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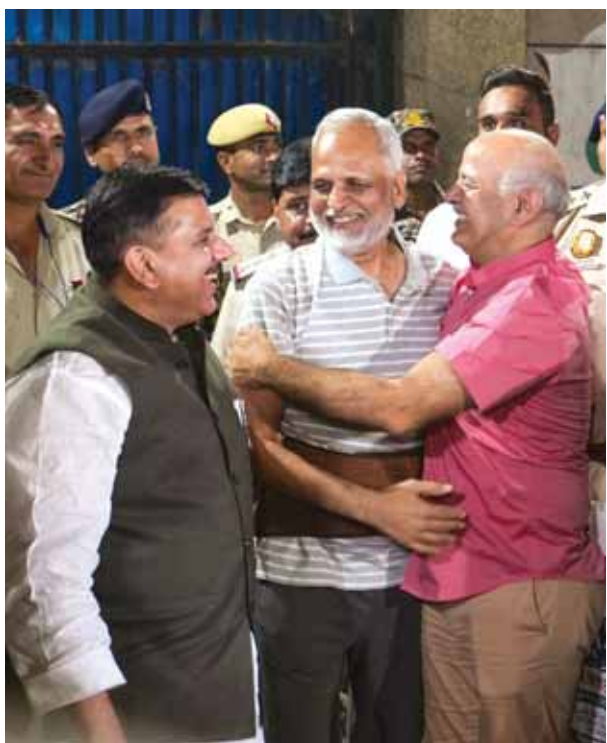
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# Final countdown for AAP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a booster dose to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a city court on Friday granted bail to Delhi's former health minister Satyendar Jain in the Rs 4.81 crore money laundering case, after 18 months in jail. Jain is the fourth senior AAP leader to come out of prison in the last five months. The party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal, and senior Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh had secured bail in the last few months. The AAP leadership is expected to campaign extensively for the Delhi Assembly elections due early next year, to retain the AAP government. The turmoil within the party arising out of the 'liquor gate' scandal forced Kejriwal to hand over the Chief Minister baton to Atishi. Jain and Sisodia were Ministers at the time of going to jail. Jain's bail comes at a time when the entire AAP leadership is trying to regain the public perceptions about their politics ahead of the assembly polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand after massive defeats in two states-Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. After debacle in the Lok Sabha polls in May and assembly polls in Haryana, the AAP performance was pathetic and all the candidates forfeited the deposit. Granting bail to Jain, Special Judge Vishal Gogne of Rouse Avenue Court said: "Considering the delay in trial and long incarceration of 18 months, and the fact that trial will take long to start, let alone conclude, the accused is favourably suited for the relief." The judge granted the relief on a bail bond Rs 50,000 with two sureties of like amount.



AAP leader and former Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain being greeted by party leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh

The court also relied on the August 9 Supreme Court judgement that granted bail to former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in cases linked to the alleged excise policy scam. Jain was the first AAP leader and Health minister in the Kejriwal government till he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on May 30, 2022, on the charge of laundering money through four companies allegedly linked to him. He was granted an interim bail a year later, in May 2023, by the Supreme Court on medical grounds. Jain returned behind the bars in March this year, after the

Supreme Court turned down his request for a regular bail. All senior AAP leaders who were jailed on corruption charges, are out on bail. Last month, Kejriwal was granted bail by the Supreme Court in a CBI case linked to the alleged liquor scam. Sisodia was granted bail by the top court in August this year, after spending 17 months in Tihar jail in cases related to the Delhi excise policy case. In April this year, the SC had granted bail to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh after ED didn't oppose his plea in the Delhi excise policy case. The moment the judge pronounced the order, Jain's

wife Poonam and daughter Shreya, who were present in the courtroom, broke down. Shreya spoke to media persons later and said Diwali had arrived early for the family. The CBI had initially registered a case under Sections 13(2) (criminal misconduct by public servant) read with 13(e) (disproportionate assets) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against Jain. The case was registered on the allegation that Jain had acquired movable properties in the name of various persons between 2015 and 2017 which he could not satisfactorily account for. Later, the ED also registered a case and alleged several companies beneficially owned and controlled by him received accommodation entries amounting to Rs 4.81 crore from shell companies against cash transferred to Kolkata-based entry operators through a hawala route. According to ED, Jain transferred money to Kolkata through the hawala channel and got it back from dummy companies in the form of accommodation entries, even though he could not show the source of the money received. He was earlier granted bail by the trial court in the case registered by CBI in September 2019. He was then granted interim bail by the SC on May 26 last year, which ended on March 18 this year, after the Supreme Court rejected his plea for regular bail. In March, the Supreme Court had observed that Satyendar Jain, along with his aides Ankush Jain and Vaibhav Jain, were prima facie guilty of the alleged offences of money laundering.

# Supreme Court steps in against Child Marriage



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) cannot be stunted by traditions under any personal law and observed marriages involving children violate the free will to choose a life partner. A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra further issued a slew of guidelines for the effective implementation of the law on prevention of child marriages in the country. The Bench, however, noted the issue of whether the PCMA would prevail over personal laws was pending with the Parliament for consideration. The Centre had urged the apex court to hold the PCMA to prevail over personal laws. The CJI highlighted that a "very extensive" sociological analysis was made in the judgement. "While the PCMA seeks to prohibit child marriages. It does not stipulate big social malaise of marriages fixed in the minority of a child which also have the effect of violating the rights to choice...It takes away from them, their choice of partner and life paths before they mature and form the ability to assert their agency..." the CJI said.

The court noted that child marriages require an intersectional approach that acknowledges the overlapping vulnerabilities experienced by children, especially girls, from marginalised communities. "Intersectionality involves considering factors like gender, caste, socio-economic status and geography, which often increase the risks of early marriage" the CJI said. Preventive strategies should be tailored to the unique needs of various communities besides focusing on addressing the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty, gender, inequality, lack of education, the judgement said. "The PCMA as a social legislation will only succeed through the collective efforts of all stakeholders to address the issue within a broader social framework, which emphasises the need for multi sectoral coordination," it added. According to the SC, the scenario necessitated the enhancement of reporting mechanisms, expansion of public awareness campaigns and investment in the training and capacity building of law enforcement. "The implementation of these guidelines is to prioritise prevention before protection and protection before penalisation. We are cognisant of the impact that criminalisation has on families and communities. To ensure effective use of the penal provisions in the PCMA, it is imperative that there is widespread awareness and education about child marriage and the legal consequences of its commission," it said. The SC, however, clarified that it should not be understood that prosecution of those who commit illegal acts is discouraged. Further, it opined the law enforcement machinery ought to make best efforts to prevent and prohibit child marriage and not solely focus on prosecution. The judgement came on a PIL filed by Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action seeking effective implementation of the law to prevent child marriages.



# SC recalls 2022 verdict on benami law provisions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development, the Supreme Court on Friday recalled its 2022 verdict that had declared as unconstitutional two provisions of the law on prohibition of benami property transactions that restrains such deals and acquisition of properties by authorities. Allowing the Centre's review of the August 23, 2022 verdict, a Bench Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, Justices P S Narasimha and Manoj Misra recalled the judgement delivered by a three-judge Bench headed by former CJI N V Ramana. In its August 2022 verdict, the top court had then held that Sections 3(2) and 5 of the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988 being "manifestly arbitrary" were unconstitutional. While Section 3 of the Act deals with prohibition of benami (a property held by a person through proxies) transactions, Section 5 pertains to property of benami liable to acquisition. On Friday, the top court agreed with the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre, that the validity of these two provisions were not under challenge before the erstwhile Bench. "In this view of the matter, the review would have to be allowed. It is trite law that challenge to the constitutional validity of a statutory provision can't be adjudicated upon in the absence of a live lis and contest between the parties," said the Bench. The top court consequently allowed the review petition. It said the civil appeal, on which the August 2022 verdict was delivered, will stand restored to the file for a fresh adjudication before a Bench nominated by the chief justice on the administrative side. In its August 2022 verdict, the apex court had held that the benami law did not have a retrospective application and the authorities couldn't initiate or continue criminal prosecution or confiscation proceedings for transactions entered into prior to when the legislation came into force. The top court was dealing with a legal question -- whether the 1988 Act, as amended by the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016 had a prospective effect. The 2022 verdict was delivered on an appeal of the Centre challenging a Calcutta High Court judgement, which held that the amendment made in the 1988 Act in 2016 would be applicable prospectively. The Centre had contended that the 2016 Act would be applicable retrospectively. The benami law was enacted to prohibit such transactions and enforce the right to recover properties held to be "benami". The law punishes a violator with a three-year jail term or fine or both.

# Salman Khan gets another death threat



T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Bollywood actor Salman Khan received an extortion-cum-death threat from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang on Friday, even as a Panvel court in Navi Mumbai on Friday remanded Sukha alias Sukhbir Balbir Singh, the key accused in the case involving the conspiracy to kill the super star, in police custody for four days. In view of the fresh threat received by Salman Khan, the police have beefed up security in and around his residence at

Bandra and farm house at Panvel. The police have also deployed armed personnel outside the studios where Salman Khan is shooting for 'Bigg Boss 18'. On a day when the Worli police registered a case in connection with a Rs 5 crore extortion threat received by the Mumbai traffic police, Sukha -- who was picked up from Panipat in Haryana by a visiting team of Panvel police--was produced before a court at Panvel in Navi Mumbai. The court remanded him to police custody till October 21. Apart from the conspiracy to kill Salman, Sukha will also be questioned in connection with the murder of politician-businessman Baba Siddique. Siddique was a close friend of Salman Khan and several other film personalities. In the threat message received by the Mumbai traffic police, a gangster close to Lawrence Bishnoi demanded Rs 5 crore from Khan as extortion money. Among other things, the gangster asked the actor to end his long-standing rivalry with incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

Continued on page 8

# Delhi's winter woes begin

Poison in the air

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising air pollution in the National Capital, around 13 'hotspots' including Narela, Bawana, Mundka, Wazirpur, Rohini, R K Puram, Okhla, Jahangirpuri, Anand Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Mayapuri, and Dwarka Sector-8 have been identified as areas where the Air Quality Index (AQI) crossed 300 on Friday. According to the Delhi government, the major factor contributing to high levels of pollution is dust. The data available by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reveals that the average AQI of the city stood at 292 in the 'poor' category at 4 pm on Friday. As per the AQICN, Anand Vihar recorded an AQI of 219, Wazirpur and Jahangirpuri recorded 157, Rohini and R K Puram recorded 154, Narela and Punjabi Bagh recorded 152, Okhla recorded 124, Mundka recorded 114 and



Dwarka Sector-8 recorded 109. Regions adjoining the national Capital also reported AQI in 'poor' category with Noida recording an average AQI of 242, Greater Noida recording 264, Ghaziabad recording 258, Faridabad recording 242 and Gurugram recording 242 according to the CPCB at 4 pm. At 8 pm, Faridabad Sector 11 recorded an AQI of 359, Greater Noida Knowledge Park-V recorded 491, Ghaziabad's Vasundhara area recorded 215 and Gurugram's Sector 51 recorded 251.

Continued on page 8



# Yamuna froths in despair

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a double whammy for the National Capital Region already grappling with poor air to breathe, pollutants led to toxic foams floating in the river Yamuna. Multiple videos circulating on social media showed vast sections of the river frothing on the surface, the foam gradually dissipated later in the day. Environmental experts expressed concern about the harmful health effects of pollution and highlighted the city's deteriorating ecosystem as

it continues to grapple with pollution year after year. A political blame game also began with the Delhi BJP alleging that the AAP government in Delhi does not want to tackle pollution. At Kalindi Kunj, the Yamuna river presents a grim sight as toxic foam blankets its surface on October 18. The frothy layer not only mars the river's beauty but is also a serious health risk, with ammonia and phosphate pollutants contributing to the foam.

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# Commuters grope in the dark at Chirag Delhi

Heavy traffic congestion, turns peak hours into a nightmare

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

The bustling areas around Chirag Delhi and Mehrauli-Badarpur (MB) road in south Delhi are notorious for perennial heavy traffic congestion, often turning peak hours into a nightmare for commuters. In response to these ongoing challenges, the Delhi Traffic Police has revealed that both immediate and long-term solutions are in the works to alleviate the situation at these key traffic junctions. At Chirag Delhi intersection, two major carriageways including J B Tito Marg and Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg merge. This road starts from Moolchand flyover and ends under Chirag Delhi while Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg starts from Khanpur T Point and ends under Chirag Delhi flyover. To provide relief to the commuters, the traffic department has written a letter to Public Works Department (PWD) for widening the JB Tito

Marg near Chirag Delhi flyover to get more space for traffic intending to turn on Outer Ring road towards Nehru Place side. "It will help to decongest the traffic. PWD staff has done ground inspection and they will do this work soon," Gupta stated. For a more permanent solution, the construction of an underpass beneath the Chirag Delhi flyover is under consideration, with the project currently pending approval by the PWD. Another pain point in the city remains Mehrauli Badarpur road, which is 3.5 KM stretch from Karni Singh Shooting range T point up to Khanpur T point and falls under the jurisdiction of Sangam Vihar circle, which witnesses frequent traffic congestion. Additional Commissioner of Police of Traffic Zone 2 Dinesh Gupta told The Pioneer that during peak hours, manual regulation of signals is carried out to manage the traffic flow as efficiently as possible.



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

However, this intervention often falls short of providing lasting relief to commuters. "During peak hours staff regulates traffic by operating signals manually and clear the traffic as per available space ahead,"

he said. Presence of heavy vehicles also makes the situation worse. "The frequency of DTC buses is very high since the Ambedkar Nagar bus terminal is also situated at MB

Road near Khanpur and the entry and exit of buses also creates congestion on this road," Gupta said, elaborating on the reasons behind the traffic. An office-goer, who frequently

faces jams while going to work, urged the traffic department to solve the issue and said, "Please address the heavy morning traffic jams from Moolchand towards Chirag Delhi and Pushpa Bhawan. It's causing significant delays for employees heading to work. I get late for work even though I leave on time from my home. Immediate action on traffic management would be highly appreciated!" Although the stretch between 'W' Point and Chirag Delhi is signal-free, there's only a single pedestrian signal at the Sadiq Nagar cut, which does little to manage the heavy flow of vehicles. The traffic coming from the W Point side accumulates at Chirag Delhi intersection during evening peak hours and creates congestion. The situation will likely be the same since the expected time of completion of this metro work is December 2026. "Ever since the construction of the metro began, the area has become

chaotic. Moreover, you will also see people living on the side of the streets making the situation worse. For a local living near the area, the situation is unimaginable," a resident of Sainik Farms said. Traffic bottlenecks are further compounded by the bus stand on Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, where the narrow road width than JB Tito Marg causes significant slowdowns when buses stop, creating a ripple effect of congestion. Buses, pedestrians, cars all jostle to get into a narrow road resulting in crawling of traffic and bumper-to-bumper jams on the roads, as the construction work of Delhi Metro has left only one lane available at some stretches for the movement of traffic, causing major inconvenience to the public. This road is also surrounded by densely populated localities including Sangam vihar, Tigri, Devali, Khanpur, Dakshin puri, Ambedkar Nagar and Madangir.

# Nine girls escape from city orphanage, 2 brought back

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Nine minor girls aged 10-18 (years) escaped from a government-sponsored and over 100-year-old shelter home run by a non-governmental organisation in Aliganj, around 2 am on Friday. Two among the nine girls were later traced in Lucknow brought back by the police while a third was found in Ayodhya. The remaining six are still missing. ACP (Aliganj) BN Singh said that the police checked the CCTV cameras, and with the help of the footage, two girls were recovered safely from near Purnia bridge. He said searches for the rest are underway at bus and railway stations

and the routes leading to their districts. Sources in police said that one of the girls was seen in Ayodhya. "A case was registered in Aliganj police station under BNS Section 264 (A) on the complaint given by the Shriram Industrial Orphanage administration regarding the escape of the girls," the ACP said, adding that the family members of the minors were informed. According to the superintendent of the orphanage, on Friday night, between 2 and 3 am, nine girls left the room one by one to go to the bathroom and they escaped by cutting the grill of the window near the bathroom. "The matter came to light

when the count was done in the morning, and the number was found to be less. When one of the bathrooms was checked, the grills of the window were found to be broken," she said. The police were informed and officials reached the spot and started a manhunt. Police said that both the girls were found about three hours after the police started the search as they were waiting for a bus near Purnia crossing. One of them is said to be from Jammu, while the other is from Bahaich. "Later in the evening, the girls were evacuated from the orphanage by police on the orders from senior officials," SHO Aliganj Vinod Kumar Tiwari said, adding that 35 girls were shifted to Rajkiya Bal

Grah in Para area of the city. There were 49 girls between the ages of 10-18 years in the orphanage," the SHO said. While the police are yet to find the exact reason for the girls escaping from the orphanage, the superintendent alleged that a few girls who came a few months back in POCSO Act cases brainwashed the other girls to escape. "The reason behind their running away from the shelter home is being investigated," the ACP said. "They were brought three months ago. All are residents of different districts. Out of the nine girls, seven were victims of sexual offences while two were victims of non-POCSO Act and other cases," superintendent said.

# CM for increasing private, public investment to meet OTDE goals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Friday, held an important meeting to discuss ongoing efforts, results achieved so far, and future policies aimed at realising the goal of transforming the state into a one trillion-dollar economy. The chief minister reviewed the progress in all 10 sectors. Deloitte India, the consulting agency, provided detailed sector-wise insights into the current economic environment of the state, including anticipated future outcomes and industry expectations. The chief minister outlined major guidelines during this special meeting. Due to planned efforts of the last seven years, the economy of Uttar Pradesh is in an all-time best condition today. The total GDP of the state in 2021-22 was Rs 16.45 lakh crore, which has increased to more than Rs 25.48 lakh crore today in 2023-24. This year the state's GSDP target is Rs 32 lakh crore. The efforts for sector-wise development are yielding unexpected results. More growth has been seen as compared to the target set for Gross Value Added (GVA) for different sectors for the financial year 2023-24. The estimated GVA for agriculture and allied sectors has been Rs 5.98 lakh crore as compared to Rs 5.85 lakh crore, manufacturing Rs 2.79 lakh crore as compared to Rs 2.48 lakh crore, an increase of 129 per cent has been registered as compared to the estimated GVA of transport, storage and communication. The growth rate of trade, hotels,

transport and communication services related to broadcasting has increased. The chief minister pointed out that the contribution of all departments is crucial to achieving the \$1 trillion target. This is an ambitious goal, and last year's report card reflects the proactive efforts of the departments. The policy and planning are on the right track, but we need to accelerate our pace to meet this significant target, he added. In 2023-24, the state recorded a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 16 per cent, which is promising. Our target for the current year is 25 per cent, and all departments must intensify their efforts to achieve this goal. Our objectives are clear, and it will require collaborative action to implement effective policies and strategies, the chief minister stressed. Significant efforts are needed to double the growth rate of grain, fruit and vegetable production. Initiatives like 'per block one crop' should be promoted within the horticulture sector. We must train farmers, provide necessary resources and encourage them to embrace innovative practices, he added. The principle of Reform, Perform, and Transform has yielded excellent results in the secondary sector of the economy. The rapid growth of the manufacturing sector is promising. To meet future demands, we must intensify our efforts to expand the land bank, implement policy reforms and enhance the ease of doing business, he added. Land will be essential for industrial projects, and everyone must

make additional efforts. We have made arrangements to utilise gram samaj land for industrial development and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The land pooling policy needs further refinement. Identify land that has been allocated but remains unused and make informed decisions regarding it. We must also identify 'sick units' and determine appropriate actions for their revitalisation. The action plan for industrial clusters should be advanced, the chief minister stated. Investment and land acquisition cases should not remain unresolved. District magistrates will be held accountable for any delays. It is crucial to implement MoUs effectively. The processes for various approvals must be time-bound, with approvals automatically granted upon the expiration of the stipulated time frame. The public grievance system should be enhanced to provide better assistance, he added. To achieve the one trillion-dollar economy (OTDE) goals, we need to further increase both private and public investment. Ongoing engagement with investors is essential, as well as outreach to new sectors and prospective investors. We must promote the unique selling propositions (USPs) of our state and improve our investor outreach efforts. The single-window system should be made simpler and more transparent to facilitate investment, he stressed. The energy sector must focus on future needs. The state government has introduced a policy to promote non-conventional

energy sources, and we are receiving positive responses from investors in the solar and biomass sectors. We need to enhance our solar energy capacity and strive to expand the coverage of the PM Surya Ghar Yojana throughout the state, he added. Concrete efforts must be undertaken to enhance the transport sector. We should implement bus services in underserved areas and seek collaboration with the private sector. A Waterway Transport Authority has been established and we expect to see positive results in this area shortly, he pointed out. We are receiving substantial proposals from the private sector for hospitals, housing, and hotels, indicating significant growth potential in this sector. It is essential to simplify regulations while considering practicality and understanding investors' expectations. This entire sector will contribute positively to both economic development and the improvement of living standards, he added. Targets for each department regarding the OTDE have already been established. Continuous progress reviews are crucial, alongside the capacity building of every department. An action plan for reforms should be developed and implemented with clear deadlines for each task. Notably, this is the same state that generated just Rs 12,000 crore in excise revenue in 2016-17, which has now increased to Rs 52,000 crore. This demonstrates that the issue was not a lack of capability but rather a lack of willpower, he stated.

# SBCC member accuses X user of obscene comments

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Member of the State Backward Classes Commission (SBCC), Richa Rajput, has filed a complaint against the operator of X handle @surya\_samajwadi at Hazratganj police station, accusing him of making objectionable comments, police said on Friday. In her complaint, she alleged that the accused was spreading election-related rumours and making inflammatory remarks on social media, including claims that UP Police encounters were staged and inciting hatred among specific castes. Rajput further alleged that the X user was encouraging his followers to attack his targets. She accused the user of promoting criminal activities and making obscene comments, engaging in sexist behaviour, and using derogatory language against women, Dalits, and people from backward classes.

"He is trying to disrupt social harmony with casteist remarks," Rajput alleged. She also alleged that the accused was harassing women while concealing his true identity. "Operating under the possible alias Shakeel Tanveer, he has been deceiving Hindu women, particularly those from backward classes, by pretending to be a Hindu," she alleged. Additionally, she claimed that the accused shared misleading videos about EVM malfunctions during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which prompted multiple complaints from other users. Rajput further alleged that the accused was using social media to incite violence against her and her supporters. "He is spreading hatred and creating divisions in society," she added, alleging. The Hazratganj police have registered an FIR based on her complaint and are currently investigating the matter.

# Bike-borne men's bid to rob youth

Lucknow (PNS): Unidentified miscreants attempted to rob a youth in Mohanlalganj but fled after discovering he had no money or valuables, police said on Friday. The youth recounted the frightening encounter to villagers after reaching the nearby village, but by the time they arrived at the scene, the miscreants had already escaped. Villagers expressed frustration with the police, accusing them of failing to control rising crime in Mohanlalganj and citing the growing threat posed by miscreants. According to reports, the victim, Shiv Prasad from Samesi gram panchayat in Mohanlalganj, was returning home from Nagam at around 9 pm on Thursday. When he reached the Indira Canal bridge, two bike-borne men stopped him and demanded money. After searching his pockets and finding nothing, they let him go. Shiv Prasad then proceeded to Patwa Kheda village via the canal path and informed the villagers of the incident. The villagers rushed to the scene with him, but the miscreants had already fled. In response, the villagers called on authorities to increase police patrolling and install CCTV cameras at key locations. Mohanlalganj ACP Rajneesh Verma also urged village leaders to take the initiative in setting up CCTV cameras to enhance security.

# Mohan Bhagwat to attend RSS national executive in Mathura

PTI ■ MATHURA

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat is set to arrive in Mathura on Saturday to attend the National Executive meeting of the Sangh and stay in the temple town for 10 days. During his stay, the RSS chief will participate in various meetings, including the National Executive Committee meeting scheduled for October 25 and 26. He will also review the ongoing developments at the Cow Research and Training Centre. This meeting will take place at the Deendayal Gau Vigyan Research and Training Centre in Mathura, where he will stay for 10 days. The meeting in Parkham village near the temple town will also discuss the "organisational goals" that has to be achieved by next year when the RSS completes 100 years of its foundation, according to a statement uploaded by the organisation on its website earlier. "This year, the meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is going to be held on 25 and 26 October in Parkham village near Mathura in Braj province of western Uttar Pradesh," RSS national media and communications in-charge Sunil Ambekar said in a statement. All the heads of the RSS' 46 provincial units, general secretaries and pracharakas are expected to attend the meeting. Government sources said the district officials are closely monitoring security and logistical arrangements related to his visit. They said Agra region Inspector General of Police Deepak Kumar, District Magistrate Shailendra Kumar Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police Shailesh Kumar Pandey con-

ducted a thorough inspection of the venue and Bhagwat's accommodations. Their focus was particularly on ensuring that the safety protocols are meticulously followed with the support from national security agencies involved in his protection.

Paradip Port Authority (PPA) is inviting tenders for the work 'Supply, Install, Operate and maintain the equipment along with supply of professional manpower for Trauma and Burn Care Unit in PPA Hospital for a period of 5 years extendable by another 2 years'. The estimated cost put to tender is Rs. 24,60,00,000.00 (Rupees twenty four crore sixty lakh) only. The last date & time of submission of DTOR is 11.10.2024 at 17.15 Hrs. For details, please refer website: <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Sd/- Dy. Chief Medical Officer, Paradip Port Authority PPA/PR/45/2024-2025 dtd. 17.10.2024

**CLASSIFIEDS**

## NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Irfan Idrisi to MOHD. IRFAN for all future purpose. Mohd. Irfan S/o Mohd Islam R/o 91/31, Heeraman Ka Purwa, Kanpur Nagar.

## NOTICE

This is to inform that I Deepanshu Rastogi have lost my ISC Board Class 12th Certificate, Index. No. B/8844/054 of 2005 Year. Deepanshu Rastogi S/o Rakesh Kumar Rastogi 529D/484, Kalyanpur West Vikas Nagar post office Lucknow-226022 UP.

## NOTICE

सूचनार्थ विजय कुमार अरोड़ा, पुत्र स्व० किशन लाल अरोड़ा, निवासी 559 ख/4, श्रीनगर, श्रृंगार नगर, आलमबाग, लखनऊ, मैं अपने पुत्र हार्दिक अरोड़ा एवं उसकी पत्नी श्रीमती ममता नेगी समाज विरोधी गतिविधियों एवं गलत आचरण की वजह से अपनी सम्पत्त चले-अचल सम्पत्ति से दोनों को बेदखल कर रहा हूँ, यदि कोई भी शख्स इनसे लेन-देन करता है तो वह स्वयं जिम्मेदार होगा, मैं और मेरे परिवार की किसी प्रकार की जिम्मेदारी नहीं होगी।

## NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Rashid Ansari To Rashid Ansari for all future purpose. Rashid Ansari S/O Chote Ansari R/o 116/454, Rawatpur Gaon, Kanpur Nagar.

## NOTICE

I, Chand Mohammad holder of indian Passport No:W7372729 issued at Abu Dhabi on 31/07/2023 and permanent resident of Vijaipur Mishrapur Vijaipur Vindhyaachal Mirzapur Pin 231303 Uttar Pradesh India and presently residing at Flat No 3 Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Salama Central District Al Ain UAE do hereby change my name from Chand Mohammad to Mohd (given name) Chand (surname) with immediate effect.

# Police prevent suicide bid by rape victim

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow police on Friday prevented a suicide attempt by a 26-year-old rape victim, who had travelled from Kanpur to Lucknow and consumed some poisonous substance. The woman was heading towards Hazratganj when officers stationed near Vikramaditya Marg noticed her suspicious behaviour. They stopped her near the Samajwadi Party office and immediately rushed her to Civil Hospital, where she is receiving treatment in the emergency ward, according to the police. In a statement, the Lucknow police confirmed that the woman is a resident of Kalyanpur, Kanpur Nagar, and had previously lodged an FIR under Section 376 of the

IPC (rape) against an accused. "During the investigation, the accused was arrested and is currently out on bail. A chargesheet was filed a year ago, and the case is pending in court," the police stated. Kanpur Nagar police have been notified of the incident, and further action is underway. The victim told the police that she had been living and studying in Kanpur when she came into contact with one Nishant Kumar, a constable with the 37th Battalion of PAC Kanpur, through social media in 2023. She alleged that Kumar lured her into a relationship via Facebook and subsequently coerced her into having physical relations with him multiple times. Despite filing a complaint, she claimed that no action was taken.



# Govt accelerates beautification of Akshayavat Corridor

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025 gain momentum, the Yogi Adityanath government is expediting the beautification of the sacred Akshayavat Corridor, aiming to enhance the spiritual experience for millions of pilgrims. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath recently reviewed the progress of the ambitious beautification project and instructed officials to accelerate the work and ensure that the site is ready to welcome devotees. Akshayavat, a 300-year-old tree of great mythological significance in Sanatan Dharma, is considered a crucial stop for pilgrims. It is believed that after bathing in the

sacred waters of Sangam, one's pilgrimage is complete only after offering prayers at Akshayavat. The blessings sought here are thought to fulfill the spiritual aspirations of devotees, making it a focal point for saints and pilgrims during the grand festival. To provide a divine and renewed experience in Kumbh Nagri, the state government has announced a significant budget. The aim is to showcase the grandeur of the holy city and emphasise its cultural and spiritual heritage as the Maha Kumbh approaches, with Akshayavat serving as a key centre of faith for visitors. When Lord Ram visited Bharadwaj Muni's ashram in Sangamnagari

# 'Vayu Veer Vijeta' car rally leaves Lucknow for Gorakhpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 7,000-km 'Vayu Veer Vijeta' car rally organised by Indian Air Force, arrived at Bakshi Ka Talab Air Force Station in Lucknow on October Thursday.. The rally has been organised to commemorate the 92nd anniversary of the foundation of the IAF which was celebrated on October 8, 2024. Twenty-nine air warriors, including women riders were part of the rally. The rally was flagged in by Bakshi ka Talab Air Force Station Commander Group Capt Gagan Kohli. The team, during their transit through Lucknow, also laid a wreath at Smitika War Memorial in Lucknow Cantonment, in honour of the Fallen Heroes. The riders left for their next stop, Gorakhpur, on Friday. The rally is expected to culminate at Tawang on October 29. During this stopover in Lucknow, local students and residents got an opportunity to interact with the team and learn about the IAF's heroic legacy.

During his journey to the forest, Muni narrated the significance of the Banyan tree. Mother Sita blessed the Banyan tree, and it was the only tree to survive when the earth submerged during the deluge. This sacred tree is known today as Akshayavat. Akshayavat is also mentioned in the 'Raghuvanshi' by the great poet Kalidas, as well as in the travelogue of Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang. It is believed that just seeing Akshayavat grants one 'akshaya punya' (eternal virtue). India is home to four such ancient Banyan trees: Akshayavat in Prayagraj, Griddhavat in Soron (Shukar Kshetra), Siddhavat in Ujjain, and Vanshavat in Vrindavan. Akshayavat has witnessed cen-

## कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़) ई-प्रोक्च्यूरमेंट निविदा सूचना

क. /192/निर्माण/2024 दिनांक 15.10.2024

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु (Online) आवलन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है-

क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (₹. लाख में)	निविदा खलने की अंतिम तिथि
1	सार्ई क. 12 अंतर्गत शायसवाल पेट्रोल पंप से शाराद विहार कर्षक योग्य तक एण्ड टू एण्ड पौवन कार्य (एनसीपी घट) (प्रथम निविदा)	125.00	04.11.2024 (T.No.159930)

उपरोक्त कार्य की निविदा की जाकारी ई-प्रोक्च्यूरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है, साथ ही निगम के वेब साईट [www.korbamunicipal.in](http://www.korbamunicipal.in) एवं [www.korba.urbanecg.gov.in](http://www.korba.urbanecg.gov.in) पर भी देखी जा सकती है।  
॥ स्वच्छ भारत निर्माण में योगदान दें ॥

## HDFC BANK

HDFC Bank Ltd, 2nd Floor, Experio Building, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226010.

POSSESSION NOTICE APPENDIX IV (RULE 8(1))  
Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of the HDFC Bank Ltd. under the Secularization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice dated 24.03.2022 calling upon the borrower(s) 1. Ms Shiv Khad Bhandar (Borrower) 2. Mr. Neeraj Kumar Gupta S/o Sh. Rajjan Lal Gupta (Guarantor & Mortgagee) 3. Mr. Dhneeraj Kumar Gupta S/o Sh. Rajjan Lal Gupta (Guarantor) 4. Mrs. Mithilesh Kumar Gupta W/o Sh. Rajjan Lal Gupta (Guarantor & Mortgagee) to pay the amount mentioned in the notice Rs. 1,66,22,777/- (Rupees One Crore Sixty-Six Lakh Twenty-Two Thousand Seven Hundred And Seventy Seven Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13 (4) of the said Act on the read with rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules, on this 16/10/2024.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrowers & Guarantors	Description of Immovable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount O/S (as mentioned in the Notice US 13(2) Date of Demand Notice
<b>BRANCH - MAHANAGAR</b>			
1.	Mrs. Anupma Rai Add:- 5171 Vipul Khand Gomti Nagar Lucknow 226010 (Borrower)	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of H. No. 5/171 Vipul khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow. Owners:- Mrs Anupma Rai & Mr. Sunil Kumar Rai. Area: 128.70 Sqmtr. Boundaries:-North: by Part of house n/ 05/139 & 05/138, South: by 9.00 mt. road East: by H.No. 5/172, West: by h.no. 5/170	Rs. 20,13,268.67 + Interest & other charges
	Mr. Sunil Kumar Rai Add:- 5171 Vipul Khand Gomti Nagar Lucknow 226010 (Co-Borrower)		
Date: 18/10/2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer, Bank of India			

## बैंक ऑफ इण्डिया Bank of India BOI POSSESSION Notice

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India under the Secularization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a Demand Notice Dated 31-07-2024, calling borrower/guarantor to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of same. The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 13 (4) of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the dated 16-10-2024 The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India for mentioned amount and interest thereon. The borrower's/guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrowers & Guarantors	Description of Immovable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount O/S (as mentioned in the Notice US 13(2) Date of Demand Notice
<b>BRANCH - MAHANAGAR</b>			
1.	Mrs. Anupma Rai Add:- 5171 Vipul Khand Gomti Nagar Lucknow 226010 (Borrower)	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of H. No. 5/171 Vipul khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow. Owners:- Mrs Anupma Rai & Mr. Sunil Kumar Rai. Area: 128.70 Sqmtr. Boundaries:-North: by Part of house n/ 05/139 & 05/138, South: by 9.00 mt. road East: by H.No. 5/172, West: by h.no. 5/170	Rs. 20,13,268.67 + Interest & other charges
	Mr. Sunil Kumar Rai Add:- 5171 Vipul Khand Gomti Nagar Lucknow 226010 (Co-Borrower)		
Date: 18/10/2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer, Bank of India			

## Spectacular drone show during Deepotsav in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government is set to elevate the grandeur of Deepotsav in Ayodhya with an extraordinary aerial drone show. The event will feature a stunning display using 500 drones adorned with colourful lights which will captivate the sky of Ayodhya. The show is scheduled to last for 15 minutes and will be a key highlight of the main Deepotsav festivities, showcasing the capabilities of drones Made in India. The attendees will also witness the 'veer mudra' of Lord Shri Ram,

Laxman and Hanuman, brought to life through a dazzling presentation of laser lights, voiceovers and musical narration. The display will also feature depictions of Ravan Vadh, Pushpak Viman, Deepotsav, Ram Darbar, Valmiki, Tulsidas and the Ram temple. This enchanting spectacle is sure to mesmerise the audience. Additionally, the logos of Deepotsav, the UP government, and the Tourism department will also be prominently featured in the sky. In preparation for this momentous occasion, which marks the first Deepotsav since the idol of Ram Lalla was enshrined in the grand tem-

ple, no effort is being spared to ensure its magnificence. The aerial drone show will adhere to international standards. A rehearsal is scheduled for October 29, a day before the Deepotsav, to ensure seamless coordination and accurate drone formations. The show will take place at Ram Ki Paidi. The event will feature a plan to create 15 captivating formations in the sky. To facilitate this, a detailed storyboard with animation will be developed and submitted for approval to the Uttar Pradesh Tourism department. A variety of processes, including concept development, screenplay cre-

ation, background music composition, voiceovers, narration and laser light effects, will support the aerial formations and work on these elements is already underway. At Ram Ki Paidi, inspirational moments from the life of Lord Ram will be showcased through a laser light and sound presentation. While laser and sound shows are held daily at Ram Ki Paidi, this annual event remains a highlight during Deepotsav. Alongside the drone show, the sound and laser display will feature artistically designed green firecrackers, enhancing the atmosphere and illuminating the skies over Ayodhya and the event venue.

**The attendees will also witness the 'veer mudra' of Lord Shri Ram, Laxman and Hanuman, brought to life through a dazzling presentation of laser lights, voiceovers and musical narration.**

## Bahraich victim's wife demands 'death' to killers PWD gives notice to accused to remove illegal construction

PTI ■ LUCKNOW / BAHRAICH

The wife of the man shot dead in Bahraich on Friday said she will get justice only when her husband's killers are dead, while the PWD served a notice to one of the accused to remove the "illegal" construction. Roli Mishra also accused the authorities of taking bribes to deny "justice" to her. The wife of 22-year-old Ram Gopal Mishra, who was killed in a gun attack in Bahraich on Sunday, in a message on social media said, "We want justice, but we are being denied it. Authorities have taken bribes." She said her husband's killers, though nabbed, were yet to be killed. "We have been shown that they have got bullet wounds on their legs, but justice is not being done to us," Roli Mishra said. Kailash Nath Mishra, the father of Ram Gopal, who spoke to journalists on Friday, said he was satisfied with his meeting with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "We are satisfied. We got what we demanded from the Chief Minister," he said. The CM, Kailash Nath said, promised the family money to build a house, a job for his daughter-in-law, some cash, and an Ayushman card (health insurance cover). "What else is there to say, he

has promised us all the facilities. But we demand our son's killer must suffer the same fate," he said. Earlier in the day, however, Kailash Nath threatened suicide if justice was not done to the family. Meanwhile, the Public Works Department carried out inspections in the Maharajganj area and took measurements of 20-25 houses, including that of Abdul Hameed, one of the accused. An official, on the condition of anonymity, said, "Every year routine action is taken to demolish houses built on the intersections, S curves or junction points of the road, which obstruct the view from the other side. Around 20-25 such illegal houses have been identified in Maharajganj, to which we are going to issue notices under the Road Control Act 1964." According to the notice put up at Abdul Hameed's house, the PWD said the construction was "illegal" since it was built within 60 feet of the central point of the road in rural areas, which is not allowed. "Therefore, you are hereby notified that if this construction has been carried out with the prior approval of the District Magistrate, Bahraich, or the concerned department, please provide the original copy of the approval immediately. "Additionally, you are required



Deceased Ram Gopal Mishra's wife Roli and mother Murni Devi at their house, in Bahraich on Friday.

to remove the said illegal construction within three days. Otherwise, the illegal construction will be removed with the assistance of the police and administration, and the expenses incurred for this action will be recovered from you through revenue means," it read. BJP MLA Sureshwar Singh from the Mahsi assembly constituency said after the "killers"

arrest, it was time for "another action." "The administration has pasted a demolition notice on the illegally constructed house of the main accused Abdul Hameed, the next action will be seen very soon," he said, indicating a demolition. Ram Gopal Mishra was part of a Durga idol procession passing through the Maharajganj area on Sunday when he was

shot during a Hindu-Muslim confrontation. A video which circulated after the incident showed him removing a green flag from the rooftop of a house in a frenzy and supplanting it with a saffron flag. He was shot immediately afterwards. The district teetered on edge for days in the wake of the killing with incidents of arson and vandalism witnessed from

across its areas. Five men suspected to be involved in Mishra's death were arrested on Thursday after an encounter with the Uttar Pradesh Police in which two of them suffered gunshot injuries. The five were allegedly trying to flee to Nepal, which shares a border with Bahraich. The gunfight took place in the Hada Basehari area under the Nanpara police station limits near the Nepal border, according to the official. Hada Basehari is around 15 km from Rupaiddiha — a transit point between India and Nepal. Director General of Police Prashant Kumar had on Thursday identified those arrested as Mohammad Faheen, Mohammad Sarfaraz and Abdul Hameed, who are named in the FIR. Two others, Mohammad Taleem alias Sabloo and Mohammad Afzal, were nabbed later. According to Kumar, a police team arrested Faheen and Taleem who gave the location of the weapon used in the crime in the Nanpara area. However, when a team went to the spot to collect it, it came under fire from Hameed, Sarfaraz, and Afzal. In retaliatory firing, Sarfaraz and Taleem were injured. "They are being treated. The weapon used in the murder has been recovered," police said.

## EC issues notification for bypolls to nine assembly seats in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Election Commission on Friday issued the notification for the upcoming bye-elections to nine assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, a senior official said. According to the EC, the last date of making nominations is October 25, while scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on October 28. The last date for the withdrawal of candidature is October 30. Voting will be held on November 13, while counting of votes will take place on November 23. The EC on Tuesday announced that bypolls to nine of the 10 vacant assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, except Milkipur of Ayodhya district, will be held on November 13. Bypoll to the Milkipur assembly seat was not announced as an election petition is pending in the high court against the candidate who had won the seat earlier. Meanwhile, officials at the office of UP's Chief Electoral Officer on Friday said that they have forwarded to the Election Commission of India the letter by the BJP asking the poll authority to postpone the bypoll dates from November 13 to November 20 in view of Kartik Purnima. A BJP delegation led by state

general secretary Govind Narain Shukla had on Thursday met Uttar Pradesh additional chief electoral officer and handed over a letter of their demands to him. The delegation said Kartik Purnima is on November 15. It is known that on this occasion in the state, a large number of people take bath, it said. People reach Kundarki (in Moradabad), Meerapur (in Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad and Prayagraj three-four days in advance to perform puja. Many people may be deprived of voting due to this, the delegation had noted. The assembly seats where bypolls will be held are Katehari, Karhal, Meerapur, Kundarki, Phulpur, Sisamau, Ghaziabad, Majhawan and Khair. Eight of these assembly seats fell vacant after its MLAs were elected to the Lok Sabha, while bypoll in Sisamau is being held due to the disqualification of SP MLA Irfan Solanki, who was convicted in a criminal case. In the 2022 assembly polls, Sisamau, Katehari, Karhal, Milkipur and Kundarki were held by the Samajwadi Party, while the BJP had won Phulpur, Ghaziabad, and Khair. The Meerapur seat was held by the RLD, while the Majhawan seat was won by the NISHAD party.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called on Governor Anandiben in Lucknow on Friday and also presented her a book on the occasion.

## Mayawati hits out at BJP over SC quota policy in Haryana

### Expels Shyamsunder Sharma from party

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Friday, attacked the new reservation policy for Scheduled Caste community of the newly-formed Haryana government. "The decision of the new Bharatiya Janata Party government of Haryana to implement classification in reservation for SC community i.e. to implement a new system of quota within reservation quota, is a conspiracy to divide Dalits again and keep them fighting among themselves," Mayawati posted on social media platform 'X' on Friday morning. "This is not only an anti-Dalit decision but also a deeply anti-reservation conspiracy. The fact that the central leadership of BJP did not come forward to stop the Haryana government from doing this proves that like the Congress, the BJP is also engaged in a conspiracy to first make reservation inactive and ineffective and ultimately abolish it, which is extremely unfair and BSP is strongly opposed to it," she further posted.

"In fact, BSP is the name of the struggle against the 'divide and rule' conspiracy of casteist parties in SC-ST and OBC society and their anti-reservation conspiracy etc. Our struggle to organise and unite these classes and make them the ruling class will continue," she added. Meanwhile, Mayawati, on Friday, expelled Mathura's veteran leader and former minister Shyamsunder Sharma from the party. According to reports, this action has been taken against Sharma due to indiscipline. Sharma has held the post of cabinet minister in many governments of Uttar Pradesh. Sharma's political stature can be gauged from the fact that before joining BSP, he won assembly elections on the tickets of Congress, Congress (Tiwari), Democratic Congress and Trinamool Congress. According to the information given by BSP, former minister Shyamsunder Sharma, who has been an eight-time MLA from Mant assembly seat of Mathura district, has been expelled from the party for six years for anti-party activities and indiscipline in the Haryana

elections. Giving information about this, the party's district president Satyaprakash Kardam informed the media that this action has been taken on the instructions of the party's national president Mayawati. He said that Shyamsunder Sharma was warned several times due to indiscipline, but there was no improvement in his working style. Kardam stated that Sharma has been expelled from the party for ignoring the warnings given by the party. Sharma was elected as MLA eight times from 1989 to 2017 from the Mant assembly seat of Mathura. He lost the assembly election from Mant only once in 2012 to the then Mathura MP Jayant Chaudhary, but after he resigned, Sharma won again in the by-election held in the same year. In the 2022 assembly election, he lost to BJP candidate Rajesh Chaudhary. Shyamsunder Sharma has been a cabinet minister in the Mayawati, Kalyan Singh, Ramprakash Gupta and Rajnath Singh governments.

## Cops probing possible paper leak of Tech Edu exams

### Investigation follows emergence alleged audio of talk between IICT employee and an unidentified person

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The police have initiated a probe after registering an FIR over a possible question paper leak in the UP Technical Education (Teaching) exam, scheduled by the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) on October 20, officials said on Friday. The investigation follows the emergence of an alleged audio conversation between an employee of the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT) in Bhadohi and an unidentified person, indicating attempts to "compromise the integrity of the upcoming exam for personal benefit," police stated. Additional Superintendent of Police Tejveer Singh said IICT Director Rajiv Kumar Varshney informed the UPPSC secretary of the audio clip via email after its discovery. In the email dated October 14, Varshney described the conversation, involving an IICT employee

named Rajesh Verma, according to the officer. "The conversation hints at efforts to compromise the exam for personal gain. The IICT director also requested the submission of the audio clip and a pen drive with further evidence for thorough investigation," Singh said. "Given the seriousness of the case, UPPSC Deputy Secretary Dharmendra Kumar Tripathi filed a formal complaint at Bhadohi City police station on October 16, citing the Uttar Pradesh Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill 2024 and Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act," he added. A thorough inquiry is underway, with questioning of those involved, to ensure any wrongdoing is addressed swiftly, Singh concluded. Meanwhile, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi attacked the Yogi Adityanath government over Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission postponed the PCS prelim

exams. Former UP in-charge of Congress said that the Yogi Adityanath government wanted to ruin the future of the youth. She said that the UP PCS prelims exam was postponed for the second time. "UP Technical Education Services-2021 exams were also postponed. Repeatedly postponing exams, ruining the future of youth through paper leak and corruption has become the policy of the BJP government," she added. Competitive students are also opposing the proposal to conduct the UPPSC exam in two days. Their argument is justified that if the same exam is held in two days, then the game of scaling will start again under the guise of normalisation. On one hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party is ruining the future of the youth and, on the other, by not giving jobs, it is also snatching the right to reservation from the backward, Dalits and deprived, she added.

## Over 400 cops fined for ticketless train travel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Prayagraj railway division has fined more than 400 police personnel for travelling without tickets on several mail and express trains in the last month and a half at various places between Ghaziabad and Kanpur, officials said. The traffic officers conducting these special drives found most of the police personnel travelling without tickets in air-conditioned coaches and pantry cars, causing inconvenience to passengers. Shashi Kant Tripathi, Chief Public Relations Officer, North Central Railway, said the Indian Railways regularly conducts drives to check unauthorised travellers. "Without-ticket travellers not only cause inconvenience to passengers but also financial loss to the railway.



Hence, we have adopted strict measures to check unauthorised travelling of every individual and we have been quite successful in our efforts," Tripathi said. Santosh Kumar, zonal secretary of the Indian Railway Ticket Checking Staff

Organisation, NCR zone, said many police personnel misuse their official position, enter air-conditioned coaches and lie down on empty berths. "They do not vacate the berths for authorised passengers and even threaten them as well as railway offi-

cials," Kumar said. He said the special drive has received a positive feedback from passengers who have appreciated the initiative and cooperated with railway officials. The drive has been led by Amit Sudarshan, Deputy Chief Traffic Manager, and assisted by Assistant Traffic Manager Dinesh Kapil and other officers. One of the railway officials said many of these police personnel threatened the traffic officers and ticket examiners of dire consequences if they are fined. "Though the higher-ups in the Uttar Pradesh police department have issued cautionary letters and circulars asking police personnel not to travel on trains without tickets, it seems that these letters have had little impact on them," another railway official said. "These police personnel think that no

one will report to the higher-ups about their misconduct and so they can carry on with their activities," he added. According to Kumar, initially these police personnel tried to intimidate commercial officers but when the latter started recording their activities on the phone and became adamant to issue challans as well as report their wrongdoings to their departments, they started pleading for mercy. "Many of them fled from one coach to another to skip the fine," Kumar said. According to the railway officials, the drive will be carried on throughout the festive season so that authorised passengers do not suffer. "Even after the festivals, we will conduct surprise checks occasionally to curb such activities," a railway official said.

## Yogi govt's zero-tolerance policy leads to conviction of over 80,000 criminals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The prosecution directorate of the Uttar Pradesh Police is making significant strides in combating crime and ensuring justice through a strict zero-tolerance policy. Over the past seven and a half years, the directorate has successfully prosecuted over 80,000 criminals, demonstrating the effectiveness of its advocacy across various state courts. In addition to legal actions, the UP Police have directly confronted criminal elements, resulting in the elimination of 210 miscreants. The prosecution directorate had been sidelined under previous administrations, however, the current Yogi government has prioritised its role, enhancing its capacity to tackle crime effectively. ADG Deepesh Juneja of the prosecution directorate informed that over the past seven and a half years, more than 81,196 criminals have been punished through effective legal advocacy. Among these, 54 criminals received the death penalty, 3,125 were given life sentences, 9,076 were sentenced to more than 10 years in prison, and 16,941 received sentences of less than 10 years. In the last 16 months, as part of Operation Convention, the police and prosecution

department punished over 52,000 criminals. Specifically, in cases involving women, 28,700 criminals were punished for serious offenses, including sexual assault and crimes under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Out of these, 16,565 criminals were punished for sexual crimes and related offenses, nine of them receiving the death penalty, 1,720 were sentenced to life in prison, 4,443 received sentences longer than 10 years, and 10,393 got sentences of less than 10 years. As of August 24, 12,135 criminals were punished under the POCSO Act. This included 44 death penalties, 1,354 life sentences, 4,599 sentences of over 10 years, and 6,138 sentences of less than 10 years. Additionally, 496 criminals from the state's most dreaded/top 10 category were punished, with one receiving the death penalty, 51 being sentenced to life imprisonment, 34 getting over 10 years, and 410 sentenced to less than 10 years. From March 25, 2022, to August 31, 2024, 29 criminals involved in 42 cases related to identified mafia gangs were punished. This included one death sentence, five life sentences, seven sentences of more than 10 years, and 29 sentences of less than 10 years.

# KDA poised to set up Aero City near Chakeri Airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

After the New Kanpur City Project, Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) is now poised to set up Aero City on 1257.43 acres of land near Chakeri Airport. In the proposed township, mixed use of land would be available which included residential, commercial and industrial facilities. Even residential and commercial construction could be carried out on a single plot. With the township being set up adjacent to the airport, it will facilitate the investors to visit the spot frequently. The scheme also envisaged setting up of big hotels, convention centre, shopping complex and other basic amenities. Vice-Chairman Madan Singh Garbaly along with officers inspected the spot adjacent to the Chakeri Airport on Thursday and studied the situation of land according to the layout. He said detailed action plan was being prepared to launch Aero City



Housing Scheme in due course. Secretary Abhay Kumar Pandey, Chief City Planner Manoj Kumar and other officers were present. **BASEMENTS SEALED:** The Kanpur Development Authority launched drive against illegal construction on Thursday and sealed basements of four premises in

Chamanganj area. At the four-storeyed House No.88/443, Humayun Bagh illegal operation of an office in the basement was sealed. Thereafter, the squad reached the seven-storeyed house No 105/590 of Mohd Arif in Chamanganj and sealed the gym operating in the basement. In the basement of

Mohd Asif's three-storeyed house No.105/242, Chamanganj, a slipper-shoe manufacturing unit was sealed. The squad also sealed a garment manufacturing unit operating in the basement of four-storeyed house No.105/247. OSD Sat Shukla said an FIR would be lodged if anyone tried to remove the seal.

# 'Azad' tunnel boring machine achieves significant milestone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The 'Azad' Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) achieved a significant milestone by completing a 330-metre section of the 'up-line' tunnel successfully reaching Transport Nagar station on Thursday. The achievement was met with enthusiastic applause from attendees, including Project Director of Kanpur Metro Arvind Meena and other senior officials. Meanwhile, the 'Vidyarthi' TBM is also making swift progress on the 'Down-Line' tunnel. It is noteworthy that the approximately 8.20 km underground section of Corridor-1 (IIT-Naubasta) will feature seven underground stations: Chuniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj, Kanpur Central, Jharkarkati, and Transport Nagar. Following the completion of tunnel construction from the ramp area at McRobertganj to Kanpur Central, work is now focused on the 2.40 km stretch from the ramp near Swadeshi Cotton Mill to Kanpur Central Station, which also includes Transport Nagar and Jharkarkati



'Azad' TBM completes 330-metre section of the 'up-line' tunnel reaching Transport Nagar station.

stations. The 'Azad' TBM on Thursday completed the first phase of tunnel construction on this stretch successfully reaching Transport Nagar station. During this 'up-line' journey, the 'Azad' TBM erected a total of 233 rings and constructed approximately 330 meters of tunnel. Meanwhile, the 'Vidyarthi' TBM in the 'down line' is making steady progress and moving closer to its target. This machine will likely achieve a breakthrough in the coming days. After reaching Transport Nagar Station, the 'Azad' TBM will be moved from one end of the station to the other using a 'drag-

ging method.' From there, it will be relaunched toward Jharkarkati station to continue tunnel construction. This approach allows the machine to reach the retrieval shaft at Kanpur Central while tunnelling underground. Typically, TBMs are retrieved from underground metro stations by constructing a retrieval shaft at one end and launching them again from the other end. However, employing the 'dragging method' will significantly save time in the process. On this achievement of the Kanpur Metro, Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (UPMRC) Managing Director

Sushil Kumar stated, "Today, the 'Azad' TBM successfully completed the tunnel construction on the 'up-line' from the ramp near Swadeshi Cotton Mill to Transport Nagar Station. I am pleased to see the Kanpur Metro team effectively tackling the challenging task of constructing a tunnel beneath one of the city's most congested and busy areas. Metro construction goes beyond just erecting cement and steel structures; it also involves engaging with the community, identifying ways, and collaborating with local authorities. The construction of both 'up-line' and 'down-line' tunnels from the ramp at McRobertganj to Kanpur Central has already been completed. Civil construction is also advancing rapidly in the Baradevi-Naubasta elevated section. To save time, our team is coordinating efforts in tunnel, track and station construction, along with system installations. We are confident that, similar to the Priority corridor (IIT-Motijheel) of Corridor-1 (IIT-Naubasta), all civil construction work on the balance sections will be completed in a well-planned manner."

# Production of good quality sugar in cost-effective manner discussed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A one-day national seminar jointly organised by National Sugar Institute (NSI), Kanpur, and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on "Indian Sugar Quality and BIS Standards" on Friday, was attended by a large number of delegates from various sugar producing states. In her address Director, NSI, Dr Seema Paroha, emphasised on standardising the sugar standards and encouraged the industry for the production of good quality sugars. She presented various business models for producing ethanol from sugarcane-based raw materials viz C & B heavy molasses, sugarcane juice/sugar/ sugar syrup and also from rice, maize and through other feed stocks. "We have already achieved all-time high blending percentage of over 15.8 during the current



A one-day national seminar jointly organised by National Sugar Institute, Kanpur, and Bureau of Indian Standards being inaugurated on Friday.

ethanol supply year and expected to achieve 20 per cent in coming year (2025-26). However, we have to look forward the year operations of ethanol plants using multiple feed stocks as per availability

and economics", she said. Assistant Professor of Sugar Technology, SK Trivedi, in his address stressed the need for BIS standards for Indian sugar like raw sugar, Demerara sugar, natural golden light and dark

brown sugar etc and also discussed production of good quality sugar in cost-effective manner for sustainability of sugar industry. He also discussed the evolving standards in sugar production and the significance of BIS regulations and how they help in maintaining consistency and trust across industries among the consumers. During it Scientist-F, head, BIS, Suneeti Toteja, made a presentation on national standardisation process in food and agriculture sector. Disha Zanwar expressed her views on Indian standards related to sugar industry. Dr Vashudha Keskar also shared views on sugar standards specification and their significance. Dr RV Dani, technical advisor, VSI Pune, discussed in detail about raw sugar for direct consumption purposes by changing their nomenclature and specifications as per BIS.

# Youth's found dead under mysterious circumstances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A youth was found dead under a tin shed under mysterious circumstances in the Bahria police station area of Phulpur here on Friday morning. The family alleged that he was murdered. The youth had come out of jail a week ago. The police will take action after the post-mortem report comes. Reports received here said that Amar Singh alias Bantu Yadav of Tulapur village had joined the army about 10 years ago. After two years of service, he was court-martialled. Since then Amar Singh was living in the village and selling cows and buffaloes. Meanwhile, a year ago, Amar Singh went to jail for giving false testimony in the court. At the same time, Amar Singh's wife Anuja Yadav started living in her maternal home Chakiya Ghat under Tharwai police station with her three children — Deepika, Ansh and Gokul. Amar Singh came home after being released from jail last week. He started living under a tin shed near Silokhara

intersection under Sikandra outpost near the village. Amar's body was found under mysterious circumstances on Friday morning. When the villagers came to defecate they saw Amar Singh lying dead and informed his family. Thereafter his family informed the Baharia police station about it. On getting information Baharia police station in charge Mahesh Mishra along with the force reached the spot. When Baharia police station in charge talked to the family, they alleged that Amar Singh had been murdered and said a complaint will be filed at the Baharia police station on getting the postmortem report. On receiving information ACP Phulpur Pankaj Lavania also reached the spot. Baharia police station in charge Mahesh Mishra said the body of the deceased has been sent to the district hospital for post-mortem examination. Action will be taken only after the postmortem report comes. Meanwhile a 35-year-old man was killed after being hit by a

train while crossing the Delhi-Howrah railway track here on Friday. He used to sell gram in the train. The police has taken the body into possession and sent it for the post-mortem examination. According to the information received here, Jagannath Baghel alias Kullu of Lakhna Chowktha village under Manda police station area used to earn his living by selling gram in trains. Like every day, he boarded the train from Meja Road railway station on Friday morning. The train stopped at the outer of Cheoki Junction of Naini. He was crossing the Delhi-Howrah railway track after getting down the train when he was hit by the train and died on the spot. The locals saw the mutilated body on the track and informed the Government Railway Police (GRP) about it. The Aadhar card was found in the pocket of the deceased and through it the body was identified. After identification, the police informed the family of the victim about the incident.

On receiving the information, Industrial police station in charge Kushal Kant took the body into possession and sent it for postmortem. Jagannath's wife and children are inconsolable. He was sole breadwinner of his family comprising his wife, a son and seven daughters. **ARRESTED:** Two liquor smugglers were arrested at Prayagraj Junction here on Friday. These smugglers were about to board a train with a consignment of liquor. The cost of the liquor is ₹44,520. On Friday, the RPF in collaboration with GRP caught a liquor smuggler, Prabhakar Singh from platform No 4/5 of Prayagraj Junction. He is a resident of Chamrupur Nandaut, Phulpur. Along with him, Janardan Singh of Phulpur was also arrested. Liquor filled in two bags was recovered from them. RPF inspector Atul Singh said during interrogation they confessed that they smuggle liquor through trains and took it to Bihar and sold it at high prices.

# Stress on doing all banking work in Hindi to facilitate customers



Zonal Chief Rajat Kumar Nanda awarding prizes to winners of Hindi competitions.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Union Bank of India (UBI), Kanpur, organised Hindi Diwas prize distribution ceremony on Thursday in a bid to publicise, promote and use of Rajbhasha Hindi. Zonal chief Rajat Kumar Nanda along with Deputy Zonal chief Prashant Desai, MLP chief Mahesh Navnath Bangale, Manager (Rajbhasha) Prema Pal and officers inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Speaking on the occasion, the zonal chief stressed on performing all banking work in Hindi to facilitate the customers. He also awarded the inter-branch Rajbhasha Shield to branches for best execution of their work in Hindi during 2023-24. At the same time, he also awarded prizes to five staff members for maximum use of Hindi in their work in the zone. As many as 35 staff members, winners of Hindi

competitions organised from September 17 to October 1 were also felicitated with the prize. On the occasion the reference book on 'Fintech Ke Samvardhan Mein Bhartiya Rajbhasha Ki Bhumika' was also unveiled in the presence of the audience. Staff members of all the branches were present in the programme. Dy Zonal Chief Prashant Desai proposed the vote of thanks and declared the event closed. Prema Pal, Manager (Rajbhasha) compered the programme. **NATIONAL CONFERENCE:** The Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), in collaboration with Bhartiya Bhasha Abhiyan, is proud to announce a two-day national conference on "National Education Policy: Indian Languages in the Field of Law and Justice" to be held on October 19 and 20 at the Senate Hall of the University. This significant event will bring together students,

scholars and academicians from across the nation to discuss and present research on the vital role of Indian languages in the legal framework of India. The conference aims to explore the growing importance of Indian languages in the law and justice sectors and identify the barriers to accessing justice due to language. With the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP), there is an increasing focus on empowering regional languages and ensuring they become integral to various fields, including law and governance. A host of thought-provoking research papers will be presented during the event by students and scholars, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities of using Indian languages in legal proceedings. These contributions are expected to foster in-depth discussions on the role of language in creating a more inclusive and accessible justice system. Certificates of participation will be awarded to all attendees, while a certificate of presentation will be provided to those presenting their research. The conference aims to create a lasting impact by paving the way for future reforms that can enhance the legal profession and educational frameworks in India. This event marks a significant step for CSJMU as it continues to strengthen its commitment to academic excellence and contribute to national development by addressing key policy issues. The collaboration with Bhartiya Bhasha Abhiyan further underscores the university's dedication to promoting Indian languages, not only in education but also in critical sectors such as law and justice.

# Captivating Dandiya performance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A "Folk dance competition And Garba festival" was organised under the aegis of Late Girija Devi Cultural Club at Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Kidwai Nagar, on Thursday. The programme was inaugurated by chief guest, famous Kathak dancer and leader of the dance group Dr Seema Dhinra and Principal Professor Anju Chaudhary by garlanding the Saraswati statue and lighting the lamp. Professor Chaudhary encouraged the students by sharing the speciality of India's diversity and rich culture with them. Dr Seema Dhinra increased the enthusiasm and zeal of the students with her speech. Braj folk dance was presented by Dr. Seema Dhinra's group. In the dance competition, the students performed different folk dances in which Kajri, Garba, Bhangra Lavni, Oriya, Assamese etc. dances were presented beautifully. About seven groups of students gave a captivating performance of Dandiya dance. All the students and lecturers in the courtyard were seen immersed in the fun of Dandiya, some in Gujarati - Chaniya Choli, some in Rajasthani - Ghaghra, some in Lehenga - Choli and other various dresses, showcasing their culture with great zeal and enthusiasm. The programme was conducted by Dr Pooja Srivastava and Dr Anita Verma. The vote of thanks was proposed by the coordinator of the cultural club, Prof Pragna Srivastava. Prof Deepali Srivastava, Prof Manisha Shukla, Prof Vandana Sharma, Prof Rashmi Chaturvedi, Dr Saba Yunus, Dr. Meera Tripathi, Dr Nishi, Dr Anamika Verma, Dr Suman Lata, Dr Pushpa Lata, Dr Gunjan and Dr Beauty Dixit participated in the programme

# New township gate inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In a significant development for the NTPC Auraiya community, a new township gate was inaugurated on Friday marking a step forward in enhancing the township's infrastructure. The inaugural ceremony was attended by senior management and other dignitaries. The ceremonial ribbon was cut by Jayadev Parida, Chief General Manager, Auraiya, and Sanghamitra Parida, President, Jagriti Mahila Mandal followed by the unveiling of the inaugural stone.

The event was witnessed by several senior officials like SK Balyan, AGM (O&M), Tanmoy Dutta, Head of HR, VP Pandey, AGM (C&M), Dr Bijay Nayak, Chief Medical



Chief General Manager, NTPC Auraiya Jayadev Parida, and President, Jagriti Mahila Mandal, Sanghamitra Parida, inaugurating the new township gate on Friday.

Officer (CMO), Amit Kumar, DC, CISE, GAIL and Rakesh Kumar, AC, CISE, Auraiya.

This new township gate is a part of NTPC Auraiya's continued efforts to improve living

conditions and provide a secure, well-maintained environment for its employees and their families. Speaking at the event, Jayadev Parida, CGM Auraiya emphasised the company's commitment to employee welfare and its constant focus on infrastructure development. President, Jagriti Mahila Mandal Sanghamitra Parida, shared her thoughts on the initiative expressing pride in the progress made and congratulated everyone. The new township gate will benefit the children studying in township schools as well as the community visiting the shopping complex because of its close proximity with the new township gate which will ensure enhanced security for the township.

# 3rd IEEE int'l conference on computer vision & machine intelligence at IIT-A from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The 3rd IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) International Conference on "Computer Vision and Machine Intelligence (IEEE CVMI)" will begin at Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad (IIIT-A) from Saturday. The two-day international conference will be inaugurated by chief guest Prof BB Chaudhuri, Patron-CVMI 24 in the administrative building auditorium on Saturday. Prof Chaudhuri who retired from Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, will deliver the keynote address. Prof Mukul S Sutaone, Director, IIIT-A, Prof Sri Niwas Singh, Director, ABV-IIITM Gwalior, Prof Ashutosh Kumar Singh, Director, IIIT Bhopal and Prof KC Santosh, University of South Dakota, USA, will be the guest of hon-

our at the inaugural function. The experts Prof RK Agrawal, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Dr Borut Batagelj, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Prof Lee Hwee-Kuan, A\*STAR, Singapore will be keynote speakers. The world-wide leading research labs, including the Applied AI Research Lab, University of South Dakota, USA, Computer Vision Laboratory, Faculty of Computer and Information Science, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Sorbonne Center for Artificial Intelligence, Abu Dhabi, UAE, and Multimedia and Computer Vision Laboratory, Department of Computer Science and Information Engineering, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan, are the organising knowledge partners. The IEEE CVMI 2024 conference is financially and technically sponsored by IEEE

Uttar Pradesh section. The CVMI 2024 conference is "Endorsed by International Association for Pattern Recognition (IAPR)" and "Technically Sponsored by IEEE SPS UP Chapter". The conference programme will include regular paper presentations, along with keynote talks by prominent expert speakers in the field. All submitted papers will be double-blind peer-reviewed. Paper acceptance will be based on originality, significance, technical soundness and clarity of presentation. The IAPR Best Paper Award and the CVMI-2024 Best Paper Awards will be given to the outstanding papers. The Best PhD Dissertation Awards will also be given in the PhD Symposium during IEEE CVMI 2024. **FOUNDER'S WEEK:** On the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of SHUATS

founder Dr Sam Higginbottom, a Founder's Week (Kritagyata Mahotsava) will be organised at Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS) from October 21 to 27 to commemorate the glorious history and contributions of its founder. The Founder's Week celebrations will feature a range of cultural and social events, including - academic seminars and workshops, cultural performances and exhibitions, social outreach programmes etc. These events aim to honor Dr Higginbottom's legacy and reaffirm the university's commitment to its vision of empowering rural communities through education and innovation. SHUATS V-C Prof Rajendra B Lal said Dr Sam Higginbottom's selfless dedication to agricultural development and education has inspired generations.

# Global community failing Hindus facing human rights abuses: VP Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday slammed the global community for failing to raise human rights violations against Hindus in India's neighbourhood and questioned its silence of ignoring their suffering, saying being "too tolerant" against such transgressions was not appropriate.

Calling them, "so-called moral preachers and custodians of human rights," who stand exposed, he said "they are mercenaries of something which is totally antithetical to human rights." However, he did not name any country. Addressing the foundation day celebrations of the National Human Rights Commission on Friday, he said we are "too tolerant" and being too tolerant to such transgressions is not appropriate. "Think if you were one of those," he said asking the people to reflect. "Look at the kind of barbarity, torture, traumatised experience of boys, girls, and women," he said, adding look



at our religious places being subjected to sacrilege. The vice president also cautioned that some pernicious forces were trying to show India in a "bad colour" and called for a "counter-attack" to neutralise such attempts. He also said that India does not like to be sermonised or lectured on human rights. He described Partition, the imposition of Emergency and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as traumatising events which "stand as a sombre reminder

of fragility of liberty". Dhankhar said there are "pernicious forces, that in a structured manner, seek to unfairly seek to taint us" and these forces have a "sinister design" to use international fora to question our human rights record. He also hit out at the hunger index which ranked India poorly, saying during the Covid pandemic, the government supported over 80 crore people with free ration regardless of their caste and creed.

The Vice President said the "sinister forces" are driven by an agenda which is "fiscally fuelled" by people who seek to make a name for themselves. "Time to shame them. They try to create havoc with the economic system of the country".

Underlining the safety of minorities in India, he said the country is way ahead of others when it comes to preserving human rights, particularly those of minorities, the marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society.

He also noted that at the domestic front, some were trying to use human rights to further their political agenda. In the course of his address, Dhankhar said, "Evidence in episode after episode" is piling up that the "deep state" is engaging in efforts against rising powers. Human rights, Dhankhar underlined, cannot and should not be used as a tool of foreign policy to exert power and influence over others. "Look at our school system- we don't have the kind of shootings that some countries claiming to be very developed

have on a regular basis. Think of those nations that turn Nelson's eye to such horrendous transgressions of human rights," he said. Dhankhar was of the view that rights of other non-Hindu refugees are repeatedly invoked, "surprisingly, also in the name of human rights, when cases are filed in the Supreme Court."

History is testimony that nations have completely lost their identity by not addressing this issue. It has global repercussions from the perspective of human rights, he warned.

NHRC's acting Chairperson Vijaya Bharathi Sayani talked about the case of alleged sexual harassment of women at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, as she recalled some of the strong words the rights panel used in its scathing report after its on-spot inquiry into the matter. "NHRC has addressed a broad spectrum of human rights violations, including custodial deaths, bonded labour, exploitation of marginalised groups and denial of medical care," Sayani said.

# PM Modi to launch 'karmayogi saptah'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the 'Karmayogi Saptah'-- National Learning Week-- on Saturday, with the exercise seeking to impart fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants, his office said.

It noted that the 'Mission Karmayogi' was launched in September 2020, and it has made substantial progress since then.

It envisions a future-ready civil service rooted in Indian ethos, with a global perspective, it added. The National Learning Week (NLW) will be the largest event of its kind providing fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants.

This initiative will stimulate a renewed commitment to learning and development. The NLW aims to create a "One Government" message, align everyone with national



goals and promote lifelong learning, the statement said. The NLW will be dedicated to learning through various forms of engagement by individual participants and ministries, departments and organizations. During NLW, each "karmayogi" will commit to achieving a target of at least four hours of competency-linked learning. The participants may complete the targeted hours through a mix of individual role-based modules on

iGOT, webinars (public lectures/policy master classes) by eminent persons. During the week, eminent speakers will deliver talks on their areas of prominence and help them work towards citizen-centric delivery in a much more effective manner, the statement said. During the week, the ministries, departments and organisations will also organise seminars and workshops to enhance domain specific competencies, it added.

# Defence Minister stresses need for unconventional ideas in modern warfare

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said technology has "transformed" the conventional warfare into an unconventional one, and adoption of "unconventional ideas", not yet known to the world, is the only way to progress while navigating this change.

In his address at the DRDO-Industry Workshop on Defence Technology Acceleration' held at the DRDO Bhawan here, he also called upon the private sector to move forward from the state of 'participation' to 'taking lead' in the defence sector.

Today, technology has "transformed" conventional warfare into unconventional warfare, the defence minister said. "New dimensions have been added to modern-day warfare, such as drones, cyber warfare, bio-weapons and space defence. In this transformative phase, research and development in defence will definitely make the defence sector stronger," Rajnath said.

It is heartening to witness Indian scientists, industrialists, academia, start-ups, MSMEs and young entrepreneurs working together in this endeavour, he said.

The defence minister asserted that "it is time for the private sector to take lead as it has the ability to absorb rapid changes and create new innovations". Rajnath, in his address, described the adoption of "unconventional ideas, not yet known to the world, as the only way to progress in



unconventional warfare". Acknowledging it as a tough task, he stated that the government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will "continue providing all necessary support" to the youth, scientists, industrialists and MSMEs in this endeavour. The defence minister reiterated the government's commitment to make the defence sector more innovative and technology-oriented. He also launched 'Dare to Dream 5.0' to encourage next generation of innovators and start-ups to come forward with transformative ideas for defence applications. The fifth edition of DRDO's innovation contest aims to generate cutting-edge solutions for India to progress further in its pursuit to achieve 'aatmanirbharta' in defence technologies, the statement said.

Rajnath also felicitated the winners of 'Dare to Dream 4.0', recognising individual innovators, start-ups and MSMEs for disruptive solutions and innovations in the fields of countermeasures for drones and swarm of drones; advanced acoustic system to locate gunfire, directed energy technologies, cognitive listening device, target seeking, among others. He described the challenges as

a testament to the commitment of the industrial ecosystem of the country to protect the future of the defence sector.

"Like our brave soldiers, scientists, industry leaders, academia, start-ups, MSMEs and entrepreneurs too are the warriors of the country, prepared to complete every assigned task," he said.

The defence minister laid emphasis on the need to achieve advancements in both incremental and disruptive technologies within the defence sector. The solutions to challenges obtained through initiatives such as 'Dare to Dream' bridge the critical gap between the two types of technologies, he said.

The defence minister called upon the scientists, start-ups and young entrepreneurs to think out-of-the-box and come out with the latest innovations as if it were their habit to accept and overcome challenges. He exhorted the private sector to move in line with the "unprecedented speed" with which the technological changes are taking place across the globe. He urged them to ensure, through timely assessment, that a technology does not become outdated when it is rolled out.

The defence minister also called for development of projects, under TDF (Technology Development Fund), based on cutting-edge technology, and "devising a system of comprehensive scan within the scheme to avoid duplication of technologies", the statement said.

# PM Modi to attend 16th BRICS summit



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Russia from October 22-23 at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin to attend the 16th Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit in Kazan, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. During his visit, the prime minister is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from BRICS member countries and invited leaders in Kazan, MEA said in a statement.

The theme of this year's summit is "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security". It will provide an important platform for leaders to discuss key global issues, it said. "The summit will offer a valuable opportunity to assess the progress of initiatives launched by BRICS and to identify potential areas for future collaboration," the ministry said.

In September, President Putin extended an invitation

to Prime Minister Modi, proposing a bilateral meeting on October 22, on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan. Putin had described Modi as a "good friend" while extending the invitation.

This will be Modi's second visit to Russia this year. He had travelled to Moscow for an informal meet with the Russian President. His trip to Moscow was also his first since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In August, the Prime Minister dialled the Russian President and urged an early resolution of the Ukraine conflict. The conversation took place days after Modi visited Kyiv and met Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He has visited Russia six times since taking over as the Prime Minister of the country. He visited Russia twice in 2015, with one of them being to participate in the 7th BRICS summit. During his visit to Russia earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Russia's highest civilian honour, the Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

# IIT's fee concession, relaxation at lower cutoff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) across the country are offering fee concessions and relaxation in already lower cut-off to students from reserved categories to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, according to officials. "In the JEE-based admissions, fee remissions and fee waivers are provided right from the application stage.

At the application stage, students belonging to the SC, ST, PwD (persons with disability) need to pay only half the examination fee. Further, cut-offs are relaxed to support a greater number of admissions in the SC, ST, PwD and OBC categories," said IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti.

IIT Madras conducted the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Advanced, the entrance exam for IITs, this year. "There are 23 IITs currently and as per Ministry of Education's focus on providing support to students from the disadvantaged sections of society, several initiatives have been taken. Besides these, some IITs take additional measures individually as well," he said. "To further enable a greater number of students to benefit from the high quality of education that the IITs have to offer, SC, ST and PwD students pay only 50



lower than the relaxed selection cut-off, are given special training through a preparatory course, which enables them to directly join the IITs after completion of the preparatory course," he added. Starting this year, JEE (Advanced) 2024 team enabled "Citizen Service Centres" across the country to help candidates, specifically from rural places, to fill out the choices and pay the fees through the online portal.

"A multi-lingual call centre was also set up to answer queries from candidates. A reconciliation day after the fee-payment deadline date was introduced this year to handle cases (who made at least one payment attempt) that had last-minute technical glitches," Kamakoti said. During the admission process, all eligible candidates pay a seat acceptance fee to ensure seriousness in applying for the seat. The SC, ST and PwD students pay only 50

per cent of the acceptance fee of regular candidates. Kamakoti said that in the acceptance fees, it was observed in the past that the candidates blocked the seat but did not turn up on when the classes started, leading to many seats lying vacant. "Since in the seat allocation process, the seats reserved for SC and ST can be allocated only to them, a vacant SC or ST seat results in the denial of a precious IIT seat to another deserving reserved category candidate," he said.

"If a student's parental income is less than Rs 1 lakh, irrespective of which category, the full tuition fee is waived by all the 23 IITs. Further, full tuition waiver is also provided for students from the SC, ST and PwD candidates," he said. Students from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) with parental income between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 5 lakh have two-thirds of their tuition fee waived, he added.

# Global warming significant catalyst for migration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Migration, often driven by economic opportunities or conflicts, is increasingly influenced by climate-induced factors, particularly prolonged droughts, according to a new study.

This finding is particularly pertinent to India, where nearly two-thirds of the landscape experienced drought conditions from 2020 to 2022.

Analysing trends across 72 countries over the past 50 years, researchers found that global warming is a significant catalyst for migration, reshaping both rural and urban landscapes as communities adapt to harsh conditions. "We find that increased drought and aridity have a significant impact on internal migration, particularly in the hyper-arid and arid areas of Southern Europe, South Asia, Africa and the Middle East and South America," the authors said in the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.



As droughts intensify, people are more likely to migrate to urban areas, which, despite their challenges, are perceived as more stable, said Marco Percoco, Director of the GREEN Research Center at Bocconi University. He emphasised that for many, migration is seen as the "least bad option" in the face of environmental pressures.

The authors used census data from 1960 to 2016. Rural communities reliant on agriculture are hit hardest, as dwindling water supplies and drying soils

lead to lost livelihoods, said the study.

The shift to cities is not just a survival strategy; it also strains urban infrastructure as cities become magnets for those fleeing rural hardships. The authors stressed on the importance of a holistic approach to tackle climate-induced migration, advocating for improved support systems in urban areas and policies that help rural communities adapt. Rural areas, especially those dependent on agriculture, were found to be the hardest hit because of climate change. The communities in

these regions are most likely to experience the effects of worsening droughts, the researchers said.

In areas where farming is the primary income source, drying soils and diminishing water supplies lead directly to lost livelihoods, prompting migration to urban centers.

Further exploring these challenges in India, a report titled "Climate and Health: Evidence for Current Practices in Resilience & Adaptation," prepared by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), highlighted that extreme weather events, such as flooding and drought, also complicate food distribution. Damaged or inaccessible roads and waterways hinder the transport of food supplies, exacerbating food security issues.

To address these challenges, the report, which was released recently, emphasises the need for proactive measures to ensure food safety, maintain nutritional quality, and secure reliable distribution networks amid climate change.

# NBCFDS to launch 'Viswas' scheme aiming SC, OBC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) is set to disburse loans under the newly-launched "Viswas" scheme from next month, with an aim to help 15 lakh people belonging to the SC, OBC, and safai karamchari communities, a senior official said on Friday.

The Vanchit Ika Samooh aur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayata (Viswas) scheme offers an interest subvention of up to five per cent per annum on loans and cash credit limits to the eligible individuals and self-help groups (SHGs). Speaking during a media interaction, NBCFDC Managing Director Rajan Sehgal emphasised the inclusive nature of the scheme, which offers financial support to the marginalised communities, with no income ceiling for safai karamcharis.



"The disbursement of loans will begin from next month," Sehgal said, adding that this year alone, the scheme aims to reach seven lakh beneficiaries, with the remaining eight lakh to be covered by next year. According to Sehgal, the beneficiaries will receive subsidies directly into their accounts through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) system, ensuring a smooth and transparent process. Announced in the Union Budget this year, the Viswas scheme offers concessional

financial development corporations (FDCs) and lending institutions, the official said.

Sharing further details, Sehgal said the loans will carry a 5 per cent interest rate with a minimum duration of five years.

He also highlighted the scheme's convergence with other national programmes, including MUDRA loans and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), to provide a holistic financial support system for the underprivileged communities. The NBCFDC is also rolling out the National Fellowship for OBC (NFOBC) students, which will provide financial assistance for higher education. "The fellowship will support students in obtaining Ph.D degrees by providing Rs 37,000 per month for the first two years and Rs 42,000 per month for the remaining tenure," Sehgal said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Balancing act

SC upholds Section 6A of Citizenship Act, balancing humanitarian concerns with indigenous rights of Assamese people

In a landmark judgement the Supreme Court of India has upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. In a 4:1 majority verdict, the bench led by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud endorsed the provisions that grant citizenship to people who migrated from Bangladesh between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971. The decision comes amidst long-standing debates over immigration in Assam. Section 6A was introduced in 1985 as part of the Assam Accord, an agreement between the Indian government and Assam's agitating groups to address the issues arising from illegal immigration. Those who arrived after March 25, 1971, are not eligible for citizenship and are considered illegal immigrants under Indian law. The Assam Accord aimed to balance the humanitarian concerns of migrants with the socio-economic and cultural interests of the indigenous Assamese population. The cut-off date of March 25, 1971, corresponds to the beginning of 'Operation Searchlight,'



a military crackdown by the Pakistani Army in then-East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which triggered a significant influx of refugees into India. In the majority ruling, Chief Justice Chandrachud noted that Section 6A does not violate the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution, which pertain to the conferring of citizenship to migrants from East and West Pakistan at the commencement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950. The court held that the legislation sought to address specific historical and demographic realities in Assam, making the separate cut-off date for the state reasonable and justifiable. However, While upholding

the constitutional validity of Section 6A, the Supreme Court expressed concerns over the inadequate implementation of immigration laws in Assam. Indeed the porous borders and incomplete fencing have allowed a continuous influx of migrants, which exacerbates demographic challenges. Besides, existing mechanisms, including the Foreigners' Tribunals, are insufficient for effectively identifying and deporting illegal immigrants. The Supreme Court's decision has far-reaching implications for the socio-political landscape in Assam. The ruling, while affirming the validity of Section 6A, also recognises the concerns of petitioners who argued that cultural and demographic tapestry of Assam has changed by mandating better enforcement of immigration laws. If the directives for stricter border controls and timely identification of illegal immigrants are implemented effectively, it could help address long-standing grievances regarding demographic changes in Assam. On the other hand, striking down Section 6A would have rendered many residents, who have lived in Assam for decades, effectively stateless, leading to potential humanitarian crises. The court's ruling ensures that such individuals retain their citizenship rights, thus preventing large-scale displacements and unrest.

### PICTALK



Women make 'rangoli' on the occasion of Lakshmi Puja, in Nadia

## Unveiling Canada's hidden history of injustice

A contradiction in Canada's identity—championing human rights and multiculturalism while perpetuating deep injustices against its most vulnerable



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Chanie Wenjack was a 12-year-old Anishinaabe boy who attended the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, in the 1960s. Like many Indigenous children, he was forcibly removed from his family and placed in the school, where the goal was to assimilate him into Canadian culture. Chanie was lonely, abused, and homesick. In 1966, he ran away from the school, trying to find his way home—over 600 kilometres away. Chanie set out on foot, without proper clothing or food, and tried to follow a set of railway tracks that he believed would lead him back to his family. After days of walking in the freezing October weather, Chanie died from exposure and hunger. His body was found on October 22, 1966, curled up beside the tracks. He was clutching matches and a frozen lump of sugar in his pocket. He was just a child, lost in a hostile world that had torn him from his family.

This tragic narrative, among hundreds of thousands of similar cases swept under the carpet of history, encapsulates a fundamental contradiction within Canada's national identity—a nation that presents itself as a bastion of multiculturalism, tolerance, and human rights while simultaneously perpetrating profound injustices against its Indigenous peoples. From the brutal implementation of the residential school system to contemporary systemic racism, Canada's historical contradictions are glaring and demand serious examination. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) reported that many children experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse while at these schools—a grim testament to a system that was, in its essence, a form of cultural genocide. This system did not simply end with the closing of these schools; the effects are still felt today, manifesting in intergenerational trauma and systemic discrimination against Indigenous communities. As the well-known Canadian writer John Ralston Saul aptly notes, "Canada's story is one of



contradiction; we celebrate diversity while practising exclusion and denying the full citizenship of Indigenous peoples," adding, "the unconscious civilisation is the one in which we have lost our sense of the individual, in which the individual has become a statistic."

While Indigenous peoples face systemic discrimination, the Canadian government has also engaged in doublespeak regarding human rights. Canada often positions itself as a global leader in advocating for human rights, yet its track record reveals a different reality. For instance, Canada's participation in international human rights agreements contrasts starkly with its treatment of Indigenous populations. The United Nations has repeatedly criticised Canada for its failure to uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples, pointing to issues such as the lack of access to clean water, adequate housing, and education.

The disparity between Canada's self-image and the lived experiences of marginalised communities highlights a persistent hypocrisy. Systemic discrimination in Canada impacts not only Indigenous communities but also various racialised groups, who encounter significant barriers in employment, education, and healthcare. This inequitable access reinforces cycles of poverty and marginalisation. The recent rise in anti-Asian

sentiment has exposed the pervasive nature of racism in Canadian society, with hate crimes against Asian Canadians increasing sharply. This alarming trend highlights the fragility of Canada's multicultural narrative and reflects a broader pattern of scapegoating marginalised groups, revealing the inadequacies of government responses that often fail to deliver meaningful action. It is quite unfortunate to see how Canada has become a sanctuary for extremist movements, allowing groups like the Khalistani separatists and Tamil Tiger sympathisers to thrive within its borders. This situation raises alarming questions about the nation's complicity in international terrorism. Critics argue that the Canadian government's leniency towards violent nationalists and separatists not only enables these ideologies but also positions Canada as a breeding ground for extremism that threatens global security. The government's failure to confront these dangerous ideologies casts doubt on its commitment to combating terrorism and upholding human rights.

The Khalistani movement, which seeks a separate Sikh state in India, has erupted into violent clashes, giving rise to grave allegations of Canadian collusion in the turmoil. This week, the expulsion of six Indian diplomats over evidence of a "campaign of violence" against dissidents fur-

ther exposes the hypocrisy of a government that engages in doublespeak while attempting to deflect attention from its shortcomings.

While Canada positions itself as a supporter of human rights and development, its actions frequently tell a different story. For example, Canadian mining companies operating in Africa have been criticised for their exploitative practices and the environmental degradation they cause.

The extraction of resources often comes at the expense of local communities, whose rights and livelihoods are compromised in the name of profit. This contradiction is starkly illustrated in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where Canadian companies have faced allegations of human rights abuses and complicity in violence against local populations.

The quest for justice is not just a collective responsibility but a relentless commitment to truth and accountability. Only then can Canada build a future where dignity is not a privilege but a right for every citizen, thus challenging the very essence of what it means to be Canadian? As Gabor Maté, a well-known Canadian physician and author, states, "the question of who we are is deeply embedded in the culture we are raised in and the stories we tell ourselves."

(The writer is a journalist and author, views expressed are personal)



SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA IMPACTS NOT ONLY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES BUT ALSO VARIOUS RACIALISED GROUPS, WHO ENCOUNTER SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### CONGRESS FACES SETBACKS

Madam — The article 'Haryana setback exposes cracks in INDIA Bloc' (October 17) has exposed chinks in the opposition armour. The tussle for the opposition face never settled even before Lok Sabha elections but after the Congress debacle in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana elections, the severe infighting has surged on the ground. Rahul Gandhi has lost not just credibility in the opposition but even the Congress cadre has a trust deficit in him. All enthusiasm appears lost for the Jharkhand and Maharashtra Assembly elections and bypolls. The blame game on EVMs has already commenced even before poll campaigns.

The allies of the INDIA bloc are marginalising Congress on seat sharing. The Udhav Thakre-led Shiv Sena has completely sacrificed its Hindu ideology and its stand on Article 370 and Veer Savarkar, so Shiv Sena (UBT) relinquished its distinct identity and space in Maharashtra politics. The opposition in the INDIA bloc and other alliances are chasing minority votes as its vote bank leaving Hindus for the BJP. The entire opposition is numbed on terrorism-related killings, illegal waqf claims on government owned properties, temples and their lands, anti-India tirades abroad, insults heaped on Sanatan and our Gods and faiths, Bengal carnage and massacres of Hindus in Bangladesh.

The National Conference boldly gave up Congress in his cabinet for better coordination with the Modi government, certainly for more empowerment of his governance. Haryana's verdict is a big blow to Congress for the fallacy of Rahul Gandhi's typical campaigning based on narratives, hypes and unsubstantiated allegations on the Modi government and the lack of good governance in Congress-ruled states.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

#### CRIME BEYOND BORDERS

Madam—In India, it is rarely heard that the business of the criminal gang here runs at the international level. It was revealed for the first time when Canadian Prime

#### Justice statue reflects change



The unveiling of the new lady statue of the justice by the delegates of the Apex Court of India is more about resemblance with the Indian Justice Vision. Despite India had been in so many years of independence now, the existence of colonial laws and justice icons presents a jeopardised picture. Often, Indian judiciary is

renowned for its delayed handling of cases, notoriously defamed as the 'Tarikh pe Tarikh' system.

The new lady icons, in their renowned appearance, will propel the audience to expect renowned justice mechanisms. The changing of sword with the Indian Constitution book, opening of her blindfold, and changing in cloth with a saree allow the same lady to visualise the renowned aspirations of the people from the Indian justice mechanism. We can expect that with indigenous statues and indigenous Samhita laws, India can pave the way for improved justice mechanisms with speedy justice delivery. We hope that this new version of the justice delivery system will enhance the trust and reliability of the Indians in these justice delivery bodies and will propel Indians to get rid of this Black coat syndrome and ineffective judiciary.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Minister Justin Trudeau said that 'India's Bishnoi group is currently carrying out its exploits at the international level. This group has created a sensation in the whole country by shooting 66-year-old Baba Siddiqui, a well-known leader and former MLA of Mumbai, in broad daylight. Apart from this, this group has also threatened to kill Bollywood celebrity Salman Khan since 2018. Bishnoi is the prime accused in the sensational murder of Sidhu Moose Wala, who was shot dead near his village in October 2022. Police say his accomplice Goldy Brar, who is also a co-accused in the murder of Moose Wala, runs the gang from Canada via remote control. Bishnoi has more than 30 cases pending against him, 19 of which are currently being heard in court. A senior officer of Punjab's Anti-Gangster Task Force has admitted that "He runs his gang from jail without any coordination."

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamsheedpur

#### BLIND SUPPORT FOR CANADA

Madam — The US, UK, Australia and New Zealand blindly supporting their

partner Canada in the 'five eyes' group on the unsubstantiated allegation against the involvement of the Indian government in the killing of an Indian-origin Canadian who belongs to the 'Khalistani' Indian Separatist group is deplorable. The allegation is based only on the basis of the intelligence reports from the Canadian Police without any evidence, as per Justin Trudeau himself.

In diplomatic matters such as these one wonders how there can be an assertion of charge by Canada, and the friendly nations support the same 'blindly' just on here say. It is sad the 'five eyes' group, which has opened its eyes on Trudeau's call against India, has turned a blind eye to what is happening in West Asia, where its lead member, the US is bolstering the attack by the rogue nation Israel in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon and now readying to attack Iran as a retaliation.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## A call to secure a lead-free future for children

As the world marks the twelfth International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, the spotlight is on eliminating lead from paints

The world is observing the twelfth International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) from October 20-26, 2024. This year's theme, "Bright Futures Begin Lead-Free", echoes the grave danger that the presence of lead in paints has on the environment and human health, and more specifically on children.

Lead, a potent neurotoxin, has long been recognised as a serious public health threat, particularly to children, and pregnant and lactating women. Exposure to lead can cause irreversible damage to the brain and nervous system, leading to cognitive impairment, learning disabilities and developmental delays. It negatively affects children's intellectual ability, attention span and academic performance.

Further lead exposure can have a huge bearing on the economy of the nation. According to a study, childhood lead exposure in low- and middle-income countries resulted in economic losses amounting to \$977 billion annually, representing 1.2 per cent of the global GDP



in 2011. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there is no known safe level of lead exposure in the human body. The UN agency has classified lead as one of the top ten chemicals of primary public health concern.

Efforts are being made globally and nationally to phase out lead from different sources, as it directly and indirectly, harms human health. The phase-out of lead from gasoline has been a remarkable success, but lead in paints remains a key source of lead poisoning, and more so in developing and the least developing countries. Nevertheless, lead-based paint

is a common source of lead poisoning in children. They ingest and inhale lead particles even when they are in the safe confines of their homes. Lead paints are more harmful when they deteriorate, releasing dust and flakes that contaminate indoor environments and pose a direct risk to human health, particularly to children. Many countries have introduced regulations to control or ban the use of lead in paints, but it is still a problem in low- and middle-income countries where such regulations are either absent or poorly enforced. The continued sale and use of lead paint in over 100 countries without

binding legal limits, exacerbates the threat. India has restricted the use of lead up to 90 PPM in household and decorative paints through a regulation, but challenges in implementing the regulations in small and medium-scale industries, persist.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, formed by WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2009, aims to phase out lead from paints worldwide by 2025. However, considering the current pace of developments, that seems far from being achieved if the movement is not accelerated. This year's theme "Bright future begins lead-free", can perhaps be catalysed as an action-oriented approach to eliminate lead from paints. There is only a year to go, so all stakeholders including government, industries, and civil society must join hands in this global effort to eliminate lead from paints and keep the future generation safe.

The author is a Senior Programme Coordinator (Chemical and Health) with Toxics Link; views are personal



PIYUSH MOHAPATRA



## FIRST COLUMN

PM MODI'S  
ASEAN OUTREACH

This strong diplomatic push comes as India emphasises ASEAN centrality



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lao PDR last week to attend the India-ASEAN summit was an important message for allies in the Indo-Pacific region regarding shared interests and common goals. PM Modi laid out a ten-point action agenda plan for upgrading relations with the ASEAN member countries, covering technology cooperation, trade, people-to-people ties, education, health, green energy and a focus on the global south bunch of nations. This comes at a time when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Pakistan (a first-in-line visit by any Indian External Affairs minister in the past 9 years) to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. PM Modi during his inaugural address at the ASEAN India summit mentioned "Ten years ago, I announced India's 'Act East' policy. Over the past decade, this initiative has revitalised the historical ties between India and ASEAN countries, infusing them with renewed energy, direction and momentum. Giving importance to ASEAN centrality, we launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative in 2019." Clear references were made regarding the Indo-Pacific's centrality for India's foreign policy interests. India has under the current government's foreign policy priorities, kept the Indo-Pacific as a centrepiece. It has joined one of the most significant multilateral platforms, QUAD with the US, Australia and Japan and also entered into an economic partnership framework with the US and several countries in Asia under IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework).

The QUAD even though not a security alliance is focussed on maintaining a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. India managed to include several crucial pointers inserted in the Chairman HE Mr Sonexay Siphandone's, (also, the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic) statement during the summit. The statement read "We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea.



We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. We further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the importance of self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety and committed to maintaining and promoting an environment conducive to the negotiations of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with International Law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. "Meanwhile as expected India did not engage in any bilateral dialogue with the SCO host country, Pakistan. Relations with Pakistan have been on the edge, for nearly a decade now, with an escalation, when India removed Article 370, regarding a special status for Kashmir. A couple of Pakistan-based terror attacks and India's surgical strike on terrorists on Pakistan soil ensured the relationship has been frosty. Meanwhile, Pakistan's national economy has plummeted in a post-Covid era. The guardian country for Pakistan in the region is India's other real problem, China. However, the binding economic packages China offers, are sure to make Pakistan a colony in the long run. While EAM's visit to Pakistan could be seen as a good goodwill gesture, in the long run, economic bilateral ties and the human bridge between the two nations, would be the only saviour for Pakistan.

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

Bangladesh reforms:  
Exaggerated importance

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

As scepticism mounts and electoral timelines remain vague, questions about the interim government's long-term ambitions are becoming harder to ignore

The latest buzzword in Bangladesh is reform. A report by Reuters, datelined August 16, 2024, and carried in the Dhaka Tribune under the heading, "Student protestors plan new party to cement their revolution," quoted Nahid Islam, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement and an advisor to the interim government, as saying, "The spirit of the movement was to create a new Bangladesh, one where no fascist or autocrat can return," and adding that to ensure that "we need structural reforms, which will definitely take some time." The government, he further said, was not considering calls from the Awami League and BNP to hold fresh polls as early as fall.

According to a report in The Daily Star, datelined August 18, 2024, and carried under the heading "No option but to succeed: Yunus," the interim government's chief advisor said, while addressing foreign diplomats during a "Meet and Greet" session at a hotel in Dhaka, that the interim government would hold a free, fair and participatory election as soon as it could complete its mandate to carry out vital reforms in the election commission, judiciary, civil administration, security forces and media. He added that the students wanted meaningful and deep reforms, which would turn Bangladesh into a "real and thriving democracy". Things have been moving. In his address to the nation on September 11, 2024, Yunus announced the names of the heads of six commissions of reform along with the areas of governance they would address. Thus, Shahdeen Malik would lead the Constitutional Reform Commission; Justice Shah Abu Naim Mominur Rahman, the Judicial Reform Commission; Badiul Alam Majumdar, the Election System Reform Commission; Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, the Public Administration Reform Commission; Safar Raj Hossain, the Police Administration Reform Commission; and Iftekharuzzaman, the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission.

Yunus stated in his 32-minute speech that the commissions were expected to start their work from October 1 and finish within the next three months. Thereafter, the interim government would, on the basis of their report, organise discussions with major political parties and, in the final stage, hold comprehensive consultations, spread over three to seven days, with representatives of student bodies, civil society, political parties and the government. He added, "This discussion will finalise the outline of the reform plan and provide an idea on how it will be implemented." There was, however, a stumble as early September 18, 2024, when it was announced that the Constitutional Reform Commission was to be headed by Ali Riaz, a Distinguished Professor at Illinois State University in the United States, and not Shahdeen Malik who, one learnt subsequently, had himself opted out, citing his own work load.

Even if the move does not make much of a difference in the commission's work, it indicates inefficiency and thoughtlessness. The interim government should have got Malik's consent before announcing his name as the head of the Constitution Reforms Commission. Besides, work has not been progressing fast enough. A



IF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD EARLIER UNDER CARETAKER GOVERNMENTS, THESE CAN BE HELD AGAIN UNDER A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WHOSE COMPOSITION IS SANCTIONED BY ALL OR A MAJORITY OF PARTIES IN BANGLADESH

report in the Dhaka Tribune, datelined October 14, 2024, and carried under the heading "Badiul Alam: Election Reform Commission reviewing laws, regulations," quotes Badiul Alam Majumdar, head of the Constitutional Reform Commission, as saying that laws, regulations, and rules were [being] reviewed as a part of the election review process, "to gain a clear understanding of electoral reforms." The implication is that the commission had yet to get a clear understanding of its task. At this rate, it is unlikely to finish its work within 90 days of starting it. Delay is almost certain to happen because the introduction of the proportional representation system is being considered. According to Riadul Karim in his piece, "Proportional system scheme in discussion," in Prothom Alo English (updated on October 15, 2024), the proceedings of a virtual discussion meeting showed that while the BNP opposed the decision and the Awami League's view was not known, both 'eminent personalities' and the other political parties favoured it. Given the BNP's opposition, there is bound to be heated discussions and delays if the Constitutional Reform Commission considers proposing such a change.

Given the difficult and contentious nature of the political and administrative terrains to be covered, progress in the other sectors of reform would also be slow unless the commissions have been told what to recom-

mend and the members have agreed. Hence, the urgency of the question, when would the elections be held? The urgent need for an answer is sharply underlined by the absence of the announcement of a timeframe, to say nothing of dates, for holding elections to the new Jatiya Sangsad or National Parliament. Continued silence on the matter is bound to raise the question: is the interim government planning to become permanent?

Some may regard this as an unwarranted question. The complete overhaul of the civil administration, foreign ministry, judiciary, police and military under way, is, however, significant in this context. The plea is that these have to be rid of those complicit in the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government's gross human rights violations. Given, however, the very large number of people shunted to sinecures, sacked or compulsorily retired before time, the question arises whether all of them were actually guilty, or the interim government is staffing the administration, judiciary, police and military with people who would support its bid to stay indefinitely in power.

The prospect must worry the BNP. With the Awami League being sought to be systematically crippled through murder and large-scale imprisonment, it has every chance of sweeping the parliamentary elections, which have become due following the dismissal of the former parliament on August 6, 2024. It might also

ask whether the reforms are so important as to make their completion a pre-requisite for holding elections.

The argument, articulated a nauseum, that reforms are need for holding free and fair elections and preventing the return of an autocrat to power, is ridiculous. If free and fair elections could be held earlier under caretaker governments, these can be held again under a caretaker government whose composition is sanctioned by all or a majority of parties in Bangladesh.

The point needs to be made because the importance of reforms as a means of ensuring a "real and thriving democracy," is highly exaggerated. The impeccably democratic constitution of the Weimer Republic could not prevent Hitler's ascent to power through the electoral process. No constitutional safeguard can prevent a legally-elected leader becoming a tyrant, or a military coup, or a violent mass-movement forcing the ouster of an existing government, a telling example of which has recently been provided by Bangladesh itself!

The harsh reality is reflected in the sage words of late Justice Learned Hand of the United States who said, "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can do even much to help."

(The writer is a consulting editor of The Pioneer; views are personal)

## The need for regulatory action on public conduct is imperative

The Delhi High Court's recent decision to suspend the counting of votes for the DUSU elections over public property defacement underscores civic responsibility

The High Court recently halted and deferred the counting of votes for the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections on the issue of public property defacement. Additionally, the court mandated that Delhi University recover costs incurred in repairing the public property from the candidates and reimburse the civic authorities including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, government departments, and Delhi Metro. This landmark decision has brought two grave issues to the fore, viz., citizens' ignorant and irresponsible behaviour and the need for regulation by authorities in issues of national interest. The world economies are



KAJLEEN KAUR

working their way to a decarbonised Green Economy, which results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. India is envisioning to be a Global Leader @2047 and boasts of its G20 presidency which focussed on creating LiFE (Lifestyles

for Environment) and sustainable practices. However, careless behaviour, such as littering, pollution, or illegal deforestation, can harm ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and contribute to environmental degradation. Such reckless acts question the credibility of the action plan and its implementation. Repairing and maintenance of public property require financial resources, often sourced from taxpayers. It causes an unnecessary burden on public funds, diverting money away from other vital areas such as education, healthcare, and social services. The responsible use of public property is a fundamental aspect of maintaining a thriving, equitable, and sus-

tainable society. It helps preserve resources for future generations, minimises economic burdens, fosters civic responsibility, promotes environmental sustainability, and ensures public safety and equality. The modern structure of economics favours a laissez-faire economy or a non-interventionist market structure. However, ensuring a sensible regulatory mechanism that respects the fundamental role of free-market competition and can also keep a check on unfair civic practices, oversupply or wastage of resources, can provide vital public benefits. There are unmet visible examples in the economy and society such as the infringement of public prop-



erties, illegal encroachments of roads, the almost disappearing footpaths, and unadministered vendors, distribution of freebies for attracting vote banks to name a few, which call for an ardent need for an effective control mechanism. The outnumbing E-rickshaws in the name of giving employment

are a menace to the traffic system and road safety, requiring urgent action. Another important aspect that needs policy action is the small packaging of products, often called "overpackaging" or "excessive packaging." It often leads to increased waste, particularly in the form of non-recy-

clable materials. Manufacturing small packages requires more raw materials (plastic, paper, metals), resulting in a higher carbon footprint and increased consumption of finite resources. Regulating packaging can contribute to a circular economy, where materials are reused or recycled effectively, minimising environmental harm. To quote the famous economist Say's law of the market, "Supply creates its own demand," it is for the authorities to introduce regulations, limiting the use of small packaging, especially for non-essential or high-waste products. Policies could include taxes or restrictions on single-use plastics and encourage pro-

ducers to switch to larger or reusable packaging, which is cost-effective. Most importantly, educating consumers on the benefits of choosing products with minimal or sustainable packaging can influence purchasing decisions and drive demand for environmentally friendly options. Creating a conducive society and economic structure includes judicialicious demand, supply, usage and a regulatory framework to ensure the same. It is imperative for all the stakeholders to act more responsibly and to minimise wastage in all forms.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)

# Opposition MVA asks ECI to probe BJP's pre-poll malpractices

T N RAGHUNATHA ■  
MUMBAI:

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Friday lodged a complaint with the Chief Election Officer (CEO), Maharashtra, alleging that the ruling BJP had manipulated the electoral rolls for the November 20 2024 State Assembly elections, by filing thousands of objections under form 7, seeking deletion of voters from the rolls. Senior MVA leaders -- including State Congress chief Nana Patole, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Vijay Wadetiwar, Jitendra Awhad and the NCP, Ambadas Danve and Anil Desai of the Shiv Sena (UBT) -- met CEO S. Chockalingam, and urged the latter to order a probe into the electoral malpractices indulged

in by the BJP. Talking to media persons here, Patole said that the BJP was blatantly "misusing" form 7 applications raising objections to the inclusion of names and deletion of the voters from the electoral rolls on the basis of deaths and shifting of residences. "We have come to know that using the form no 7, large chunks voters' names are being deleted from the electoral rolls, mostly the supporters of the MVA parties. A large number of voters belonging to Scheduled Castes and Muslim communities are among the chief targets of the BJP," Patole said. "We have urged the CEP and Election Commission of India (ECI) to come out with a white paper disclosing the Assembly constituency-wise details about the Form 7 applications made



and the names of those who have made these applications," the State Congress chief said. Awhad said that there was a conspiracy to remove at least

5000 names from the voter lists in each of the 288 Assembly constituencies in the state to accord benefit to the ruling Eknath Shinde Shiv Sena-BJP-

NCP (Ajit Pawar) alliance. "Voters who are alive have been shown as dead. The names and photos of voters don't match. Five people from

a single household are shown in different constituencies. The printing of the electoral rolls is of very poor quality, with many errors, even though the government makes tall claims of digital India," Awhad said. Wadetiwar alleged that the government was trying to remove at least 10,000 names of voters in each of the 288 constituencies where the MVA allies are in a dominant position, so that the MahaYuti candidates can sail to easy victory. Danve said that even the initiative facilitating elderly citizens above 85 years ago to vote from home was fraught with huge irregularities. "For instance, Mumbai has more than 4,500 such voters in each of constituency. Elsewhere in the state, there are more than 6000 such voters per con-

stituency. This has raised doubts about free, fair and transparent elections," Danve said. "The pattern of deleting names of voters through the misuse of Form 7 is a dangerous development. The entire state is alarmed at this development and there is a grave suspicion that the devious measures deployed by the BJP in Chikli-23 constituency are being replicated across Maharashtra. The people of Maharashtra expect transparency from the ECI, through a white paper on this issue that discloses: Assembly constituency-wise details of form 7 received and names of those who have filed form 7 applications," the MVA stated in its representation made to the CEO, Maharashtra. Danve and Wadetiwar took serious objection to the fact

that the BJP-led MahaYuti government had hurriedly taken 359 new decisions ahead of the notification of the State Assembly elections and it had appointed 50,000 brand ambassadors for honorarium of Rs 50,000 each "who only promoted the BJP at public expenses" They urged the ECI to stay the new decisions and appointment of the ambassadors. Reiterating the Congress' serious objection to the "illegal" extension of tenure granted to the Director-General of Police Rashmi Shukla after her retirement, Patole demanded her immediate removal from the post. "Why is the ECI refusing to touch her? Are there separate laws for West Bengal and Maharashtra?" Patole asked.

## Opposition MP's threatened JPC chief, witness at Waqf Panel meet: BJP's Tejasvi Surya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

BJP leader Tejasvi Surya has written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla alleging some opposition members threatened Jagadambika Pal, the chairperson of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, and a witness during a sitting of the panel, and also tore up documents. Surya, a two-term MP from Bengaluru South, claimed the opposition members resorted to unparliamentary behaviour on October 14, when the Committee had called former Karnataka State Minorities Commission chairman Anwar Maniappadhyay to hear his views on the Waqf land "scam" in Karnataka. The BJP leader's missive to the Speaker came days after the opposition members' letter to the Lok Sabha presiding officer alleging "gross violation of parliamentary code of conduct" by Pal during the meeting of the parliamentary panel. In his letter to Birla, Surya said, "During his deposition, Shri Maniappadi discussed a report



he submitted in 2012 during his tenure. This report alleges large-scale encroachment or sale of approximately 2,000 acres of Waqf land, valued at around Rs. 2 lakh crore, to private entities, implicating certain leaders of the Indian National Congress." Surya claimed that as soon as this issue was brought to the Committee's attention, opposition members disrupted the proceedings, verbally threatened both the witness and the chairperson, and tore up committee documents. "They also walked near to where the witness and chairperson were seated, tried to

physically threaten both, snatched the notes and papers they had made and tore it," he said, adding that the opposition members' behaviour reflected a complete disregard for Parliamentary decorum. Following this, they walked out of the meeting while making derogatory remarks towards other members present, he alleged. Surya asked the Speaker to direct the opposition members to adhere to the Rules of Conduct and Parliamentary Etiquette, and initiate disciplinary action against those responsible for this unruly and unparliamentary behaviour.

## Migrant worker from Bihar found dead in fresh J and K targetted killings

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A migrant worker, hailing from the Banka district of Bihar, was found dead with multiple bullet injuries in the Wachi area of Shopian on Friday. He worked in the corn fields to earn his livelihood. According to preliminary reports, suspected terrorists active in the area were behind the fresh targeted killing of a non-local worker in the area. Till late evening, Kashmir zone police had not made any official statement even as investigations were underway to ascertain the circumstances leading to the killing of a non-local worker. Deputy Commissioner, Shopian Sahahid Saleem along with senior police officers also visited the spot where the dead body was recovered. This is the first incident of targeted killing after the formation of the Omar Abdullah-led government in Jammu and Kashmir. Nine days ago, a jawan of the Territorial army was first kidnapped and later found dead in the Pathribal area of Anantnag. Meanwhile, the deceased worker has been identified as Ashok



Kumar Chauhan. He hailed from the Banka district of Bihar and is survived by two minor kids and a wife. One of his close relatives, who also worked alongside him in the fields, told reporters Ashok Chauhan was working in the maize fields when he received a call around 7.00 a.m. on his mobile phone to check the quality of corn stock Friday morning. After some time when he started contacting him, there was no response from his side, a close relative of Ashok Chauhan said. "As we started looking for him we stumbled upon his dead body in the nearby fields with several marks of bullet injuries on his head, neck and lower torso". Ashok was residing in the Sangam area of Anantnag. The

fellow workers claimed they were worried about their safety as well after one among them had been targeted in the broad daylight in the fields. In February this year, two migrant workers hailing from Amritsar were targeted from a close range by unidentified terrorists in the Shaheed Gunj area of Srinagar. A Sikh carpenter identified as 31-year-old Amritpal Singh was killed on the spot while another person identified as Rohit Masih succumbed to his critical injuries the next day. In 2023, a total number of 14 civilians were killed in different incidents of terrorist-related violence while 31 were killed in 2022, 41 in 2021, 38 in 2020, and 44 in 2019 across J&K.

## MCG fining violators of Solid Waste Management Rules 2016

PARVESH SHARMA ■  
GURUGRAM

The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) is issuing fines against those who violate the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016. Under this, the Swachhata teams of the MCG imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 each on three hotels and restaurants in Sector 29 on Friday. According to the MCG officials, the teams of Senior Sanitation Inspector Harsh Chawla and Sanitation Inspector Jitendra Kumar of Zone-3 area were inspecting the cleanliness system of the area. During the inspection, the team also reached the hotel and restaurant located in the Sector-29 area to check the compliance of Bulk Waste Generators (BWG) rules. The team found that Bikanerwala, Gola Sizzlers and Punjab Grills were not ensuring compliance with Solid Waste Management Rules 2016. The team imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 each on the three violators on the spot and instructed them to ensure compliance

with the rules in future. According to the MCG Commissioner Dr Narhari Singh Bangar, it is mandatory for all bulk waste generators located in the municipal corporation limits to follow the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016. Under this, the establishment must divide the waste generated from their place into wet, dry and hazardous waste and dispose of it in different categories only. The corporation's cleanliness teams are constantly inspecting BWG and if the rules are not followed, the concerned are being fined as per the rules. "The corporation is also operating an online portal to list BWG, on which it has been made mandatory for all BWG to register themselves," Singh said. The corporation has also informed all BWGs about this through notices and other publicity mediums. "We appealed to the BWG to fulfil the responsibility of waste management and contribute to making Gurugram a clean, beautiful and better city," he added.

## MUDA would provide all documents as sought by ED: Kanataka Minister

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Urban Development Minister Suresha B S (Byrathi Suresh) on Friday said the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) would provide all documents to the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) as sought by the agency in connection with a case in which it has booked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his family members and others. The ED on Friday conducted searches in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the MUDA site allotment case. The MUDA office in Mysuru and some other locations were raided by the federal probe agency officials along with an escort of a central paramilitary force. "Whatever documents are sought, MUDA will give...ED is said to have got powers to raid after ECIR (Enforcement Case Information Report) being booked (against the CM), whatever documents they ask, MUDA will give, there is no question of us getting involved in this, officials will provide documents," Suresh, under whose department MUDA comes, said.

Speaking to reporters, he said: "...It is our country's law, it is our ED, police and courts and they know their jurisdictional limits, let them (ED) investigate." "It is not a raid, it is seeking documents. How can you call seeking documents a raid? They (ED) are seeking documents. Officials will give what they ask. It is 8 lakh page documents. Desai committee was given 8 lakh pages, the same will be given if sought. They may not be able to give in one day as taking xerox (photocopy) of 8 lakh pages may take a week. They will give," he said. On September 30, the ED filed an ECIR to book the CM and others taking cognisance of the FIR registered by the Lokayukta. The CM is facing allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife B M Parvathi by the MUDA. Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law B M Mallikarjuna Swamy and Devaraju -- from whom Swamy had purchased a land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others have been named in the FIR registered by the Mysuru-located Lokayukta police establishment on September 27.

## Mamata reviews hospital infrastructure

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Hours after the agitating junior doctors of Bengal accused the State of submitting false information in the Supreme Court regarding the progress of infrastructural facilities in the Government hospitals and medical colleges, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee directed the State officials to hasten up the infrastructural projects. "The Chief Minister has held a meeting with the senior officials including the Chief Secretary and enquired about the progress in installing the security infrastructure in the government hospitals and medical colleges," officials said adding Banerjee also told officials to ensure that the works were completed in time. The State Government earlier told the Supreme Court that barring RG Kar Medical College where an on-duty lady-doctor was brutally raped and murdered in the morning of August 9 -- triggering country-wide protests -- in most of the medical colleges and government hospitals about 95-98 percent of infrastructural work had been completed. The Government had been asked to take adequate security measures including construction of on duty restrooms, washrooms for doctors, installation of CCTV camera apart from posting of security personnel etc in the State hospitals, following the RG Kar incident. The junior doctors -- some of whom were sitting on an indefinite fast in support of their demand -- earlier accused the State of submitting false information to the Supreme



Court saying unlike what was submitted before the Apex Court about completion of 95-98 percent infrastructural work in many hospitals nothing had been done. "In many colleges restrooms or washrooms are non-functional... only a lip service has been done in the name of installing CCTV cameras... in colleges like SSKM and other hospitals the cameras have been installed on a temporary basis as the contractors have been told fix their cameras for 45 days only," doctors said adding, "neither the CCTV cameras have adequate data storage capacity nor there is a monitoring system in place... there has been a dozen cases of hospital staff including doctors getting attacked and beaten up by the public not only in the districts but also in Kolkata which is an adequate instance of how fool-proof the security system is working."

## Over nine lakh voters expected to exercise franchise in five Assam constituencies on Nov 13: CEO

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Over 9 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in the upcoming bypolls to five Assam assembly constituencies on November 13, Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said on Friday. Bypolls to Dholai (SC), Samaguri, Behali, Bongaigaon, and Sidli (ST) were necessitated after the MLAs were elected as MPs in the Lok Sabha polls earlier this year. Out of the 910,665 electorate, there are 455,924 women and 454,722 men, Goel said at a press conference. Voting will take place at 1,078 polling stations across the five constituencies, with Sidli (ST) having the highest number of 273 booths, while Behali has the lowest at 154. Goel said there are 4,389 voters with physical disabilities and 3,788 above the age of 85. "The model code of conduct has already come into force and will apply to the entire district where the constituencies are located," he added. He confirmed that there is sufficient stock of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Poll notification was issued



The first randomisation of the EVMs is scheduled for Saturday, with a second one on November 1 in the presence of representatives from political parties and candidates. Commissioning will take place from November 4, Goel added. Polling will take place from 7 am to 5 pm, but those who enter the booths before the end of polling will still be allowed to vote, he added. Counting will start at 8 am on November 23, beginning with postal ballots, Goel confirmed. He noted that the bypolls will be held according to pre-delimited constituencies. A delimitation exercise was carried out last year, maintaining the number of assembly constituencies at 126 and Lok Sabha seats at 14, while revising the nomenclature of one parliamentary seat and 19 assembly constituencies. Poll notification was issued

on Friday but no nominations were filed on the first day. The last date of filing of nominations is October 25, scrutiny on October 28 and last date of withdrawal on October 30, he added. The ruling alliance has decided that the BJP will contest from three seats - Dholai (SC), Behali, and Samaguri, while AGP will contest from Bongaigaon and UPPL from Sidli (ST). The seats fell vacant after Dholai (SC) BJP MLA and former cabinet minister Parimal Suklabaidya was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Silchar (SC) parliamentary constituency, while his party colleague Ranjit Dutta from Behali won the Sonitpur seat. NDA's alliance partner AGP's sitting MLA from Bongaigaon, Phanihushan Choudhury, was elected from Barpeta Lok Sabha seat. Additionally, Joyanta Basumatary from the United Peoples' Party, Liberal (UPPL), was elected from the Kokrajhar (ST) parliamentary constituency. Congress MLA from Samaguri, Rakibul Hussain, won the Dhubri parliamentary seat by a record margin of over 10 lakh voters.

## Poison in the air

From page 1

Environment Minister Gopal Rai, who met relevant departments to discuss controlling air pollution in hotspot areas, said the government has formed a coordination committee each to identify and mitigate local sources of pollution at 13 locations stifled with "very poor" air. To reduce dust pollution, 80 mobile anti-smog guns have been deployed, and MCD Deputy Commissioners have been directed to conduct regular visits and take necessary measures. To tackle the problem, coordination committees have been established for each hotspot to manage tasks related to the Justice Department in those areas. A total of 10 mobile anti-smog guns will be deployed in Wazirpur, eight in Mundka, seven in Rohini, four in Jahangirpuri, Dwarka Sector 8, Punjabi Bagh, and Ashok Vihar, 10 in Anand Vihar, five in

Bawana, Narela, Vivek Vihar, and Okhla, and six in RK Puram. Delhiites on Friday woke up to a light haze covering the skies of the national Capital which is only expected to grow worse in the coming days as the AQI further deteriorates. According to the AQICN at 7 pm, the fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) which leads to haze was alarmingly high in different areas of Delhi including 217 µg/m3 in Jahangirpuri, 205 µg/m3 in R.K.Puram, 198 µg/m3 at Anand Vihar, 183 µg/m3 in Dwarka, 177 µg/m3 in Wazirpur, 176 µg/m3 in Rohini, 175 µg/m3 at Bawana, 172 µg/m3 in Mundka, and 158 µg/m3 in Patparganj among other parts of the city. The haze which will grow more prominent in the coming days will not only lead to severe implications on people's health, it will also cause slower movement of vehicles due to reduced visibility on the road and delay or cancellation of flights.

## Yamuna froths in despair

From page 1

Experts have urged the government to address the pollution levels in the Yamuna, especially as major festivals like Chhath Puja are approaching. The pungent foam contains high levels of ammonia and phosphates, posing serious health risks, including respiratory and skin problems, according to environmental experts. As the Yamuna river in Delhi was seen covered with a thick layer of white froth on Friday with experts saying this poses health hazards for people especially as the festive season approaches. Bhim Singh Rawat, Associate Coordinator of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers &

## Salman Khan gets...

From page 1

The Bishnoi gang member warned the traffic police in his text message saying: "Don't take it lightly, if Salman Khan wants to stay alive and wants to end the enmity with Lawrence Bishnoi, then he will have to pay Rs 5 crore. If the money is not given, Salman Khan's condition will be worse than Baba Siddique." The investigations have revealed that gangster Lawrence Bishnoi had allegedly given Rs 25 lakh 'supari' (contract) to kill Salman Khan. The contract to kill Salman Khan was hatched between August 2023 and April 2024. Sukha is a key accused in the conspiracy case. The investigations have also revealed that Sukha was in touch

with Dogar, his Pakistan-based handler. The accused were preparing to buy state-of-the-art weapons AK 47, AK 92 and M 16 from Pakistan and the Turkish-made Zigana pistol. Several people belonging to the Bishnoi gang were keeping track of Salman Khan's routine and movements, especially at his Bandra house, Panvel farmhouse and Goregaon Film City. The other accused, who were arrested in the case earlier, were Dhananjay alias Ajay Kashyap alias Nahvi, Gaurav Bhatia, Waspi Khan alias Wasim Chikna, Rizwan Khan alias Javed, and Deepak Hawa Singh alias John. It may be recalled that on April 14, 2024, two unidentified motorcycle-borne miscreants, who

were covering their faces with helmets, had opened four rounds of fire outside his Bandra (west) residence "Galaxy Apartment" in north-west Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday, before speeding away immediately after the shoot-out. Following the incident in which Bishnoi gang members were allegedly involved, the Navi Mumbai police registered a case against 18 identified accused and others of the gang for hatching a conspiracy to kill the actor. Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, his brother Anmol Bishnoi, Sampat Nehra and Rohit Godhara were among the named as accused in the FIR. Canada-based gangster Sateerj Singh alias Goldy Brar too has been named in the FIR.



# Hamas confirms Sinwar's death, vows new phase in war with Israel

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Hamas confirmed Friday that its leader, Yahya Sinwar, was killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, and the militant group reiterated its stance that hostages taken from Israel a year ago will not be released until there is a cease-fire in Gaza and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

"Those prisoners will not return to you before the end of the aggression on Gaza and the withdrawal from Gaza," said Khalil al-Hayya, who was Sinwar's Qatar-based deputy and headed up the group's delegation during several rounds of cease-fire negotiations mediated by the US, Qatar and Egypt.

In a statement, Hamas heralded Sinwar as a hero who "ascended as a heroic martyr, advancing and not retreating, brandishing his weapon, engaging and confronting the occupation army at the forefront of the ranks." The statement appeared to refer to a video the Israeli military circulated of Sinwar's apparent last moments in which a man sits on a

chair in severely damaged building, badly wounded and covered in dust. In the video, the man raises his hand and flings a stick at an approaching Israeli drone.

Sinwar's killing, in what appeared to be a chance front-line encounter with Israeli troops on Wednesday, could shift the dynamics of the Gaza war even as Israel presses its offensive against Hezbollah with ground troops in southern Lebanon and airstrikes in other areas of the country. Hezbollah has fired rockets into Israel nearly every day since the Israel-Hamas war began. Both Hamas and Hezbollah are backed by Iran, which hailed Sinwar as a martyr who can inspire others in challenging Israel.

Israel has pledged to destroy Hamas politically in Gaza, and killing Sinwar was a top military priority. Photos which were apparently taken by Israeli troops on the scene showed the body of a man who appeared to be him, half-buried in rubble and with a gaping wound in his head.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu said in a speech announcing the killing Thursday night that "our war is not yet ended."

But many, from the governments of Israel's allies to exhausted residents of Gaza, expressed hope that Sinwar's death would pave the way for an end to the war.

In Israel, families of hostages still held in Gaza demanded the Israeli government use Sinwar's killing as a way to restart negotiations to bring home their loved ones. There are about 100 hostages remaining in Gaza, at least 30 of whom Israel says are dead.

"We are at an inflection point where the goals set for the war with Gaza have been achieved, all but the release of the hostages," Ronen Neutra, father of the Israeli-American hostage Omer Neutra, said in a video statement. "Sinwar, who was described as a major obstacle to a deal, is no longer alive."

Netanyahu was planning to convene a special meeting Friday to discuss hostage negotiations, an Israeli official with knowledge of the negoti-



ations said. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss confidential information.

Iran's mission to the United Nations issued a statement honoring Sinwar, emphasizing that he died on the battlefield and not in hiding, unlike their former enemy Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who was hanged in 2006.

"When US forces dragged a

disheveled Saddam Hussein out of an underground hole, he begged them not to kill him despite being armed. Those who regarded Saddam as their model of resistance eventually collapsed," the statement said. "However when Muslims look up to martyr Sinwar standing on the battlefield — in combat attire and out in the open, not in a hideout, facing the enemy — the spirit of resistance will be strengthened."

More than 1 million people on both sides were killed during the brutal Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s that began when Hussein launched an invasion of Iraq.

In Lebanon, the militant Hezbollah group, which has been firing rockets into Israel since the war in Gaza erupted in October last year, issued a statement early Friday saying its fighters have used new types of precision-guided missiles and explosive drones against Israel for the first time in recent days.

Hezbollah's statement appeared to refer to an explosives-laden drone that evaded Israel's multilayered air-defense system and slammed

into a mess hall at a military training camp deep inside Israel last Sunday, killing four soldiers and wounding dozens.

The group also announced earlier this week that it fired a new type of missile called Qader 2 toward the suburbs of Tel Aviv.

The Israeli military said it would activate an additional reserve brigade to the north of its country to support troops battling in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah said its fighters were working according to "plans prepared in advance" to battle invading Israeli troops in several parts of south Lebanon. It also announced several missile and artillery attacks on Israeli forces operating in villages in southern Lebanon's border area overnight and Friday morning.

In one case, the group said it fired a heavy missile barrage at Israeli soldiers who were trying to evacuate those wounded in an earlier strike.

The group also said it had fired "large missile salvos" at a military barracks in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights and at the Zvulun

area north of Haifa.

Earlier this week, Hezbollah's acting leader Naim Kassem warned the group will continue to target wider areas of Israel, which it has attacked with rockets nearly every day since Hamas' deadly incursion last year. As Israel fought militants in Lebanon and in Gaza, its military said Friday that its forces had killed two militants who crossed into Israeli territory south of the Dead Sea from neighboring Jordan.

Such infiltrations are relatively rare, especially as Israel has ramped up border security since the Hamas attack in October 2023.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians. The war has destroyed vast swathes of Gaza and displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people.

## North sending troops to Russia's aid in Ukraine, says South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean intelligence has found that North Korea has dispatched 12,000 troops including special operation forces to support Russia's war against Ukraine, news reports said Friday.

Yonhap news agency cited the National Intelligence Service as that the North Korean troops have already left the country. The NIS didn't immediately confirm the report, but South Korea's presidential office said in a statement that President Yoon Suk Yeol had presided over an emergency meeting earlier Friday to discuss North Korea's troop dispatch to Ukraine. The statement said

participants of the meeting agreed that North Korea's troop dispatch poses a grave security threat to South Korea and the international community. But the presidential office gave no further details like when and how many North Korean soldiers have been sent to Ukraine and what roles they are expected to play.

Ukrainian media reported earlier this month that six North Koreans were among those killed after a Ukrainian missile strike in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region on Oct. 3. On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his government has intelligence that 10,000 troops from North Korea are

being prepared to join Russian forces fighting against his country, warning that a third nation wading into the hostilities could turn the conflict into a "world war."

"From our intelligence we've got information that North Korea sent tactical personnel and officers to Ukraine," Zelenskyy told reporters at NATO headquarters. "They are preparing on their land 10,000 soldiers, but they didn't move them already to Ukraine or to Russia."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said the western alliance "has no evidence that North Korean soldiers are involved in the fight. But we do know that North Korea is supporting

Russia in many ways, weapons supplies, technological supplies, innovation, to support them in the war effort. And that is highly worrying."

The US, South Korea and their partners have accused North Korea of supplying Russia with artillery shells, missiles and other equipment to help fuel its war on Ukraine.

Outside officials and experts say North Korea in exchange possibly received badly needed food and economic aid and technology assistance aimed at upgrading Kim's nuclear-armed military. Both Moscow and Pyongyang have repeatedly denied the existence of an arms deal between the countries.

## N Korean leader stresses troops to treat S Korea as hostile enemy

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reminded his troops to treat South Korea as a hostile foreign enemy and insisted that the North wouldn't hesitate to attack its rival if the South infringes upon its sovereignty, state media said Friday.

Kim's comments at an army headquarters came after North Korea this week confirmed that it revised its constitution to define South Korea as "a hostile state" and blew up front-line road and rail links that were once connected to the South.

The steps punctuated Kim's calls for North Korea to abandon its longstanding goals of reconciling with the South and reflect his intent to escalate tensions and increase leverage amid a deepening stalemate in diplomacy.

Analysts see increasing risks of possible clashes along the rivals' tense border areas, although it would be highly unlikely for the North to contemplate full-scale attacks in the face of superior US and South Korean forces.

During a visit to the headquarters of the North Korean People's Army's 2nd Corps on Thursday, Kim stressed to troops the importance of understanding that any use of offensive force against the South would constitute a "legitimate retaliatory action against the hostile country, not the fellow countrymen." He said the North's detonation of the border road and rail sections on Tuesday demonstrated the North's resolve to cut off persistent "evil" relations with the South, which "lasted century after century and the complete removal of the useless awareness about fellow countrymen and unreasonable idea of reunification." He said the event was also a declaration that his troops wouldn't hesitate to use physical force against the South, an "apparent hostile country," if it violates North Korea's sovereignty, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

South Korea had no immediate comment on Kim's remarks. North Korea has been making increasingly provocative threats against rival South Korea in recent weeks.



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte (left) speaks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the NATO-Ukraine Council working dinner at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on Thursday. AP/PTI

## Russia flaunts its doomsday weapons to keep West from supporting Ukraine

AP ■ MOSCOW

This year has seen President Vladimir Putin repeatedly brandish the nuclear sword, reminding everyone that Russia has the world's largest atomic arsenal to try to deter the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

He ordered his military to hold drills involving battlefield nuclear weapons with ally Belarus.

He announced Russia will start producing ground-based intermediate range missiles that were outlawed by a now-defunct US-Soviet treaty in 1987.

And last month, he lowered the threshold for unleashing his arsenal by revising the country's nuclear doctrine.

Putin is relying on those thousands of warheads and hundreds of missiles as an enormous doomsday machine to offset NATO's massive edge in conventional weapons to discourage what he sees as threats to Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

A look at Russia's atomic arsenal and the issues surrounding it: Russia's strategic weapons The Federation of American Scientists estimated this year that Russia has an inventory totaling 5,580 deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads, while the US has 5,044. Together, that's about 88% of the world's nuclear weapons. Most of these are strategic, or intercontinental-range weapons.

Like the US, Russia has a nuclear triad of ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bombers and ICBM-armed submarines.

Since Putin came to power in 2000, the Kremlin has worked to upgrade the Soviet-built components of the triad, deploying hundreds of new land-based missiles, commissioning new nuclear submarines and modernizing nuclear-capable bombers. Russia's effort to revamp its nuclear forces has helped prompt the US to launch a costly modernisation of its arsenal.

Russia has reequipped its land-based strategic missile forces with mobile Yars ICBMs and recently began deploying the heavy, silo-based Sarmat ICBMs — designated "Satan II" missiles in the West — to gradually replace about 40 Soviet-built R-36M missiles. Sarmat has had only one known successful test, and reportedly suffered a massive explosion during an abortive test last month.

The navy commissioned seven new Borei-class atomic-powered submarines, each with 16 Bulava nuclear-tipped missiles, and plans to build five more. They are intended to form the core of the triad's naval component alongside a few Soviet-era nuclear subs still operating.

Russia still relies on Soviet-built Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers carrying nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. Moscow has restarted production of the supersonic Tu-160 that was halted after the 1991 Soviet collapse, aiming to build several dozen modernized aircraft with new engines and avionics.

Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons The US estimates that Russia has between 1,000 and 2,000 non-strategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons intended for use on the battlefield that typically are far less powerful than the strategic warheads capable of destroying entire cities.

Russia has high-precision ground-launched Iskander missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometers (310 miles), which can be fitted with either a conventional or a nuclear warhead.

The air force has a fleet of MiG-31 fighter jets that carry a hypersonic Kinzhal missile, which can be equipped with a nuclear or conventional warhead. Russia has widely used conventional versions of both Iskander and Kinzhal against Ukraine.

As part of the Kremlin's nuclear messaging, Russia and ally Belarus held drills to train their troops with the battlefield nuclear weapons in May, shortly after Putin began his fifth term.

## Singapore detains teenager for planning terror attacks

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore has detained a 17-year-old self-radicalised supporter of terror group ISIS under the Internal Security Act (ISA) mere weeks before his planned attack on non-Muslim males in a public housing estate.

The teenager, purportedly influenced by the ongoing Hamas strikes and developments around Syria, wanted to use either a kitchen knife or a pair of scissors from his home as his weapon, said the Internal Security Department (ISD) in a press release on Friday.

It was a "very close shave as he could have easily gone on a rampage," Singapore's Minister for Law and Home Affairs K Shanmugam said. "I would say this is one of the ones where it was quite close, fairly close," Shanmugam said on the duration between the teen's arrest and the planned attack.

Shanmugam pointed out that the area that the teen had intended for the attack was frequented by "thousands of people" every day, including senior citizens and young children, and that it would be even more crowded during the school

holidays being a main housing estate area with shopping malls and leisure facilities. Since 2020, the ISD has detained five self-radicalised youths who wanted to carry out attacks in Singapore using such easily accessible weapons. Such attacks require little time and preparation to execute, said the department. In this particular case, the youth was determined to follow through with his plan and was less than a month away from executing it at the time of his arrest in August, it added.

He had planned to attack non-Muslim males near Tampines West Community Centre, during the school holidays in September. Following his arrest, the teenager was issued a two-year detention order in September as well, the Channel News Asia reported on Friday.

The youth chose the Tampines location as it was crowded and within walking distance from his home, said the ISD. Tampines is one of the major housing estates built, owned and managed by the state-agency Housing Board.

He also took "concrete steps" to prepare himself for the attack, the agency added. A knife or

scissors was his weapon of choice because he felt he could wield them effectively and inflict "maximum damage" on his targets.

"To ensure that he could kill or grievously wound his targets, he planned to stab them in the neck, and practised stabbing motions using different grips with the scissors," said the ISD. In June, he conducted a walk-through of the route he would take from his house to execute the attack. The ISD added that the youth was determined to be killed by the police or passers-by in the course of his attack, as this would fulfil his aspiration to become a "martyr."

"He felt a sense of pride knowing that his planned attack if successfully executed would be the first terrorist attack in Singapore in recent decades," the release said. He crafted a declaration of armed jihad or struggle against non-Muslims, which he planned to release before his attack in the "hope of inspiring other Muslims to engage in armed violence," the ISD said. The ISD said the student became exposed to the teachings of foreign radical preachers in August 2023 while searching for religious knowledge online.

## Yoga in Saudi Arabia dominated by women: Padma Shri Nouf Marwaai

PTI ■ RIYADH

The Saudis accepted yoga "unhesitatingly" seven years ago and now this ancient Indian practice is quite popular in Saudi Arabia and is dominated by women, says the country's first certified yoga instructor and the first Arab recipient of Padma Shri award Nouf Marwaai.

She says Saudis love anything that is good for health and well-being. Marwaai played an instrumental role in introducing yoga in Saudi Arabia in 2017 and was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government in 2018. She now heads the Saudi Yoga Committee, established in 2021, and is the founder and president of the Arab Yoga Foundation.

She says yoga today is dominated by women in Saudi Arabia.

At the second Saudi Open Yoga Asana Championship held in Mecca by Al-Wahda Club and the Saudi Yoga Committee this January, there were 56 girls and 10 boys, she says.

Marwaai was just 17 when she was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease



called Lupus Erythematosus.

"The doctors told my parents I won't live long. I was asked not to go to school and that is when I learnt yoga at home in Riyadh. My health condition surprisingly started improving. Finally, I decided to go to India to learn more about yoga," she recalls her tryst with yoga.

"In 2008, I went to India to study yoga and ayurveda and it was a big shift that happened in my life," she adds.

Asked how difficult it was to introduce yoga in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, Marwaai told PTI, "I think the

Saudi people just needed to know that they were not practising something which was in conflict with their religion."

She says yoga is vast and the philosophy itself is an ancient one.

"I believe there is no harm in studying any philosophy and learning for you to improve your life. Of course, the Vedic philosophy and yoga coming from a background like the Vedas is actually something ancient and something lived for thousands of years for humanity," she says.

According to Marwaai, there was no opposition as such from Saudi people, but from those outside.

"The Saudis love different cultures, they love to explore, they know their faith. If something doesn't conflict, they are not very hesitant. And anything that is good for health and well-being, people in Saudi Arabia love it," she says.

Last year, on the international day of yoga, we had 10,000 people including Saudis participating, she says, adding this year, in spite of the Hajj vacation, there were 8,000 people who took part.

## Over a billion people live in acute poverty, half are kids

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

More than 1 billion people live in acute poverty, over half are children and nearly 40 per cent live in conflict-torn and fragile countries, according to a report released Thursday.

The report by the UN Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford also said that more than 83 per cent of poor people live in rural areas — and the same percentage live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The UN Development Programme and Oxford have been publishing the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, known as the MPI, since 2010 using 10 indicators including health, education and standard of living.

This year's index included data from 112 countries with a combined population of 6.3 bil-

lion people.

According to the index, 1.1 billion people live in acute poverty, with nearly half in five countries: India with 234 million impoverished people, Pakistan with 93 million, Ethiopia with 86 million, Nigeria with 74 million and Congo with 66 million.

Over half of the people living in poverty — 584 million — are children under the age of 18, with 317 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 184 million in South Asia, it said.

In Afghanistan, where poverty has increased, the proportion of impoverished children is even higher — nearly 59 per cent.

UNDP and Oxford said this year's report focused on poverty amid conflict because 2023 saw more conflicts than at any time since World War II and that an all-time high of 117 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, disasters and other factors.

Pedro Conceicao, director of

the UN Development Programme office that produces its annual Human Development Report, said: "By overlaying conflict data with global MPI data for the first time, the report reveals the stark realities of those simultaneously enduring conflict and poverty."

"A staggering 455 million people, both multi-dimensionally poor and living in contexts of conflict, face significantly harsher deprivations — three to five times more severe — when it comes to basic needs like nutrition, water and sanitation, electricity, and education, compared to those in poverty who live in more peaceful settings," he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Sabina Alkire, director of the Oxford initiative, said it's intuitive that reducing poverty is easier in peaceful settings than for these 455 million people, representing nearly 40 per cent of the 1.1 billion poor.

# Finance Minister urges Mexican firms to partner with startups and academia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday urged Mexican firms to explore collaborations with startups as well as academic institutions and take advantage of India's business-friendly policies. In her address at Tech Leaders Roundtable at the Chamber of Commerce, Guadalajara, Sitharaman emphasised on opportunities and responsibilities for similar placed economies and how India and Mexico can leverage and collaborate with each other.



Mexico has been thriving through nearshoring, which has resulted in collaborations between multinational companies and enabled exchange of talent as well as joint efforts for risk mitigation, she said. "The Union Finance Minister highlighted that rapid transformation that has been taking place in India while

working towards the goal of #ViksitBharat in 2047," the finance ministry said in a post on X. Citing new areas of development and collaboration between India and Mexico, she referred to the key Budget announcement made regarding setting up of Centres of Excellence (CoE) and shared information regarding the recently identified and announced COEs in India for working in the areas of AI in health and healthcare, agriculture, and sustainable cities. India and Mexico can explore working together in these areas through collaboration between startups as well as academic institutions, she said. "Union Finance Minister

Smt. @nsitharaman said that for large economies, The challenges are not just around growth but also to bridge gap and create opportunities for all, and that there is a need for #ResponsibleCapitalism," it said.

During her visit to Tata Consultancy Services Headquarters (Latin America), at Guadalajara, the finance minister paid tribute to the iconic industrialist Ratan Tata. On October 9, Ratan Tata, Tata Group's chairman emeritus and veteran industrialist, passed away at the age of 86 years. During her official visit till October 20, Sitharaman will hold a bilateral meeting with her Mexican counterpart Rogelio Ramirez de la O. She has discussions with several members of the Mexican Parliament to strengthen parliamentary cooperation and foster economic development.

# Infrastructure projects help in boosting tourism, creating jobs: Nitin Gadkari

PTI ■ PANAJI

Infrastructure projects like new expressways and facilities at tourist sites are helping boost tourism and create more jobs, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Friday. In a message to a conference organised by the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in Goa, the minister pointed out that the hospitality sector was crucial for the country's economic growth. Gadkari's message was read out on the second and last day of the conference which brings together hoteliers, restaurateurs and experts to explore topics ranging from sustainability to new-age restaurant trends, aimed at improving business operations and growth in India's hospitality industry. The minister expressed strong support for the hospitality sector and added it provides vast employment



opportunities and is crucial to economy. "Our country is focusing on developing religious and tourist destinations to boost tourism and create more jobs. Additionally, infrastructure projects like new expressways and facilities at tourist sites are helping boost tourism, which in turn creates more jobs," he added. Gadkari maintained the Union government is developing 18 more tourist destinations, with many projects nearing completion,

which will further enhance tourism. "Nowadays, people are visiting not only pilgrimage sites, but also modern cities and exclusive tourist locations," he emphasised. The second day of the convention featured several insightful sessions focused on key trends shaping the hospitality industry. Mugdha Sinha, Director General of Tourism at the Union Ministry of Tourism, said, "We must rethink our approach to attracting international

wedding tourism by offering a seamless experience for foreign guests." Direct flight connectivity, simplified visa processes, and curated, unique itineraries will make India the ultimate wedding destination, she opined. With 54 per cent of people in India spending over Rs 10 lakh on marriages and an average guest size of 525, the 'Big Fat Indian Wedding' has evolved into a creative economic force, Sinha said. "This market, second only to China, presents immense opportunities for growth. Weddings in India are not just events, but cultural showcases, and the industry can greatly benefit from promoting honeymoon packages and milestone celebrations here," she noted. Chander Baljee, CMD of Royal Orchid Hotels, discussed the future of hospitality, highlighting the need for businesses to stay agile and embrace digitalization to remain competitive.

# Uber partners with IAF to offer mobility solutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A leading cab aggregator has joined hands with the IAF to offer mobility solutions for official travel and commute of air force personnel and their families, according to an official statement issued on Thursday.



An MoU was signed between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Uber to that effect, a senior official said. "This partnership aims to provide reliable, convenient, and safe transportation services for IAF personnel, veterans and families," the statement said. Through the collaboration, the IAF will leverage Uber for Business, a platform that enables organisations to customise Uber's extensive scale and comprehensive travel benefits, ensuring a

seamless commuting experience, it said. The company will also facilitate effective change management for official travel and daily commutes, while offering enterprise benefits tailored to the unique needs of the IAF, it said. "The collaboration with Uber represents an important step in the journey towards enhanced mobility solutions for Air Force personnel and families," the IAF was quoted in the statement.

The MoU signing ceremony took place on the presence of senior officials of the IAF and Uber. "We are proud to partner with the Indian Air Force to enhance mobility solutions... This partnership marks a significant step towards digitalisation by adopting shared mobility solutions. Through this MoU, we aim to support the Indian Air Force's broader vision of leveraging technology for a transformative progress."

# Infosys shares tumble 4.50 per cent post earnings announcement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Infosys Ltd slumped 4.50 per cent on Friday morning after the company's second quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The stock tanked 4.50 per cent to Rs 1,880.80 on the BSE. At the NSE, it dived 4.44 per cent to Rs 1,880.65. The stock was the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms. The company's market valuation eroded by Rs 31,327.94 crore to Rs 7,86,437.37 crore during the morning trade. Decline in the bellwether stock dragged the markets lower. The BSE benchmark tanked 570.45 points to 80,436.16 in early trade. The NSE Nifty slumped 178.3 points to 24,571.55. Infosys Ltd, India's second-largest IT services exporter, on

Thursday reported a near 5 per cent rise in its second quarter net profit and raised revenue guidance for the year on broad-based recovery in demand particularly from its key financial industry clients. Consolidated net profit of Rs 6,506 crore in July-September - the second quarter of current 2024-25 fiscal year -- was 4.7 per cent higher than the year-ago earnings and 2.2 per cent more than the net profit in the preceding quarter, according to a company statement. Technology services bellwether for the second consecutive quarter raised its revenue guidance for the full fiscal. It now expects constant currency revenue growth between 3.75 per cent and 4.5 per cent for the financial year April 2024 to March 2025, higher than its earlier guidance of 3 per cent to 4 per cent.

# JSW Energy arms ink pacts to supply 1,200 MW solar-wind power to Maharashtra discom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Energy on Friday said that its two arms have signed agreements to supply 1,200 MW of power to Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company. JSW Renew Energy Six Ltd and JSW Renew Energy Thirty Ltd, step-down subsidiaries of JSW Energy, have signed power purchase agreements (PPAs) with Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (MSEDCL) for state transmission utility (STU)-connected solar-wind hybrid capacity, according to a company statement. The agreements have been signed for two hybrid projects, each with a capacity of 600 MW, totalling 1,200 MW. The letters of award for these projects were received on August 29, 2024, and September 10, 2024,



respectively, JSW Energy said. The projects are expected to be commissioned within 24 months, it said, adding that the agreements are set for a 25-year period at a tariff of Rs 3.60/kWh. Currently, the company has a project pipeline of 8.3 GW, with PPAs signed for 4.4 GW. JSW Energy has total locked-in generation capacity of 18.2 GW, comprising 7.7 GW operational, 2.1 GW under-construction across wind,

thermal and hydro, and RE pipeline of 8.3 GW. It also has 16.2 GWh of locked-in energy storage capacity through battery energy storage system and hydro pumped storage project. The company aims to reach 20 GW generation capacity and 40 GWh of energy storage capacity before 2030. JSW Energy has set an ambitious target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

# The backbone of Star Air's growth: RCS-UDAN scheme

BY CAPTAIN SIMRAN SINGH TIWANA



The Government of India's Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) has been pivotal to Star Air's journey and growth. Since our inception, we've been dedicated to Connecting Real India, and UDAN has enabled us to do exactly that—connecting the underserved and unserved regions of the country, ensuring affordable air travel for everyone. When we launched our first two routes in January 2019, between Hubli to Bengaluru and Hubli to Tirupati, it was a significant milestone for us. It symbolized the beginning of our mission to enhance regional connectivity, starting with this crucial route. Today, I am proud to say that since that first flight, we've flown over 1.3 million passengers by fulfilling dreams of many who had tasted flight for the first time!

Today powered by the UDAN scheme we operate to 22 airports Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Through this initiative, Star Air was awarded 44 routes under UDAN 2 and 3-8 routes under UDAN-2 and 36 routes under UDAN-3. Further, we have been awarded 44 more routes under UDAN 5, giving us the opportunity to bring air connectivity to even more regions.

The UDAN scheme has been instrumental in providing the necessary support for us to operate routes that otherwise may not have been viable. Through the infrastructural development that came along UDAN, allowed us to expand steadily into tier 2 and tier 3 cities, bringing us closer to our goal of Connecting Real India. We have seen the joy in the eyes of many as they took to sky for the first time. We are see many business come up to support this new air connectivity. Clearly proving

the economic multiplier Air Connectivity is. Our fleet has grown alongside our aspirations. What started with one Embraer E145 aircraft in 2019 has now expanded to five E145s and four Embraer E175s. This growth has enabled us to launch new routes, access more destinations, and serve an even larger number of passengers. Thanks to the RCS-UDAN initiative, Star Air is well on its way to realizing its vision of providing swift, affordable, and comfortable air travel to every corner of India. The backbone of our success has been this visionary scheme UDAN, which continues to empower regional carriers like us to play an essential role in India's aviation landscape. We look forward to many more milestones as we continue to build on these solid foundation. (Author of the article is Chief Executive Officer, Star Air)

# Ashneer Grover withdraws oppression and mismanagement plea against BharatPe management

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ashneer Grover, co-founder and former managing director of BharatPe, withdrew his plea from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), in which he had alleged oppressive conduct and mismanagement by the board of the fintech firm. The withdrawal of the plea from the NCLT's Delhi bench came after Grover reached a settlement with the company on September 30, 2024. A copy of the settlement agreement was also placed before the NCLT by the counsel appearing for Grover, who had filed an application for withdrawal of the petition. "... During the pendency of the said petition, parties have arrived with settlement and also executed the settlement agreement dated September 30, 2024, a copy of which is



placed on record and in view of the settlement applicant (who is petitioner in the main company petition) has sought liberty to withdraw the company petition," the NCLT order dated October 14, 2024, noted. It further said: "Liberty is granted to the applicant to withdraw the company petition... And the same is dismissed as withdrawn. The present IA is disposed of."

Besides, on October 17, Grover also withdrew a plea from the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), where he had sought an early hearing of the case in NCLT. In his petition, Grover had sought his reinstatement as Managing Director of the company and the changes in the management of the company by altering the board of the Resilient

Innovations Pvt Ltd, which is doing business as BharatPe, to be declared "illegal". He had also requested the NCLT to order an inspection and audit of the company by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and revocation of termination of his wife Madhuri Jain by the board of BharatPe. As per the settlement, the former co-founder will neither be associated with the company in any capacity nor be a part of its shareholding. Grover was removed from the position of managing director of BharatPe by the company's board in March 2022. Since then, both parties have been involved in legal disputes. Following the agreement, certain shares of Grover will be transferred to the Resilient Growth Trust for the benefit of the company and his remaining shares will be managed by his family trust.

# Homebuying decision may be impacted if mortgage rates cross nine per cent: FICCI-Anarock survey

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Nearly 90 per cent of respondents feel that their decision to buy residential properties will be significantly impacted if mortgage rates exceed 9 per cent, according to a survey conducted by FICCI and Anarock. The Indian residential market continues to be predominantly driven by end-users, with over 67 per cent of survey participants buying properties for self-use. The survey revealed that the budget range of Rs 45-90 lakh continues to be the most favoured option for over 35 per cent of prospective homebuyers. Currently, over 28 per cent of survey respondents stated their preference for homes priced between Rs 90 lakh and Rs 1.5 crore. Top homebuyer demands are timely project completion (98 per cent), improved

per cent, about 54 per cent expect a moderate influence on their choice," the report said. Among other findings, the survey found that real estate is the most preferred asset class for investment for over 59 per cent of respondents. The Indian residential market continues to be predominantly driven by end-users, with over 67 per cent of survey participants buying properties for self-use. The survey revealed that the budget range of Rs 45-90 lakh continues to be the most favoured option for over 35 per cent of prospective homebuyers. Currently, over 28 per cent of survey respondents stated their preference for homes priced between Rs 90 lakh and Rs 1.5 crore. Top homebuyer demands are timely project completion (98 per cent), improved

construction quality (93 per cent), and well-ventilated homes (72 per cent). Addressing a FICCI event, Pramod Rao, Executive Director, SEBI, underscored the importance of regulatory frameworks in driving sustainable growth in the real estate sector. "Investor confidence is vital for the industry's long-term success, and SEBI's focus on transparency and governance has been key in building this trust," Rao said, according to a FICCI statement. Rao emphasised that strong compliance and better disclosures will be crucial in attracting institutional investments. He also highlighted SEBI's initiatives, including a single dashboard data bank to streamline processes and efforts to convert real estate investments into tradable financial instruments,



boosting liquidity and accessibility. Sandip Somany, Past President, FICCI and Mentor, FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate, and CMD, Somany Impres Group, said, "The Indian real estate sector has shown remarkable evolution. The significant shift in consumer preferences away from ready-to-move homes towards

under-construction properties indicates growing confidence in developers and the regulatory environment." This trend reflects a maturing market and the positive impact of regulatory measures like RERA, he added. Raj Menda, Chairman, FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate and Chairman of the

Supervisory Board, RMZ Corporation, said, "India's economic growth is driving rapid expansion in the real estate sector, with the residential market projected to reach USD 1.04 trillion by 2029, growing at a 25.6 per cent CAGR. This growth is fuelled by rising demand for ultra-luxury properties and significant investments." The commercial real estate sector is also thriving, supported by 1,600 Global Capability Centers and emerging secondary markets, Menda said. Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said the consumer sentiment survey is timely and important, as it gauges contemporary homebuyers' preferences in the current market environment and highlights currently significant trends in Indian residential real estate. Sanjay Dutt, Managing

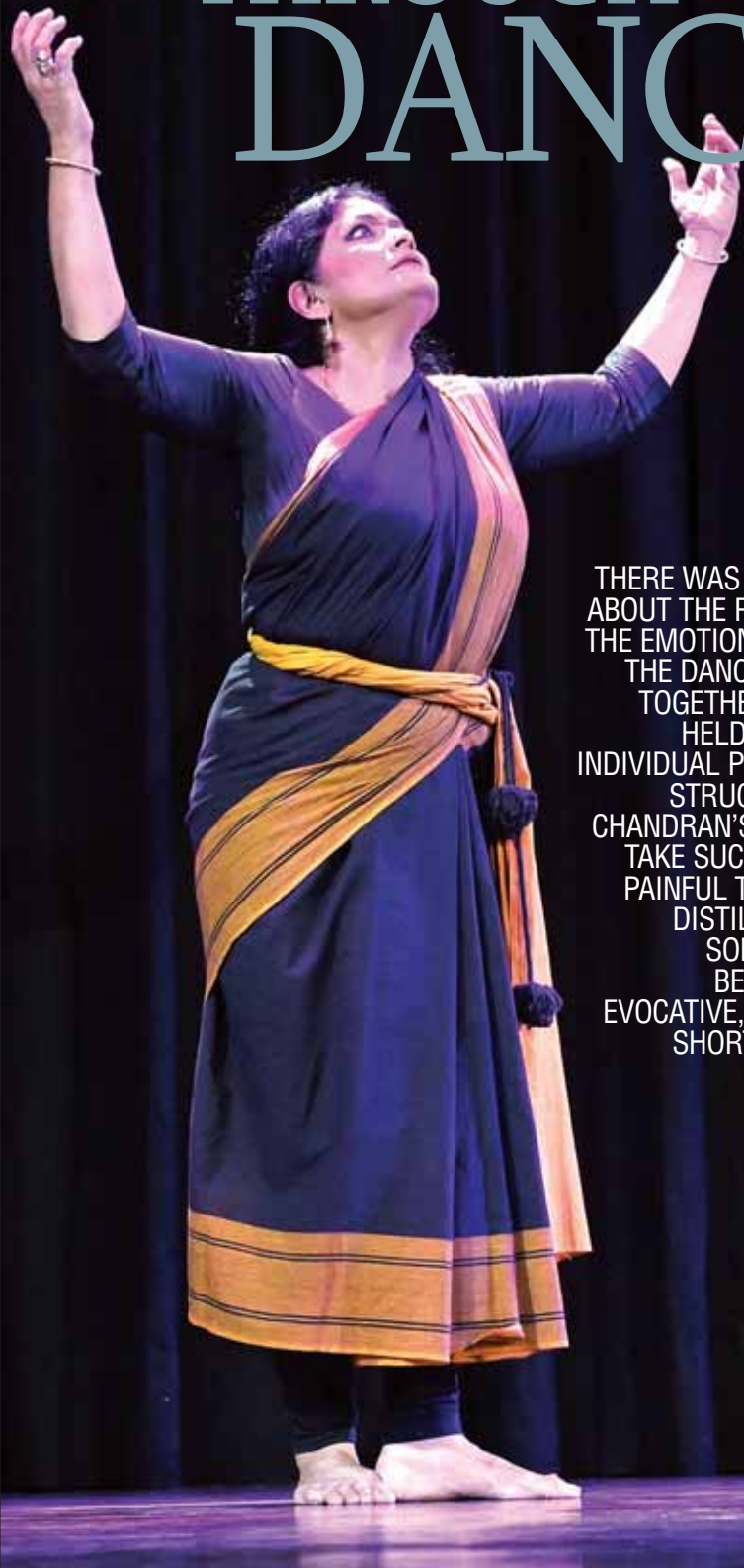
Director and CEO of Tata Realty and Infrastructure, highlighted the significant evolution of the real estate sector, particularly with the shift from traditional REITs to smaller-scale REITs (SM REITs). He emphasised the advantages of fractional ownership, noting how it allows investors to access high-quality assets with lower capital commitments, democratising real estate investment. Gaurav Pandey, Co-Chairman of the FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate and Managing Director and CEO of Godrej Properties, stated, "Institutional investors are increasingly focused on wealth creation through the development of better-quality products in the real estate sector." He highlighted the distinct

growth stories of various cities, noting that Pune stands out as a frontrunner in this regard. Pandey emphasised that sustainability has become a critical priority for all large developers, reflecting a collective commitment to responsible and eco-friendly practices that will shape the industry's future." In his address, Vipul Roongta, Co-Chairman of the FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate and Managing Director and CEO of HDFC Capital Advisors Ltd emphasized on the critical importance of investing in skilled labour and workforce development to drive progress. Additionally, Roongta underscored the essential role of the private sector in creating impactful, scalable solutions to meet the growing demand in the industry.



In celebration of WISCOMP's 25th anniversary, Bharatanatyam legend Geeta Chandran and the Natya Vriksha Dance Collective delivered a moving performance, "Our Voice," which explored women's struggles, resilience and hope in times of conflict, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

## INSPIRING CHANGE THROUGH DANCE



THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE RAWNESS OF THE EMOTIONS, THE WAY THE DANCERS MOVED TOGETHER YET EACH HELD THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL POWER, THAT STRUCK A CHORD. CHANDRAN'S ABILITY TO TAKE SUCH COMPLEX, PAINFUL THEMES AND DISTIL THEM INTO SOMETHING SO BEAUTIFUL, SO EVOCATIVE, IS NOTHING SHORT OF GENIUS



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

The hall was utterly still, a silence so real that it felt as though the entire audience had collectively held its breath. Not a single whisper broke the stillness. The audience was captivated by the intensity of the performance unfolding before them. As the final movement came to an end, the applause burst forth. It wasn't a brief acknowledgment, but a wave of appreciation that seemed to last forever.

At the heart of it all was none other than Padma Shri awardee Geeta Chandran, a living legend in the world of Bharatanatyam. As she performed, she commanded the stage with a presence so powerful it drew in every single spectator, binding them to her every move. It was not just a performance; it was an experience, one that resonated deeply with everyone in the room. Chandran, true to form, paid meticulous attention to every detail. Every gesture, every glance, every step was deliberate, contributing to a performance that was nothing short of spectacular.

This evening was particularly special as it marked WISCOMP's (Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace) 25th anniversary. The event, *Our Voice*, was a collaboration between Chandran and the Natya Vriksha Dance Collective, commissioned by WISCOMP itself. Held at the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium in New Delhi, the performance centred on the themes of women, war, and peace. Through the expressive language of Bharatanatyam, Chandran told a story that resonated deeply, not just because of its artistry, but because of its urgent relevance. What made 'Our Voice' so

compelling was the way it wove together the struggles of women with such authenticity and emotion. Chandran's portrayal of these themes was both profound and deeply human. It was not just a dance but a narrative, a reimagining of the age-old battles women have fought, battles against patriarchy, oppression and a world that too often refuses to hear their voices. Yet, this was not a lament. It was a celebration of resilience, strength, and the quiet but relentless pursuit of peace.

I've seen many performances, but few have moved me as deeply as this one. There was something about the rawness of the emotions, the way the dancers moved together yet each held their own individual power, that struck a chord. Chandran's ability to take such complex, painful themes and distil them into something so beautiful, so evocative, is nothing short of genius.

In the words of Chandran herself, *Our Voice* was a deeply personal project, one that took her out of her comfort zone. She explained how the process of creating this piece began with conversations about women's issues, particularly the price women pay in times of war. However, it wasn't just about war in the literal sense; it was about the daily battles women face, the constant struggle to find space for their agency in a world that often seeks to diminish it. From these discussions, the script evolved into something larger, a movement, a performance that speaks not only of women's suffering but of their incredible capacity for endurance and hope. And it was this hope that stayed with me long after the final bow. Hope, not as a vague or

distant ideal, but as something real, something these women, these dancers, brought to life before our very eyes. Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Director of WISCOMP, captured this sentiment perfectly when she said that Chandran's performance was "sheer poetry in motion on the audacity of hope." It's true. There was something bold about the performance, not in its defiance, but in its belief that, despite everything, peace is possible. That women, even in the face of conflict, trauma and violence, continue to fight not just for survival, but for a better world.

This was not the first time Geeta Chandran has tackled such themes. *Our Voice* is a continuation of her earlier work, *Her Voice*, performed 25 years ago. While the original piece focused on Draupadi's personal losses from the Mahabharata, this newer work took on a broader scope, exploring the universal struggles of women against patriarchal forces. Chandran's use of water as a metaphor for women's lives, fluid, powerful, yet constrained - was especially poignant. It was a reminder of how often women's potential is stifled by societal expectations, but also of how, like water, they continue to find ways to flow, to push forward.

It wasn't just Chandran's individual brilliance that made the evening so powerful, though. The Natya Vriksha Dance Collective, a group of dancers entirely trained by Chandran, added a richness and depth to the

performance that was undeniable. There was an unspoken trust and connection between the dancers, a shared understanding that made their movements feel like a conversation, not just between themselves, but with the audience. Each dancer brought something unique to the performance while contributing to the overall harmony of the piece.

As the performance ended, the applause was not just a formality. It was a recognition of something greater, a shared experience that had left everyone in the room changed in some way. The clapping didn't just end; it stayed with us, persistent and filled with emotion. It was as if the audience didn't want to let go of what they had just witnessed, as if by continuing to applaud, they could hold on to the feeling a little longer. Reflecting on the evening, I realised that what moved me most wasn't just the technical skill or the beauty of the dance, though both were extraordinary. It was the way in which the performance so perfectly captured the essence of WISCOMP's mission. For 25 years, WISCOMP has worked to promote women's leadership in peace and security, and this collaboration with Geeta Chandran was a powerful tribute to that legacy.

Art has always been a way to explore difficult subjects, provoke thought and inspire change. 'Our Voice' did all of that and more. It reminded us that the struggles of women are not confined to history books, but are ongoing and very real. Yet, in the face of these struggles, there is also incredible strength, resilience and most importantly, hope. As I walked out of the auditorium that night, I carried that hope with me.

## Step into a World of Melody and Peace

The *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* at Kamani Auditorium celebrated the legacy of Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna through captivating performances of Indian classical music

BY TEAM VIVA

The sound of melody filled the air, bringing with it a sense of 'SUKOON', a deep, soothing peace that only music can offer. This was the essence of the *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* at Kamani Auditorium. The annual festival, honouring the legendary flautist Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna, was a tribute to the timeless beauty of Indian classical music, celebrating the sacred bond between guru and disciple. As the audience settled into their seats, it became clear that the evening would be more than just a series of performances; it would be a journey into the heart of India's musical heritage.

The evening began with a breathtaking violin recital by Padma Bhushan N. Rajam, a maestro known for her unparalleled mastery of the instrument. Accompanied by her equally talented disciple, Nandini Shankar and the skilled Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, the performance was a seamless fusion of tradition and artistry. Rajam's violin flowed effortlessly, creating



a soundscape that transported the audience into a world of tranquillity. The synergy between the artists was remarkable, each note resonating with precision and emotion, setting the perfect tone for the night ahead. The atmosphere was further enriched by the vocal magic of Padma Shri Shubha Mudgal, whose performance was nothing short of mesmerising. Her powerful voice, rich with emotion, filled the

auditorium, captivating every listener. Supported by an exceptional ensemble of musicians, Pandit Aneesh Pradhan on tabla, Ustad Murad Ali on sarangi and Pandit Vinay Mishra on harmonium, Mudgal's rendition of classical ragas showcased her deep understanding and passion for the art form. The performance was a fine blend of tradition and innovation, leaving the audience in awe.

**The evening began with a breathtaking violin recital by Padma Bhushan N Rajam, a maestro known for her unparalleled mastery of the instrument. Accompanied by her equally talented disciple, Nandini Shankar and the skilled Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, the performance was a seamless fusion of tradition and artistry**

Yet, the heart of the festival was Pandit Ajay Prasanna's flute recital. As the son and disciple of Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna, Ajay Prasanna carried forward his father's legacy with grace and dedication. His flute performance was a soulful tribute to his guru, each note filled with reverence and emotion. Accompanied by the rhythmic brilliance of Pandit Mithlesh Jha and Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, Ajay Prasanna's

music was a seamless blend of melody and memory, evoking the timeless spirit of the bansuri. The audience sat in quiet admiration as the music washed over them, creating a moment of connection between past and present.

As the performances drew to a close, the hall remained filled with the gentle echoes of the night's music. The sense of Peace that the audience had experienced was unmistakable, a peaceful calm that stayed long after the final note had been played. The *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* was not just a tribute to a musical legend, but a reminder of the profound power of music to touch the soul.

This festival, with its line-up of extraordinary artists and heartfelt performances, brought together the essence of Indian classical music in a way that felt timeless. The sound of melody, the rhythm of the tabla, the beauty of the ragas, this was the magic of the *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav*. It was an evening of pure musical bliss, one that left the audience with a deep sense of peace, or as the performers might say, 'SUKOON'.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

# ROHIT, KOHLI, SARFARAZ FIFTIES TAKE INDIA TO 231/3 AT CLOSE ON DAY 3

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Counter-attacking India kept alive the hopes of a miracle turnaround through free-flowing fifties from the trio of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Sarfaraz Khan, reaching 231 for three in their second innings on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand here on Friday.

Kohli (70), who completed 9,000 Test runs during the course of his knock, got out to Glenn Phillips off the last ball of the day, edging him to Tom Blundell, leaving Sarfaraz (70) at the crease at close. The deficit at the end of an overcast day was a less intimidating 125. Kohli and Sarfaraz added 136 runs for the third wicket after skipper Rohit did the early running with a fluent 52. This was after New Zealand posted a total of 402 all out to gain a massive lead of 356 runs thanks to Rachin Ravindra (134) and Tim Southee (63), who added precious 134 runs for a flowing eighth wicket stand.

The largest deficit India has overturned to win a Test in their cricketing history is 274 during the iconic Kolkata Test against Australia in 2001.

Such an epic is still some distance away, but hopes will be flickering after the day's effort with the bat.

Amid the more coruscating fifties by Rohit and Sarfaraz, Kohli's effort still stood out for its personal and situational significance.

It was his first Test half-century of 2024, and he could not have timed his 31st in the longest format better -- literally and figuratively.

Seldom a shot describes the touch of Kohli better than the cover drive, and the moment he executed one off pacer William O'Rourke, the 35-year-old was in full flow. He took 15 balls to get off the mark.

Kohli brought up his fifty with a single off Matt Henry but at the other end, Sarfaraz resembled a race car on the tarmac.

The Mumbai man punished all bowlers with disdain and left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel was shut out of the park for two successive sixes.

Then there was a daring upper cut for maximum off O'Rourke and fortune also blessed him as a couple of edges fell inches short of Ajaz at gully and wide of third slip.

Before Kohli and Sarfaraz ran

## RESURRECTION AFTER COLLAPSE



roughsho, another old-young combination of Rohit and Yashviji Jaiswal (35) gave India a solid start.

Jaiswal went through an early uncertain play-and-miss phase but he overcame that to play some sparkling shots.

Rohit had no such issues. The right-hander flicked and drove New Zealand pacers to reach a fifty off just 59 balls, and also thrilled the crowd with that patented swivel pull on one leg. But his tenure in the middle ended in unfortunate circumstances. Rohit offered a forward defensive shot to Ajaz, but the ball trickled back onto his stumps after taking a deflection from his bat.

A few minutes before that, Jaiswal's decision to give a charge to Ajaz resulted in him getting stumped by Tom Blundell, after adding 72 for the opening wicket with Rohit. The recovery was impressive but it could not overshadow what New Zealand accomplished earlier in the day.

Resuming the day at 180 for three, the Kiwis were halted to an extent by Ravindra Jadeja (3/72) and the other Indian bowlers who took some early wickets to reduce them to 233 for seven.

They lost Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Blundell and Henry in this period.

Jasprit Bumrah snaffled Blundell while Mohammed Siraj had the number of Mitchell. Phillips and Henry perished to the crafty Jadeja.

The Blackcaps were ahead by 187 runs at that point and it was imperative for them to stretch the lead at least till the 250-mark to maintain their edge.

Ravindra and Southee exceeded the expectations during their partnership to take the lead past the 300-run mark.

Ravindra started cautiously but unfurled his full range once he and the pitch settled down past the first-hour mark.

The 24-year-old, who has his family roots in Bengaluru, showed the correct method of playing Indian spinners, either staying on the front foot or making a shimmy down to nullify the turn. A cleanly swept four off Ravichandran Ashwin carried him to his second Test hundred.

Southee, who hammered a couple of his trademark sixes, gave solid company to Ravindra and duly completed his seventh Test fifty immediately after the lunch.



## Pakistan seal 152-run win in second Test

AP ■ MULTAN (PAKISTAN)

Noman Ali and Sajid Khan claimed all 20 wickets on a recycled turning pitch as Pakistan ended a long wait for a home win with a 152-run victory over England in the second test on Friday.

Left-arm spinner Ali took 8-46 to finish with a match haul of 11 wickets and England was bowled out for 144 inside the first session on Day 4 on a tailor-made dry wicket.

Off-spinner Khan took 2-93 to go with his 7-111 in the first innings as both spinners bowled unchanged and ran through the tourists' batting lineup after Pakistan had set up a daunting target of 297 runs.

The win was first for captain Shan Masood, who lost six tests in a row since being elevated as red-ball skipper last year and also ended Pakistan's winless 11-match home run that included four losses against England.

England capitulated against Khan and Ali for the second time in the match after it

resumed on 36-2 and needed a further improbable 261 runs for victory of a tricky turning wicket.

Khan gleefully accepted a return catch from Ollie Pope on his second ball of the day before Ali cut through by claiming all the remaining seven wickets as the tourists failed to counter the spin through their sweeps and reverse sweeps.

Captain Ben Stokes, who returned to lead the side after recovering from a torn hamstring, top-scored with 37 before falling in a bizarre fashion. Stokes charged down the wicket to Ali, but the bat flew out of England captain's hand and he was stumped.

Brydon Carse smashed three sixes against Khan and scored 27 before he edged Ali in the slips as England couldn't counter the spinners on a wicket which had plenty of cracks and turn.

England won the first test by an innings and 47 runs last week after posting a record-breaking 823-7 declared.

## Arjun crushes Maxime to win WR Chess Masters

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaise secured the WR Chess masters title after defeating Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in the Armageddon game following two draws in Classical chess during the final.

Arjun displayed great form and precision throughout the event to bag the winner's prize of 20000 Euros. He defeated his friend R Praggnanandhaa in the semifinals of the knock out event before eventually getting past Vachier-Lagrave. The 16-player tournament



the World number four Indian but eventually crumbled in the Armageddon.

featured wild complex play out of a Sicilian Najdorf opening where the Indian played white.

The dust subsided on the 21st move leading to a tricky endgame post the queen trade and the game was drawn.

Vachier-Lagrave had 10 minutes on his clock with white pieces in the finale against Arjun's 6 minutes and 58 seconds. However, as is the law, the Frenchman needed a win.

Arjun navigated the opening wild despite less time out of a Petroff defense and reached a balanced position.

Vachier-Lagrave sacrificed two minor pieces for a rook to make some threats around Arjun's King but the Indian remained on guard. The game could have been a draw through repetition but that would have won the match for Arjun anyway.

The Queens were traded but Arjun was never in trouble as Vachier-Lagrave fought in vain for 69 moves before calling it a day.

With this victory, Arjun moved closer to the coveted 2800 ELO rating mark, though he will need to wait for his next event to achieve it.

## Indian junior team, guided by Sreejesh, faces Japan in Sultan of Johor opener

PTI ■ JOHOR (MALAYSIA)

Two-time Olympic medal-winning stalwart P R Sreejesh will face his first major test as India's new junior men's hockey coach when the under-21 team aims for a fourth title triumph at the 12th Sultan of Johor Cup, beginning with a clash against Japan here on Saturday.

The 36-year-old former goalkeeper, who retired after the bronze-winning campaign in the Paris Olympics earlier this year, took over the reins of the junior group soon after.

India triumphed over Japan in their last encounter at the Junior Asia Cup in May last year, securing a 3-1 victory and also defeated them 5-1 in the 2022 Sultan of Johor Cup.

"The team has been training well under the new head coach

October 22 and then Australia on October 23.

India will conclude the group stage against New Zealand on October 25, aiming to finish in the top two to advance to the final on October 26.

"We have been training hard over the past few days to be in the best shape ahead of the Sultan of Johor Cup," vice-captain Rohit said.

"This time around, the team has several new players who are excited to demonstrate their abilities on the field. All of the players are encouraging one another to improve in preparation for a busy time for us, which includes the men's junior Asia Cup Muscat in November."

After the Paris campaign, Sreejesh had stated that he always harboured coaching ambitions and wanted to be the Rahul Dravid of Indian hockey by shaping the younger generation of players.

Dravid, before serving as the senior team coach, mentored the under-19 players for a significant duration.



## Chelsea, Lyon and Roma stay perfect with victories in Womens Champions League

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Chelsea, Lyon and Roma all stayed perfect in the Women's Champions League by cruising to away victories.

Roma routed Galatasaray at Istanbul 6-1, Chelsea beat Twente in the Netherlands 3-1 and eight-time champion Lyon won 2-0 at Wolfsburg.

Real Madrid claimed its first victory of the campaign by easing past Celtic 4-0.

Roma and Lyon both have six points in Group A. Two-time champion Wolfsburg and Galatasaray, the first Turkish team to reach the group stage, have no points.

In Group B, Chelsea leads with six points, with Madrid and Twente on three and Celtic last bottom without a point.

Renard strikes on Popp's day/Wolfsburg striker Alexandra Popp made her 100th competition appearance - becoming only the second player to reach the mark but it was Lyon defender Wendie Renard, the only one who has played more, who stole the show.

Renard's header found the back of the net early on in her 118th game in the competition.

U.S. International Lindsey Horan netted from the penalty spot in the second half.

Lyon is the competition's record eight-time champion but last won the trophy in 2022. It was runner-up last season to Barcelona.

Roma routIn a matchup between the Italian and Turkish champions, Roma dominated in Istanbul.

Summer signing Hawa Cissoko scored in the seventh minute to mark her debut game in the competition. The France defender who transferred from West Ham headed home off Manuela Giugliano's corner.

Valentina Giacinti made it 2-0 in the 24th minute when she was left unmarked near the spot to head in Verena Hanshaw's cross.

Giugliano failed to convert from the spot in the first-half stoppage time but Emilie Haavi got Roma's third with a right-footed blast past goalkeeper Gamze Yaman early in the second.

Giugliano finally found the back of the net from close range for a 4-0 lead before Andrea Stankova scored the consolation goal for the hosts.

Roma substitutes Marta Pandini and Alice Corelli also scored.

Blues win again under Bompastor/Chelsea struck early in another winning performance under new coach Sonia Bompastor, who joined from Lyon.

Agnes Beever-Jones put the Blues ahead with a long-distance deflected strike in the seventh minute and Maika Hamano made it 2-0 a short time later by lifting the ball over goalkeeper Olivia Clark from outside the area.

Substitute Guro Reiten added the third in the second from the spot just past the hour mark.

## Nadal loses to Alcaraz at Six Kings Slam exhibition event

AP ■ RIYADH

With an eye on the Davis Cup, Rafael Nadal said he was pleased with his performance despite losing 6-3, 6-3 to Carlos Alcaraz at the Six Kings Slam.

Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic 6-2, 6-7 (0), 6-4 in the other semifinal at the exhibition event that awards money but no ATP ranking points and is Saudi Arabia's latest foray into tennis.

The match against Alcaraz was Nadal's first since he announced last week that he would be retiring after playing for Spain in the Davis Cup next month. Nadal and Alcaraz played doubles together at the Paris Games and could team up again for the Davis Cup.

"I have the Davis Cup in front (of me) in a month so every day is an opportunity to be better and better and be ready for this final tournament of my tennis career," Nadal said. "I want to try my best to be ready for that and help the team in some way."

Thursday's match was the first contest for Nadal since his exit at the Paris Olympics in July.

"Carlos was too good. I haven't been on the competitive stage since a couple months ago," Nadal said. "So yeah I think it was a good performance, even if it was not enough to play



against an animal like him. But it was a positive match for me and I'm happy."

Nadal will play Djokovic on Saturday in a third-place match before Sinner faces Alcaraz.

The top-ranked Sinner was cleared in a doping case shortly before winning last month's U.S. Open, although the World Anti-Doping Agency has appealed that exoneration.

Djokovic and Sinner met for real on Sunday, when the Italian won in straight sets for the Shanghai Masters title.

## Iga Swiatek has hired Wim Fissette as her new coach

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Iga Swiatek is hiring Wim Fissette to be her new coach, announcing via social media that she is bringing aboard someone who has worked with a long list of top players that includes Naomi Osaka, Kim Clijsters and Victoria Azarenka.

"I'm excited and motivated to start a new chapter," posted the No. 1-ranked Swiatek, who parted ways with Tomasz Wiktorowski two weeks ago after three years together.

Swiatek hasn't competed since Sept. 4, when she lost in the U.S. Open quarterfinals to eventual runner-up Jessica Pegula. Since then, Swiatek withdrew from the China Open and Korea Open.

Next up for Swiatek is the season-ending WTA Finals, which will be held in November in Riyadh, Saudi



Arabia.

"As you know, I'm preparing for the WTA Finals but my perspective is, as always, long-term, not short-term. I said many times that my career is a marathon for me, not a sprint, and I'm working, operating and making decisions with this approach," Swiatek wrote on Thursday. "I want to say that I'm very excited and looking forward to working with Wim. He seems to have a great attitude, vision and huge experience at a very top level of tennis. It's always crucial to try and get to know each other better but we're off to a good start and I can't wait to

compete soon."

Swiatek is 54-7 this season with five titles and about \$7.5 million in prize money. She won the French Open in June for her third consecutive title in Paris and fourth in the past five years, raising her career haul to five Grand Slam trophies. Four of those came with Wiktorowski as her coach.

The 23-year-old from Poland also picked up a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics in August.

She will be trying to hold off Sabalenka for the year-end No. 1 ranking.

Fissette, who is Belgian and Swiatek's first non-Polish coach, had worked with Osaka most recently, and helped her win two of her four Grand Slam titles. He also was with Clijsters and Angelique Kerber for major championships. Other No.

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