



# the pioneer

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SPORTS

SHAMI'S ABSENCE BIG LOSS FOR INDIA, BUT WON'T UNDERESTIMATE RESERVE PACERS: MCDONALD



## Yamuna froths, Delhi's taps run dry

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

More than half of the population in Delhi is currently facing disruption in the drinking water supply by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) due to presence of high level of ammonia and froth in Yamuna and curtailing of raw water supply from the upper Ganga canal. This disruption of water supply will continue till November 1. It is estimated that there has been a reduction of 200-225 Million Gallon per Day (MGD) due to

ammonia levels at the Chandrawal, Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi Water Treatment Plants. While officially, only Sonia Vihar WTP is working at 15 percent below its daily capacity of 140 MGD. DJB's overall average water production capacity is 990-1,000 million gallons per day (MGD), including from tubewells. Toxic foam accumulation in the Yamuna has forced the shutdown of the Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant, impacting potable water availability in south, north and east Delhi and New Delhi's Lutyens areas



including Jor Bagh, Lodhi Colony, Golf Links, Pandara Road, the High Court vicinity, East and West Kidwai Nagar, Tughlaq Crescent, Ravinder Nagar, Khan Market, Lodhi Estate, Akbar Road, Amrita Shergill Marg, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Road, Prithvi Raj Road, and Tees January Road, among others. The high ammonia levels, exceeding 1.5 ppm (parts per million), present a substantial treatment challenge, leading to a reduction in operational capacity by up to 30 per cent. The increasing ammonia level in the Yamuna has been a persistent

problem for Delhiites. Every winter season, people in Delhi have to endure scarcity of drinking water due to the elevated level of ammonia in the Yamuna. Normally, the Bhagirathi and Sonia Vihar water treatment plants, which have a combined capacity of 250 million gallons per day (MGD) - 140 MGD from Sonia Vihar and 110 MGD from Bhagirathi - get their water from the Ganga. However, due to the annual maintenance and repair works being carried out by the UP Irrigation Department and UP Jal Nigam, the Ganga water supply has been halted from

October 21 onwards. Subsequently, Ganga water supply to these WTPs has been stopped. Due to high ammonia content i.e. above 1.5 ppm in raw water at River Yamuna, it is difficult to treat the Yamuna raw water. Hence, the production at Bhagirathi and Sonia Vihar has been curtailed up to 30 percent of the capacity. Further, the production would depend entirely upon the quality of Raw water at River Yamuna and production from these plants shall vary accordingly. Continued on page 8

## There is no such thing as 'digital arrests': PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday cautioned citizens about fraudsters indulging in the cyber crime of so-called "digital arrests". He urged people to adopt the mantra of "stop, think and take action" when faced with such a scam, asserting that these steps will provide digital security to them. In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, he said probe agencies are working with states to deal with the issue but added that awareness is essential in protecting oneself from this crime. During his broadcast, he also shared a conversation between a victim and a fraudster to highlight the cyber crime. "The fraudsters of digital arrest phone calls, at times, impersonate police, CBI, Narcotics; at times RBI... Using such various labels, they converse as fake officers with a lot of

confidence. Many listeners of 'Mann Ki Baat' have wished that we must discuss that," the PM said. "Let me tell you how these fraud gangs work. What is this dangerous game? It is very important for you to understand this," he said. Explaining the modus operandi of such fraudsters, he said they collect personal information as their first

move and then in their second move create an atmosphere of fear. "You went to Goa last month, didn't you? Your daughter studies in Delhi, right? They collect so much information about you that you will be surprised. The second move - create an atmosphere of fear... Uniform, Government office set-up, legal sections. They will scare you so much on the phone. In the midst of the conversation you will not be able to even think," the PM said. He added that the third move of such fraudsters is the pressure of time. "You have to decide now or else you will be arrested..." These people create so much psychological pressure on the victim that one gets scared. People from every class and age group fall victim to digital arrest," he said, adding that people have lost lakhs of rupees earned through their hard work, out of sheer fear. Continued on page 8

## Bandra Terminus stampede leaves 10 injured

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

At least 10 passengers were injured, two of whom severely, in a stampede that took place when scores of passengers rushed to board an unreserved compartment of the Gorakhpur-bound Antyodaya Express platform number-one of Bandra Terminus (BDTS) Railway Station in the small hours of Sunday. The incident took place at around 2.45 am, when the 22921 Antyodaya Express was slowly moving onto platform no 1 from the yard to head to Gorakhpur. A large number of passengers made headway into one of the unreserved compartments, leading to utter chaos and consequent stampede. "On 27.10.2024 at about 02.45 hrs, passenger train number 22921 Antyodaya Express was slowly being placed on platform number 01 from the BDTS yard, when some passengers present on the platform tried to board the moving train and 02 passengers fell and got injured," the Western Railway said in a statement issued here.



Police personnel, passengers and others at Bandra railway station after a stampede, in Mumbai, Sunday

Of the ten injured passengers, two severely injured - identified as Noor Shaikh Mohammed (18) and Indrajit Sahani (19), who were initially rushed to the nearby Bhabha Hospital, have been shifted to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)-run KEM Hospital. "Both of them have suffered multiple injuries. Noor Mohammed is on Oxygen support. His condition is critical,"

an official from the BMC's disaster control room said. The authorities identified the remaining eight injured passengers as Shabbir Abdul Rehman (40), Parmeshwar Sukhdar Gupta (28), Ravindra Harihar Chuma (30), Ramsevak Ravindra Prasad Prajapati (29), Sanjay Tilakram Kangay (27), Divyanshu Yogendra Yadav (18), Mohammad Shareef Shaikh (25)

and Sameer Shaikh (22) Of them, five are undergoing treatment at the Bhabha Hospital, while three have been discharged from the hospital after treatment. A 51-second video clip shot minutes before the stampede showed a huge crowd of passengers waiting platform number one to board the train at the Bandra railway platform. As the train was moving onto the platform passengers surged and jostled with one another to board an unreserved compartment. What followed was a stampede. Some videos circulating on social media showed people running helter skelter and shouting. One of the videos showed a man with blood oozing out of his wounds, while another injured passenger lay next to him. One video showed a Railway Protection Force (RPF) constable carrying an injured passenger on his shoulder, while another personnel was seen taking a passenger to the hospital in a make-shift cloth stretcher. Continued on page 8

## Over 350 hoax bomb threat calls, only two arrests? Begging for a smartphone? Professionals are at it already!

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hoax bomb callers have continued to target commercial flights and premium hotels across the country, causing significant financial losses and delays. At least 50 flights belonging to Akasa Air, IndiGo, and Vistara received bomb threats on Sunday. So far, more than 350 flights have received hoax bomb threats in the last 14 days. In some cases, the threats were issued to flights that had already been operated for the day or were not scheduled to operate. Besides, dozens of premium hotels in four states-West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh have also received threat messages in the past three days, prompting the security agencies to launch search operations. Most of the threats were issued through social media. In the backdrop of worrying trends of hoax threat messages to airlines, the government is taking support from international agencies, law enforcement wings and the Intelligence



FILE PHOTO/PTI

Bureau to prevent these fake threats. Intelligence sources said there is an attempt to hit the economy via the aviation sector and the hospitality sector during the festive season. Meanwhile, airlines and passengers remain in a state of uncertainty due to these hoax call messages. According to sources, IndiGo received threats for 18 flights and Vistara for 17 flights. Akasa Air received threats for 15 flights. At least two IndiGo flights were diverted

following threats. Its flight 6E 133 (Pune to Jodhpur) was diverted to Ahmedabad and 6E 87 (Kozhikode to Dammam) was diverted to Mumbai. According to an IndiGo statement, the flights that received security-related alerts include 6E 11 (Delhi-Istanbul), 6E 92 (Jeddah-Mumbai), 6E 112 (Goa-Ahmedabad), 6E 125 (Bengaluru-Jharsuguda), 6E 127 (Amritsar-Ahmedabad) and 6E 135 (Kolkata-Pune). Among others flights targeted were 6E 149 (Hyderabad to

Bagdogra), 6E 173 (Delhi to Bengaluru), 6E 175 (Bengaluru to Delhi), 6E 197 (Raipur to Hyderabad), 6E 248 (Mumbai to Kolkata), 6E 277 (Ahmedabad-Lucknow), 6E 312 (Bengaluru to Kolkata), 6E 235 (Kolkata-Bengaluru) and 6E 74 (Riyadh-Mumbai). Akasa Air issued a statement, confirming in a brief that its Emergency Response Team is actively monitoring the situation and is in contact with security and regulatory authorities. "We are following all safety and security

procedures in coordination with local authorities, and the Akasa Air teams on ground are prepared to assist passengers to ensure their safety and comfort," read Akasa Air's statement posted on X. This has created a panic among air passengers amid the ongoing festive season. According to Akasa Air, on Sunday, a bomb threat was reported on a flight enroute from Bengaluru to Delhi via Gorakhpur, which was found to be a hoax after inspection. During a thorough inspection at the Gorakhpur airport, no suspicious item was found, Gorakhpur Airport director RK Parasher said. The flight landed in Gorakhpur at 1.33 pm and the door opened at 1.50 pm. The aircraft was carrying 174 passengers and three infants. The inspection of the aircraft and the passengers continued till 2.42 pm and the flight took off at 3.43 pm for Delhi, Parasher said. Ahead of the plane's arrival, the airport saw a high-security response, with police, Indian Air Force, Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad, fire brigade, and medical teams arriving on the site. Continued on page 8

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a surprising discovery, a recent survey by the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA), the Municipal Corporation, and the Social Welfare Department has revealed that many beggars in Lucknow are financially better off than several professionals. Some even possess smartphones and PAN cards, challenging common perceptions about the economic conditions of the city's beggars. The survey found a total of 5,312 beggars in the city, including individuals whose monthly earnings can reach up to ₹80,000-90,000 - especially pregnant women. The survey is part of a broader campaign to identify beggars and connect them with government welfare schemes. Authorities are documenting their details and registering them for Aadhaar cards to help integrate them into mainstream society. The data collected has brought several startling facts to light.



Initiated under the direction of Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob, the survey aims to understand the backgrounds and living conditions of beggars with a focus on rehabilitation. Findings reveal that many of these individuals originate from nearby districts such as Barabanki, Sitapur, Hardoi, Rae Bareilly, Unnao, and Bahraich. Despite owning homes in their villages, many choose to live on the streets of Lucknow, adopting begging as a way of life. Women earn more from begging The survey found that women, particularly those who are pregnant or accompanied by young children, tend to earn the most from begging. Their

daily income can reach up to ₹3,000, while elderly people and children typically earn between ₹900 to ₹2,000 daily. Besides cash, these individuals often receive food, clothes, and other essentials from well-wishers. Reports suggest that certain groups encourage women to have multiple children, believing that pregnancy attracts more donations from the public. As a result, many female beggars have as many as eight or nine children. Based on these findings, officials estimate that with an average daily earning of ₹1,200 per beggar, residents of Lucknow collectively distribute over ₹63 lakh in alms each day. Continued on page 8



## Fumes, crowds, blaring horns, Diwali shopping is now a challenge

### Lajpat Nagar and Sarojini Nagar get a footfall of thousands each day during the festive season

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

Shoppers splurging on clothes, gifts and other items ahead of Diwali, have been making a beeline to markets across the National Capital, the most popular ones include Lajpat Nagar and Sarojini Nagar in south Delhi. Lakhs arrive here as soon as the market opens around 11 am, and the footfalls continue till the closing time of 9 pm. Their cars, motorcycles, auto rickshaws, and taxis add a heavy load on the already busy roads leading to massive jams at all hours. There is also a possible threat to life in case a stampede like situation arises. The markets of Sarojini Nagar and Lajpat Nagar are bustling with shoppers coming to buy for the festivities ahead. However, with vehicles including cars, motorcycles and autos the spaces become cramped leaving restricted movement. It also leads to a potential threat to

lives with stampede-like situations arising. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police has amped up their security for the festivities and also in light of a blast near a Central Reserves Police Forces (CRPF) public school in Rohini Sector 14. In Lajpat Nagar, one can see that there is no free flow of traffic as vehicles are parked on both sides of the road creating massive inconvenience to the public, despite a Delhi police booth right outside the market and heightened police patrolling. People also fear that in a case of emergency, ambulances wouldn't be available on time due to the jams and very limited space for the movement of vehicles. A frustrated shopper said, "Whole Lajpat Nagar is facing huge traffic. People have parked their cars and vehicles here and there on the roads which are completely filled leaving little space for any movement. Why is



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

the Delhi Police not taking any action? What if there is any emergency, how can even an ambulance reach?" Another resident of the area claimed that selective restriction won't work in the area while she blamed the mismanagement of traffic as a reason for such congestion near the market area. "Restriction on all sorts of vehicular movements shall be a solution, not selective ones. As a person who has lived in Lajpat Nagar, I can vouch for the fact that this situation stems from unscientific parking and poor traffic management," she stated. Similar situations also exist in Sarojini Nagar even as several auto-rickshaws create a menace on the road. "There is a traffic jam created by autos at Sarojini Nagar market entry opposite to the post office in Vinay nagar. Delhi Police, please send some traffic personnel who can manage the situation. If such a situation persists at

the peak season, it can inevitably result in a scenario where people find it hard to move out despite an emergency," a commuter said. However, the Delhi Police told The Pioneer that the police have heightened its security and encroachments are also removed to make more space for the free flow of traffic as well as the shoppers to avoid any stampede like situation in the market. In Sarojini Nagar, a police officer said there 30 local police personnel, 24 paramilitary officers and five machans in light of the security situation ahead of festivities. "We have carried out anti-encroachment drives as well to provide more spaces on the road and police officers are stationed on all the five entry and exit points in the market. In case of a medical emergency, there is a fire tender and ambulance stationed as well," he added.



# Major hotels in city get bomb threats



Bomb disposal squad at a hotel that received bomb threats via email, in Hazratganj area of Lucknow, on Sunday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police conducted an intensive checking after at least 10 major hotels in the state capital received bomb threats via email on Sunday. A spokesman said the Lucknow police conducted checking of hotels which were mentioned in the hoax mail but nothing objectionable or sensitive object was found. He said this seemed to be a mischief but still the top cops were keeping a close watch and security vigil had been beefed up. As per reports, the email threatened that explosions would take place if a ransom

demand of USD 55,000 (Rs 4,624,288) is not met. "Bombs are hidden in black bags on the grounds of your hotel. I want USD 55,000, or I will detonate the explosives and blood will spill everywhere. Any attempt at defusing the bombs will detonate them," read the threat email. A manager of one of the hotels said, "We received the threat mail in the morning. As a precaution we reported the matter to the local police station and a team has come to look into the matter." "We already have systems to scan all the guests and their luggage. Even then, as a

precaution we are helping the police to scan the hotel," he added. Senior police officials could not be reached for a comment despite several attempts. Authorities have been grappling with a number of hoax bomb threats targeting Indian airlines during the last fortnight. In 14 days, more than 350 flights operated by Indian carriers have received hoax bomb threats, most of them through social media. A number of threatening emails were received by schools, malls and other establishments in Delhi-NCR in recent months and they turned out to be hoax.

# Girl student alleges harassment by teacher

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A school teacher has been accused of improperly touching and groping a Class XII girl student while giving her tuition at his house in the Jankipuram area, police said on Sunday. The student's father has stated in his complaint that the accused would call her before time and misbehave when alone with her, they added. The complainant also alleged that when his daughter tried to resist his act, he threatened her with dire consequences, boasting of his links with influential people. When the girl could not take the alleged harassment any longer, he complained about the teacher to her parents. Her father then filed a complaint, based on which an FIR was registered in this regard and further investigations are ongoing. As per reports, a resident of Kursi Road in Gudamba, the teenage girl is a student of a private school and the accused, identified as RS Tiwari, is her English teacher. He also tutors many students of the school, including the girl in question, at his house. "The accused touched my daughter inappropriately several times, but she ignored it. It only emboldened him and he made amorous advances towards her. When she offered resistance, he threatened her," the complainant alleged. Inspector, Jankipuram, confirmed that a case had been registered and investigation was underway.

# Salman should apologise to Bishnoi community: Tikait

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Amidst reports of a threat to Bollywood star Salman Khan's life from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday said the actor should apologise to the Bishnoi community because if a dispute is resolved by apologising, then there is nothing wrong in it. Tikait, who was here to take part in a farmers' 'Mahapanchayat', said this while replying to a reporter's question on jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. "If any dispute ends by apologising to the Bishnoi community, then what is wrong in it? If a mistake has been made knowingly or unknowingly, then what does Salman Khan lose in apologising?" the farmer leader asked. He also alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government, which had promised free electricity to farmers, has started installing meters in their fields. "We do not know how free electricity will come from the meters," he said while talking to reporters after the "Kisan Mahapanchayat" held at Mundera here. "If meters are to be installed, then they (BJP) will have to bring it in their manifesto before the 2027 (Uttar Pradesh) Assembly polls. Otherwise a meter will not be installed in a farmer's field," Tikait said. Regarding the price of paddy, he alleged that the crop is being procured from farmers in Purvanchal's Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Ballia at the rate of Rs 1,200 per quintal. "The same is the case with



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait addresses the Kisan Majdoor Mahapanchayat, in Prayagraj on Sunday

PTI

maize. In Bihar alone, farmers have suffered a loss of Rs 1 lakh crore by selling crops at low prices. This is the condition of all the states," Tikait said. "A big conspiracy is being hatched to make people live as

those recruited under it will have to work as security guards in the coming days and claimed that a particular business group needs 25,000 security guards. "Agniveers will work as guards in the coming

**"If any dispute ends by apologising to the Bishnoi community, then what is wrong in it? If a mistake has been made knowingly or unknowingly, then what does Salman Khan lose in apologising?"**

bonded labourers of the government. This government wants to make India a country of workers because there is a huge shortage of workers in industries," he added. On the Agniveer scheme for short-term military recruitment, Tikait claimed that

days because a particular (business) group alone needs 25,000 guards. This recruitment (of Agniveers) is being done for that. This country will become a labour-dominated country from an agriculture-dominated one," he said.

# Woman on board train molested by coach attendant

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman passenger on board the Gondia-Barauni Express train was allegedly molested by a coach attendant, railway officials said on Sunday. The incident occurred on October 22 after the train departed from the Ballia railway station, according to the Government Railway Police (GRP). Station House Officer (SHO) of Ballia GRP, Vivekanand said, "A young woman from Motihari district, Bihar, was allegedly molested and harassed by coach attendant Rakesh Kumar Srivastava while she was asleep on her berth." The victim promptly reported the incident to the railway police on the train itself. A case was initially registered at the Chhapra GRP police station on October 24 based on the complaint. The case has since been transferred to the Ballia GRP on Saturday for further investigation, the SHO added. Meanwhile, a 25-year-old Dalit woman was allegedly raped by a man in a village in Pratapgarh, police said on Sunday. The accused was identified as Rikhiram Maurya (65), they said. The woman in her complaint alleged that Maurya had raped her last week and threatened to kill her if she told anyone about it. Additional SP, Sanjay Rai said. Based on her complaint, an FIR was registered against Maurya under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Rai said. Maurya has been arrested and further investigation is underway, Rai added.

# BJP MLA lays foundation for 28 projects

Lucknow (PNS): BJP MLA OP Srivastava laid the foundation for 28 projects in the Lucknow East assembly constituency on Sunday. These projects include the construction of roads in front of houses, drains, interlocking works, and beautification of parks for the residents of the residents. Srivastava had pledged to complete 74 projects in the constituency on the 74th birthday of Defence Minister and Lucknow MP Rajnath Singh. Out of these development works, the foundation stone for 28 projects was laid on Sunday in the first phase, funded by the Vidhyak Nidhi. The programme was presided over by former metropolitan president and MLC Mukesh Sharma. Many dignitaries were present on the occasion, including Diwakar Tripathi, a representative Rajnath Singh, and OSD Pushkar Shukla. A large number of residents also attended the programme. Srivastava said that many initiatives are being launched from the MLA fund. "As the remaining schemes receive government approval and allocation of funds, all those projects will be carried out swiftly in the coming days. Today's collective foundation stone-laying programme is not merely about laying the foundations for a few development works, such as roads or parks, but it is also a programme to establish the groundwork for many public expectations," he said.

# Government begins process to develop SEZs in six districts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has started the process of developing a 'Special Education Zone (SEZ)' in six districts of the state, including Lucknow. The other districts are Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Agra, Gautam Buddha Nagar, and Bundelkhand. Notably, in these SEZs, education from nursery to university will be provided through the establishment of various educational institutions. The education sector will also contribute significantly towards fulfilling Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's goal of making the state a trillion-dollar economy. For this reason, the education sector has been formally classifi-

fied as an industry. To promote this industry, the Higher Education Promotion Policy-2024 has also been approved by the cabinet. Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay stated that under CM Yogi, a detailed action plan has been prepared for the establishment of SEZs in the state. According to this plan, the first SEZ will be established on Mohaan Road in Lucknow. Education City will be developed here in an area of 785 acres, with various educational institutions to come up. The development process has already begun in a 103-acre area for which an Expression of Interest (EOI) has been issued. This SEZ will serve as a model for the

establishment of similar SEZs in the other five districts of the state. In this regard, unused land parcels of Acharya Narendra Dev University in Ayodhya, RBS College in Agra, and Gautam Buddha University in Gautam Buddha Nagar will be utilised. The process of land acquisition has also started in Gorakhpur and Bundelkhand. All these SEZs will pave the way for the establishment and development of a maximum of eight and a total of 40 educational institutions. Following the cabinet nod to the new Higher Education Promotion Policy-2024, the state government is focusing on fulfilling the goal of 'one district one university' in the state.

# State's tiger reserves to open early for tourists

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced that eco-tourism sites across the state will open for the new tourism season on November 6, nine days earlier than the traditional start date of November 15. In response to growing public interest in the state's eco-tourism destinations, preparations have been expedited to enhance the visitor experience. Among the exciting offerings this year are walking trails, swings, and special arrangements for tourists across popular sites, including Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, and Pilibhit Tiger Reserve. In line with this new initiative, multiple wildlife reserves and eco-tourism destinations will open, including Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Ranipur Tiger Reserve, Amargarh Tiger Reserve, Suhailwa Wildlife Sanctuary, Sohagbarwa Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandraprabha Wildlife Sanctuary, Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Nawabganj Bird

Sanctuary, and the newly developed Rapdi Eco-Tourism Centre in Firozabad. "Tourism amenities, such as jeep safaris, elephant rides, and trained nature guides, have been meticulously arranged. In addition, guides at Dudhwa and other key reserves have been specially trained in storytelling, sharing detailed knowledge about reptiles, various wildlife, and tigers, creating an immersive and educational experience for tourists. The guides will also offer valuable insights to visitors from across the country and beyond," a tourism official said. Firozabad's Rapdi Eco-Tourism Centre, located in the dense forest region along the Yamuna River, is a special highlight this season, featuring cottages, nature trails, a butterfly park, and motorboat rides. The opening of this centre is expected to boost tourism and promote local development. Other popular wildlife sanctuaries, such as Katarniaghat, Pilibhit, Ranipur, and Amargarh Tiger Reserves, are also drawing significant interest among adventure seekers. "Upholding its commitment to

conservation, the Eco-Tourism Board has issued guidelines to ban plastic and polythene across these eco-tourism sites, encouraging an eco-friendly visitor experience. Additionally, a special package for students has been introduced at an affordable rate of Rs 499, aiming to provide educational tours and insights into eco-tourism. Key eco-tourism sites, such as Dudhwa National Park and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, have further enriched the visitor experience with trained nature guides," he said. Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "Eco-tourism has immense potential in Uttar Pradesh. Many of our sites are blessed with natural beauty, and the efforts of the Eco-Tourism Development Board are yielding positive results. We are committed to enhancing facilities based on visitor demand and have advanced the start of this tourism season by nine days. We invite tourists to enjoy our unique eco-tourism offerings, including jungle safaris, while ensuring they experience the natural heritage of Uttar Pradesh at its best."



## NOTICE

I, Sabitri Devi, mother of Arun Kumar Pandey resident of Vill - Pure Kathik Post Ram Sanehi Ghat Teh Ram Sanehi Ghat Dist - Barabanki PIN - 225401 State Uttar Pradesh have changed my Name from Sabitri Devi to Savitri Devi Affidavit dated Date 26/10/2024 lucknow.

## NOTICE

My name is mentioned as Km. Pradipti Singh in my educational documents, whereas my name is mentioned as Pradipti Singh in my Adhaar Card and PAN Card. Both Km. Pradipti Singh & Pradipti Singh belong to the same woman/me. In future, I should be known as Pradipti Singh D/o Umesh Kumar Singh, W/o Amardeep Singh Chauhan, R/o- 570/S/181, Fauji Colony, Alambagh, Lucknow.

## NOTICE

I, DHEERAJ holding Indian Passport No:T0677648 issued at DUBAI on 18/12/2018 and Permanent Resident of GONILA BHOJAPUR MARDAH GHAZIPUR UTTAR PRADESH and presently residing at DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from DHEERAJ to DHEERAJ (Given name) CHAUHAN (SURNAME) with immediate effect.

# State not empowered to frame rules for motor driving schools: HC

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Allahabad High Court has held that Section 27 of Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 empowers the central government to make rules for licensing and regulating motor driving training schools. The state government is not competent to frame rules in this regard. The Uttar Pradesh government had issued an order in 2023 laying down Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for private motor driving training schools and their operation which was challenged before the High Court. Allowing the writ petition filed by UP Motor Training School Owners Association and seven others, a high court bench comprising Justices Anjali Kumar Mishra and Jayant Banerji struck down the government order. "The counsel for the petitioners had submitted that the central government alone has the power to make rules for the purpose of licensing and regulating schools or establishments for imparting

instructions in driving of motor vehicles and related matters. The bench in its order dated October 25, 2024 observed, "Section 28 of the Act which empowers the state government to frame rules clearly bars it from framing rules regarding which the power vests with the central government." "Various paras and clauses of the impugned Government Order by which the petitioner is aggrieved, in our considered opinion clearly fall within the domain of rule-making power of Central Government alone," the bench said. "The submission of learned Standing Counsel that the impugned Government Order merely supplements the rules framed by the central government cannot be accepted," the court added. Welcoming the judgment, KM Bajpai, President of UP Motor Training School Owners Association said, "We expect that while taking any further decision, the state would take care of the interest of motor driving school operators."

# Wall Art Fest: 'Quantum Portrait' by French artist unveiled

Lucknow (PNS): Alliance Française de Lucknow announced the much-anticipated 'Wall Art Festival', which took place on the streets of Lucknow on Sunday. The wall painting, 'Quantum Portrait', by French artist Charles Fousard was unveiled on a wall in the precinct of Le Press Newal Kishore. President of Alliance Française de Lucknow Nishi Pandey stated that the artist took three days to complete the painting. "He has come to Lucknow as part of the Indo-French Cultural Exchange, which brings artists from France to India and vice versa. This is our fourth year of celebrations," she said. She further explained that Fousard, whose distinctive artistic style has garnered international acclaim, has embarked on a remarkable journey to showcase his talents across several Alliance Française centres in India. "His visit to Lucknow is the final step in this artistic journey, following stops in Hyderabad and Kolkata. Here, his work is displayed at Le Press Galleria. In 'Portrait Quantique', the artist combines three themes that are dear to him: portraiture, landscape, and still life. This interplay of animate



and inanimate elements raises questions about the human place in the world," she added. "This event is supported by the French Embassy in India and JSW. It celebrates the power of art to transcend borders," Pandey said. Discussing the painting, she noted that Fousard's work features a face with a third eye, symbolising multiple visions. "The expression resonates with our culture," she noted. Fousard's technique, using acrylic paint, creates a unique effect that conveys fluidity and the interaction between the visible and invisible. "He particularly enjoyed the food and hospitality in Lucknow," she added.

# CPI (ML) team visits Dhauha

Lucknow (PNS): A four-member team led by the CPI (ML) state committee member and national councillor of All India Agricultural and Rural Labourers Association (AIARLA) Jeera Bharti visited Dhauha village in Chunar police station area of Mirzapur on Saturday. On October 22, armed men had attacked the house of Ram Achal (70) of Dalit community over a land related dispute and killed him. Nine persons, including six women of the family, suffered head injuries in the attack. The assailants had come on Bolero, motorcycle and tractor. After meeting the family members of

the deceased, and the injured in the hospital, Bharti said that the Dalit family had been plowing and five bighas of gram samaj land for more than four decades, besides living on it. In between, a person from Varanasi fraudulently got the land leased and later transferred the deed to Mirzapur resident Rajeev Gupta. A day before the attack (on October 21), the Dalit family had plowed the land to sow potatoes. The CPI (ML) demanded strict punishment to the assailants, proper treatment of the injured, regularisation of the said land in favour of the Dalit family, government job, security and adequate compensation to the family members of the deceased.

**SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CO. LTD.**  
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**NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002 (HEREINAFTER CALLED 'ACT')**

It is to bring to your notice that your loan account has been declared as NPA by secured creditor Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited having its registered office at 608 - 609, 6th Floor, Block - C Ansal Imperial Tower, Community Center, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi - 110028. (herein after called 'SHDFCL') and you are liable to pay total outstanding against your loan to SHDFCL. You are also liable to pay future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. Therefore, we hereby call upon you to discharge in full your liabilities to SHDFCL within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which SHDFCL will be empowered to exercise the power under Section 13(4) of the ACT. The details of borrowers and secured assets are as under:

S. No.	Loan Account No. / Borrower(s) Name	Applicant Address	Demand Notice Amount & Date	Secured Asset
1.	OADR2305000050627977 / Dhananjai Tiwari, Kiran Tiwari	Parasahawa Kushinagar Primary School Deoria Uttar Pradesh-274402	Rs. 6,04,128/- & 22/10/2024	House No. 624B/166/5/03, Mohalla Chirhat Ward Chirhat Tehsil & Dist. Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226001
2.	0ALB1806000005013547 / Mohammad Akram, Shabnam Bano, Mohd Asraf	157 , Pura Manohardas Barior Atala Chawraha, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh -211016	Rs. 13,50,080/- & 22/10/2024	House No. 167 / 153 , Pura Manohar Das, Pargana Tehsil -Sadar, District -Allahabad , Uttar Pradesh -211016
3.	OLK1230700005066734 / Ramanand Gupta, Aradhana Shrivastav	563 /32, Chitragupta Nagar Alambagh Near Gurudwara, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226005	Rs. 18,55,780/- & 22/10/2024	House No 545KA/10K-213, Built on Part plot No. - 324, Part Of Khassa No. - 1333 SA Situated At Village - Sarosa Bhabra Pargana - Kakori Tehsil - Sarojini Nagar, Distt.- Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226009

**PLACE: GURGAON, DATE: 26-10-2024** **AUTHORIZED OFFICER, SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE COMPANY LTD.**



# Magisterial probe ordered into custodial death case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A magisterial probe was ordered a day after Chinhat Inspector Ashwini Kumar Chaturvedi was booked along with four others, including deceased businessman Mohit Pandey's adversary Adesh, Adesh's uncle, who is a political figure, and unidentified people in the alleged custodial death at Chinhat police station.

Additionally, Chaturvedi was removed from his post, and Sub-Inspector Bharat Kumar Pathak was given charge of the Chinhat police station.

Meanwhile, the family of the deceased staged a dharna in front of Mantri Awasi on Sunday, demanding compensation.

DCP (East) Shashank Singh said a case was registered on the basis of the complaint given by Mohit's family at the Chinhat police station.

"Inspector-in-charge, Gombi Nagar Extension, Sudhir Awasthi has been tasked with conducting a probe into the case," the DCP said. He explained that the police had written to the district magistrate requesting him for a magisterial inquiry while the Gombi Nagar Extension SHO would investigate the FIR lodged against the former Chinhat inspector and others based on the complaint of Mohit's mother.

A large number of people from the Chinhat area, accompanied by the deceased's wife and mother, blocked the road. The police tried to convince them to disperse, but the protesters refused to budge.

The deadlock continued for hours until a promise to fulfil their demands was communicated to them.

In the meantime, a purported CCTV footage of the businessman's death surfaced on social media. Local sources said that on Friday night, the police detained Mohit and his brother Shobharam in the lockup without registering a case. They were allegedly beaten while in custody. When Mohit Pandey died on Saturday, the challan process under Section 151 was completed.

Meanwhile, a police spokesman said that the cause of death could not be ascertained in the



Deceased Mohit Pandey's kin and others protesting in front of Mantri Awasi in Lucknow on Sunday

## Jungle raj, says Priyanka Gandhi

Lucknow: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday hit out at the BJP over a custodial death in Uttar Pradesh, saying the ruling party has established such a "jungle raj" in the state that police are becoming synonymous with cruelty.

"In Lucknow, UP Police detained two youths and one died the next morning. This is the second death in UP police custody in a fortnight. The family alleges that police killed their son," Priyanka Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

Uttar Pradesh ranks first in the country in terms of custodial deaths, she claimed. "The BJP has established such

post-mortem report. He added that viscera had been preserved for chemical analysis and heart for histopathological examination. Following the uproar on Saturday, Mohit was taken to RML Hospital while a case was registered against the inspector in question and four others. On Sunday morning, three CCTV recordings from the police station were released. The first footage shows Mohit being brought to the police station. The second is from the lockup, and the third shows him drinking water from a bot-

tle. Following the release of this CCTV footage, the family members raised several questions. They asked why only five minutes of footage from the 17-hour incident was released, and why the footage preceding Mohit's transfer to the hospital—when his health deteriorated—was not disclosed. On the other hand, the deceased's mother, Tapeshwari Devi, from Jainabad, Uptron Deva Road in Lucknow, stated in her complaint that there was a minor dispute between her son Mohit and Adesh from Lauai, Chinhat.

Both parties called 112, and the police arrived, taking Mohit to Chinhat police station at around 10 pm. "My elder son Shobharam went to Chinhat police station to meet Mohit at around 11 pm. The police arrested Shobharam as well, claiming he was drunk, while the other party was dealt with leniency because Adesh's uncle is a leader," she alleged. She further said that Adesh's uncle ordered the cops to take her son to the police station, threatening that he would ensure they were dealt with there.

Earlier this month, a 24-year-old man who was arrested during a raid on a gambling den in Lucknow died in police custody. The family of the man, Aman Gautam, alleged that he was beaten to death by police. However, police claimed that he died of a heart attack. Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party's state chief spokesper-

son Vanshraj Dubey said that UP was number one in cases of deaths in police custody. He was reacting to the alleged custodial death of school dress supplier Mohit Pandey in Chinhat police station. Dubey said with two custodial deaths in Lucknow within two weeks, the police had become a "killer" in the Yogi Adityanath regime. He alleged that youths from backward, Dalit and Hindu families were dying in police custody. The AAP leader said that just two weeks ago, a Dalit youth was tortured and beaten so badly in the custody of Lucknow police that he died inside the police station.

## Ensure welfare schemes reach every eligible citizen: CM

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure that all eligible persons get the benefits of the government welfare schemes. He emphasised providing permanent housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, or Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana to those without homes and extending social pension benefits to everyone qualifying for such support.

Chief Minister Yogi issued these directives while addressing public grievances during the Janata Darshan held in front of the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan on Gorakhnath temple premises on Sunday.

The chief minister approached attendees seated on chairs, listened to their concerns one by one, and assured them of timely, transparent and satisfactory resolution of every issue.

The chief minister heard the problems of about 300 people, including several women, at the Janata Darshan. Among them, one woman raised concerns about housing.

In response, the chief minister promptly instructed officials to address her issue with sensitivity and ensure she is provided housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana or Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana, based on eligibility. On complaints of land grabbing, the chief minister emphasised the need for strict legal action in such cases. He directed officials to take decisive measures in matters related to revenue and law enforcement.

Chief Minister Yogi asked the officials to prioritise public welfare initiatives and ensure the prompt resolution of every grievance. He also assured those seeking financial assistance for medical treatment that no treatment would be discontinued due to a lack of funds. He directed the officials to prioritise the preparation of estimates and submit them to the government promptly, assuring that sufficient financial support would be provided for medical treatment.

During the Janata Darshan, Chief Minister Yogi warmly interacted with young children accompanying some women, affectionately handing out chocolates to them.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during Janata Darshan held in front of the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan on Gorakhnath temple premises on Sunday

## No place for sacrifice in politics: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Against the backdrop of the state assembly elections among Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has said that "there is no place for sacrifice in politics".

"If MVA does not keep Samajwadi Party in alliance for Maharashtra polls, then the party (SP) will contest elections on seats where it enjoys public support in the state," Akhilesh Yadav said on Sunday.

"The Maharashtra state president of the Samajwadi Party will decide. First, we will try to be in an alliance. But, if they (MVA) won't keep us in the alliance, we will contest on those seats where we will get votes or we have our organisation working there. We will contest those seats, which will not harm the alliance. But, in politics, there is no place for sacrifice," Akhilesh Yadav said.

The MVA is yet to decide on the Samajwadi Party's long-pending demand of five seats in the Maharashtra assembly elections. Akhilesh's party has tar-

getted the alliance multiple times for delaying a decision on SP's demand. According to Samajwadi Party Maharashtra chief Abu Azmi, if seats are not given to the party, then it will have no option but to contest alone. A Samajwadi Party leader monitoring the process of seat-sharing with MVA here said, "SP leaders spoke to Sharad Pawar on Saturday. He said that we will decide today but I did not receive any call today. I think that we are going to face betrayal like the previous two terms. Looks like they don't want to give seats to the Samajwadi Party."

He said, "The SP favours the cohesion and stability of MVA to prevent the division of votes. If they don't pay attention to us then we won't have an option but to contest alone." Sources in the SP said here that the party was disappointed with MVA's approach towards seat sharing. SP is now planning to contest at least 20 seats in Maharashtra. Abu Azmi has already warned MVA's top leaders that any harm to the alliance due to split in votes will be the result of their ignorance.

## Four killed in road mishaps

Lucknow (PNS/PTI): Two people were killed and 14 others were injured when a truck hit their pickup on the Etawah-Bareilly road in Farrukhabad, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night when the pickup was coming from Mathura to Farrukhabad. The truck hit the pickup from the rear side, injuring 14 people, police said. The injured were rushed to a hospital where Om Prakash Gupta (50) and an unidentified driver died during treatment. The condition of others is said to be stable.

Meanwhile, two persons were killed while a woman was injured in a road accident in Sonbhadra, police said on Sunday. Pipri CO Amit Kumar said that a car going from Renukut to Anpara and a motorcycle coming from the opposite direction collided near village Karhiya on Saturday evening.

While Mahesh (19) and Ramnarayan (20), both residents of Chakelwa police station area of Anpara, who were riding the motorcycle, died on the spot, a woman travelling in the car was injured. The injured woman was admitted to a hospital in Dibulganj.

## Govt reclaims 4,740 hectares of pasture land across UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has launched an extensive campaign to reclaim pasture land for animals across Uttar Pradesh.

As part of the initiative, the authorities have so far freed over 4,740 hectares of pasture land from illegal encroachments, out of the 6,930 hectares marked for recovery.

The initiative aims to restore essential grazing areas, benefiting livestock and supporting the agricultural community. As of October 15, 2024, data from the Board of Revenue shows that there is a total of 61,304.504 hectares of pasture

land in the state. Out of this, 6,930.619 hectares have been identified as illegally occupied. So far, 4,740.598 hectares of this land has been cleared of illegal occupation.

Deoria has 256.296 hectares of pasture land, with 16,458 hectares marked as illegally occupied. Of this, 5,431 hectares has been freed, while efforts are going on to recover the remaining 11,027 hectares. In Jaunpur, there is a total of 1,361.983 hectares of pasture land, with 21,181 hectares freed from illegal occupation out of 70,945 hectares that was illegal-ly occupied. A campaign is planned to reclaim 49,764 hectares from encroachment.

Similarly, in Shamli, of the total 293,577 hectares of pasture land, 27,056 hectares out of 105,752 hectares has been freed of illegal occupation, and efforts are going on to recover 78,696 hectares. Similar efforts are also underway in Bijnor, Mau, Sambhal and Ghaziabad to reclaim marked encroached land.

Regarding green fodder production on pasture land, the Animal Husbandry department reports that there are 6,708 rural cow shelters in the state. Among these, 3,060 are associated with tagged pasture land, which makes up 45.62 per cent of the total cow shelters.

## 4-year-old girl killed by aunt, tantrik

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident, a four-year-old girl was allegedly killed by her aunt and a 'tantrik' as part of black magic rituals in Bareilly.

The duo has been arrested, officials said on Sunday. Acting on a missing person's report filed by the girl's family, police found her body from the aunt's residence, they said. On Saturday, Misty went missing from her home in Shikarpur Chaudhary village, following which her family filed a complaint at Izzat Nagar police station. The activities of Savitri, the aunt, were found to be suspicious when she refused to

allow anyone to enter her home, police said, adding that they took the help of CCTV footage of the area.

Police raided her residence and found Misty's body hidden in a sack near a bore well.

Senior Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said initial investigations suggested that the murder was motivated by black magic rituals performed by Savitri and her relative Ganga Ram who is a 'tantrik'. "The duo, believed to be involved in occult practices, allegedly sacrificed the innocent child as part of their dark rituals," the SSP said.

Police have sent the body for the post-mortem and launched a probe into the matter.

## Maha Kumbh: NCR develops roadmap for crowd mgmt

Prayagraj (PNS): In preparation for Maha Kumbh-2025, the Prayagraj division of North Central Railway has developed a detailed roadmap for crowd management at railway stations. Construction of passenger shelters, with a capacity to accommodate approximately 25,000 people across Prayagraj's railway stations, is nearing completion.

The Kumbh Mela Authority anticipates a turnout of nearly 40 crore devotees. Given the significant influx, approximately 10 crore pilgrims are expected to arrive by train. With such a high volume of passengers expected, the North Central Railway is actively preparing to ensure smooth travel and safe-

ty for devotees arriving from across the country.

Ahead of Maha Kumbh-2025, nine railway stations in Prayagraj are gearing up to manage the large number of devotees expected. NCR's Prayagraj division Public Relations Officer Amit Singh said that the Prayagraj division had crafted a crowd management plan to handle up to 50,000 passengers per hour.

To aid this, 10 shelters for around 25,000 devotees are being set up, with four at Prayagraj junction, three at Naini junction, two at Chheoki station, and one at Subedarganj station. These shelters, originally built for the 2019 Kumbh, are being updated with tempo-

rory ticket counters and toilet facilities. An additional shelter is being constructed at Chheoki station.

According to Amit Singh, colour-coded shelters will be used to organise passengers based on their destinations. For example, red shelters are for travelers heading to Lucknow and Varanasi, green for Kanpur-bound passengers, and yellow for those going toward Satna, Manikpur and Jhansi.

Each station will have information displays for the colour-coded shelters, and announcements will help guide passengers to the right trains. Special shelters are also being arranged for reserved-category passengers.

# Ayodhya to witness grand confluence of culture, tradition and spirituality

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/AYODHYA

Deepotsav-2024 in Ramnagari is set to bring together a grand confluence of spirituality, tradition and culture, promising a unique celebration this year. This Deepotsav will be particularly historic, as it will be the first to take place after the consecration of Ram Lalla in his new temple. Enhancing the festive glow, a new record is expected with the lighting of 25 lakh lamps across the city, creating a dazzling spectacle of devotion. On October 30, the Ramkatha Park will host a vibrant cultural display, featuring the Ramkatha of Uttarakhanda alongside performances from six countries, showcasing the universal appeal of Ramayana's teachings.

Additionally, a mesmerising Hanuman Chalisa dance drama will be performed on the main stage, adding a spiritual depth to the festivities and captivating the audience with its devotional resonance. On October 30, the main stage of Deepotsav at Ramkatha Park will showcase a vibrant line-up

of cultural performances. Ramkatha, the traditional play based on Lord Ram's life, will be performed by artists from six countries—Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia, along with a group from Uttarakhanda.

From October 28 to 30, Ramkatha groups will lead a grand Shobha Yatra procession under the guidance of the Culture department. Among the 11 Ramkatha groups participating are Shri Maruti Nandan Hanuman Adarsh Ramkatha Mandal, Shri Balaji Cultural Development Service Institute, Jai Hanuman Manas Utthan Adarsh Ramkatha Mandal, Shri Avadh Adarsh Ramkatha Committee, and Shri Janak Dulari Institute.

Folk artists groups will also bring unique performances such as Vijayveer Vikram Bahadur, Faruahi by Mata Prasad Verma, Pushpendra Kumar's Bahurupiya from Ayodhya, Sumishtha Mitra's Badhawa, Awadhi folk by Rama Prajapati's team, Nishant Bhadauria Rai from Jhansi, Vantangiya dance by Sugam Singh Shekhawat from

Gorakhpur, and Mayur dance by Madhav Acharya from Mathura.

To host this grand festival, the Yogi government has prepared 10 major stages across Ayodhya, including locations like Guptar Ghat, Badi Devkali, Rama Ghat, Bharatkund, Tulsi Udyan, Bhajan Sandhya Sthal, Naka Hanumangarhi Sahabganj, and Ram Katha Park. Each venue will come alive with performances from 5 pm to 9 pm. The famous Agnihotri brothers will also perform at Ram Ghat. Additionally, artists from every district of Uttar Pradesh will showcase their talents, making this Deepotsav a truly statewide cultural celebration.

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**  
The government is set to transform Ayodhya into a digital city for the eighth Deepotsav, offering an unforgettable blend of faith and illumination. This year, Ayodhya's Dharmapath and Lata Chowk will captivate visitors with their dazzling displays, enhanced by digital pillars that add a modern glow to the city's historic charm.

Twenty-four digital pillars, each 15 feet tall, are being installed along Dharmapath, the main entry route from the National Highway to Ayodhya. From October 28 to 30, these pillars will display scenes from the Ramayana up to Swagatham Dwar, enhanced with attractive lighting effects.

### ECO-FRIENDLY LAMPS

Special eco-friendly lamps will illuminate the Shri Ram temple. These lamps are designed to prevent stains and soot from affecting the temple's structure and will remain lit for extended periods. A special floral decoration will adorn the Ram temple. The temple complex has been divided into various sections for decoration, with each section assigned specific responsibilities. The overall supervision of lighting, entrance arch decorations, and thorough cleaning have been entrusted to Ashu Shukla, a retired IG from the Bihar cadre. Devotees will experience a divine sight as the temple is beautifully decorated with flowers and lights. Environmental protection is also a key focus for this Deepotsav.

## 80,000-diya 'Swastik' to illuminate at Deepostav

PNS ■ AYODHYA

As the Yogi Adityanath government's preparations for Deepotsav 2024 near completion, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University Vice-Chancellor Prof Pratibha Goyal has mobilised a large team to make the event truly historic. Over 30,000 volunteers are decorating 55 ghats along the Saryu river with 2.8 million diyas under the guidance of more than 2,000 supervisors, coordinators, ghat in-charges and other members.

A spectacular 80,000-diya 'Swastik' symbol is being created at ghat number 10 of Ram Ki Paidi, involving more than 150 dedicated volunteers. This grand display will be a major highlight of the celebration, sharing a message of auspiciousness with the world. To achieve a world record, volunteers from the university and other institutions joined the efforts at Ram Ki Paidi on the second day, chanting 'Jai



Shri Ram' as they worked. Clad in ID cards, T-shirts and caps with QR codes, they arranged diyas in 16x16 grids, each containing 256 diyas, as part of the elaborate decoration. On October 30, Chhoti Diwali, a new world record will be set by lighting 2.8 million diyas, each filled with oil and a wick, in the evening. Ghat in-charges and coordinators reg-

ularly guide the volunteers, who carefully arrange the diyas on the ghats after taking them out of cardboard boxes. To support the volunteers, arrangements for clean drinking water have been made at the ghats under the supervision of material coordinators Prof Siddharth Shukla and Prof Gangaram Mishra. In addition, food is being provided at the

Bhajan Sandhya venue, organised by the food committee coordinator Prof Chayan Kumar Mishra and his team. Deputy Registrar of the university, Dinesh Kumar Maurya, in collaboration with the municipal corporation, has deployed a large team to ensure the ghats remain clean.

Prof Sant Sharan Mishra, the Deepotsav nodal officer, stated that 30,000 volunteers from 14 colleges, 37 intermediate colleges, 40 non-governmental organisations and the university campus are involved in the preparations. The volunteers are creating 16x16 diya grids, containing 256 diyas each, across 55 ghats along the Saryu River. Each diya will be filled with 30 ml of mustard oil, with meticulous supervision during the oil-filling process. The arrangement of diyas will be completed by October 28, followed by counting on October 29. On October 30, the diyas will be lit to achieve the world record.



# CM launches scholarship scheme for Sanskrit students



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath giving scholarship to a Sanskrit student at SSU in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a scholarship scheme for the students of all Sanskrit schools, colleges and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) here on Sunday. At a programme organised at SSU premises, Yogi Adityanath transferred an amount of ₹586 lakh as scholarship to the bank accounts of 69,195 Sanskrit students of the state by clicking the computer mouse. This includes 36 students of the SSU. On the occasion the CM symbolically pro-

vided scholarships to 12 children from the stage. While addressing the people, the CM said Sanskrit language was described as the voice of the energy of Indian culture. "Every person should be delighted by this energy. There should be a provision of scholarship for poor and helpless children, but why Sanskrit language was neglected is beyond understanding. Till now, only 300 Sanskrit children have been provided scholarships", he said, adding that scholarships should be provided to all children from Prathama to

Acharya of Sanskrit. He appealed to Sanskrit schools to make efforts by completing the formalities of filling the forms of children etc. Calling upon the people to open institutions that revive the tradition of Gurukul, the CM said the state government will immediately recognise such schools. Quoting the statement of a sage, he described Sanskrit and its literature as the biggest treasure of India. He assured the students of Sanskrit that they should study diligently, the government is taking care of their every facility. The

CM asked to make arrangements for recruitment to the vacant posts in Sanskrit schools and colleges soon, till then he also laid special emphasis on making arrangements for teachers as an alternative arrangement so that the education system of children continues to run smoothly. He also laid special emphasis on taking Sanskrit forward from the point of view of scientific language. He said under the leadership of the prime minister, the civilisation and culture of India has risen. "Sanskrit is not only Devvaani (divine language) but also a scientific solution to all problems of the physical world", he said and added that to promote Sanskrit, research work should be carried forward for which the government will also bring research scholarships. He also highlighted the contribution of Maharishi Arvind in promoting Indian culture. "Every person in the world who is in favour of all-round development is also in favour of the development of Sanskrit. Everyone should try again in this direction so that Kashi again becomes the centre of cultural and spiritual consciousness", he said. UP Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, while welcoming the CM, said that the 235-year-old SSU is in Kashi, the cultural and educa-

tional capital of the world, which is preserving and promoting the Dev Bhasha. "Our culture remained alive due to Sanskrit language", he said, adding that India is a land of culture, spiritual consciousness and if Sanskrit is not safe then the culture will be in danger. "Sanskrit is the language of Vedas and without knowing it, it will be difficult to know the culture of India. Strengthening Sanskrit will strengthen Indian culture and Chief Minister Yogi's focus is constantly in this direction", he said and also attacked Macaulay's education system. The function was presided over by Vice-Chancellor (V-C) Prof Bihari Lal Sharma. In the programme, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath unveiling idol of Lord Hanuman at Kazi Sarai in Varanasi on Sunday.

# Maha Kumbh-2025: Under-construction bridge inspected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Railway Board Satish Kumar along with General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Saumya Mathur conducted trolley inspection of the important bridge under construction on the Ganga river between Jhansi-Prayagraj Rambagh for the convenience of the devotees coming to Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025 and inspected the development works for the convenience of fair passengers at Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhansi stations on Saturday. Senior officers of NER Headquarters Gorakhpur and Varanasi Division were present on the occasion. The CRB conducted a thor-

ough inspection of Jhansi and Prayagraj Rambagh stations to provide ease and proper passenger facilities to the devotees coming to the upcoming Mahakumbh and reviewed the passenger facility expansion works going on at the stations in the context of preparations for the Kumbh Mela and expressed satisfaction over the progress of work. He directed to complete the remaining development works within the stipulated time frame on the basis of appropriate standards with quality. During the inspection, Satish Kumar inspected the important rail bridge number 111 being constructed under doubling on the Ganga river between Jhansi-Prayagraj Rambagh by motor trolley and reviewed the progress with senior officials and engineers of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). This important bridge has 24 girders of 76.2 meter span and its length is about 2 km. The work is in the final stage. Girder launching work has been completed through duct on both ends. Ninety-six per cent formation work has been



CRB Satish Kumar inspecting the preparations for Prayagraj Mahakumbh

during Kumbh Mela, their alternative arrangements and the identified places where they would be set up. The CRB also conducted a thorough inspection of Prayagraj Rambagh station and inspected the passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters, temporary food and water vending stalls, waiting rooms, additional entry and exit routes, permanent and temporary platforms, passenger sheds, RCC benches, foot over bridge, temporary waiting rooms, CCTV surveillance, boundary walls and control room for proper crowd management and passenger facility development works under construction for the convenience of fair passengers during Kumbh Mela and gave necessary suggestions and instructions to the concerned in this regard. During the inspection, Satish Kumar interacted with passengers taking tickets at the counter. It is to be noted that a total of 111.37 km of doubling from Banaras to Jhansi has been completed with electrified lines, the remaining Prayagraj Rambagh to Prayagraj (2.22 km) has been completed on October 21.

# Make proper arrangements on Dhanteras, Diwali: Yogi



CM Yogi Adityanath giving instructions to administrative and police officers at KVC in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath gave instructions to district and police officers for making proper arrangements during the forthcoming festival of Dhanteras, Diwali and Annakut Mahotsav. Though since long Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) like other temples of the city, including Maa Annapurna Temple, also celebrates Annakut Mahotsav of four/five days from Dhanteras, but the festival is organised in a grand way since the stolen Maa Annapurna idol was brought back from Canada after 108 and installed in the

premises of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (KVC) in 2021. During his one-day visit to this holy city and parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Sunday, the CM offered prayers at Kashi Vishwanath and Kal Bhairav temples and performed rituals. The Kashi Vishwanath Temple administration welcomed the CM, honouring him with 'angavastram' (traditional garment) and a memento. After the puja, CM Yogi sought blessings of Lord Shiva for the prosperity and development of Uttar Pradesh. His visit included a heartwarming moment as he handed out toffees to children

gathered outside the temple, bringing smiles to young faces. The CM was joined by prominent leaders, including Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, MLA Saurav Srivastava, and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma. The Executive Officer of the temple, Sunil Kumar Verma, officially welcomed CM Yogi on behalf of the administration. Senior officials, including Commissioner of Police Mohit Agarwal and District Magistrate S Rajalingam, ensured tight security within the temple premises to facilitate a smooth and peaceful visit.

# Darshan of Maa Annapurna's golden idol from Dhanteras

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The darshan of golden idol of Maa Annapurna, as per the tradition, will start from the auspicious occasion of Dhanteras on October 29 which will continue till Annakut Mahotsav. Giving this information, Mahant of famous Maa Annapurna Temple, close to Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Shankar Puri said on the occasion of Dhanteras, the devotees will get treasure in the court of Maa Annapurna as per tradition. The golden idol of Maa Annapurna is brought out only once during the year for darshan on this auspicious occasion. He said, "Maa Annapurna, who gave alms of food and money to Baba Vishwanath, will shower her blessings on her devotees". According to him, "Muhurat Puja" will start from 3 am in Mangal Bela (wee hours) and Shavhidhi Puja will be done till

quarter to five, the doors will open for the general devotees at 5 am. On the day of Dhanteras (on November 29), the doors of the temple will be opened one hour before the scheduled time and for five days devotees will be able to see the golden idol of Maa Annapurna, Maa Bhumi Devi, Lakshmi and Rajat Mahadev. Mahant Shankar Puri said that this time a very auspicious 'jyotishya yog' is being formed on Dhanteras. "There will be prosperity in the country and the treasury will be full", he said. In the morning of Abhijeet Muhurat, after the worship and aarti of the Goddess, the treasure will be worshipped. He said devotees used to get the opportunity to have darshan only four days in a year, but this second year too, devotees will be able to have darshan of the golden Annapurna for five days (till November 2). Mahant Shankar

Puri said the treasure will be distributed on Dhanteras while on the day of Annakut Mahotsav on November 2, a tableau of laddus will be decorated, and at 11.30 pm, the Maha Aarti of the Goddess will be performed, after which the doors of the golden Annapurna will be closed for one year. The devotees will reach the temple from gate number one Dhundhiraj via Bansphatak, while they will go out from Kalika Gali after having darshan of the golden Goddess through the temporary stairs built there. Manager Kashi Mishra said the number of cameras has been increased for security. "In view of the rush of devotees, monitoring will be done through the control room. Sevaadars will be stationed at various places", he said, adding that arrangements will be made so that all the visitors coming to the temple get an easy darshan.

# Coin machines to be installed in mela area

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The world's largest Maha Kumbh Mela will be starting in Sangam from January 13 next year. This time the entire Mela area will be plastic free. The government and the Mela administration are fully focused on this. Special initia-

tives are being taken for this purpose. For the first time, coin machines will be installed at different places in the Mela area. One will get a cotton bag as soon as he/she puts 10 rupees coin in it. There are preparations to instal eight coin machines in the Mela

area and the city. The Yogi government is taking new measures to make the Maha Kumbh clean and eco-friendly. From making people aware to making the Mela area and the whole of Prayagraj plastic free, a campaign is being run. In this sequence, now these coin machines will be installed

through CSR fund. Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand said that citizens will be able to get cotton bags by putting a 10 rupee coin in them. Bags can also be obtained by scanning the QR code and making online payment. This initiative will inspire people not to use plastic bags

and will help in making the Maha Kumbh Mela area as well as the whole of Prayagraj plastic free. After Maha Kumbh, there are plans to install many more machines in the second phase. These are to be installed at various places, including vegetable market, fruit market and AG office.

# Gym trainer kills woman, hides body in pit, held

PTI/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A gym trainer allegedly killed a married woman he was having an affair with and hid her body in a pit near the district magistrate's camp office-cum-residence here at Civil Lines. Inspired by the crime thriller Drishyam, he hoped police would not look there. Vimal Soni's plan seemed to have worked for four months until police finally caught up with him and he was arrested on Saturday night. During interrogation, he confessed to killing 32-year-old Ekta Gupta, a Civil Lines resident, who was found to be married to a stock trader, police said on Sunday. "He said he killed Ekta because she was upset about his impending marriage," Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shrawan Kumar Singh. "On June 24th, Vimal picked up Ekta from the gym and drove to a secluded location to discuss their relationship. A heated argument ensued, during which Vimal punched Ekta in the neck, leading to her death," said the DCP. Inspired by the movie Drishyam, Vimal chose the location near the DM's camp office to dispose of the body, believing it to be a less likely place to be discovered, the officer said. Police said the

spot where he allegedly killed her was only a few hundred metres away from the DM's camp office. "The accused dug an eight-feet-deep pit inside the officer's club adjacent to the camp office-cum-residence of the district magistrate and buried the body there," said the officer. Despite his meticulous planning — Soni had avoided using his phone around the area to avoid detection — police successfully recovered the body and arrested the accused, he said. **KILLED:** Two bike-borne labourers were killed when a speeding pebble-laden dumper hit them near a petrol pump on the highway under Vidhnu police station area on Sunday morning. Inspector Jitendra Pratap Singh said after impounding the dumper, bodies had been sent for autopsy. On the basis of complaint, further action will be initiated in the matter, he said. Meanwhile around a dozen passengers were injured when a private bus overturned in a pit in Sadh police station area on Sunday morning. Of them, seven seriously injured passengers were referred to the LLR (Hallet) hospital, Kanpur, while those with minor injury proceeded for their destination. The incident took place near

Mirzapur village turn of Dargahi Lal Canal bridge when the private bus in a bid to give side to a vehicle coming from the opposite direction suddenly overturned into the pit. On getting information the Sadh police rushed to the spot and after sending all the injured to the CHC, restored the traffic. The private bus after collecting passengers from Jahanabad was going to Kanpur via Mahanipur and Mirzapur. After it reached near Dargahi Lal canal bridge, the driver in order to give side to a vehicle coming from the opposite direction took the vehicle to the roadside. Suddenly, the bus fell into the pit and overturned. The villagers rushed to the spot and rescued the seriously injured passengers. They were identified as Raisa (45) of Koda, Jahanabad (Fatehpur), her daughter Humaira Anzum (25), Asha (40), Savitri (45) of Gaura, Chandpur, Fatehpur, Sitieshwari (45) of Jarara, Bakewar, Gorelal, son of Kailash, and Srimati (75) wife of Ramautar of Bharthua. Villagers broke the windowpanes and rescued the passengers. Sadh SO Kushalpal along with inspector Anand Dwivedi rushed to the spot. Many ambulances reached the spot which took the injured to the Bhitargaon CHC.

# Diwali cultural programme organised



Prayagraj (PNS): Ashirwad's Diwali cultural programme was organised by Ashirwad Sansthan at District Panchayat Office, Prayagraj, by the courtesy of IFFCO Ghyanagar Phulpur Mahila Chetna Club here on Sunday. The programme started with lighting the lamp by chief guest

Vineeta Kudesia and other dignitaries. In the cultural programme, children of Kusht Ashram Vidyalaya presented Ghoomar dance, children of Raj Ansh Vidyalaya presented songs and children of deaf & dumb vidyalaya presented a group dance. Chief guest and president of Mahila

Chetna Club, Vineeta Kudesia said that our organisation IFFCO and Mahila Chetna Club definitely participate in such programmes and help the needy. The programme was conducted by Abhijeet Mishra. IFFCO Officers' Association Vice-President DK Singh, Mahila Chetna Club members Rama Vaish, Sunita Mishra, Alka Gupta, Sarita Singh, Punam Sharma, Anamika Mishra, Mamta Raj and Vibha Shahi were present. **EFFERVESCENCE:** The final day of Effervescence ended with a night that will remain etched in memory as Sanam Puri won the hearts of audience with scintillating performance at IIIT Allahabad on Sunday.

# Union election organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Regional Labour Commissioner (Central), Kanpur, Ram Krishna Meena, visited NTPC Auraiya as observer for union election. In his presence, election was held between two workmen unions of NTPC Auraiya. The election was held peacefully and smoothly. Auraiya gas power NTPC Karamchhari Sangh (affiliated to BMS) was declared the winner. The workmen election is held



Winner Union office-bearer being felicitated at NTPC Auraiya.

once in two years in NTPC projects. The election was coordinated by Tanmoy Dutta, Head of HR, NTPC Auraiya and Alok Adhikari, Manager(HR).

# New Knp City project: KDA gets registry done of farmers' land



OSD, KDA, Dr Ravi Pratap Singh handing over demand draft to farmers.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) got the registry of 11 more farmers' land done under the New Kanpur City Project. Thus, out of 89 hectares of land consent had been received for acquisition of 55 hectares of land so far. Efforts are on to acquire remaining land required for setting up the project. For the farmers who failed to execute registry of their land so far, efforts are on to acquire their land also. The KDA got the registry of 11 farmers' 1.52933 hectares of land, including a builder, done and paid approximately ₹13.31 crore as compensation. OSD Dr Ravi Pratap Singh said 30 more farmers had also agreed to execute registry of their 3.1 hectares of land. Besides, ₹16 crore will be paid to them towards compensation. They have already given

their consent and the process for execution of registry will start soon. Talks with many other farmers are also on and most of them had planned to submit their consent. The KDA will set up a camp on the spot for completing all procedural formalities for onward registry of their land soon, he said and added that the work for acquiring the land will start from November for which notices were being served to farmers. **KITP AWARDED 'A' Grade ACCREDITATION:** The Kanpur Institute of Technology and Pharmacy (KITP) has been awarded 'A' Grade accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The KITP has become the first pharmacy institute in Kanpur to achieve this feat that too in first cycle. Director Dr Prashant Katiyar told mediapersons this significant achievement highlights the institute's unwavering commitment to providing high-quality education, fostering research and promoting community engagement. The institute offers a range of undergraduate (BPharm) and Diploma (DPharm) courses in pharmacy, designed to equip students with the necessary tools to excel in their careers, he added.



# PM Modi envisions India as global animation powerhouse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the popularity of Indian animated series such as 'Chhota Bheem', 'Hanuman' and 'Motu-Patlu', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is on the way to ushering in a new revolution in the world of animation and urged the people to take the resolve of making the country a global animation powerhouse.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, he said India's animation characters and movies, on account of content and creativity, are being loved all over the world.

"You must remember the days when 'Chhota Bheem' started airing on TV. Children can never forget that; there was so much excitement about 'Chhota Bheem'. You would be surprised that today 'Dholakpur ka Dhol' attracts children not only in India but also in other countries. Similarly, our other animated serials such as 'Krishna', 'Hanuman', 'Motu-Patlu' also have a fan-following all over the world," the prime minister said.

"You might have noticed that from the smartphone to the cinema screen, gaming console to virtual reality, animation is omnipresent. India is on the way to ushering in a new revolution in the world of animation," Modi asserted.

He also pointed out that the gaming space of India is also expanding rapidly and Indian games are also gaining popularity all over the world.

"When I met leading gamers of India a few months ago... I got an opportunity to know



and understand the amazing creativity and quality of Indian games. Indeed, in the country, there's a constant wave of creative energy," he said.

In the world of animation, 'Made in India' and 'Made by Indians' can be noticed everywhere, Modi said.

"You will be happy to know that today India's talent is also a significant part of foreign productions. Be it the present day Spider-Man or Transformers, in both these movies, Harinarayan Rajeev's contribution has been highly appreciated by people," he said.

Animation studios of India, are working with world famous production companies such as Disney and Warner Brothers, Modi noted.

"Today our youth are creating original Indian content, which reflects glimpses of our culture. These are being watched all over the world," he said.

Modi stressed that today, the animation sector has donned the form of an industry that

achieve great success," he said.

Noting that the 'World Animation Day' will be celebrated on October 28, he called on the people to take the resolve of making India a global animation powerhouse.

Recalling Swami Vivekananda's mantra of success - 'Take an idea, Make that one idea your life', Modi said the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is also riding on this mantra of success, and noted this campaign has become a part of our collective consciousness.

"It has become our inspiration at every step. Self-reliance has become not only our policy, but our passion as well. Not that long ago... Just 10 years ago, if someone had said then, that some complex technology was to develop in India, many people would not believe it - but today the same people are amazed to see the success of the country," Modi said.

Becoming self-reliant, India is doing wonders in every sector, he asserted. "Just think, India, which used to import mobile phones once upon a time, is the world's second largest manufacturer today. India, which once was the biggest buyer of defence equipment in the world, is now also exporting to 85 countries. Today, in space technology, India has become the first country to reach the South Pole of the Moon," he said.

He said this campaign of self-reliance is no longer just a government campaign now and the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is becoming a people's campaign with success in every field, the

prime minister said.

"Just as this month, we inaugurated Asia's largest 'Imaging Telescope MACE' in Hanle, Ladakh. It is situated at a height of 4300 metres. Do you know what is special about it as well? It is 'Made in India'. Imagine, the place where the cold dips to minus 30 degrees, where there is a shortage of even oxygen, it is there that our scientists have achieved something that no other nation in Asia has done," he said.

Even though the Hanle Telescope is watching a distant world, it is also showing us something more - the capabilities of self-reliant India, Modi said.

He urged people to share as many examples of India becoming self-reliant as possible. "What new innovation have you noticed in your neighbourhood? Which Local Start-up has impressed you the most? Along with hashtag A t m a n i r b h a r Innovation, write down this information on social media and celebrate Atmanirbhar Bharat," Modi said.

In this festive season, Modi urged people to strengthen this campaign of Atmanirbhar Bharat and asked them to do their shopping with the mantra of Vocal for Local.

"This is the new India where the impossible is just a challenge... Where Make in India has now turned into Make for the world, where every citizen is an innovator, where every challenge is an opportunity," Modi said.

"We not only have to make India self-reliant, but also strengthen our country as a global powerhouse of innovation," he said.

# SC seeks Uttarakhand government's response on plea for Madhumita Shukla murder convict

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has sought the Uttarakhand government's response on a plea seeking the premature release of one of the convicts in the 2003 murder case of 26-year-old poet Madhumita Shukla.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih issued notice to the Uttarakhand government on a plea by Rohit Chaturvedi seeking direction to a competent authority for ordering his premature release.

Additional Advocate General Garima Prasad, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government referred to earlier judgements of the apex court passed in the Bilkis Bano case on January 8 and May 13, 2022 and said that the competent authority in this case will be the Uttarakhand government.

She submitted that this court has held on January 8 that the state in which trial of a criminal case has taken place will be the competent authority to deal with premature release of convicts as per state's policy.

"Since the case was transferred to Uttarakhand from Uttar Pradesh on the orders of this court, in this case the competent authority will be the Uttarakhand government," Prasad submitted.

The bench agreed to issue a fresh notice to the Uttarakhand government and posted the matter for further hearing on November 14.

Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh government moved the top court seeking a recall of an order that has asked it to consider a premature release of Chaturvedi.

The UP government has contended that in view of the second Bilkis Bano judgement of January 8 this year, the state has sought a recall or modification of the December 15, 2023 order passed in the case of Chaturvedi.

On January 8, the top court quashed the Gujarat government's remission granted to 11 convicts in a case involving the gangrape of Bilkis Bano and murder of her seven family members during the 2002 Godhra riots.

It had said the Gujarat government was not the appropriate authority to pass the remission order and clarified that the state in which an offender is tried and sentenced is competent to decide a remission plea of the convict.



The convicts in the Bilkis Bano case were tried in Maharashtra.

In the process, the bench had nullified a May 13, 2022 judgement of another apex court bench that had directed the Gujarat government to consider the remission applications of the 11 convicts, saying it was obtained by "playing fraud on court".

On May 13, 2022, a bench comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi (now retired) and Vikram Nath asked the Gujarat government to consider the plea of convict Radheshyam Shah for a premature release in terms of its remission policy of July 9, 1992, holding that the government of the state where the offence had taken place has the jurisdiction to decide the application.

In the present case, on December 15, 2023, a bench of Justices Aniruddha Bose (now retired) and Masih, relying on the May 13, 2022 judgment, asked the Uttar Pradesh government to consider the remission plea of Chaturvedi, who was tried for murder in a court in Uttarakhand.

"We, accordingly, direct that the remission plea which was filed by the petitioner-convict (Chaturvedi) be sent to the home secretary, state of Uttar Pradesh by the state of Uttarakhand.

This shall be done within a period of three weeks from date. Thereafter, the state of Uttar Pradesh shall examine the question and take a decision in that regard within a further period of eight weeks," it had directed on December 15, 2023.

The UP government has sought a recall of the order that has asked it to decide the convict's remission plea on the ground that the apex court, in the subsequent judgment in the Bilkis Bano case, has held that the state where the convicts were tried is the requisite authority to decide such a plea for premature release.

Shukla was shot dead on May 9, 2003 in Lucknow's Paper Mill Colony while she was pregnant.

Former UP minister Amarmani Tripathi was arrested in September 2003 in connection with the killing of the poet with whom he was allegedly in a relationship. Subsequently, other accused were also arrested in connection with a conspiracy to kill Shukla.

On October 24, 2007, a trial court in Uttarakhand convicted Amarmani Tripathi, his wife Madhumani Tripathi, nephew Rohit Chaturvedi and associate Santosh Kumar Rai for Shukla's murder and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

Amarmani Tripathi, who was elected from the Nautanwa constituency, was a minister in the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh in 2001 and also in the BSP government formed in 2002. He has also been associated with the Samajwadi Party.

On June 17, 2003, the probe was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The trial was shifted from Uttar Pradesh to Uttarakhand by the Supreme Court on February 8, 2007.

On July 16, 2012, the Uttarakhand High Court upheld their conviction and sentence. The order was upheld by the apex court on November 19, 2013.

On August 24, 2023, the Uttar Pradesh prisons department issued an order for a premature release of Amarmani Tripathi and his wife Madhumani Tripathi, citing the state's 2018 policy on remission and also the fact that they had completed 16 years of their sentences.

Chaturvedi, who was convicted for criminal conspiracy and murder, had applied for a premature release to the Uttarakhand government but his plea was rejected.

Thereafter, citing the first Bilkis Bano case judgement on remission (of May 13, 2022), he sought a direction from the apex court to the Uttar Pradesh government for his premature release.

# Satcom industry urges Government to protect key frequency bands for satellite communication

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The satellite-communication industry has urged the government to protect the key frequency bands used by them, particularly the Ka and Ku bands, from being allocated to terrestrial services.

The Satcom Industry Association of India has also asked the government to reserve the 27.5-28.5 GHz band exclusively for satellite services, instead of transferring it to IMT (International Mobile Telecommunications) for flexible use, in line with global practices.

"Any reduction in satellite bandwidth will not only double the gateway requirements but also increase operational costs for satellite operators, ultimately affecting end-users. We must prioritise the preservation of these frequency bands for satellite-communication services to avoid unnecessary financial burdens," Subba Rao Pavuluri, president, SIA-India, said in a statement.

The industry body has also proposed specific frequency ranges in the Ku and Ka bands for the NGSO-based Fixed Satellite Services (FSS). SIA-India represents major

satellite providers, including Inmarsat, Viasat, SES, Intelsat, Telesat, Omnispace, Amazon, AsiaSat and Hughes Communications. The association has also called for clear guidelines on the authorisation process for instances, such as when a single satellite operator seeks to provide both a gateway earth station and user terminal services.

"Establishing these guidelines is essential to ensure a streamlined and efficient framework that supports the growth and reliability of satellite communication services," Anil Prakash, director general, SIA-India, said.

The association has also advocated for long-term spectrum assignments and proposed a maximum assignment period of 20 years with renewal rights, as seen in several international regimes. Such an approach will provide satellite operators with the necessary confidence to invest in their infrastructure and services over an extended timeframe, they have said. Additionally, SIA-India has also suggested that a single licence should suffice for multiple antennas located at one site to streamline operations.

# PM Modi to inaugurate C-295 aircraft at Vadodara



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the inauguration of a manufacturing facility for C-295 planes in Vadodara, official sources on Sunday said of the 40 aircraft to be made in India, the first C-295 is likely to roll out of the plant in September 2026.

Prime Minister Modi and his Spanish counterpart Pedro Sanchez

counterpart will inaugurate the Final Assembly Line plant of C-295 aircraft at Vadodara on Monday, the first private sector final assembly line for military aircraft in India, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had said in a statement on Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone of the Final Assembly Line (FAL) plant of C-295 aircraft in Vadodara in October 2022. The Ministry of Defence in September 2021 signed a Rs 21,935-crore contract with Airbus Defense and Space SA, Spain for supply of 56 aircraft. Of these 56 aircraft, a total of 16 will be brought in flyaway condition directly from Spain, and 40 will be built in India by

Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL). First C-295 medium tactical transport aircraft was delivered in September 2023.

As on date, the IAF has "already inducted six C-295 aircraft" in its Vadodara-based 11 Squadron. The last of the 16 flyaway aircraft will be delivered by August 2025, an official source said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez is scheduled to visit India from October 28-30, during which he will visit the Vadodara facility on Monday.

"Of the 40 aircraft to be made in India, the first C-295 will roll out of the Vadodara facility in September 2026 and the remaining 39 aircraft by August 2031," the source added.

# Government seeks public input on draft arbitration and conciliation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to provide "further boost" to institutional arbitration and reduce court intervention in such cases, the government has come out with a draft bill seeking views on the proposed amendments.

The Department of Legal Affairs in the law ministry has invited comments on the draft Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2024, saying "the aim and purpose is to provide further boost to institutional arbitration,



reduce court intervention in arbitrations and ensuring timely conclusion of arbitration proceedings". The draft bill comes months after an expert committee

headed by former law secretary and former Lok Sabha secretary general T K Vishwanathan submitted its report on proposed reforms in the arbitration sector to the law ministry.

The draft bill proposes the concept of 'emergency arbitration'. The proposed amendment says arbitral institutions may, for the purpose of grant of interim measures, provide for appointment of 'emergency arbitrator' prior to the constitution of an arbitral tribunal.

The emergency arbitrator appointed will conduct proceedings in the manner as may be specified by the (arbitration) council. At the same time, the draft bill also omits some of the clauses of the present law.

One of the clauses omitted relates to laying of notifications proposed issued, in both Houses of Parliament when it is in session.

The omitted clause read: "A copy of every notification proposed to be issued... Shall be laid in draft before each House of Parliament, while it

is in session, for a total period of 30 days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in disapproving the issue of the notification or both Houses agree in making any modification in the notification, the notification shall not be issued or, as the case may be, shall be issued only in such modified form as may be agreed upon by the

both Houses of Parliament". Addressing an event here last year, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar had lamented that retired judges have kept the arbitral system of the country in a tight fist grip, denying chance to other qualified minds. He said India is known for its rich human resources, but they are not picked up to adjudicate arbitral process.

Successive governments have been pushing to make India a hub of international arbitration on the lines of London and Singapore, with limited success.

# Cyber criminals take advantage of user's lack of technical knowledge: CERT-In

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian cyber-security agency CERT-In on Sunday shared a list that talks about more than a dozen ways in which online scams are being perpetrated by fraudsters in the country, including "digital arrest" to dupe people by stealing their money and private data.

The public advisory has been accessed by PTI and it came on a day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi too cautioned people against such frauds in his monthly "Mann ki Baat" radio broadcast.

The Computer Emergency Response Team of India (CERT-In) advisory said "digital arrest" is an online scam as "government agencies do not use platforms like WhatsApp or Skype for official communication". "Verify their identity by directly contacting the relevant agency," it



recommended. The advisory said in a case of "digital arrest", victims receive a phone call, e-mail or message claiming that they are under investigation for illegal activities, such as

identity theft or money laundering. The scammer threatens the victim with arrest or legal consequences unless he takes immediate action. They often create a sense of

panic to prevent rational thinking, the advisory said. Under the guise of "clearing their name", "assisting with the investigation" or "refundable security deposit/escrow account", individuals are coerced into transferring large sums of money to specified bank accounts or UPI IDs, it added.

The advisory asked people, who get contacted by such cyber criminals, to "not panic as scammers use fear and urgency to manipulate victims".

"Take a moment to assess the situation calmly before responding. Avoid sharing personal information and never disclose sensitive personal or financial details over the phone or video calls, especially to unknown numbers," the CERT-In said. It stressed that people should not transfer money "under pressure" as legitimate law-

enforcement agencies "will never pressure you into sending money immediately".

"If someone demands money over the phone or online, it's most likely a scam," it said. The advisory said staying "vigilant and informed" is crucial to protect oneself from this "emerging cyber threat".

The advisory also spoke about other online cons like "phishing scams", in which scammers create e-mails and messages that appear legitimate, often using logos and branding from trusted organisations; "lottery and prize scams" where victims receive notifications claiming that they have won a huge amount of money and to claim the prize, they are asked to pay a processing fee or taxes.

It said scammers exploit "hope and greed" to carry out lottery scams. "Emotional manipulation

scams" are perpetrated on online dating communication apps where scammers build emotional connections and then solicit money for emergencies like medical treatment and request that funds be sent via crypto currency.

"Job scams" are meant to con fresh graduates by posting about fake work listings on legitimate hiring portals or social media. As part of "tech support scams", cyber criminals take advantage of a user's lack of technical knowledge and stealthily gain access to his computer by warning about a virus and then steal sensitive personal data.

"Investment scams" cash on a person's desire to earn quick money as they promise "unrealistic" returns via Ponzi or pyramid schemes and in "cash-on-delivery scams", criminals set up fake online stores accepting CoD orders.

When the product is delivered, it is either counterfeit or completely different from what was advertised.

To con people using "fake charity appeal scams", scammers create convincing websites or social media profiles asking for donations for fake causes like disaster relief or health initiatives and use such images or stories that provoke sympathy or urgency.

"Mistaken money-transfer scams" are those in which fraudsters contact a victim via e-mail or social media, claiming that money has been mistakenly sent to his account as they use fake transaction receipts to ask the person to return the funds immediately to avoid legal issues.

"Phone scams" are those where victims receive calls or messages under the fake name of a telecom regulatory body, saying

there is an "issue" in their service as they urgently seek one-time passwords (OTPs) and banking information for identity verification.

"Parcel scams" are like "digital arrest" where victims are informed over a call or message that they are under probe as their drugs-laden parcel has been seized and they will be arrested or may have to face legal consequences if they do not pay a fine.

As part of the "loan or cards scam", fraudsters offer loans with low interest rates, coupled with quick approval, and "disappear" after the victims transfers an upfront fee for securing the loan.

The advisory suggested a host of best practices and counter-measures to stay vigilant against such crimes and not give into the "pressure tactics" deployed by cyber criminals, who seek quick action by creating "a sense of urgency".





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Clouds of doom

As the US push for de-escalation, the risk of a multi-front war looms large, threatening to destabilise West Asia

The recent Israeli airstrikes on Iran and the subsequent retaliatory measures have intensified the long-standing conflict between the two nations, raising fears of a broader war in West Asia. The airstrikes, which targeted Iranian military installations and reportedly resulted in the deaths of four Iranian soldiers, were framed as a response to Iranian aggression. Iran's ally, Hezbollah, quickly reacted with rocket salvos targeting residential areas in northern Israel, signalling the potential for the conflict to spread. The current episode of hostilities began after Israeli warplanes allegedly used Iraqi airspace to conduct strikes on military and radar installations in Tehran. These actions were framed by Israel as necessary measures to neutralise threats posed by Iran and its regional proxies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran has condemned the strikes as a violation of its sovereignty, insisting on its right to retaliate. As expected the United States has firmly backed Israel, reiterating its "ironclad" support and cautioning Iran against further retaliation. Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, expressing concern about the potential for the violence to escalate uncontrollably.



The conflict's spillover into Lebanon, where Hezbollah's rocket attacks targeted northern Israel, highlights the interconnected nature of West Asia politics. Hezbollah, a powerful militia with close ties to Tehran, represents Iran's most prominent proxy in the region. Its involvement indicates that the conflict could easily escalate beyond a bilateral confrontation between Israel and Iran, drawing in other state and non-state actors. The conflict's potential to involve additional countries is significant. Lebanon, already grappling with a fragile political and economic situation, could become a battlefield, destabilising the broader Levant. Similarly, Iraq's alleged involvement in providing airspace for Israeli operations could trigger responses from Shia militias in the country. Besides, Iran's network of proxies, including militias in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, could engage in coordinated retaliatory strikes against Israel or the US interests in the region. This would complicate efforts to contain the conflict and could lead to an asymmetric, multi-front war. It goes without saying that diplomatic efforts are urgently needed to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. One country that could convince Israel for ceasefire is the US. It could leverage its influence over Israel and its regional allies to push for restraint, while simultaneously deterring Iranian retaliation through diplomatic channels. In fact even the US does not want the war to spill over. Direct communication between Washington and Tehran could prevent misunderstandings that might trigger further escalation. Besides, international neutral actors such as India, Russia, or regional mediators like Oman could facilitate backchannel negotiations aimed at establishing a ceasefire. The war must be stopped at any cost now else it could be a free-for-all, making it precursor to the World War III.

Lebanon, already grappling with a fragile political and economic situation, could become a battlefield, destabilising the broader Levant. Similarly, Iraq's alleged involvement in providing airspace for Israeli operations could trigger responses from Shia militias in the country. Besides, Iran's network of proxies, including militias in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, could engage in coordinated retaliatory strikes against Israel or the US interests in the region. This would complicate efforts to contain the conflict and could lead to an asymmetric, multi-front war. It goes without saying that diplomatic efforts are urgently needed to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. One country that could convince Israel for ceasefire is the US. It could leverage its influence over Israel and its regional allies to push for restraint, while simultaneously deterring Iranian retaliation through diplomatic channels. In fact even the US does not want the war to spill over. Direct communication between Washington and Tehran could prevent misunderstandings that might trigger further escalation. Besides, international neutral actors such as India, Russia, or regional mediators like Oman could facilitate backchannel negotiations aimed at establishing a ceasefire. The war must be stopped at any cost now else it could be a free-for-all, making it precursor to the World War III.

### PICTALK



People buy decorative items at a market ahead of the Diwali festival, in Amritsar

PTI

## Come winter, Delhi chokes again

Despite the implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan, including stricter dust control and bans on open burning, smog continues to blanket the city



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Every year, an estimated 4.2 million deaths are linked to ambient air pollution worldwide, as nearly 91 per cent of the global population resides in areas where air quality exceeds the safe limits set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In Asia's largest metropolitan regions, rapid urbanisation, unchecked industrialisation, population growth, and the surge in automobiles and construction activities have exacerbated air pollution levels, posing severe health risks. Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, exemplifies this crisis, with its air quality frequently plummeting to hazardous levels, especially during the winter months, making it a focal point in the battle against air pollution in the region. On the morning of October 19, 2024, the Air Quality Index (AQI) reached concerning levels in various parts of the Capital City, particularly in Anand Vihar and Akshardham, where it climbed to 334, placing it in the "very poor" category. The worsening air quality in Delhi can be attributed to several key factors. First, as easterly winds set in, dust pollution across the National Capital Region (NCR) has become a primary cause of the declining AQI. The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), a series of measures aimed at addressing Delhi's air pollution, was implemented on October 15 as the situation began to worsen. These measures include frequent cleaning of roads and restrictions on diesel generators. However, despite these efforts, the problem continues to escalate. One of the most significant contributors to Delhi's declining air quality is stubble burning in neighbouring states, primarily Punjab and Haryana. The Early Warning System (EWS) for Delhi predicts that the contribution of stubble burning to the city's pollution levels is expected to increase significantly over a few weeks. The seasonal practice of burning crop residue adds large amounts of particulate matter (PM2.5) to the air, exacerbating the already poor conditions in the city. As air quality continues to worsen, there are reports of residents



complaining of increasing health issues. Many are experiencing respiratory problems, including difficulty breathing, coughing, and throat irritation. According to media reports, the smog and particulate matter have caused inflammation of the airways and irritation in the eyes. These symptoms are consistent with high levels of pollution, which contribute to various respiratory illnesses to the extent that doctors have been receiving patients with skin issues too. Moreover, ENT specialists have noted a surge in cases involving nasal irritation, throat inflammation, and persistent dry coughs. These symptoms are affecting children and adults too with complaints of inflammation, and gastrointestinal problems, such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and dyspepsia, which have also been linked to pollution. In this regard, 'climate change' is another factor worsening this situation in Delhi. With changing weather patterns, temperature inversions at regular intervals, and extreme weather conditions even during summer and winter, in this season, pollutants become trapped near the ground, creating a layer of smog. Delhi's minimum temperature of 19.2 degrees Celsius, slightly above the sea-



THE WORSENING AIR QUALITY IN DELHI CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL KEY FACTORS. FIRST, AS EASTERLY WINDS SET IN, DUST POLLUTION ACROSS THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HAS BECOME A PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE DECLINING AQI

sonal average, contributes to these conditions. Moreover, climate change also aggravates the effects of vehicular emissions by reducing the frequency of rainfall, which would otherwise help to clear particulate matter from the air. The government has taken several measures to curb the rising pollution, including implementing the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) restrictions - which include different stages I-IV - besides imposing fines for open burning. Additionally, authorities have been tasked with identifying local sources contributing to the worsening air quality. To tackle the immediate crises that have engulfed the Capital City, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage 1 of the Graded Response Action Plan across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan, in response to air quality data and weather forecasts provided by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), with a series of stringent measures, aimed at mitigating air pollution. Key restrictions include enhanced dust control protocols at construction sites, improved waste management practices, and rigorous checks

on polluting vehicles and industrial emissions, particularly from power plants and brick kilns. Additionally, open waste burning and the use of diesel generators are prohibited, along with a ban on coal and firewood in eateries. Construction and demolition activities exceeding 500 square meters face severe limitations, and diesel/petrol vehicles older than 10-15 years, as well as the use of firecrackers, are banned until January 1, 2025. Not only this, traffic management is also prioritised, with increased deployment of police in congested areas to reduce vehicular idling, while visibly polluting vehicles face strict penalties and possible impoundment. These measures form part of a broader strategy to curtail air pollution and improve public health. The situation is also a stark reminder of the need for collective action to address the underlying causes of air pollution, including vehicular emissions, waste burning, and industrial activities, in addition to climate mitigation efforts. What authorities must also look at is the underutilisation of the 'smog tower', which was introduced as a major intervention.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BRICS PRIORITISES DEVELOPMENT

Madam — The power of diplomacy is writ large in the recently concluded bilateral meeting between India and China on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Russia. It also broke some ice ever since the deadly clash in 2020. However, notwithstanding a new deal settled on the disengagement of troops, both remain deeply suspicious of each other. That BRICS has a greater relevance in a multipolar and multidimensional context at a time when the world faces multiple challenges like the ongoing wars, economic uncertainty, climate change, terrorism, east-west and north-south divide as the forum reflects the Global South's deeper concerns, with many more countries queuing up to join or partner with the grouping. The first ever attendance of new member countries like the UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia and Iran opposing the unilateral sanctions by the west on other nations underscores their challenges confronting them and encourages them to unite for a fairer international order. Another case in point is the creation of the New Development Bank, which has emerged as a significant platform for the needs of such countries. Greater use of local currency finds mention in the Kazan declaration rather than supporting a yuan anchored BRICS against the U.S. dollar. India favours greater use of local currencies for cross border payment system. Increasing use of UPI, which has been adopted by many countries including the UAE acts as a bulwark against the west. The development of the global south remains the top priority of the BRICS Summit in contrast to portraying the grouping as only a gang up against the US-led west. Other initiatives include start-up forums, workforce skilling initiatives, and digital public infrastructure providing low-cost solutions for developing countries.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

#### IMPROVE RURAL HEALTHCARE

Madam — There should be the government's special focus on public health, particularly in tribal areas in this season. The

#### Glaciers are melting fast



The rapid melting of all 900 glaciers in Uttarakhand, along with 9,575 others across the Himalayas, has reached a critical level due to global warming. Alarming factors like deforestation, black carbon deposits, and greenhouse gas emissions are accelerating this decline, leading to water scarcity, impacting hydropower generation,

and threatening the extinction of many aquatic species. To protect our nation and environment from these apocalyptic consequences, immediate and decisive action is essential. According to the Global Forest Watch report, "From 2001-2023, Uttarakhand lost 20.7 thousand hectares of tree cover, representing 0.89% of the global total." This tree loss is unacceptable, and measures like afforestation, preserving green areas around glaciers, and strengthening forest protection are crucial. Furthermore, it is imperative to establish research and development projects to study and preserve glaciers and to limit black carbon emissions. Acting now is essential to safeguarding our natural resources and the future of our environment.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

cases of diarrhoea are being reported in an increased number than before across the state of Andhra Pradesh. The tribal areas are prone to different types of fevers. The greater prevalence of anaemia, malnutrition and lack of access to medical services in those areas, make things worse for the people with added acute illnesses. So the government should take a comprehensive approach to addressing the public health issues. The ground-level coordination among various departments is the need of the hour. The quick reporting of likely contagious disease at the beginning will help the authorities get prepared with preventive plans and stop it from turning into an epidemic. There is a saying in epidemiology, i.e., it's better to stamp the spark first than to call the fire brigade later. The government should carry out regular door-to-door public health surveys, monitoring, medical camps, chlorination of water and mass treatment for malaria in prone areas. The mobile ambulances should be kept ready near the habitats, which don't have road connectivity.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

#### KIWIS WINS PUNE TEST

Madam — Kudos to the Kiwis for their marvellous victory at the Pune Test and a series win since 1955 on Indian soil for the first time. Bowlers winning matches has been proven again when Kiwis Mitchell Santner put India off the backfoot in the Pune test. Chasing a target of 359 to win the test, the only batter who played with intent was Jaiswal, and in the end, there was some resistance from Ravindra Jadeja, but it was not good enough. The Indian top order can't rest on the old laurels of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, and both of them failed to deliver. Full credit goes to Washington Sundar and Ashwin for fighting despite the fact that this was the most humiliating defeat for India while beaten in our own backyard very convincingly by the Kiwis. It's high time for the head coach Gautam Gambhir to realise that this team calls for a revamp and to bring in those who are hungry for runs and wickets.

AP Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Leveraging folklores to educate the new generation

The ancient art of storytelling remains a vital medium for teaching values and fostering cultural understanding

Folklores, the traditional stories, myths, and legends passed down through generations, have long been a source of fascination, serving as much more than mere entertainment. Folklores often centre on ordinary people who face adversity yet find ways to overcome it, reflecting everyday life's common struggles and aspirations. This relatability comforts those who feel isolated in their struggles, showing that they are not alone and that their challenges are shared across time and place. One of folklore's most significant aspects is its inherent simplicity, which makes it a powerful tool for education across generations. Folklores are often crafted to be relatable, encapsulating moral lessons or practical wisdom in a format accessible to children and adults alike. This accessibility makes folklore an effective educational medium, especially in regions where formal education might be limited. Through memorable characters, narratives, and



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Panchatantra and Jataka Tales have transcended regions, becoming staples of Indian storytelling that educate on universal values while highlighting India's unique cultural tapestry. Indian folklores frequently address social issues, challenging established norms and encouraging reflection on societal practices. For instance, the folktales of Tenali Rama, the witty advisor in the Vijayanagara Empire, often question the elite's excesses and promote justice for the common man. Similarly, Birbal, a wise minister in the Mughal court, features in numerous tales that promote intellectual equality. These stories teach Indians to value wit, intelligence, and fairness, subtly questioning the authority of those in power. By embedding reformist ideas within entertaining narratives, Indian folklores provide a soft yet powerful critique of societal hierarchies, encouraging progressive thinking. Many Indian folklores emphasize the bond between humans and

nature, imparting lessons on environmental stewardship that resonate with India's agrarian roots. Stories about sacred rivers, protective spirits, or revered animals highlight the belief that natural entities are to be respected and cared for. These tales often highlight shared human experiences, bridging cultural gaps and fostering a sense of collective identity. Folklore serves as a reservoir of collective wisdom, transcending time and geography to educate and reform society. Its remarkable ability to touch hearts, prompt reflection, and inspire action makes it indispensable in both formal and informal education. In an era dominated by digital technology, folklore may seem antiquated, yet its relevance has only deepened. Modern storytellers, educators, and social reformers can adapt folklore for contemporary audiences, harnessing its emotive power to foster empathy and awareness.

(The writer, is the Dean, academic affairs, at Garden City University, views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN





## FIRST COLUMN

## UNLOCKING THE DIVINE ENERGIE

According to yogic traditions, each day is linked to a specific shakti and Diwali happens to be a special day



ASHWININI GURUJI

The universe operates under the influence of various *shaktis* (divine energies). As one advances in yogic practice (*sadhana*), these energies can be experienced directly. Each of the 365 days is associated with a specific *shakti*, which is why maintaining discipline and consistent daily practice in yoga is crucial. Missing even a single day can disrupt the connection with that day's *shakti*, potentially setting back the entire year's *sadhana*. In the cosmos, every element is interconnected, so when one aspect is neglected, it affects everything—our body, the Earth, and even other planets and stars. Each *shakti* is associated with a day, but accessing these energies does not require rituals. In yogic and tantric traditions, *sadhana* alone is the key to connecting with *shakti*. Understanding the form (*swarup*) of each *shakti* is essential. While every form has a specific name, names are revealed only after the body is prepared through particular *sadhanas*. At a basic level, when you meditate (*dhyan*) with your guru, you may see different forms manifesting in them, such as the sun or the moon. Have you ever wondered what these forms signify?

Many practitioners have reported seeing the sun during meditation. What makes the sun so significant? If you observe the sun at sunrise or sunset while focusing on the Manipura chakra (navel centre) and chanting the mantra "Ram," you will notice a glow emerging in your body. Within a month, you may begin to look noticeably different. However, a word of caution—any yogic practice should be undertaken under the guidance of a *guru* who can adapt it to your capacity. Similarly, the moon is a fascinating energy source. It merely reflects the sun's light, yet it can influence tides and even the Earth's surface during a full moon. Have



you ever considered what makes the moon special? On full moon nights, animals may behave aggressively, and incidents of accidents and conflicts tend to rise. These are just basic observations that hint at something deeper about these celestial forms. Understanding their true nature requires direct experience, which is attainable through the proper practice of *Sanatan Kriya*. The moon may appear calm and peaceful, but it is actually more volatile than the sun. When you observe the moon under a *guru's* guidance, you can perceive the mantras embedded within its form. Some *shaktis* are not directly visible and can only be accessed through other *shaktis*. These experiences form the foundation of yoga. Without direct experience, yoga remains incomplete. Nature, with all its wonders—from flowers of various colors to the sky above—contains the hidden forms of *shaktis*. If you observe these elements without blinking, under the guidance of a *guru*, you may find that your physical and mental imbalances begin to dissipate. However, discipline (*niyam*) is essential. The practice must be continuous, and disruptions will occur if one lacks the capacity for the *shakti* or does not have a *guru* to guide them. Everything around us contains the essence of *shakti*, and these energies are easily accessible. When one becomes steady and focused on a particular *shakti*, it starts to follow them, empowering their life. The nine days leading up to Diwali hold special significance because of the congregation of specific *shaktis* during this period. Our ancestors advised observing celibacy (*brahmacharya*) during these days to strengthen the body and prepare it to receive these energies. During this time, keep your mind centred within yourself, as the *sadhana* performed during these nine days is equivalent to months of practice. As Diwali approaches, especially on *Amavasya* (the new moon night), when we light *diyas*, it is an opportune time for *shakti sadhana*. Even a layperson who is not an experienced practitioner can perceive the *swarup* of *shakti* by sitting with closed eyes in meditation. With a pure heart, one can experience these divine energies without any elaborate rituals. Let this Diwali be a time to connect with the powerful *shaktis*, embracing their presence to enrich your spiritual journey.

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

## Rising import reliance amid regulatory challenge



UTTAM GUPTA

Despite Government efforts to boost domestic production, policy constraints and pricing caps continue to stifle the energy sector's growth



According to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG), during the first six months of the current financial year (FY) September 2024, India's consumption of natural gas (NG) increased by almost 12 per cent to 36.850 billion metric standard cubic meters (bmscm) over the corresponding period last FY. However, the import of NG (it is imported in a liquefied form commonly known as LNG) increased by 23 per cent to 18.975 bmscm during this period. Taken as a proportion of consumption, imports were 51.5 per cent during April-September 2024 up from 46.8 per cent during April-September 2023.

The country's production of NG registered a marginal increase of around 2 per cent during April-September 2024. The State-owned major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation or ONGC (it contributes about 84 per cent of total domestic output) produced 9.407 bmscm of NG during this period, which was 4 per cent less than during the same period of last FY. However, Oil India Limited (it has 8 per cent share) produced 4 per cent more NG at 1.577 bmscm during this period. The share of production in consumption was 48.5 per cent. Delivering the 75th Independence Day address on 15th August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to achieve self-reliance in energy production by boosting the gas-based economy. He had then wished the share of NG in the total energy mix to go up from subsisting around 6 per cent to 15 per cent. Pertinently, even to comply with the 6 per cent share, India had to import more than 50 per cent of its NG requirement. The position hasn't changed even today. Increasing the share of NG in the total energy mix to 15 per cent would require its consumption to increase from its current annual of 73.689 bmscm to 184.222 mmscm (73.689x2.5). The current consumption includes domestic production of 35.739 bmscm. If domestic production stagnates at the current level (in sync with the trend of the last few years) then, to achieve the 15 per cent target, the import of LNG will have to be 148.483 bmscm (184.222-35.739) which means India's import dependence will have to increase to over 80 per cent. The above calculation assumes no



THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR A 'PREDICTABLE' AND 'ATTRACTIVE' POLICY ENVIRONMENT TO GIVE A FILLIP TO THE EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION OF NG

increase in total energy consumption. But, it is increasing at a rapid pace. The country's power demand alone is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 7 per cent during the next five years (as per an estimate by the Central Electricity Authority or CEA).

In that scenario, compliance with the 15 per cent target for NG would mean still higher reliance on imports. What is coming in the way of increasing production? Natural resource endowment is not a problem. India has 26 sedimentary basins (SBs) covering an area of 3.4 million sq km that could be searched for hydrocarbon resources. However, only six of the SBs are under commercial exploitation; these too are sub-optimally utilised. Hydrocarbon exploration is a highly capital-intensive and technology-intensive business involving a long gestation period. It is risky, especially when drilling in deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature (D/UD/HP/HT) fields in offshore areas such as the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin.

However, these areas offer maximum promise in terms of reserves. Multinational companies (MNCs) such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total etc. which have the technology and resources can be enticed to take long-term bets in the Indian hydrocarbon sector provided the government offers them an opportunity to earn an attractive return on their investment in a 'sustained' basis.

This, in turn, requires that their efforts in the discovery and development of NG fields don't face regulatory hurdles and that they can sell the gas 'freely' at a 'remunerative' price. Modi - The government has made a lot of efforts to remove regulatory hurdles. Until recently, of 1.73 million sq km SB area lying offshore, 0.69 million sq km was a 'No go' area, courtesy of security reasons.

The Centre has released almost all of this for exploration and produc-

tion (E&P) activity. Now, it is granting lease rights over the entire economic life of the allotted fields (this could extend up to 30 years, even beyond depending on the available reserves) instead of the extant system of short tenure with extensions.

It has also made amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act to enable prompt access to forest areas for exploration of hydrocarbon resources. Under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), also known as the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) launched in 2017, E&P firms are allowed to pick up a block of their choice unlike the earlier New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) (launched in 1999) wherein they had to accept what the government offered. Besides, under OALP, an operator gets a composite license to search for hydrocarbon in whatever form viz NG, 'shale gas', CBM (coal bed methane) etc. For long, E&P efforts were hamstrung by cumbersome procedures, multiple approvals and bureaucratic red tape. Approvals were needed at every stage.

As many as 37 procedures were required to be followed by a firm-awarded block under NELP. Team Modi has substantially liberalised and de-bureaucratised approvals by providing for self-certification of documents and pre-approved clearance of blocks. While the above helps, without freedom of marketing and the ability to secure a good price, E&P firms won't get enthused. Of the domestic gas, on around two-thirds of supplies (mostly from so-called 'legacy fields' given on nomination to ONGC and OIL and from fields given under NELP), the Centre has full control over 'to whom' the supplies will be made and at 'what price'. From April 1, 2023, based on the recommendations of the Kirit Parikh committee, this price expressed on a per million British thermal units (Btu) basis is arrived at by taking 10 per cent

of the monthly average of the Indian crude basket in the preceding month and notified every month. The price thus calculated is subject to a ceiling of US\$ 6.50 per mBtu which makes the formula redundant.

Now, the bureaucrats have come up with a 20 per cent premium on supplies by ONGC and OIL only from the so-called 'new wells' or 'well interventions'.

If their intent is to give a good price why put a cap in the first place? Moreover, which fields get the benefit of 'new wells' or 'interventions', will also be solely at their discretion. Even the pricing of the remaining one-third of domestic NG supplied from the so-called deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature fields (KG-D6 operated by Reliance Industries and neighbouring KG-DWN-98/2 operated by ONGC in Krishna-Godavari basin off the Andhra Pradesh coast fall in this category) isn't free from 'control' 'discretion' and 'arbitrariness'. Technically though, the firms can go for competitive bidding to determine the price for such supplies (referred to as a 'premium' price), this too is subject to a ceiling linked to the prices of alternate fuels including fuel oil, naphtha, and LNG.

There is an urgent need for a 'predictable' and 'attractive' policy environment to give a fillip to the exploration and production of NG. The Kirit Parikh committee was conscious of this when it recommended de-regulating difficult gas fields' prices by January 1, 2026, and the price on supplies from legacy fields by January 1, 2027. The government should implement these recommendations. Meanwhile, it should prepare the ground for giving subsidies directly to major users such as fertilizers, power, CNG, PNG etc instead of creating distortions in the supply chain by controlling the price of basic inputs such as NG.

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

## Ayurveda Day 2024: Celebrating innovations for global health and wellness

This year's celebration aims to highlight the transformative potential of Ayurveda in addressing modern health challenges

Over the last decade, the Ayush sector has undergone a significant transformation, largely due to the initiatives led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This revolution in traditional Indian medicine has created new opportunities for various stakeholders, including industry professionals, traders, and healthcare practitioners. Since its establishment in 2014, the Ministry of Ayush has successfully integrated Ayush into mainstream healthcare, driving innovation, research, and gaining global recognition. The ministry's strategic focus encompasses public health, technology, education, globalisation, and quality control, ensuring that Ayush products and services are safe and of high quality.



RAJESH KOTECHEA

This comprehensive approach aligns with the goals of universal health coverage and sustainability, contributing to the sector's growth, increased public awareness, and a rising demand for Ayush healthcare systems worldwide. Ayurveda Day is celebrated on the occasion of Dhanteras to honor Lord Dhanvantari, the deity revered as the physician

of the gods and the God of Ayurveda. This year, Ayurveda Day will be observed on October 29, 2024, with a renewed focus on the theme "Ayurveda Innovations for Global Health." Since the Ministry of Ayush initiated Ayurveda Day in 2016, the event has expanded into a global celebration. The emphasis this year is on showcasing Ayurveda's potential to improve global health through innovative practices and natural treatment methods. Ayurveda's core strength lies in its holistic approach to health, which emphasizes prevention, health promotion, and natural healing. With the growing global demand for integrative healthcare solutions, Ayurveda is gaining recognition as a viable and sustainable alterna-

tive. Recent advancements, supported by scientific research, have increased the global reach and acceptance of Ayurvedic practices. One of the most notable contributions of Ayurveda to modern healthcare is the innovative use of herbal medicine. It is reported that over 95% of Ayurvedic interventions are based on herbal treatments, utilizing the healing properties of nature. As scientific research continues to validate the effectiveness of Ayurvedic herbs and therapies, the demand for these natural solutions is rapidly increasing worldwide. The rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and cancer has highlighted the need for natural, preventive healthcare solutions.



Ayurveda, with its focus on holistic well-being, offers a unique approach to managing these conditions. Additionally, the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance requires alternative treatment methods, and Ayurvedic remedies, rooted in herbal medicine, present sustainable options. As climate change exacerbates health risks,

Ayurveda's emphasis on lifestyle management, mental health, and care for the elderly provides resilient solutions for vulnerable populations. Moreover, as societies face challenges like nutritional disorders and mental health crises, Ayurveda's approach to balancing the body and mind becomes increasingly relevant. Ayurveda is not a static system; it evolves continually through ongoing research and innovation. Recent advancements in fields such as genome sequencing and nanotechnology have revealed parallels with traditional Ayurvedic concepts like Prakriti (body constitution) and Bhasma (herbal-mineral formulations). These modern innovations help bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary

healthcare, making Ayurvedic treatments more accessible and scientifically validated. Ayurveda as a proactive health strategy that can boost immunity, mental clarity, and overall well-being. The alignment of Ayurvedic innovations with the SDGs and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) underscores its potential to provide accessible, affordable, and inclusive healthcare. The 2024 Ayurveda Day will mark several important milestones that reflect the growth and integration of Ayurveda into mainstream healthcare. The Ministry of Ayush is accelerating this progress through the construction of Phase II of the All India Institute of Ayurveda in New Delhi and the establishment of six new Centers of Excellence to promote innova-

tion and research in traditional medicine. Plans to develop the Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy (CRIYN) in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh aim to enhance the promotion of holistic health practices. The celebrations for Ayurveda Day 2024 will include a variety of engaging activities, such as creative exhibitions, Ayurveda quizzes, medical camps, and Prakriti Parikshan (body constitution analysis). Initiatives like "Ayurveda in My Kitchen" and "Ayurveda in My Vatika" will emphasise the practical application of Ayurvedic principles in daily life.

(The writer is Secretary Ministry of Ayush; views are personal)



# BJP will win Maharashtra, Jharkhand before big target Bengal: HM Shah

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The BJP will drive away Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress from Bengal in 2026 but before that it will do a 'Haryana' and 'Odisha' in Maharashtra and Jharkhand (State elections) where it will shatter Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's dream of a la Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said. Shah who launched a membership drive in the State to set the "next big target" of winning Bengal in 2026 for the party's state unit said that I have come to tell the youth of Bengal that if you want to end the rule of cut money, corruption and savor Rabindra Sangeet instead of crackling sound of bombs and establish the rule of law then the only way is to end the TMC's syndicate raj and bring BJP to power in 2026 ... that is our next big target." Attacking the Mamata Banerjee Government for the incidents like Sandeshkhali and RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Shah said that "there is no respect for



women in Bengal ... that the mothers and sisters cannot live with honour in this State is proved by the incidents of RG Kar and Sandeshkhali." An lady doctor was on August 9, brutally raped and murdered inside the RGKMCH triggering a nationwide upheaval. Taking a dig at the Congress leadership, particularly Rahul Gandhi he said, "like it happened before the MP, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan elections Rahul Baba was dreaming of defeating BJP ...

he also was daydreaming of winning Haryana and Odisha but in both the States the Congress suffered defeat," iterating "this time also I announce that like in Haryana, MP and Odisha the BJP will emphatically win both Jharkhand and Maharashtra." Saying that the BJP was a proud party because "Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the only such person to form a Government for the third consecutive time," he wondered why Gandhi was

going to town claiming the BJP had been defeated in the parliamentary elections. "Rahul Baba is saying that the BJP has been defeated in the elections but he doesn't seem to understand that a winner always forms the Government and the loser like them sits in the Opposition ... they are telling that the BJP has won only 240 seats but they tend to forget that the Congress has not won that many seats together in the past three elections." Attacking Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for unleashing a violent rule in Bengal he said that, after winning in 2024 Parliamentary elections "she was thinking that the BJP has been obliterated from Bengal but she does not that we are a party that started from two seats to win 370 and went on to abolish (Article) 370 ... we work for a goal --- which in this case is to win Bengal in 2026 --- we don't work to make our nephew a next Chief Minister." Dismissing Banerjee's claims that the Centre had been depriving Bengal of its legit-

imate funds Shah said that unlike during the UPA Government of which she was a partner, the NDA had given her more funds. "Mamata didi is misleading the people about central allocation of funds ... she is telling that the Centre is not giving her funds ... but in reality the INDIA (formerly UPA) alliance when it was in power had given Bengal Rs 1.09 lakh crore between 2004 and 2014 whereas the NDA Government has given Bengal Rs 7.74 lakh crore between 2014 and 2024 ... similarly for MNREGA UPA gave Bengal Rs 15,000 crore whereas NDA gave Rs 54,000 crore ... In PMAY the NDA Government gave Bengal Rs 50,000 crore whereas the UPA Government only Rs 4,500 crore ... and still she is misleading the people by peddling lies," he said adding asking the people to bring a second Parivartan (change) in Bengal "to end cut money and syndicate raj ... to see that the farmers' and poor men's allocations that are released by the Centre do not go into the pockets of any TMC leader."

## Stop infiltration to bring peace: Shah at Bangla border

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ PETRAPOLE/BONGAON

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday inaugurated a massive newly constructed passenger terminal and cargo gate at the Indo-Bangla border point at Petrapole in North 24 Parganas said that peace will return to Bengal only when trans-border infiltration is stopped and that can only be ensured with the fall of the Trinamool Congress Government. Addressing a gathering at Petrapole in North 24 Parganas where he Shah said "in establishing peace in the region, land ports play an important role... Illegal movement of people across the border disturbs peace ... and peace in Bengal can only be restored when there is no infiltration which again can be

ensured only if the BJP come to power in 2026 throwing away the TMC from power," he said. The new facility at the border is likely to end the miseries of the passengers crossing to and from India. Besides being the eighth largest international immigration port of India that handles more than 23.5 lakh passengers annually between India and Bangladesh the Petrapole crossing is the largest land port in South Asia. While Petrapole is in India, Benapole is situated on the corresponding side in Bangladesh. Apart from handling passenger traffic a large portion of which accounts for medical tourism nearly 70 per cent of land-based trade (by value) between the two countries take place through this point which is controlled by the Land Ports Authority of

India, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Shah alleged during a subsequent meeting in Kolkata that the TMC Government in Bengal was the biggest facilitators of the infiltrators. "I have come to tell the youth of Bengal that State-sponsored infiltration in Bengal has to be stopped and for that to happen then the only way is to form BJP Government in 2026," the Home Minister said Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari too attacked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "perpetrating a mafia raj and allowing infiltration in Bengal." Vowing that the BJP would "never allow Bengal to become a second Bangladesh," he said in 2026 Assembly elections his party would do whatever that was required to be done to oust the TMC from power.

## Delhi court to pronounce order on Engineer Rashid's bail on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court is likely to pronounce on Monday its order on a regular bail plea of Engineer Rashid, the Lok Sabha MP from J-K's Baramulla, in a terror funding case. Additional Sessions Judge Chander Jit Singh, who on September 10 granted interim bail to Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popular as Engineer Rashid, to enable him to campaign for the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, had earlier deferred the order on his regular bail application. The judge had extended Rashid's interim bail till October 28 on the grounds of his father's health. The NIA had said it had verified the documents and it



was not opposing the bail application of the accused due to the health condition of his father. Rashid had been lodged in Tihar jail since 2019 after he was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a 2017

terror funding case. Elections to the 90-member J-K Assembly were held in three phases from September 18 to October 1. The results were declared on October 8 in which the National Conference-Congress alliance attained a clear majority with 48 seats.

## Waqf Board demand sets tone for secessionist movement in south India

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Mission Malabar, a project to carve out an Islamic State incorporating Muslim majority regions in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is in full swing, according to political leaders and former intelligence professionals. Mustafa Mundupara, leader of Samasta Youth Sangham had called for carving out a separate Malabar State while addressing a public meeting in the month of June 2024. "With the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution by the BJP-led Government at the Centre, the extremist and terrorist organizations operating out of Kashmir have shifted their bases to Kerala and Karnataka. The present Waqf Board controversy is part of the mission to drive out infidels from Muslim dominated regions in these States," Kevin Peter, founder president,

Christian Alliance and Association for Social Action (CAASA), told The Pioneer. According to the Ministry of Minority Affairs, the word Waqf means properties dedicated exclusively for religious or charitable purposes under Islamic Law and any other use or sale of the property is prohibited. In India, Waqf Board controls 8.7 lakh properties spanning 9.4 lakh acres with an estimated value of Rs 1.2 lakh crore. India has the largest Waqf holding in the world. Waqf Board is the largest land owner in India after the Armed Forces and Indian Railways. In neighboring Karnataka, the Congress-ruled Government has asked the Revenue Officials to transfer 15,000 acres of land belonging to the farmers in Vijayapura district to the Waqf Board which would throw out thousands of poor people from their land where

they have been staying for more than six decades with valid documents. "Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his minister for minority affairs Zameer Ahmed Khan are trying to convert Karnataka into another Pakistan," said Tejasvi Surya, MP and president of BJP's National Youth. Situation is no different in Tamil Nadu where the Waqf Board has claimed hectares of temple land and properties owned by non-Muslims. Rajagopal in Thiruchenturai, a poor farmer who is struggling to sell his land to clear his debts is heart rending. Since the Waqf Board refuses to issue NOC to the sale, the farmer is caught between devil and deep sea. Kevin Peter told this paper after visiting Munambam-Cherai, the coastal village along the sea shore in Ernakulam district from where 600 families have been

asked to vacate by the local revenue officials. They had told the residents that the 450 acres of land where they are staying for more than six decades belong to Waqf Board. Philip Joseph of Cherai who struggled for decades in West Asia and was a senior official to the Prime Minister of Kuwait returned to India with dreams of providing livelihood to the youths in this fishing hamlet. Taken back by the Waqf Board stance, he is planning to return to Kuwait. The laity that congregates at the Velankanni Church during every October say the rosaries with tears in their eyes. "Our only request to the Holy Mother is to save us from eviction and not to make us roofless," Jesna Sanal, member of Cherai Panchayath. Decades ago, B Raman, former additional secretary in the Cabinet

Secretariat has written in one of his research papers that the hardcore Islamists are scheming to establish a corridor of Muslim majority regions in the three States linking them with former princely State of Hyderabad. The Waqf Board is executing the mission that was forecast by Raman, said Anantha Narayanan of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan. The BJP is the only political outfit to condemn the Waqf Board move. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan while releasing a book authored by P Jayarajan, state committee member of the CPI(M) said that though he was attending the function he was not in agreement with many views expressed by the author. The Congress too is silent on the Waqf Board demand though top leader of the party (the chief minister in waiting) asked the Christians to call off the agitation against the Waqf Board.

## Bandra Terminus stampede leaves...

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All the 10 persons injured were taken initially to the nearby Bhabha Hospital from where two severely injured persons were shifted to the KEM Hospital. There was a tremendous pre-

Diwali rush at the Bandra at Bandra Railway station when the mishap took place. The migrants, who have come to Mumbai for jobs, return to their native places in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the run-up to Diwali and Chhath by trains every year.

In a statement issued here, the Western Railway said that 130 festival special trains were being run to various destinations, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, in view of the upcoming Diwali and Chhath festivals."

These special trains will make 2,300 trips from Mumbai Central and Bandra in the metropolis, as well as Valsad and Udhna in neighbouring Gujarat," the WR statement added. Sunday's incident brought back the horrific memories

of a massive stampede that had taken place on a narrow foot-over-bridge (FOB) connecting the Parel and Elphinstone Railway stations in south-central Mumbai that took place on September 29, 2017, in which 22 commuters were killed and

39 others injured. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former minister Aadiya Thackeray on Sunday dubbed Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav as "incapable" and said that he wished "the reel minister was a rail minister for once"

Aadiya wrote on micro-blogging site "X": "Wish the reel minister was a rail minister for once. The incident at Bandra only reflects how incapable the current Railways Minister is." "The BJP has made Ashwini

Vaishnav ji, a prabhari for BJP Maharashtra for elections, but every week there are some incidents and accidents that occur with the railways. Such a shame that our country has been forced under such incapable ministers," Aadiya stated.

## Yamuna froths, Delhi's taps...

From page 1

The issue of high ammoniacal nitrogen concentrations in the Yamuna during the winter is not new. Between December and March each year, treatment plants have to either shut down or operate at reduced capacity several times, as the system can handle ammonia only up to 1 part per million (ppm). However, the level of ammonia has spiked up to 5 ppm, resulting in a challenge for a key water treatment plant in the national capital, which supplies water to several parts of south Delhi. According to DJB, water supply will be affected till 1st November, 2024 in East Delhi, North East Delhi, part of South Delhi and part of NDMC area, such as Gokulpuri, Sonia Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Babarpur, Tahirpur, Dilshad Garden, Nandnagari, Shahdara, Laxmi Nagar, Geeta Colony, Mayur Vihar, Kondli, Dallupura, Yamuna Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Jaffrabad, Jhilmil, Mandawali, Laxmi Nagar, Shakarpur, Vivek Vihar, Karkardooma, Jagatpuri, Shalimar Park, Krishna Nagar, Patparganj, Preet Vihar, Vishwakarma Park, Lalita Park, Seelampur, Shastri Park, Brahmपुरi, Kailash Nagar, Sarai Kale Khan, Jal Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, Moolchand Hospital, Greater Kailash, Vasant Kunj, Devli, Ambedkar Nagar, Okhla, Kalkaji, Kalkaji Extn., Govindpuri, G.B. Pant polytechnic, Shyam Nagar Colony, Okhla Sabzimandi, Amar Colony, Dakshin Pari, Panchsheel Park, Shahpur Ji, Kotla Mubarakpur, Sarita

Vihar, Sidhartha Nagar, Apollo, G.K. North, Malviya Nagar, Deer Park, Gitanjali, Srinivaspuri, G.K. South, Chhatrapur, part of NDMC and their adjoining areas, and adjoining areas. Meanwhile, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice-President Vinay Mishra conducted an urgent inspection at Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) on Sunday, and held the BJP ruled Haryana government responsible for high levels of ammonia in Yamuna river. After the inspection, Mishra shared a few snippets on his 'X' handle, stating: "After becoming the Vice President of Delhi Jal Board, I inspected the water treatment plant today. Ammonia is increasing in the water due to industrial waste coming from Haryana. The Delhi government will soon talk to the Haryana government and resolve this issue so that Delhiites can get clean water. Also, appropriate instructions were given to the officers to ensure that when the quality of water improves, the water treatment plant works at 100% capacity." "Since last year, DJB has raised concerns about increasing ammonia levels in the Yamuna, mainly attributed to industrial waste discharged from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Ammonia spikes have been repeatedly detected, most notably in January and February this year, impacting production, especially at the Wazirabad WTP. Recently, ammonia content reached 0.9 ppm, rendering the water unsuitable for treatment and further limiting WTP operations," he added.

## Begging for a smartphone? The professionals have...

From page 1

One case highlighted by a project officer involved a pregnant woman with six children, whose earnings significantly increased during pregnancy, reaching as high as ₹80,000-90,000 per month. Among the survey's findings, a concerning trend has emerged in areas like Charbagh, where many beggars have been identified as drug addicts. These individuals were reluctant to reveal information about their drug suppliers, raising suspicions of potential drug syndicate operations in the area. The survey also uncovered the existence of organised begging syndicates, where begging appears to be a coordinated activity rather than an act of individual desperation. From compulsion to

profession What may begin as a means of survival has evolved into a lucrative profession for many. DUDA Project Officer Saurabh Tripathi pointed out that only a small percentage of beggars in Lucknow beg out of genuine need. Approximately 10 percent have been identified as professional beggars, travelling to Lucknow from nearby districts like Hardoi, Barabanki, Sitapur, and Rae Bareilly for this purpose. "Our aim is to understand the identity of the beggars, their origins, and whether any groups are coercing them into begging. We want to assess if they would be willing to abandon begging, if provided with work opportunities," Tripathi explained. Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh emphasised the importance of the survey,

stating, "Let's wait for the final report. This survey focuses on five main crossings in the state capital. Our objective is to eradicate begging in Lucknow, but we cannot formulate effective strategies without solid facts and figures. We aim to address the root causes of begging, which is why this survey is crucial. Once we analyse the report, we will develop a targeted strategy to combat the issue." This revelation has sparked discussions among officials and citizens alike, raising questions about the dynamics of begging in the city and the need for more focused social welfare initiatives. While authorities work to integrate these individuals into government programs, the findings shed light on a complex reality underlying daily life in Lucknow.

## There is no such thing...

From page 1

"Whenever you receive such a call, don't be scared. You should be aware that no investigative agency inquires like this through a phone call or a video call. I am enumerating the three steps to digital security. These three steps are - 'stop'? think? 'take action'," he said. "As soon as you get a call, stop... - don't panic, stay calm, don't take any hasty steps, don't give away your personal information to anyone; if possible take a screenshot and record it for sure. The first step was 'stop' and the second step was 'think'. No government agency threatens you on the phone like this, neither inquires nor demands money on a video call like this," he said. The third step is 'take action', he said and urged victims to dial the national cyber

helpline 1930 and report such incidents on cybercrime.gov.in. He also urged people to inform family and police, and preserve evidence by recording the fraud call. "Stop, then think, and then take action; these three steps will become the protector of your digital security," the PM said. The Prime Minister reiterated that there is no system like "digital arrest" in the law and this is just a fraud, deceit and a lie. The gang of criminals and those who are doing this are enemies of society," Modi said. To deal with the fraud that is going on in the name of digital arrest, all probe agencies are working together with the state governments, he said, adding that for synchronisation among these agencies, a National Cyber

Coordination Centre has been set up. "Thousands of such fraudulent video calling IDs have been blocked by the agencies. Lakhs of SIM cards, mobile phones and bank accounts have also been blocked. Agencies are doing their job, but for protection from scams in the name of digital arrest, it is very important that everyone is aware, every citizen is aware," he said. Those who are victims of this kind of cyber fraud should let as many people as possible know about it, the PM said and urged people to use the hashtag 'SafeDigitalIndia' for spreading awareness. He also urged schools and colleges to involve students in the campaign against cyber scams. "We can fight this challenge only with the collective efforts of society," he said.

## Over 350 hoax bomb threat calls, only two arrests?

From page 1

Senior officials also rushed to the scene to manage the situation, he said. Passengers were safely evacuated, and a thorough inspection of the aircraft was conducted, revealing no suspicious items. Following the all-clear, the flight continued its journey to Delhi. Responding to a query after formally inaugurating two flights Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu on

Sunday said the government is taking support from international agencies, law enforcement wings and the Intelligence Bureau to prevent these fake threats. "The investigation is going on," he added. Meanwhile, a total 35 hotels and a temple also received bomb threat messages, these include 10 premium hotels in Lucknow, 10 hotels in Rajkot, 10 in Kolkata and several hotels and a temple in Tirupati. These hoax threats were made in the past three days. An email sent to a hotel

threatened that explosions would take place if a ransom demand of USD 55,000 (Rs 4,624,288) was not met. "Bombs are hidden in black bags on the grounds of your hotel. I want USD 55,000, or I will detonate the explosives and blood will spill everywhere. Any attempt at defusing the bombs will detonate them," read the threat email. Against the backdrop of a spate of hoax bomb threats to airlines, the IT Ministry has asked social media platforms to observe due diligence obligations and

promptly remove or disable access to misinformation within the strict timelines prescribed under IT rules. Meanwhile, the civil aviation ministry is looking to take legislative actions to tackle the menace of the hoax bomb threats to airlines. On Saturday, Delhi police had arrested a 25-year-old unemployed man for making hoax bomb threats, marking only the second arrest since a spate of such threats began being issued to airlines last week. According to police, the

man admitted to making the threats to draw attention to himself after seeing reports of similar calls on television. A case was registered and investigations revealed that the account belonged to Shubham Upadhyay from Rajapuri in west Delhi's Uttam Nagar area. Upadhyay was arrested and, on being questioned, revealed that he had made the threats to garner attention after seeing reports of similar calls on TV. On October 16, the Mumbai

Police had taken a 17-year-old school dropout from Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh into custody for threats made to four flights on October 14. After a dispute with a friend over money, the teenager had allegedly created an X handle in his name and made threats to frame him. Of the four flights to which the boy had issued the threats, two were delayed - including Air India flight AI 119 from Mumbai to New York, which was diverted to New Delhi - and one had to be cancelled.

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# 'Israeli strikes kill 22 in northern Gaza'

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israeli strikes on northern Gaza have killed at least 22 people, mostly women and children, Palestinian officials said Sunday, as its offensive in the hard-hit and isolated north entered a third week and aid groups described a humanitarian catastrophe. In a separate development, a truck rammed into a bus stop near Tel Aviv, injuring dozens of people, according to Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service. The circumstances were not immediately clear, but Palestinians have carried out dozens of vehicle-ramming attacks over the years. The Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service said that 11 women and two children were among those killed in the strikes late Saturday on several homes and buildings in the northern town of Beit Lahiya. It said another 15 people were wounded and that the death toll could rise. It listed the names of those killed, who mostly came from three families. The Israeli military said it carried out a precise strike on militants in a structure in Beit Lahiya and took steps to avoid harming civilians. It disputed what it said were "numbers published by the media," without elaborating or providing evidence for its own account. Israel is still carrying out daily strikes across Gaza, even as it wages air and ground war with the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon. Two people were wounded after an explosive drone launched from Lebanon slammed into a building in an industrial area of northern Israel, authorities said. An Israeli airstrike on a southern neighbourhood of Beirut sent flames and smoke climbing into the air. On Saturday, Israeli warplanes attacked military targets in Iran — which backs both Hamas and Hezbollah — in response to an Iranian ballistic missile attack earlier this month. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Sunday that Israel's attack "should not be exaggerated nor downplayed," while stopping short of calling for retaliation. His

remarks are the latest suggesting Iran is carefully weighing its response to the attack. "It is up to the authorities to determine how to convey the power and will of the Iranian people to the Israeli regime and to take actions that serve the interests of this nation and country," said Khamenei, who has the final say over all major decisions in Iran. The cascading conflicts have raised fears of an all-out regional war pitting Israel and the United States against Iran and its militant proxies, which also include the Houthi rebels in Yemen and armed groups in Syria and Iraq. Red Cross describes 'horrific circumstances' in northern Gaza Israel has been waging a massive air and ground offensive in northern Gaza since October 6, after saying that Hamas militants had regrouped there. Hundreds of people have been killed and tens of thousands of Palestinians have fled to Gaza City in the latest wave of displacement in the yearlong war. Israel says its strikes on Gaza only target militants, and it blames Hamas for civilian

casualties because the militants fight in densely populated areas. The military rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children. Aid groups have warned of a catastrophic situation in northern Gaza, which was the first target of Israel's ground offensive and had already suffered the heaviest destruction of the war. Israel has severely limited the entry of basic humanitarian aid in recent weeks, and the three remaining hospitals in the north — one of which was raided over the weekend — say they have been overwhelmed by waves of wounded people. The International Committee of the Red Cross on Saturday said that ongoing Israeli evacuation orders and restrictions on the entry of essential supplies to the north had left the civilian population in "horrific circumstances." "Many civilians are currently unable to move, trapped by fighting, destruction or physical constraint and now lack access to even basic medical care," it said. Hospital reels after Israeli raid detains dozens of medics Israel

troops raided the Kamal Adwan Hospital in the north on Friday, detaining dozens of medical staff and causing heavy damage, according to the Health Ministry. Footage circulated online showing the courtyard bulldozed and the wards ransacked. Israeli troops withdrew on Saturday. The head of the World Health Organisation said 44 male staff members were detained at the hospital. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said only female staff, the hospital director and one male doctor were left to care for almost 200 patients. Among those detained and taken away was Dr. Mohamed Obeid, head of the orthopedics' department at nearby Al-Awda Hospital, according to Al-Awda Hospital. His whereabouts are unknown. Throughout the yearlong Israel-Hamas war, Israeli forces have stormed and bombarded a number of hospitals including the strip's largest medical facility, Shifa Hospital. Israel accuses Hamas of using medical facilities across Gaza for military purposes, allegations denied by hospital staff, who say the raids

have recklessly endangered sick and wounded civilians. The war began when Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's border wall and stormed into southern Israel in a surprise attack on October 7, 2023. They killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, around a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians, according to the local Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says more than half of those killed were women and children. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence. The offensive has devastated much of the impoverished coastal territory and displaced around 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people have crowded into squalid tent camps along the coast, and aid groups say hunger is rampant.

Apparent truck attack on bus stop near Mossad HQ in Israel wounds dozens

## Apparent truck attack on bus stop near Mossad HQ in Israel wounds dozens

AP ■ TEL AVIV

A truck rammed into a bus stop near the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, wounding 35 people, according to first responders. Israeli police described it as an attack and said the assailant was an Arab citizen of Israel. The ramming occurred near the headquarters of Israel's Mossad spy agency. In the city of Ramat Hasharon, northeast of Tel Aviv, the truck slammed into a bus at a stop as Israelis were returning to work after a weeklong holiday, leaving some people stuck under the vehicles. In addition to being near the Mossad headquarters and a military base, the bus stop is also close to a central highway junction. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said six of the wounded were in serious condition. Asi Aharoni, an Israeli police spokesperson, told reporters that the attacker had been

"neutralised," without saying if the assailant was dead. Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group praised the suspected attack but did not claim it. Palestinians have carried out scores of stabbings, shootings and car-ramming attacks over the years. Tensions have soared since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, as Israel has carried out regular military raids into the occupied West Bank that have left hundreds dead. Most appear to have been militants killed during shootouts with Israeli forces, but Palestinians taking part in violent protests and civilian bystanders have also been killed. The military said there was another attack near a checkpoint in the West Bank, in which a suspect tried to ram soldiers with his vehicle and then tried to stab them before being killed. No soldiers were wounded, it said.

## Georgia's pro-Western opposition disputes election result that could decide its EU path

AP ■ TBILISI

Georgia's pro-Western opposition disputed the results of the parliamentary election after officials declared Sunday the ruling party led the crucial vote that could decide whether the country remains on the path to joining the European Union or comes under Russian sway. The Central Election Commission said Georgian Dream won 54.8 per cent of Saturday's vote with almost 100 per cent of ballots counted. Following a divisive pre-election campaign, initial figures suggested turnout is the highest since the ruling party was first elected in 2012. Georgian electoral observers, who stationed thousands across the country to monitor the vote, reported multiple violations and said the results "do not correspond to the will of the Georgian people." Georgian Dream has become

increasingly authoritarian, adopting laws similar to those used by Russia to crack down on freedom of speech. Brussels suspended Georgia's EU membership process indefinitely because of a "Russian law" passed in June. Bidzina Ivanishvili, the billionaire founder of Georgian Dream who made his fortune in Russia, claimed victory almost immediately after polls closed and said, "It is rare in the world for the same party to achieve such success in such a difficult situation." He had vowed ahead of the election to ban opposition parties should his party win. Tina Bokuchava, the chair of the United National Movement opposition party accused the election commission of carrying out Ivanishvili's "dirty order" and said he "stole the victory from the Georgian people and thereby stole the European future." She indicated the opposition would not

recognise the results and "will fight like never before to reclaim our European future." The UNM party said its headquarters were attacked on Saturday while Georgian media reported two people were hospitalised after being attacked outside polling stations. The pre-election campaign in the South Caucasus nation of 3.7 million people, which borders Russia, was dominated by foreign policy and marked by a bitter fight for votes and allegations of a smear campaign. Some Georgians complained of intimidation and being pressured to vote for the governing party. Georgian Dream scored its highest share of the vote — polling almost 90 per cent — in the Javakheti region of southern Georgia, 135 kilometres west of the capital Tbilisi where it failed to get more than 44 per cent of the vote in any district.

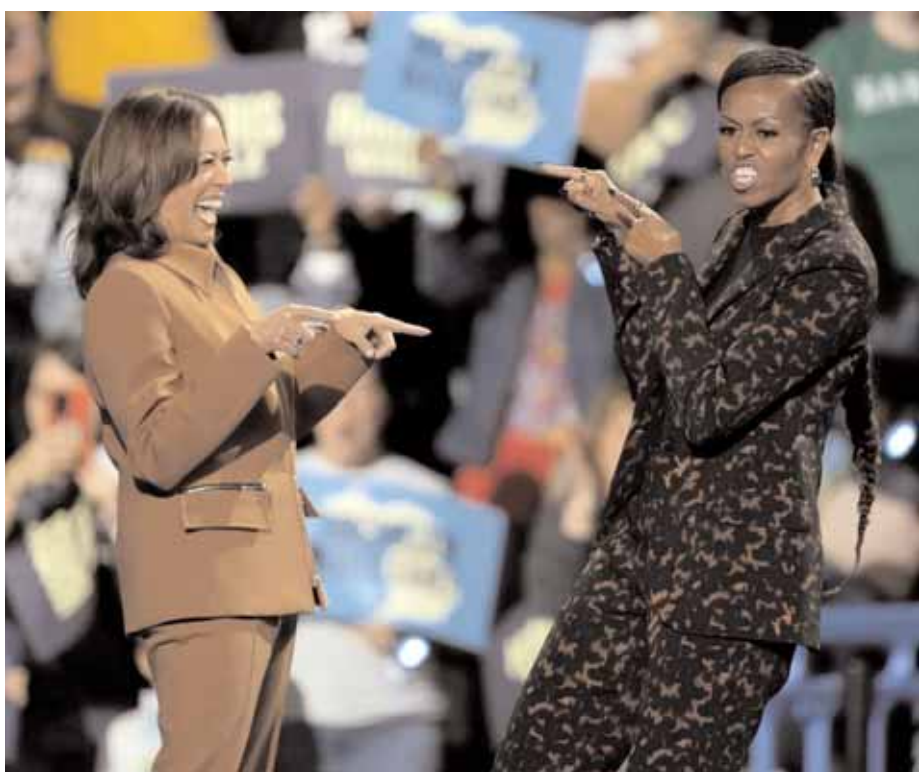
## Protesters disrupt Netanyahu speech

AP ■ KYIV

Ramat Hasharon (Israel) (AP) Protesters disrupted a speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a ceremony Sunday remembering the victims of Hamas' attack on southern Israel last year. People shouted "Shame on you" and made a commotion, forcing Netanyahu to stop his speech shortly after it began. The major commemorative event is being broadcast live around the country. Many Israelis blame Netanyahu for the failures that led to Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack and hold him responsible for not yet bringing home the remaining hostages held by the militant group in Gaza.



Israeli police climb on a truck that rammed into a bus stop near the headquarters of Israel's Mossad spy agency, wounding dozens of people, according to Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sunday. AP/PTI



Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris, left, and former first lady Michelle Obama arrive to speak at a campaign rally at the Wings Event Center, Saturday in Kalamazoo. AP/PTI

## Immigration: A key issue in US election campaign

PTI ■ ATLANTA

With just nine days left for Election Day, immigration remained one of the contentious issues in the US presidential campaign, with many immigrants, including from India and other South Asian nations, fearing a backlash if Republican hopeful Donald Trump wins the poll. In his campaign speeches, Trump promised a radical shift to tighten Washington's immigration policy and vowed to carry out the "largest" domestic deportation operation in American history of undocumented immigrants and review the existing refugee programmes if he is re-elected. The Republican leader has even resolved to end birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants living in the US illegally, triggering concerns among various diaspora communities, including from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Various pro-immigration advocacy groups have criticised Trump over his rhetoric on immigration, saying the continuation of birthright citizenship is legally questionable as it is enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution. On her part, Vice President Kamala Harris has underlined the need for curtailing illegal immigration and that the US immigration system is broken and requires legislative measures to fix it. At a recent campaign rally, Trump accused Harris of bringing in "migrant gangs and illegal alien criminals" into the US, adding that "her policy of importing migrant gangs is a crime against our country." "This is a very sensitive issue and we are worried about the possible fallout of Trump's victory," said Mohammad Iqbal, a Bangladesh-origin green card holder living in Atlanta for over a decade.

"Trump's policy is creating panic among various migrant societies and that is why they are supporting Vice President Kamala Harris," he noted. Vasudev Patel, general secretary of the Federation of Indian-Americans in Georgia, said the Republican leader is looking at welcoming "educated" and "peaceful" people to the US. A survey report by Pew Research has found that the supporters of Trump and Harris differ on mass deportations but favour border security. Nearly nine-in-ten Trump supporters (88 per cent) favour mass deportations of immigrants living in the country illegally, it said. In contrast, only 27 per cent of Harris supporters favour mass deportations while 72 per cent oppose it, the survey found. More than a third of Trump supporters (37 per cent) favour allowing undocumented immigrants to live and work in

the US if they are married to an American citizen, compared with 80 per cent of Harris supporters who say the same, Pew Research found. About half of Trump supporters (49 per cent) support admitting more civilian refugees who are escaping war or violence, but a majority of Harris supporters (85 per cent) say the same, it said. Latanya, a student from Michigan, said immigration is a major issue in the election and she was upset with Trump over his policy on the matter. "I think, Harris is a much better choice than Trump in the election," she added. The US presidential race remained very tight with both Harris and Trump locked in a dead heat for the popular votes in most swing states. The final nationwide CNN poll found this week that 47 per cent of likely voters support Harris and an equal 47 would endorse Trump in the elections.

In the final New York Times/Siena College national poll from October 20 to 23, the two aspirants are tied at 48 per cent. The remaining four per cent are yet to decide on their preference. A separate poll conducted by the Financial Times and the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business showed that 44 per cent of respondents trust Trump to handle the economy as opposed to 43 per cent for Harris. An analysis by FiveThirtyEight poll tracker, however, showed that Harris has a slight edge over Trump with 1.7 percentage points. To win the race for the White House, the successful candidate will have to secure 270 of the 538 electoral votes up for grabs. The seven key swing states which are seen to be crucial to determine the election results are Georgia, Michigan, Arizona, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Nevada.

## Donald Trump skips swing states for Madison Square Garden moment

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump is finally getting his Madison Square Garden moment. With just over a week to go before Election Day, the former president will take the stage at one of the country's most iconic venues, hosting a hometown rally to deliver his campaign's closing message against Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris. "Madison Square Garden is the centre of the universe," said Trump campaign senior adviser Jason Miller, noting the venue's storied history hosting events including the 1971 "Fight of the Century." The rally is one of a series of detours Trump has made from battleground states, including a recent rally in Coachella, California — best known for

the famous music festival named after the town — and one over the summer on the Jersey Shore. This summer he campaigned in the South Bronx. While some Democrats and TV pundits have questioned Trump's decision to hold what they dismiss as vanity events, the rally guarantees Trump what he most craves: the spotlight, wall-to-wall coverage and a national audience. Along with trying to energise his base, Trump's campaign has been trying to court the few remaining undecided voters, many of whom don't get their news from traditional outlets. To reach them, Trump has spent hours appearing on popular podcasts. And his campaign has worked to create viral moments like his visit last weekend to a McDonald's

restaurant, where he made fries and served supporters through the drive-thru window. Video of the stop posted by his campaign has been viewed more than 40 million times on TikTok alone. "He's not just going to be speaking to the attendees inside Madison Square Garden. There will be people tuning in from battleground states all across the country," said former US Rep. Lee Zeldin, a New York Republican and ally of the former president, who said Trump has been talking about holding an event at the venue since the start of his campaign. Harris has also travelled to non-battleground states for major events intended to drive a national message. She appeared in Houston Friday with music superstar Beyoncé

to speak about reproductive rights, and will deliver her own closing argument Tuesday from the Ellipse in Washington, where Trump spoke ahead of the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot. Trump will be joined at the rally by supporters including Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, who has spent tens of millions of dollars to boost his campaign. Trump often compares himself to the country's greatest entertainers. The former reality TV star has long talked about wanting to hold a rally at the venue dubbed "The World's Most Famous Arena," raising the idea in interviews and private conversations. "New York is part of his DNA. Madison Square Garden is part of his DNA," said New York State Republican Chairman Ed Cox.

## Satellite images show damage from Israeli attack at 2 secretive Iranian military bases

AP ■ DUBAI

An Israeli attack on Iran damaged facilities at a secretive military base south-east of the Iranian capital that experts in the past have linked to Tehran's onetime nuclear weapons programme and at another base tied to its ballistic missile programme, satellite photos analysed Sunday by The Associated Press show. Some of the buildings damaged sat in Iran's Parchin military base, where the International Atomic Energy Agency suspects Iran in the past conducted tests of high explosives that could trigger a nuclear weapon. Iran long has insisted its nuclear programme is peaceful, though the IAEA, Western intelligence agencies and others say Tehran had an active weapons programme up

until 2003. The other damage could be seen at the nearby Khojir military base, which analysts believe hides an underground tunnel system and missile production sites. Iran's military has not acknowledged damage at either Khojir or Parchin from Israel's attack early Saturday, though it has said the assault killed four Iranian soldiers working in the country's air defence systems. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor did the Israeli military. However, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday told an audience that the Israeli attack "should not be exaggerated nor downplayed," while stopping short of calling for an immediate retali-

atory strike. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu separately said Sunday that Israel's strikes "severely harmed" Iran and that the barrage "achieved all its goals." It remains unclear how many sites in total were targeted in the Israeli attack. There have been no images of damage so far released by Iran's military. Iranian officials have identified affected areas as being in Ilam, Khuzestan and Tehran provinces. Burned fields could be seen in satellite images from Planet Labs PBC around Iran's Tange Bijar natural gas production site in Ilam province on Saturday, though it wasn't immediately clear if it was related to the attack. Ilam province sits on the Iran-Iraq border in western Iran. The most telling damage could be seen in Planet Labs images

of Parchin, some 40 kilometres southeast of downtown Tehran near the Mamalu Dam. There, one structure appeared to be totally destroyed while others looked damaged in the attack. At Khojir, some 20 kilometres away from downtown Tehran, damage could be seen on at least two structures in satellite images. Analysts including Decker Eveleth at the Virginia-based think tank CNA, Joe Truzman at the Washington-based Foundation for Defence of Democracies and former United Nations weapon inspector David Albright, as well as other open-source experts, first identified the damage to the bases. The locations of the two bases correspond to videos obtained by the AP showing Iranian air defence systems firing in the vicinity early Saturday.



# Mcap of nine top-10 most valued firms drops as markets trumble

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together lost a whopping Rs 2,09,952.26 crore from market valuation last week, in line with weak trends in equities, with Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries Limited taking the biggest hit. Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,822.46 points or 2.24 per cent. "The dismal Q2 earnings so far have aggravated the investors' woes while persistent FII selling continued to create havoc in the market," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. From the top-10 pack, HDFC Bank emerged as the only winner. The market valuation of



Hindustan Unilever eroded by Rs 44,195.81 crore to Rs 5,93,870.94 crore. Reliance Industries' valuation tumbled Rs 41,994.54 crore to Rs 17,96,726.60 crore. State Bank of India's market valuation plummeted by Rs

35,117.72 crore to Rs 6,96,655.84 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel tanked by Rs 24,108.72 crore to Rs 9,47,598.89 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) dropped by Rs

23,137.67 crore to Rs 14,68,183.73 crore. The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) diminished by Rs 19,797.24 crore to Rs 5,71,621.67 crore, and that of Infosys declined by Rs 10,629.49 crore to Rs 7,69,496.61 crore. ITC's mcap fell by Rs 5,690.96 crore to Rs 6,02,991.33 crore, and that of ICICI Bank went lower by Rs 5,280.11 crore to Rs 8,84,911.27 crore. However, the mcap of HDFC Bank jumped Rs 46,891.13 crore to Rs 13,29,739.43 crore. Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and LIC.

# Government plans to issue ALMM to push India's green energy transition

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is planning to introduce an Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) for solar cells on the lines of module manufacturing to boost India's transition towards green energy. The government is aiming to make the second list (List II) under the ALMM for solar PV cells effective April 1, 2026. The government introduced the ALMM order (List I) in 2019 for solar modules to boost the manufacturing and usage of made-in-India solar panels. It was made mandatory to source PV modules from models and manufacturers included in the ALMM List I. According to an office memorandum of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the ALMM order dated January 2, 2019,



specified models and manufacturers of solar PV modules, whereas List-II will identify and include models and manufacturers of solar PV cells. However, to date, List II of solar PV cells has not been issued because the installed capacity of solar PV cells in the country was lower than the demand, the government document said. "With installed capacity of solar PV cells in the country expected to increase

substantially in the next two years, it has been proposed to issue List-II of solar PV cells under ALMM, which shall be effective from April 1, 2026," according to the draft amendment to ALMM order for implementation of ALMM for solar PV cells. The draft paper also proposed that the solar PV modules -- which are presently enlisted in ALMM List-I (for solar PV modules) with an expiry date beyond March 31, 2026 -- will also have to use solar PV cells included in ALMM List-II (for solar PV cells) from April 1, 2026, onwards. If the modules don't have the cells included in List-II, they will be liable to be delisted from ALMM List-I, as per the draft. "All projects where the last date of bid submission is before the issuance of this order shall stand exempted from the mandatory requirement of using solar PV

cells from ALMM List-II," the draft said. Sustainable Projects and Developers Association (SDPA) President Vineet Mittal said the introduction of an ALMM mechanism for solar cells will boost domestic manufacturing by ensuring that only approved, high-quality, and reliable products are used in government-backed projects. This will promote self-reliance in the sector and significantly reduce dependency on imports, which is crucial for achieving India's long-term renewable energy goals, he added. Yogesh Dua, co-founder of UTL Solar, said, "We welcome the efforts being taken by the government to make the industry more sustainable. It will not only push the vision of 500 GW but also meet our goals. The move will also benefit consumers with efficient solar projects".

# Festive sales: Buoyed by online offers, appliance makers expect growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The appliance & consumer electronics industry expects around 30 per cent growth in the festive season sales this year after a double-digit booster from online sale events of leading e-tailers Flipkart and Amazon and an expected final thrust from offline channels during Dhanteras week. This festive season, premiumisation is the flavour, where consumers are willing to pay extra for features such as energy efficiency, higher capacity and larger size and even showing interest in the high-end AI & IOT Technology-driven products, industry leaders said. Companies such as LG Electronics, Panasonic, Sony, Godrej Appliances and Haier started festive sales with a good kick start from the Onam festival and expect to continue the momentum till the remaining week of the nearly 45-day festive period, which concludes after Diwali. To make the premium range as large screen TV panels above 51" screen size, higher load capacity washing machines and French door refrigerators (with two side-by-side doors), the manufacturers are incentivising with attractive

financing schemes, investing in branding and promotion on digital and traditional mediums. "There is good growth across all categories, especially in premium products like large-capacity washing machines and refrigerators. We are witnessing good demand for products featuring AI & IOT technology," said LG Electronics India, Senior VP-Home Appliances Sanjay Chitkara. He added that this festive season, demand for premium products has also increased even from the smaller tier II & III markets, which is encouraging. "Upcoming week is significant for festive sales as generally during Dhanteras there will be a high sell-out across India," said Chitkara. Moreover, this year's festive season sale also coincides with a strong wedding season this winter. "There were not many wedding dates in summer this year therefore wedding purchases are complementing festival sellout," he said. Godrej Appliances Business Head and EVP Kamal Nandi said helped by a good monsoon markets have picked up this festive season. The premium leading the charge this season, though



mass product segments also have shown significant growth. "At Godrej Appliances, we have seen a growth of close to 40 per cent since the start of Onam in September compared to last year. October, driven by a combination of Durga Puja /Navratri and the upcoming Diwali celebrations has delivered close to 45 per cent surge so far," he said. Over the festive season sales on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart, Nandi said Godrej Appliances has overall "achieved an impressive 70 per cent-plus growth compared to last year". Panasonic India's e-commerce continued to grow in double digits and during Navratri, it witnessed over 20 per cent growth and hopes to

continue momentum till Diwali. "Consumption remains bullish for premium appliances. Whether it is offline or, online consumers are opting for higher ASP (Average Selling Price) products," said Panasonic Marketing India Managing Director Fumiyasu Fujimori. Sony India is also witnessing a surge in demand for large screen televisions especially 55" and above, with 75" and 85" screen sizes gaining significant traction, said its Managing Director Sunil Nayyar. "We are offering lucrative bank offers and easy finance schemes to make the purchase easier for our customers both in the offline and online space," he said. Industry body CEAMA (Consumer Electronics and

Appliances Manufacturers Association) projects around 20 growth this festive season. Both e-commerce platforms and brick-and-mortar stores are witnessing this positive trend, underscoring the significance of the consumer electronics segment during the festive season, said its President Sunil Vachani. "During this festive season, both online and offline sales have seen a remarkable boost, where we have witnessed online marketplaces alone achieving high sales figures within a week-a 26% rise from 2023," he said. There has been a particularly strong demand for LED TVs, air conditioners, large refrigerators, microwaves, and washing machines, driven by the launch of new models and attractive offers, Vachani added. Haier India President Satish NS said its premium products are doing "extremely well" led by LED panels above 51-inch screen size and high-load washing machines. "People are willing to pay for premiumisation through the consumer financing schemes, which is a good sign for the industry. My expectation is that we should be doing about a minimum of 30-35 per cent growth in terms of value growth," he said.

Avneet Singh Marwah, CEO of Noida-based Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd (SPPL), a TV and appliance manufacturing company having licenses of several global brands including Thomson, Kodak, Blaupunkt, White-Westinghouse - said consumers are now shifting towards bigger screens. "This year the festive sales have been good, especially in the larger segment and we saw a 15 per cent growth in comparison to the last festive season. The segment which has really grown for us is 43-inch and 55-inch, there's been a triple-digit growth in 65-inch and 75-inch since last year," he said. BSH Home Appliances MD & CEO Saif Khan said with increased interest in home upgrades and real estate, demand for premium and luxury appliances-particularly front-loading washing machines, dishwashers, and built-in cooking ranges from Bosch and Siemens-continues to grow. "In the pre-festive period leading up to Dussehra, BSH experienced a remarkable 40 per cent growth in e-commerce sales, primarily fueled by an increased demand for higher-capacity appliances," he said.

# Turkiye's measures on polyester staple fibres impact exports: India seeks compensation



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has sought compensation from Turkiye as Ankara's decision to extend safeguard measures on polyester staple fibres has impacted the product's exports, an official said. India flagged concerns and impact from these measures during a recent bilateral consultations with Turkiye under the WTO's safeguard agreement. On October 14, India sought consultations with Turkiye under the agreement following Ankara's decision to extend safeguard measures on polyester staple fibres. "We have sought compensation as we have a loss of trade. India has the option to propose retaliatory customs duties equivalent to the value of export loss if the issue will not be resolved through consultations," the official said. India has exported these fibres worth USD 22.18 million during 2023-24. It was USD 23.55 million in 2022-23. In September, Turkiye decided to extend safeguard measures against imports of polyester staple fibres. "As a member having a substantial trade interest in the export of products concerned, India had requested for consultations with Turkiye on the extension of the measures," the official added. As per a provision of the Agreement on Safeguards, a WTO member country proposing to apply safeguard measures shall provide

adequate opportunity for prior consultations with those members having a substantial interest as exporters of the product concerned, with a view to reviewing the information provided, exchanging views on the measure, and reaching an understanding on ways to achieve the objective set out in the agreement. India's overall exports to Turkiye stood at USD 6.65 billion in 2023-24, while imports were USD 3.78 billion.. An expert said that India has been "very proactive" in the recent past about trade remedy measures and is seeking consultations with its trading partners if its trade is getting affected. Last month, India proposed the imposition of retaliatory customs duties, under the WTO (World Trade Organisation) norms, on certain value of goods imported from the EU, as the two sides have failed to reach a consensus on the European Union's safeguard measures on some steel products. The EU has extended safeguard duties on imports of certain steel product categories with an out-of-quota duty of 25 per cent, for another two years till 2026. In 2022, India had also proposed to impose retaliatory customs duties under the WTO norms on about USD 250 million worth of goods imported from the UK against Britain's move to extend safeguard duty and quota restrictions on the import of certain steel products till 2024.

# Brewers oppose Karnataka beer tax hike

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Brewers Association of India (BAI) on Sunday requested the Karnataka Government to not go ahead with proposed amendments to reclassification of beer and restructuring of taxes, saying these would work against both the Government and the industry. BAI's submission is in response to a draft notification issued by the Karnataka government seeking stakeholders opinion on matters related to regulation of beer. In the draft notification the Government has sought to mandate declaration of malt and sugar content on the label of beer products, increase taxes on the strong beer, and raise the minimum price of beer in the state. The draft notification introduces a new definition of beer which, amongst others, limits the addition of sugar to 25% in beer and makes it mandatory for the beer products to display the content of malt and sugar on the label. Brewers in the state have objected to these proposals. Commenting on the matter, Vinod Giri, the Director general of the BAI said, "Beer has no sugar in it. There is a definition of beer set by the FSSAI which are followed by all states and we don't see the need to change them by one state. Having said that, our larger concern is regarding putting it up on the label. Beer labels are already cluttered with so much statutory information and warnings. Adding more



information, especially when it is not even relevant, will just make them more cluttered and unappealing." The draft notification also proposes to increase the excise duty on strong beer by 100% to Rs 20 per bulk litre, increases the minimum billing price for beer in the state to Rs 300 per case and increases Additional Excise Duty (AED) to 195% of the billing price or Rs 130 per bulk litre whichever is higher. On the proposed hike in minimum beer price of beer, Mr Giri said: "If implemented, it would be the third increase in tax on beer in the last 15 months. That's unheard of! It almost seems the direction of the policy is to make beer prices uncompetitive compared to hard liquor so as to shift consumers from a milder form of alcohol like beer to hard spirit like IMFL. That is something that health bodies such as the WHO do not recommend for public policy. Governments should not do that consciously." BAI has objected to these, saying that these proposals will hit the beer industry in the state very hard. BAI, in its letter to the Government states that the taxes on beer have already been increased twice in the last one year and one more tax increase will push the beer price amongst the highest in the country.

BAI has said that such increase may lead to drop in sales of beer in the state and encourage cross border unlawful imports, eventually leading to fall in tax collection of the Government. Vinod Giri added, "The proposed tax increases are going to hit consumers two ways. One, the price of strong beer, which accounts for 90% of beer sold in the state, will go up by Rs 10-15 per bottle making it amongst the most expensive in the country, and raise the minimum price of the beer from current Rs 95 per bottle to Rs 140 per bottle. Such a rapid and massive increase in tax on beer is surprising as it is third time in less than a year. Further, the Government is at the same time reducing taxes on liquor. Increasing beer prices and holding or reducing liquor prices will only encourage consumers to switch from mild form of alcohol to hard liquor, which is not what the World Health Organization recommends." The letter states: "Karnataka is recognized for its strong beer culture. It has 11 breweries with thousands of crores of investment, providing employment to 7500 people. It is home to two of India's largest beer makers. All this has been made possible by supportive and progressive policies by the Government. However, we are concerned that some proposed changes could hinder the growth of the industry, diminish the state's investment appeal, or drive investments elsewhere.

# ONGC head should be chairman of subsidiary HPCL, says synergy panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The oil and Natural Gas Corporation Chairman and Managing Director should also be the chair of the firm's subsidiary Hindustan Petroleum Corporation in line with the universal practice of a corporate group having only one chairman, a panel appointed to work out synergies between the two firms said in its report. India's top oil and gas producer Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) had, in January 2018, bought the government's entire 51.11 per cent stake in HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore. The nation's third-biggest oil refining and fuel marketing company thereafter became a subsidiary of ONGC. But Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), which initially did not even recognise the new owner, continues to be headed by a chairman and managing director, who does not report to parent firm ONGC or its board. ONGC has got just one board position on HPCL following the acquisition. On a prod from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, ONGC appointed a three-member panel to work out synergies between ONGC and HPCL. The panel, which comprised former oil secretary GC Chaturvedi, former ONGC chairman Dinesh Kumar Sarraf, and former HPCL head MB Lal, a couple of months back submitted its report to ONGC, which forwarded it to the ministry for further action, two



sources with direct knowledge of the matter said. The panel in the report said the ONGC chairman and managing director should be the chair of the board of not just ONGC but also all its subsidiaries - ONGC Videsh Ltd, HPCL, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd, and ONGC Petro additions Limited (OPAL). The subsidiaries should be headed by the CEO and Managing Directors, who would report to the ONGC chairman, they said citing the report. Except for HPCL, all other subsidiaries - OVL, MRPL and OPAL - are headed by CEO and Managing Director. The ONGC chairman heads the board of OVL, MRPL and OPAL. "ONGC and all its direct subsidiaries should have one chairman and the different units be run by a board and MD/CEO," a source aware of the report said. "The board of step-down subsidiaries should be headed by the MD/CEO of the immediate parent firm." The panel was formed to work out synergies between ONGC and HPCL and optimise processes and businesses.

Mukesh Kumar Surana, who was the chairman and managing director of HPCL when ONGC bought out the government stake in January 2018, retired on April 30, 2022. His successor, Pushp Kumar Joshi superannuated on August 31 this year. No one has so far been appointed as HPCL chairman till now. Another source said the government should use this opportunity to implement the panel report. It should appoint an MD and CEO of HPCL and make the ONGC chairman the head of its board. Even after the Union Cabinet approval and ONGC buying out the entire government stake, HPCL for over one and half years refused to recognise ONGC as its promoter. It listed ONGC's shareholding of 51.11 per cent as a 'public shareholder' in as many as six quarterly shareholding filings with stock exchanges post-January 2018. HPCL listed the President of India with nil shareholding as its promoter in those filings. This is despite the oil ministry's explicit advice, sources said, adding that HPCL delayed the eventual by seeking "clarifications" from various authorities.

## INBRIEF

### INDIAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY RECOGNIZES PROFESSOR

**AMRITSAR:** Professor Narpinder Singh, Vice Chancellor of Graphic Era Deemed to be University, has been selected for the prestigious Prof. Priyadarshan Ray Memorial Award 2023 by the Indian Chemical Society, founded in 1924, is India's premier professional organization dedicated to promoting chemical sciences through research, education, and industry collaboration.

### MORE FESTIVE SPECIAL TRAINS BY NFR

**MALIGAON:** In a bid to clear the additional rush of passengers during this ongoing festive season of 2024, it has been decided to operate six additional pairs of festive special trains.

### POWERGRID CELEBRATES ITS 35 TH RAISING DAY



**GURUGRAM:** TPower Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) - a Maharatna CPSU under Ministry of Power celebrated its 35 th raising day across the country with great zeal and enthusiasm.





## DELHI'S AIR POLLUTION CRISIS

# LASTING SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTH AND GREENERY

Keep the windows closed, avoiding indoor burning of wood, and using a wet mop for cleaning can reduce dust exposure in this high AQI writes GUFRAAN BEIG

With the air quality in the national capital already in the "poor" category ahead of Diwali, the Delhi government has swung into action, coinciding with the Centre's directive to implement GRAP Stage 1 and other related initiatives. City residents are bracing themselves for, yet another long winter of air pollution and the health hazards it causes. Air Quality Index (AQI) is a measure of the quantum of harmful particles, fumes, chemicals, and oxides in the air. It gauges levels on a scale from 0 to 500 and plays a crucial role in understanding the scale of the air pollution crisis. While the AQI under 50 is ideal and under 100 is liveable, once it crosses this level, it progressively indicates that the air we breathe is getting more harmful. AQI levels (100-200) can lead to eye and throat irritation, while higher levels can have several serious health impacts. During the winter months, Delhi's AQI levels become hazardous, exceeding 200 resulting in prolonged exposure to unhealthy levels of PM2.5. Several medical studies show that such exposure can lead to a range of serious health issues, including reduced lung function and development, cancer, premature mortality, cardiovascular symptoms such as unusual chest pain, and hematological abnormalities like anemia, leukemia, thrombocytosis, and venous thromboembolism. To mitigate exposure, people are advised to limit outdoor activities, especially in the early morning and after sunset to

TO MITIGATE EXPOSURE, PEOPLE ARE ADVISED TO LIMIT OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, IN THE EARLY MORNING AND AFTER SUNSET. TO AVOID HEAVY EXERTION OPT FOR SHORT WALKS, AVOID JOGGING, AND TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS. IF UNUSUAL SYMPTOMS ARISE, SUCH AS COUGHING OR CHEST DISCOMFORT, STOP ALL ACTIVITIES

avoid heavy exertion. You can opt for short walks, avoid jogging, and take frequent breaks. If unusual symptoms arise, such as coughing or chest discomfort, stop all activities. Keeping windows closed, avoiding indoor burning of wood or candles, and using wet mopping for cleaning can further reduce dust exposure. N95 or P100 masks may provide some protection when outside. Also, the reality is that the transportation sector is growing rapidly, fuelled by increased vehicle ownership and the need to modernise outdated engine technology. The Government is proactively promoting electric mobility, recognising its immense potential to transform air quality. While it can upscale its efforts with more

incentives and better infrastructure, citizens must also collaborate in this transition by embracing EVs more actively and making them their primary mode of personal transport. With the Delhi Metro and Delhi Transport Corporation already committed to using zero emission electric power trains for their trains and buses, it's time for residents of the Capital too to follow their lead and make a stronger collective effort to eliminate dangerous exhaust pollutants, significantly improving air quality and public health. We must create a cleaner and healthier future for Delhi residents. Controlling tailpipe emissions is critical for this. Mandating vehicle electrification, curtailing emissions from vehicles running on petrol and diesel, and retiring highly polluting older models where the emissions can't be reduced must be considered. While this will not be easy, the time for action is now or it may get too late. Concerns about the environmental impact of increased electricity demand for EVs will be addressed by transitioning to renewable energy sources. As India makes more strides in this direction, the growth of clean energy can mitigate the reliance on coal, ultimately benefiting the environment.

The author is a chair professor of NIAS, IISc-Campus, Bengaluru and Founder, SAFAR.

## ARE WE ON THE PATH TO END AIDS BY 2030?



BY SHOBHA SHUKLA

The reality is a mix of yes and no while the facts shared in the latest report by UNAIDS reveal that as a world we are not already on the path, they do show that we can be there if world leaders take bold actions ensuring that the HIV response has the resources it needs. Progress made in the past decade notwithstanding, there is still a huge gap between the targets set up to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The UNAIDS report- The Urgency of Now: AIDS at a Crossroads- shows that globally, of the 39.9 million people living with HIV, nearly 25% (9.3 million), are not receiving life-saving treatment, including 660,000 children living with HIV. Globally, 4,000 young women and girls will become infected with HIV every week in 2022.

### DEVELOP NEW HIV PREVENTION OPTIONS AND DELIVER THEM EQUITABLY

"We have to fill the product introduction gap - accelerate time to regulatory approvals of product introduction to impact; demand creation and programme platforms for prevention; and differentiated and integrated service delivery for people. We must also fill the product development gap - long acting and event driven; user-friendly and developed with users; dual purpose and multi-purpose methods must be our top priority," says Mitchell Warren, Executive Director of AVAC. PrEP is one of the new HIV prevention options for HIV-negative people who can reduce the risk of HIV acquisition by taking an antiretroviral medication and the latest addition is the long acting injectable lenacapavir that has been found to be highly effective in preventing HIV in cisgender women as well as in gay, bisexual and transgender people.

### CHOICE MATTERS ON MULTIPLE LEVELS

Studies have proved that expanding testing and treating and then introducing PrEP has lowered the incidence of HIV in communities that had access to it. In Warren's opinion, "We should not forget that biomedical products- whether for prevention or for treatment- exist in behavioural and structural contexts. None of these methods can help if we do not address access and equity. While we develop biomedical products around the pathogen-around the HIV virus- we need to design the programmes around the people. That is what matters and that is how you get to impact.

### ROLLOUT OF NEW TOOLS

The deadly delays between developing path breaking health technologies and benefiting those for whom these were developed must end. We have to ensure vaccines convert into vaccinations of the 'last person in queue' first - without any delay. Same holds true for the full range of disease prevention, diagnostics, and treatments we have today. The 5th HIVR4P Conference to be convened in Lima, Peru will bring together around 1500 participants including representatives of key and affected populations in the HIV response to advance scientific knowledge, and enhance scientific and community collaborations to address the challenges and opportunities in HIV prevention. The author is the award-winning founding Managing Editor and Executive Director of CNS (Citizen News Service)

## IMPACTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

# Effect of Improper Sleep, Mental Health on Students' Performance

BY ARCHANA PADHYE

As an educator, one tends to observe that sleep patterns are strongly linked to psychological well-being and academic performance. In today's fast-paced society, students are always undergoing pressure to maintain their social life, balance extracurricular activities, and be academically fit. Unfortunately, sleep is the most crucial component that is sometimes forgotten. In this article we will look at the connections between healthy sleep patterns, mental wellbeing, and academic success and discuss ways to support our students' general wellbeing.

### The Role of Sleep in Academic Success

Rest is necessary for cognitive and emotional regulation. While asleep, the brain processes information learned during the day through consolidation of learning and memory. Thus, students learn better and pay better attention, leading to higher levels of academic performance when they are well rested. On the other hand, sleep deprivation leads to lack of focus and irritability. It can be much tougher for students to sit in class and complete tasks in hand when they are sleep deprived. Sleep timings can vary by age, when it comes to students.

### Mental Health and Its Impact on Learning

Mental wellbeing contributes much to students' academic performance. Stress, anxiety, and even depression are increasing in school-going children. It

isn't self induced, it is normally facilitated by pressure related to academics. This leads to distraction, low motivation, and poor time management. The following suggestions have been

put into practice to help foster healthier sleeping habits and mental well-being for students so they can best be prepared: **Create a Consistent Sleep Schedule** - Encouraging students to go to bed and

wake up at the same time every day—even on weekends—helps regulate their internal body clock. This makes it easier to fall asleep and wake up refreshed. **Limit Screen Time Right Before**

**Sleep** - Radiation emitting through mobile phones, tablets, and computers interferes with the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone. Regulating the screens before bed time has to be a ritual.

**Promoting Relaxing Methods** - Engaging in relaxing activities such as deep breathing, meditation, listening to soulful music or reading a book before bed may ease the student into the spirit of sleeping. These methods also reduce levels of anxiety and stress, thus enhancing mental well-being.

**Time Management** - Students often end up feeling extremely overwhelmed by the tasks in hand, exams, and extracurricular activities. Breaking down tasks into different elements, as well as a prioritisation of workloads, can actually ease the burden and reduce the stress associated with it.

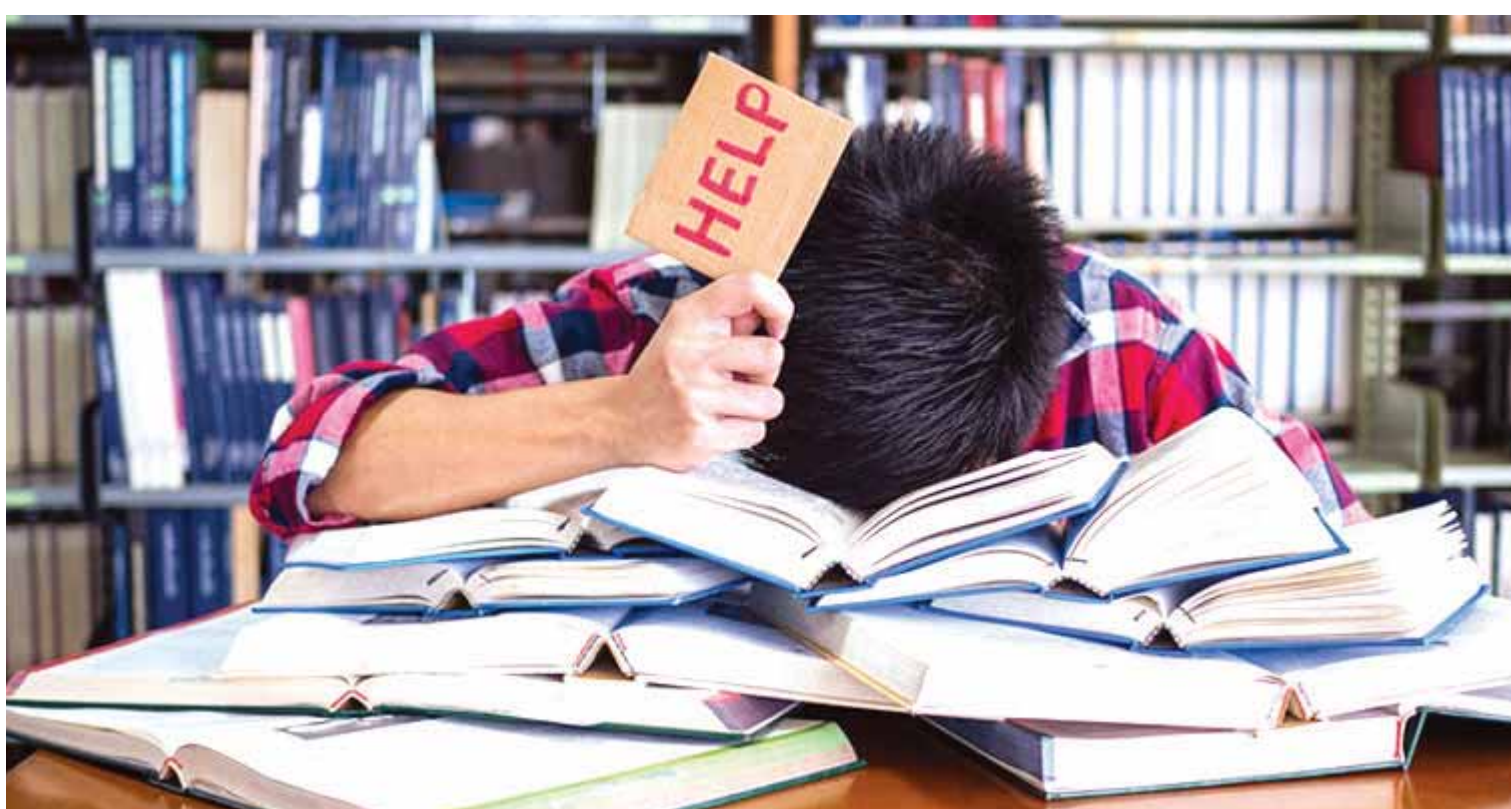
**Advocating Physical Activity** - Physical activities tire the body, thus improving the quality of sleep. In addition to that, regular physical activity reduces anxiety and depression, hence encouraging mental health.

Balancing sleep, mental health, and academic performance can really impact the overall success of the student.

So, educators and counselors should reinforce the importance of sleep in healthy mental habits and provide students with the tools to succeed not only in the classroom but also in their personal space.

Together, schools can create this kind of school environment that works to make students shine in academics and emotionally as well.

The author is the Head of Department, SEN & Counselling at Orchids The International School.





# INDIAN BATTERS WERE EXPOSED BY SANTNER; KOHLI'S FORM NOT A CONCERN: SIMON DOULL

PTI ■ PUNE

Former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull attributed India's shocking series defeat to their batsmen's inadequacies against spin bowling but he was not ready to write off underwhelming star batter Virat Kohli.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner grabbed 13 wickets as the Kiwis walloped India by 113 runs in the second Test here on Saturday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

"There's a misconception that Indian players are better players of spin. I think they've had better spinners and they've been able to expose the opposition batters. But in this Test (at Pune), their batters were exposed a little bit by a very, very good performance from Mitchell Santner," Doull told PTI Videos.

Even though Doull said negating spin is no longer a forte of many teams, he conceded that Indian batters' capitulation against "not a world-class spin bowling attack" of New Zealand offered some worrying signals.

"I think you get used to playing on such good wickets. And when it does turn, techniques get exposed a little bit. For a long time, when



India played on turning surfaces, they still had the best spinners in the world in Jadeja and Ashwin.

"So, they've been able to undo other sides. In this Test match, they were undone by a New Zealand side that, with all due respect, is not a world-class spin bowling attack. So, that will be a concern of some sort," he detailed.

Kohli's modest run in the ongoing series was one of the talking points, as the veteran batter succumbed to spin three times in four innings.

But Doull did not read too much into the former Indian captain's dismal form, and said it would not have an effect in the upcoming five-match Test series against Australia.

"There're issues against spin but he's not the only one. You're not going to find those (spin-friendly) conditions in Australia. He (Kohli) had a great series Down Under."

"He plays quick bowling as well as he has for the last four or five years. So, I don't think it's a concern," he noted.

The 55-year-old also defended Indian skipper Rohit Sharma for his defensive approach and placed veteran bowlers in the side as culpable for the series defeat.

"I think winning the toss is crucial. For Rohit, the wrong decision at Bangalore was crucial. He's admitted to that as well. New Zealand seamers took advantage of that," he said.

Rohit elected to bat first in the opening Test under overcast conditions and his side got

bowled out for a pathetic 46, which eventually transpired into an eight-wicket defeat.

The second Test saw a different scenario as New Zealand skipper Tom Latham won the toss and smartly elected to bat first, realising that batting fourth on Pune pitch would be a tough task.

"Winning the toss in this Test (at Pune), when you knew, pitch was going to turn...it might not have looked like a big score, 259 in the (NZ) first innings.

"But it was made to look like a really big score because the ball was turning. So, I think Tom Latham's captaincy was outstanding for the most part."

Doull, who took 98 wickets from 32 Tests, said senior bowlers too should have taken more responsibility.

"People say Rohit might have been a touch defensive, but that comes down to the bowlers. There're very, very senior spin bowlers in that side.

"If you can't trust an Ashwin or a Jadeja to set his own field, you can't blame Rohit for that all the time. I think the bowlers have to have some part to play in that as well," he explained.

Moving over to the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Doull said winning the third Test at Mumbai against the Kiwis will do a world of good

to their morale ahead of the marquee clash starting next month.

"They have to forget about this series. They could go out and win the third Test in Wankhede and go to Australia with a little bit more confidence. In Australia, quick bowlers will be required. India batters, I think, will be a lot better off on good surfaces. That's what you tend to get in Australia."

Doull said India have good enough players to tackle the Australian challenge.

"I'll come down to how they play the quick bowlers from Australia - the tall, slightly bouncer bowlers. But they've got the batters to do the job, I think, in good conditions.

"And if later on in the Test matches, whether it be in Perth or whether it be in Sydney, it starts to turn and bounce a little bit, then their spinners will come into play." New Zealand also became the first visiting side to win a Test series in India after 12 years, and Doull termed it remarkable. "I think it's one of the greatest moments in New Zealand cricket history. Teams don't come here and beat India once, let alone twice. And for a New Zealand team to do it without one of their star batters - Kane Williamson - it's just a phenomenal performance," he signed off.



## Shami's absence big loss for India, but won't underestimate reserve pacers: McDonald

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia head coach Andrew McDonald feels the absence of Mohammed Shami during the marquee Border Gavaskar Trophy next month is a huge loss for India, but stressed that the hosts won't underestimate the quicks stepping in for the seasoned pacer.

Shami, who had played a significant role in India's successful 2018 tour of Australia, has not played since the ODI World Cup final last November due to an ankle injury. He underwent surgery and was subsequently rehabilitating at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) but developed swelling in his knees which affected his rehabilitation.

"Mohammed Shami is a big loss," McDonald was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo on ABC's Offsiders.

"The way our batters speak about his relentless nature, his line and lengths, the way he goes about his business, a real good complimenting skill set to Bumrah so think that one-two combo they'll lack a little bit, and they'll miss that."

India have handed maiden call ups to Delhi speedster Harshit Rana and Andhra seam bowling all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy while quicks Akash Deep and Prasidh Krishna have also

been selected for the marquee series. Jasprit Bumrah will lead the fast bowling department.

"But needless to say we saw what happened last time, they had reserves that came in and did the job as well so they cannot be underestimated at all," he added.

Australian teenager Sam Konstas, who announced himself with twin Sheffield Shield centuries for New South Wales earlier this month, is in the reckoning to partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the five-match series.

"I think we're picking the best team for here and now, and if that does encompass a younger player, then we'll head down that direction," he said.

McDonald stated that if the selectors believe the 19-year-old is the best option, he will receive a Test debut, regardless of his lack of first-class experience. "I've heard people commenting 'do you protect the player?' If they're ready, they're ready in our mind, and if Sam's capable and we feel as though it is capable to fill that spot I don't think that the opponent should come into the equation." Australia will host India for the Border Gavaskar Trophy, starting November 22 in Perth.

## Sivarajan, Sukant shine as India wins 24 medals at Japan Para Badminton International

PTI ■ TOKYO

Sivarajan Solaimalai and Sukant Kadam delivered standout performances, helping India win an impressive 24 medals at the Japan Para Badminton International on Sunday.

India won six gold, nine silver and as many bronze medals in the tournament. Sivarajan enjoyed a double victory, clinching gold in the men's singles SH6 class and partnering with Sudarsan Saravanakumar Muthusamy to win the top prize in men's

doubles. Sukant also excelled, taking gold in men's singles (SL4) and silver in men's doubles (SL3-SL4) with partner Dinesh Rajaiyah. He triumphed over fellow Indian Tarun in a thrilling singles final, winning 21-12, 21-10, while Naveen Sivakumar and Surya Kant Yadav secured bronze medals.

In the doubles final, Sukant and Dinesh fought valiantly but fell short against compatriots Umesh Vikram Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav, losing 5-21, 22-20, 16-21 to take home silver.



"Winning gold in singles and silver in doubles is incredibly special," Sukant said in a release.

"I thank my coaches, support team, and the entire para-badminton community for their unwavering support.

This victory fuels my motivation to keep pushing boundaries. In other events, reigning Paralympic champion Kumar Nitesh claimed silver after a close match against Japan's Daisuke Fujihara, losing 16-21, 21-18, 19-21 in the SL3 finals.

In women's SU5, Manisha Ramdass captured gold by defeating Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-12, 21-18, while Neeraj settled for silver in the women's SL3 category after falling to Coraline Bergeron. Neeraj also finished second

in mixed doubles with Surya Kant Yadav in the SL3-SU5 category.

In men's doubles SU5, Hardik Makkar and Rithvik Ragupati won gold, while Dev Rathi and Indonesia's Bartlomiej Mroz secured silver. Hardik and Rithvik also earned silver and bronze in men's singles SU5.

In the men's doubles WH1-WH2 category, Abu Hubaida and Prem Kumar Ale took home bronze, while Alpha James bagged silver in the women's singles WH2 category.

## Move over Messi-Ronaldo, new generation of soccer stars lining up to win Ballon d'Or



AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

No Lionel Messi. No Cristiano Ronaldo. When the Ballon d'Or is presented at a gala ceremony in Paris on Monday, it will feel like the start of a new era in soccer. There is also a sense of void now that one of sport's most engrossing rivalries is likely over.

"It's interesting that as it starts to come to an end, we are sort of saying, what's the next equivalent rivalry going to be," soccer author Jonathan Wilson told The Associated Press. "As if that kind of rivalry was a natural state. But, there's never been a rivalry like that before."

Messi and Ronaldo won soccer's most prestigious individual award a combined 13 times over 16 years of unprecedented dominance. Neither has been nominated this year. Instead Real Madrid winger Vinicius Junior is the favourite to be crowned the world's best player and become the first winner born this century. He underlined his credentials this week with a stunning Champions League hat-trick against Borussia Dortmund. "Vinicius had an incredible

terms of greatness over a protracted period, Messi is the greatest there has ever been by quite some margin.

"I don't think there's anybody in the world now who has anything remotely close to that talent."

Such was the dominance of Messi and Ronaldo, not only would Vinicius Junior become the first winner born this century, but there has never even been a recipient born in the '90s.

Vinicius Junior, whose goals helped Madrid to a record-extending 15th European Cup last season, is part of a new generation of stars that are flourishing as Messi and Ronaldo reach the final stages of their careers.

Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland, Jude Bellingham and Lamine Yamal make up a field of contenders who could challenge for years to come.

Manchester City midfielder Rodri is the second favourite to win this year and would become the first player born in the '90s to take the award. Mbappe, who has long been seen as the heir to Messi and Ronaldo as the world's best player, was born in 1998, meaning it's likely there will eventually be a winner from that decade even if Rodri misses out. The only other winners since Ronaldo won his first Ballon d'Or in 2008 were Luka Modric in 2018 and Karim Benzema in 2022. Both were born in the 1980s.

The award was cancelled in 2020 when Robert Lewandowski was widely regarded as the best player that year. He was also born in the '80s. Neymar, born in 1992, came third on two occasions.

Robert Lewandowski scored twice and Lamine Yamal piled on to ruin Kylian Mbappé's first clasico as Barcelona routed Real Madrid 4-0.

The lopsided victory in Spain's capital ended the host's unbeaten run in La Liga at 42 games, one shy of Barcelona's record streak in 2017-18. Carlo Ancelotti's side suffered its first loss since Sept. 23 last year.

And what a loss it was. Lewandowski got the visitors going from a superb pass by Barcelona's latest youth talent Marc Casadó in the 54th minute and rose up to head in a fine header three minutes later to silence Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Yamal made it a rout in the 77th when the teenage phenom rifled a shot from an angle over goalkeeper Andriy Lunin. That goal made him the youngest scorer in a clasico at 17 years, 105 days, surpassing teammate Ansu Fati, who was about 250 days older in October 2020.

Raphinha then broke free with Madrid completely unhinged and chipped Lunin in the 84th. "The win came three days after Barcelona thumped Bayern Munich 4-1 in the Champions League. It has outsourced its last five opponents 21-2. "We came here to do just this," Yamal said. "We had lots of confidence and when we scored the second goal, we wanted to score a third, and then a fourth, as many goals as possible. To win 4-0 at this ground and beat Bayern 4-1, we showed that we are ready

## Lewandowski and Yamal spoil Mbappé's first clasico as Barcelona routs Real Madrid 4-0

AP ■ BARCELONA

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for anything." It is an understatement that Mbappé had a frustrating first game against Barcelona in a white shirt. The France star was caught eight times offside by Barcelona's synchronized back four and failed to beat second-choice goalkeeper Iñaki Peña one-on-one with his team down two goals. "We knew that they played with a high line, and we just couldn't take advantage of it," Ancelotti said. "Sometimes (Mbappé) fell offside, but he had three or four chances to score and needed a better finishing touch."

Hansi Flick, meanwhile, had a night to remember in the first clasico for the German coach. Barcelona still has financial troubles that cast doubt over its future but its youthful team has made huge steps forward since Flick replaced

Barcelona great Xavi Hernández in the summer. "Today we made a fantastic match and it is all about the team. Everyone gave it 100%," said Flick, who Ancelotti called "a gentleman" for telling his bench to cool it when they effusively celebrated the fourth goal near Madrid's dugout.

After opening a six-point lead over Madrid at the top of La Liga, it is no longer a foregone conclusion that with Mbappé on board Madrid will waltz to a second straight domestic title.

Casadó was one of five homegrown players that Flick put in his starting lineup, the same 11 from the Bayern win. Six players under 22 years old started for Barcelona, led by 17-year-olds Yamal and Pau Cubarsi.

Casadó had flashes of the flawless ball control of a Sergi Busquets as he helped compensate for Madrid's extra man in the midfield before he cued up the game-changing pass to play Lewandowski clear to slot home. Yamal upstaged Mbappé this summer when Spain beat France en route to winning the European Championship, and he did it again. To top it off, he scored with his supposedly "not as good" right foot before flashing his new braces decorated with Barcelona's colors for the cameras. Mbappé ensnared by offside trap Mbappé was ruled offside five times in the first half hour, as Barcelona pressed high. Vinicius Júnior, who featured in a fascinating duel with Cubarsi, missed a golden chance in the 21st when he shot past the post from close.

"When they scored those back-to-back goals it took the energy out of us," Ancelotti said. "This is a complicated moment for us. It hurts to lose a game and especially after going 42 games unbeaten, but we shouldn't just throw everything away because this team will play better."

Peña was questioned if he was up to the task of replacing Marc-Andre ter Stegen, out long term with a knee injury. His strong performance, which included two stops to deny Mbappé, was his first great game in goal for Barcelona.

"Our coach said that playing a high defensive line was non-negotiable," Peña said. "It is risky to play with such a high defense line, but the effort and work of the entire team is reflected in the offside traps we are creating." Raphinha's goal confirmed his massive step forward under Flick. The Brazil forward, who acted as Barcelona captain, has 10 goals in this campaign.

Lewandowski's goals 16th and 17th overall for the Poland striker this season, taking his league-best tally to 14. He also hit the post. Mbappé, by comparison, has eight goals in all competitions. Ayoze Pérez scored his seventh goal since joining Villarreal this campaign to help it win 2-1 at Valladolid and lift his team into third place. Rayo Vallecano beat Alaves 1-0 after scoring late despite having played a man down from the 22nd, while Las Palmas beat Girona 1-0.