidiary of Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), broke ground for its ambitious two million sq. Ft. Business Park, aimed at promoting the city as a global hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

This comes as part of the Karnataka Government's new GCC policy (2024-2029), which aims to create 3.5 lakh jobs and contribute USD 50 billion to the economy, a BIAL statement said on Monday.

Located within the larger Kempegowda International Airport's (BLR Airport) campus, Bengaluru Airport City is being developed as a mixed-use destination, featuring business parks, an education & health district, R&D hubs, and multiple entertainment and hospitality options, it said.



The Business Park will be built over 17.7 acres. Executive Director & CEO of BACL, Rao Munukutla, said: "The city has cemented its status as India's premier hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs), with 36 per cent of India's GCC workforce driving growth across IT, biotechnology, automotive, and aerospace." The upcoming Airport West metro station, located within

walking distance from the Business Park, will enhance connectivity to Bengaluru's city centre, providing faster and eco-friendly travel for employees and visitors, it was noted.

As a future entertainment and hospitality hub, plans include India's first 'Concert Arena' within an airport ecosystem and a Convention & Exhibition Centre, it added.

SW Energy arm, NTPC sign agreement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Renew Energy Thirteen Ltd, a step-down subsidiary of JSW Energy, has signed a 25-year power purchase agreement with state-owned NTPC.

The tariff for the 700 MW solar project is Rs 2.59/kilowatt hour, JSW Energy said in an exchange filing. JSW Renew Energy Thirteen has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with NTPC for ISTS/STU-connected solar capacity of 700 MW," the company said. The project is expected to be commissioned by June 2026.

The current solar pipeline capacity stands at 3.0 GW, with PPAs signed for 2.0 GW.

SINDHU, LAKSHYA AIM TO REGAIN FORM AT DENMARK OPEN

PTI ■ ODENSE (DENMARK)

Indian badminton stars PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will be eager to bounce back from a disappointing resumption to their season when they compete in the USD 850,000 Denmark Open Super 750, starting Tuesday. Both players found the going tough in the Arctic Open in Vantaa, Finland, last week where former world champion Sindhu suffered a first-round exit, while 2021 world bronze winner Sen bowed out in the second round.

At Arena Fyn in Odense, they will hope for better results as they lead India's challenge in this prestigious tournament, the 13th event of the 2024 BWF World Tour.

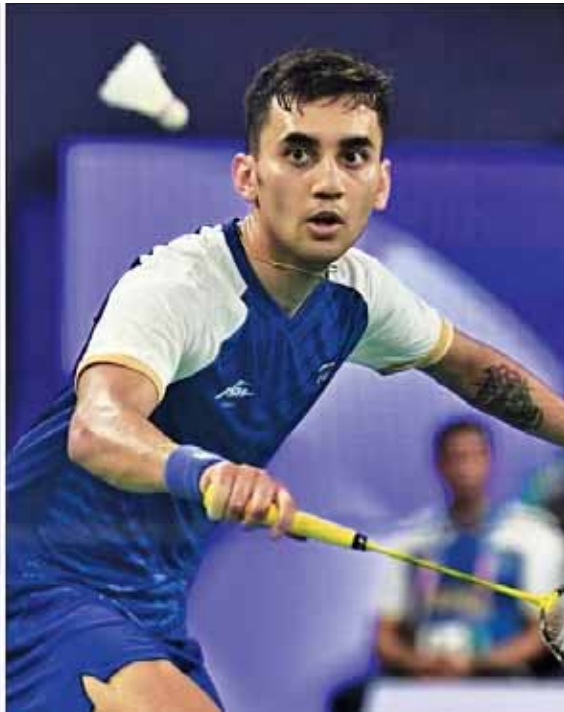
Sen, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, went down fighting to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen last week.

Here, the 23-year-old from Almorea will face China's Lu Guang Zu in his opening match an opponent he is yet to meet in professional badminton.

Should he advance, Sen might face Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the second round, with reigning world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand will, in all likelihood, be waiting for him in the quarter-finals.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will need to quickly address the issues affecting her performance after a disappointing first-round loss to Canada's Michelle Li, an opponent she had previously defeated 10 times.

Under the guidance of new coaches Anup Sridhar and Korea's Lee Hyun-il,



she will open against Chinese Taipei's Pai Yu Po and could potentially face China's Han Yue in the second round if she progresses.

In addition to Sindhu, India will have several other competitors in women's singles, including the in-form Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap, and promising talent Unnati Hooda. Bansod, who had reached the quarterfinals of China Open, will go up against Vietnam's Nguyen Thy

Linh at first, while Kashyap faces Thailand's Supanida Katethong. Hooda, the 2022 Odisha Open winner, will compete against Lauren Lam from the USA.

While there will be no Indian representation in men's doubles, Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who had missed the Paris Olympics, will compete in the women's doubles, taking on the fifth-seeded Malaysian duo of Pearly Tan and Thinnah

Muralitharan. The Panda sisters, Swetaparna and Rutaparna, will face off against Chang Ching Hui and Yang Ching Tung of Chinese Taipei. In mixed doubles, the husband-wife combination of B Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy are set to face Canada's Kevin Lee and Eliana Zhang, while Sathish Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath will take on Indonesia's Rehan Kusharjanto and Lisa Kusumawati.



Australia faces toughest of challenges in Asian World Cup qualifying

AP ■ TOKYO

Australia faces the most daunting road trip in Asia on Tuesday when it faces a dominant Japan at Saitama Stadium, knowing a win would put the Socceroos back on track for a sixth successive World Cup appearance after a mixed start in the third round of qualification.

The Group C meeting is also a chance for new coach Tony Popovic, appointed in September to replace Graham Arnold, to make a statement win in his second game in charge and cross swords with a former team-mate.

Popovic played for Japanese club Sanfrecce Hiroshima from 1997 to 2001 alongside Hajime Moriyasu - now coach of Japan. "I know their

head coach very well; he was my captain during my time in Japan. A remarkable person who has dedicated years to developing the national team," said Popovic.

Japan is on course for an eighth successive World Cup appearance with three wins against China, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, scoring 14 goals and conceding none.

"This is undoubtedly a significant challenge, but it also presents a fantastic opportunity to etch our name in history by winning in Japan," Popovic said after defeating China 3-1 in his first game in charge on Thursday, a result that took Australia to four points in the group, five behind Japan.

The top two teams from each of the three groups of six

qualify automatically for the 2026 World Cup with the third and fourth place finishers advancing to the next stage.

Like Australia, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have four points and meet in Jeddah, while winless China hosts Indonesia at home.

The top two in Group B meet as South Korea hosts Iraq with both teams on seven points. The game has been switched to the city of Yongin, due to the poor condition of the playing surface at Seoul World Cup Stadium.

South Korea will be without English Premier League stars Tottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min and Hwang Hee-chan of Wolverhampton Wanderers due to injury.

Over 350 players in fray for first ever women's HIL auctions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 350 players from around the world will go under the hammer in the inaugural women's Hockey India League auctions here on Tuesday.

After a seven-year hiatus, the highly-anticipated HIL is making a grand return with an expanded format, featuring both men's and an exclusive women's league for the first time.

The historic auction will witness over 250 domestic players and more than 70 overseas players vying for a spot in the inaugural season of the women's HIL. India's top women players, including seasoned goalkeeper Savita, national team captain Salima Tete, rising drag-flicker Deepika, the most-capped women's player Vandana Kataria, and forward Lalremsiami are some of the big names from the country.

Additionally, former Indian stalwarts such as Yogita Bali, Lilima Minz, and Namita Toppo have registered, adding further excitement to the auction.



On the international front, renowned players such as Delfina Merino (Argentina), Charlotte Stapenhorst (Germany), Maria Granatto (Argentina), Rachael Lynch (Australia), and Nikke Lorenz (Germany) are set to participate, ensuring a global spectacle.

Notably, the maiden season of the women's edition of the HIL will witness participation of total four teams, while two more teams will be added in the second season of the tournament.

The participating teams for this season include Soorma Hockey Club, Shrachi Rahr

Bengal Tigers, Delhi SG Pipers, and Odisha Warriors. For the second season, Hyderabad Toofans and a team owned by the BC Jindal Group will be added, expanding the lineup to six teams.

Each team will consist of 24 players, including 16 Indian players (with a mandatory inclusion of four junior players) and eight overseas players, aligning with HIL's vision of promoting both local and global talent.

Franchises will have a purse of Rs 2 crore to select players, with athletes categorised under three base price slabs --

Rs 10 lakh, Rs 5 lakhs, and Rs 2 lakh.

The historic women's auction marks a major milestone in the world of hockey, showcasing the sport's growth and the increasing prominence of women's hockey.

It also stands out as one of the rare instances in India where both men's and women's editions of a major sports league will run concurrently.

"This is not just a revival of the Hockey India League but also a celebration of the growth of women's hockey in India. We are proud to host the first-ever women's auction, which is not just about building teams but also about building legacies," Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey said.

We are excited to see our domestic talent go head-to-head with some of the best international players and create new heroes for the next generation. The Women's HIL 2024-25 promises to be a watershed moment for Indian hockey, further propelling the sport's growth on both national and international stages."

Top British shooters miss World Cup due to 'confusion' over visa paperwork

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ISSF World Cup final here has been robbed of some sheen as three of Britain's top shotgun shooters, including Paris Olympics trap gold-medallist Nathan Hales, will not be competing in the prestigious year-ending event owing to "confusion" over paperwork that led to denial of visa to them.

The World Cup final got underway at the Karni Singh Ranges with elite shooters from across the world, including Olympic and world championship medallists, taking part in the training sessions on Monday. The competitions will start on Tuesday.

"No, he's (Hales) not (coming). They couldn't get their business visas in time. I don't know the exact ins and outs of it, but there was a complication... I think, what happened is that one of them (shooters) applied for a tourist visa, which was accepted," former shooter Peter Wilson, personal coach of Hales in the Paris Games, told PTI.

"But, then, they were told that they had to apply for a business visa and there was, for whatever reason, a complication and it was either revoked and the rest were left pending and they just didn't have the time for it to be processed," added the legendary double-trap marksman who won a gold in the 2012 London Olympics.

Wilson, who had recently expressed his



desire to coach the Indian trap team, said it was a huge setback for British shooters.

"Obviously, it's a massive shame that they're not competing. So, there were three (shooters), two in men's trap, Hales and Matt Coward-Holley, and one in men's skeet Ben Llewellyn. Ben got a tourist visa but was then told by our federation that he should reapply for a business visa.

"He applied incorrectly and at that point he had left it too late; apparently he was refused... I don't know why he was refused," Wilson revealed. Asked if the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) had provided these

shooters details on the visa they should apply for, Wilson said, "I would assume so, but I think at the moment no one knows quite where the blame lies.

"But it's just a shame that of all the teams, we've not got the Great Britain team and the Olympic gold medallist here, so it's a real shame."

NRAI president Kalikesh Singh Deo said, "I think there was some confusion with the way they applied."

Most of India's Paris Games squad will compete at the World Cup. A prominent who would skip is double bronze-medallist Manu Bhaker, who is on a break after her exploits in the French capital.

Tough competition expected at Delhi Half Marathon elite field

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ethiopia's two-time 5000m world champion Muktar Edris is expected to challenge Paris Olympics 10,000m winner Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda for the top prize in the men's elite race at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon on October 20 here.

Fresh from his victory in the 10,000m in Paris, the 28-year-old Cheptegei is set to make his debut at the Delhi Half Marathon. He has been a three-time world champion in 10,000m and boasts a personal best of 59:21 seconds in half marathon.

He is the current world record holder for both the 5000m and 10,000m and holds the world's best time over the 15km distance. A three-time world champion in the 10,000m, he made his international debut in India at the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2014, finishing second. Cheptegei will face formidable opposition from Ethiopia's Edris, who will be returning to the Delhi Half Marathon after 2022. A star of the sport at the junior level, Edris finished fourth on debut in the Delhi Half Marathon in 2020 with an impressive run of 59:04 seconds. Before that, he won two world



championship titles in the 5,000m in 2017 and 2019. His half marathon personal best is better than that of Cheptegei at 58:40 seconds, which he had clocked in Valencia, Spain in 2021.

The women's elite field will be led by 2022 Commonwealth Games 10000m champion Eilish McColgan of Great Britain.

McColgan holds the European record for the 10km road race and British records for multiple distances. She has also represented Great Britain in four Olympic Games (2012-2024) and Scotland in three Commonwealth Games (2014-2022).

She won the Berlin Half Marathon with a personal best time of 65:43 seconds in 2023.

Several top athletes, including Kenya's Cynthia Limo (66:04), Ethiopia's Yalemget Yaregal (66:27s), Tiruye Mesfin (66:31), and Tanzania's Magdalena Shauri (66:37), are joining McColgan in the women's race. With five women having clocked times under 67 minutes, the competition promises to be a fast-paced one.

Ethiopia's Amdework Walelegn (58:53) and Yalemzerf Yehualaw (64:46) held the men's and women's course records in the Delhi Half Marathon since 2020.

A World Athletics Gold Label Road Race, the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon, with a prize pool of USD 260,000, will be flagged off from Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

England gets back to winning, interim coach Carsley says team needs "world class" manager

AP ■ LONDON

After three wins from four games as England interim coach, Lee Carsley appeared to distance himself from taking on the job full time.

A 3-1 victory against Finland in the Nations League on Sunday saw England get back to winning ways after the shock 2-1 home loss to Greece. But Carsley sounded uncertain about his credentials to succeed Gareth Southgate in one of the biggest management roles in world soccer.

"This job deserves a world class coach that's won trophies and been there and done it and I'm still on the path to that," Carsley said after goals from Jack Grealish, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Declan Rice secured the win in Helsinki. Carsley led England's under-21 team to victory in the European Championship last year and was seen as one of the leading contenders to replace Southgate, who stepped down in July.

But after naming an experimental team that lost to Greece on Thursday, questions about his suitability were raised. If not for some errant finishing from No. 64-ranked Finland, Sunday could have been another



uncomfortable night for an England team ranked 60 places higher.

Carsley said he hadn't enjoyed the days following the loss to Greece.

"I'm just not used to losing with an England team. I don't take losing very well," he said. Grealish helped lift his mood when opening the scoring

from close range in the 18th minute at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium after being set up by a clever flick from Angel Gomes.

Alexander-Arnold doubled England's lead in the 74th with a trademark free kick and Rice converted at the near post 10 minutes later from substitute Ollie

Watkins' cross. Arttu Hoskonen scored a consolation for Finland in the 87th.

Carsley said his remit was to take charge of the six Nations League games before the end of the year, with two remaining against Greece and Ireland next month. "My bosses have made it

totally clear what they need from me," he said.

GREECE WINS: Greece still leads Group B2 after extending its perfect start in the Nations League with a 2-0 win against Ireland.

Anastasios Bakasetas and Petros Mantalos scored the goals that kept Greece three points ahead of England. Before the game, Greece's players held up the jersey of defender George Baldock, who was found dead at his home in Athens on Wednesday.

NORWAY ROUTED: Not even Erling Haaland could prevent Norway from a humbling 5-1 loss against Austria.

The Manchester City striker became his country's all time leading scorer this week with 34 goals. But he was kept quiet by Austria in Group B3. Marko Arnautovic opened the scoring at Austria's Raiffeisen Arena before Alexander Sorloth evened the game before halftime.

In the second half Austria took control with Arnautovic scoring again. Philipp Lienhart, Stefan Posch and Michael Gregoritsch also scored.

Norway still leads the group but is level on seven points with Austria in second and third-place Slovenia, which beat Kazakhstan 1-0.

IT MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF WE TOOK CHANCES: MUZUMDAR

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Disheartened India head coach Amol Muzumdar rued the missed opportunities that could have altered the game's outcome after his team's hopes of reaching the women's T20 World Cup semifinals were dashed by a loss to Australia. In a bid to control their own destiny, the Indian team delivered a lackluster performance on the field, ultimately resulting in a nine-run loss to defending champions Australia in their must-win game on Sunday. "I think we were right in the game, right till the last over. Just that experience of Australia, saw them through," Muzumdar said at the post match press conference. "Just a little disappointing with the loss. And I feel we've fielded pretty well. But yeah, a couple of chances could have been, we could have taken those chances and then the things could have been different. "Maybe 10-15 runs less, even the last over. But at the same time, I would like to say that we put in our best effort



forward in this game," he added. India dropped as many as three catches, while also missing a stumping opportunity. To add to their woes, a close lbw call also went against them. In the 17th over of the Australian innings, Phoebe Litchfield, batting on 5, had attempted a reverse sweep with the on-field umpire giving her leg-before-wicket after she missed the shot. However, a decision to review handed her a reprieve because the ball pitched outside leg stump. India players, including vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, protested, claiming the ball pitching outside the leg-stump line should be deemed inconsequential given the batter had switched stances. Litchfield went on to add 10 more crucial runs, helping Australia post the highest team total at Sharjah in the ongoing tournament. "What I gathered from that non-dismissal is that she didn't move before the ball was released. So, the leg mark, what was there, it stood as it is. That was my only understanding about it.

Whether it was out or not, it was up to the umpires to decide or the third umpire. So yeah, it was a crucial one." Australia posted a total of 151/8. In response, India fell short, finishing at 142/9 despite skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's unbeaten 54. With senior players Harmanpreet and Deepti Sharma in the middle, India needed 85 off 10 overs. Asked what message was being sent to the duo in the middle at the time, Muzumdar said: "First and foremost, it was about the run chase. Second was keeping the net run rate also in account. But the only message was if we take it a little deeper, then we do have a good chance to chase these runs down. "I think Harman's presence was very important till the end. That is what I felt in her run chase. We almost got it through." India's chances of making the semifinal now hinge on Pakistan beating New Zealand on Monday. "Well, I just want to wish Pakistan all the best. That's all I can say. But we will be watching the game very closely, that's for sure."

Ben Stokes returns for second Test against Pakistan

PTI ■ MULTAN

Captain Ben Stokes made a return to the England Test team as he was on Monday named in the playing eleven for the second match against Pakistan beginning here Tuesday, after he was declared to have been recovered from an injury he sustained in August. Stokes, who has been out of action due to a hamstring problem, is one of the two changes in the England side that beat Pakistan in the first Test by an innings and 47 runs. Fast bowler Matthew Potts was included in place of Gus Atkinson. Stokes has replaced pacer Chris Woakes while England have retained both spinners Shoaib Bashir and Jack Leach in their eleven. According to the visiting team management, Stokes has bowled and batted

without any discomfort in the nets in the last few days and was cleared by medical experts to make his comeback. The 33-year-old all-rounder last played in the Hundred where he sustained his injury in August forcing him to miss the entire three-match series against Sri Lanka at home. He also missed the first Test against Pakistan here. Pakistan is yet to announce its playing eleven although the selectors on Sunday dropped Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah for the remaining two Tests and also released Sarfaraz Ahmed from the squad. **England Playing XI:** Ben Stokes (capt), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith (wk), Brydon Carse, Matthew Potts, Jack Leach, Shoaib Bashir.



Cummins to lead Australia in Pakistan ODIs, McGuirk retained

AP ■ SYDNEY

Pat Cummins will captain Australia's one-day squad for the first time since lifting the Cricket World Cup in November in its three-match series against Pakistan at home next month. Cummins was named Monday in the 14-man Australia squad for the matches at Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth along with Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, the other regular members of Australia's test pace lineup. Jake Fraser-McGuirk has been given another chance after struggling in Australia's Twenty20 series against Scotland in September, in which he made 16 runs in three innings with two ducks. While he made a 30-ball 50 against England, he wasn't selected for the subsequent five-match ODI series. Fraser-McGuirk will likely open the batting with Matt Short in the absence of Travis Head and Mitch Marsh who are on paternity leave. The squad also includes batters Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne and white ball regulars Glenn Maxwell, Josh Inglis and Adam Zampa. In Cooper Connolly also has

been retained after making his one-day and T20 debuts on Australia's September tour to Britain. Allrounder Aaron Hardie who scored 67 runs in two innings while batting No. 8 and took four wickets in the England series has kept his place while Marcus Stoinis returns after being left out of the England one-dayers. Seamer Sean Abbott also has held his spot with several bowlers recovering from injuries suffered in England. Nathan Ellis, Xavier Bartlett, Ben Dwarshuis and Riley Meredith all left that series with injuries while Spencer Johnson was ruled out with a side strain before it began. Meanwhile, test allrounder Cameron Green confirmed Monday he will undergo surgery on a stress fracture in his back and will be out of action for six months. A squad for the Twenty20 series against Pakistan will be named later this month. The Pakistan series which comprises matches at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Nov. 4, the Adelaide Oval on Nov. 8 and Perth Stadium on Nov. 10 is Australia's last one-day series before the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February.

Kohli hungry for runs, no need to judge after every match: Gambhir



PTI ■ BENGALURU

India head coach Gautam Gambhir is not too concerned about the recent lukewarm form of Virat Kohli, insisting that the star batter remains as hungry as when he made his debut. "Now, his hunger is always there," Gambhir told reporters here on Monday. "That hunger is what makes him a world-class cricketer. I am sure that he will be hungry to get runs in this series and probably moving forward to Australia as well," he added. Gambhir said the prolific batter, once he gets into "those runs scoring phases", is remarkably consistent. "So, I am sure that he will be looking for these three Test matches in the series and then to Australia." Gambhir reiterated his opinion that a player should not be judged on the basis of a one bad match or a series. "You don't keep judging people after every game. If you keep judging people after every game, that's not fair on

them. It's a sport and people are bound to fail. "But more importantly, I think if we can get the results, if people are doing what is needed of them to get the results in our favour, that is fine," he noted. The former opener said his job is to back the players and keep them hungry for success, particularly during a long season where India is scheduled to play eight more Test matches. "Everyone doesn't have the best days everyday. I think the kind of vibe we have is we keep backing our players. My job is to keep backing the players. My job is to keep selecting the best playing 11, not dropping anyone. "I'm sure everyone is hungry and they know there are eight Test matches in a row. So, this is probably the start of them looking at eight Test matches in a row and performing well," said Gambhir.



Green ruled out of India Test series, to undergo back surgery

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia all-rounder Cameron Green was on Monday ruled out of the marquee Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series against India owing to a stress fracture in his spine that will need six months to heal after a surgery. The 25-year-old seam-bowling all-rounder was diagnosed with the problem in his lower back after experiencing pain during last month's tour of the UK. Green has previously suffered four stress fractures in his back but has not encountered any issues in that area since 2019. "Whilst spine stress fractures are not unusual in pace bowlers, Cam has a unique defect in an adjacent area to the fracture that is believed to be contributing to the injury," a CA statement said on Monday. A six-month recovery time will mean Green misses not just the Border Gavaskar Trophy, but also February's Test tour of Sri Lanka and the Champions Trophy. His

participation in the IPL is also in doubt. Green has decided to opt for a similar type of surgery undergone by several pacers including Jasprit Bumrah, James Pattinson, Jason Behrendorff, and Ben Dwarshuis. "After thorough consultation it was determined Cameron would benefit from the surgery to stabilise the defect and reduce the risk of future recurrence," CA said. The alternative to surgery would have involved rehabilitation and restricting his bowling during the five-match series against India, starting November 22 in Perth. "The surgery has been performed successfully with elite pace bowlers in the past. Recovery time is anticipated to be around six-months. "The decision to proceed to surgery is with Cameron's long-term future as an all-rounder in mind," the statement added. The operation will be performed by New Zealand surgeons Grahame Inglis and Rowan Schouten, which

involves screws and titanium wire to bind vertebrae together, according to 'cricket.Com.Au.' His absence would mean Australia will have to rejig their batting order. Green had returned to the Test side following veteran opener David Warner's retirement earlier this year with Steve Smith being pushed to open the innings. However, the veteran struggled at the top of the order and will drop back to his preferred number four position, which has been left vacant by Green. The selectors will now keep an eye on Australia's A series against India where the likes of Cameron Bancroft, and teen prodigy Sam Konstas will vie for the now vacant opening spot. Additionally, Australia will also have to find someone to bowl Green's overs. Mitchell Marsh did not bowl in Western Australia's Sheffield Shield match against Queensland and hardly rolled his arm while captaining the white-ball teams over the winter.

Battling accomplished Ashwin, Jadeja crucial for New Zealand: Rachin Ravindra

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Top-order batter Rachin Ravindra said on Monday that nullifying the twin threat posed by senior spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja will be crucial to New Zealand's success in the three-match series against India. Ashwin and Jadeja together have grabbed over 800 Test wickets, and are among the most experienced bowling pairs in world cricket at present. "They've got consistent bowlers who bowl in an area for a long period of time. I mean, you see the two spinners who play consistently, Ashwin and Jadeja, they're two very accomplished bowlers. You know, they can bat too,

which makes it a little bit hard," Ravindra told reporters here on Monday. "They're consistent, they're good to battle, especially in this part of the world. Obviously, we know how good India are in their own conditions, the quality of their bowlers and batters. It shows how hard it is for a team to come and win here. So, it's difficult," he added. Ravindra banked on his previous experience of playing cricket in India to come good in the upcoming Test rubber. The Kiwi played in this part of the world during last year's ODI World Cup before appearing for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL 2024. "Although it is different formats, it gives you confidence that you can perform in this part of the

world. I think it's (Test cricket) a different challenge entirely and it's something I'm really looking forward to. "As you've seen, those two tournaments (ODI WC and IPL) were amazing, the crowds and the passion and the hype and the buzz around them. So, I'm excited to have a full-fledged series here," he noted. From a team perspective, the 24-year-old said the tourists will have to keep focus on their game plans rather than worrying about India's approach. "The brand of cricket they play is very positive, especially in their own conditions. The way they've evolved over the last few years has been amazing, especially away (from home). "As New Zealanders, we don't necessarily try and look



at the opposition too much. We know what a quality side they are and what they bring to the table, but I think if we're able to play our game and be consistent and put our best foot forward, hopefully, that will result in a win," he added. New Zealand's preparation for the series against India has been far from ideal as they lost 0-2 against Sri Lanka recently, while their one-off Test match against Afghanistan was a washout at Noida. However, Ravindra was confident that the team can lean upon the learnings from those experiences against India. "We did some really good stuff during the Sri Lankan series, obviously, came on the wrong side of the win and loss column. But I think as a

group there were times where we really pushed and that first Test was close," he said. In the first Test against the Islanders at Galle, the left-hander made a fine 92 but the Kiwis lost the match by 63 runs while chasing 275. Ravindra wanted his side not to repeat the mistake of faltering at the crunch moments. "I think we've got to understand that we've got to do it (fighting) for long periods of time because that's what Test match cricket is about. Obviously, Sri Lanka and India are different places, but similar in terms of the amount of spin you might play. "So, we have learnt a lot. So, it's about, you know, seeing how we can play our game and how we can bring that here to India," he added.

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