



magazine

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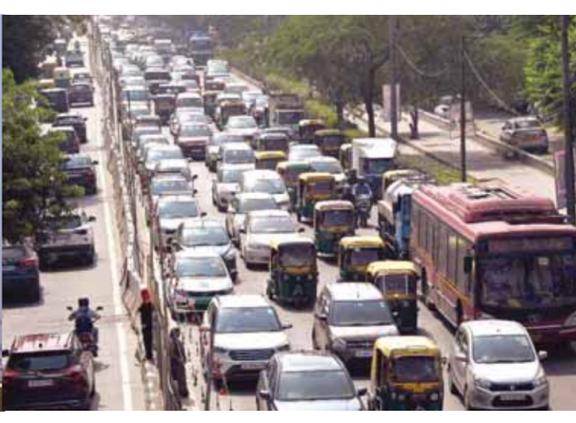
WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

Nightmare in the skies

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Mid air scares targeting Indian airlines continued on Saturday, as at least 30 flights operated by Vistara, Air India, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Star Air and Akasa Airlines were forced to make emergency landings after bomb threats, which later turned out to be hoaxes. So far this week, at least 70 flights of Indian carriers have received bomb threats, and all of them turned out to be hoaxes. The hoax threats comes right in the middle of festive season when a large number of Indians plan to fly. Worried over increasing trends of bomb threat messages, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has called the chief executive officers (CEOs) of the airlines for a meeting to discuss ways to tackle the issue, which is causing inconvenience to passengers and losses to carriers. According to officials, six flights against which bomb threats were made via social media made scheduled landings at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. These threats came from a single X account and were categorised as "hoax" and "non specific" after thorough checks, the official added. The account, of a user named 'Adha', mentioned flights of several airlines, though only six were scheduled to land at Mumbai

international airport, the official said. These were from Delhi, Goa and Darbhanga. Hoax bomb threats can wreak havoc on the Indian aviation sector since they are not easy to trace. Given the Khalistani threats to airlines, the government or airlines can't take such calls lightly even if they think these to be hoax calls. Notably, the spate of hoax bomb threats against Indian airlines has led to major financial repercussions, with airline officials estimating losses running into crores of rupees. According to Aviation Industry sources, the overall financial damage of the hoax, including costs for unscheduled landing, passenger accommodations, aircraft grounding, and crew replacements, is projected to exceed Rs 3 crore. Top sources said more than 30 flights, including domestic and international ones, operated by domestic airlines have received bomb threats through social media since Saturday morning. In at least one of the flights, a note was found in the lavatory saying there was a bomb in the flight. On Saturday, Vistara said five of its flights on international routes received security threats through social media while IndiGo said at least four of its flights got security-related alerts. The five flights of Vistara are UK106 (Singapore to Mumbai), UK027 (Mumbai



to Frankfurt), UK107 (Mumbai to Singapore), UK121 (Delhi to Bangkok) and UK131 (Mumbai to Colombo). "Following the protocol, all relevant authorities were promptly alerted and all security procedures are being adhered to, as per the guidance from the authorities and security agencies," an airline spokesperson said in a statement. Besides, there was a security concern regarding Vistara flight UK624 from Udaipur to Mumbai, and after landing, the aircraft was taken to an isolation bay for mandatory checks. A note was found in the lavatory of the aircraft saying there is a bomb in the flight, a source in the know said. IndiGo also issued statements for at least five international flights with respect to the threats - 6E 11, 6E 17, 6E 58, 6E 108, and 6E 184. They are 6E17

(Mumbai to Istanbul), 6E11 (Delhi to Istanbul), 6E184 (Jodhpur to Delhi) and 6E108 (Hyderabad to Chandigarh). The airline said it is cognisant of a situation involving flights from Mumbai and Delhi to Istanbul. Regarding the Jodhpur to Delhi flight, the carrier said the plane landed in the national capital and customers have disembarked the aircraft. About the Hyderabad to Chandigarh flight, IndiGo said that upon landing, the aircraft was isolated and all passengers were safely disembarked. Sources said that the plane was being checked at Chandigarh airport thoroughly by the airport authorities at the isolation bay. The Air India flight numbers AI 101, AI 105, AI 126, 119, and AI 161 were disrupted following the bomb scare.

Chaos on the roads

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The worsening traffic congestion across the city particularly at major junctions such as ITO, Moolchand, Chirag Delhi, Nehru Place, RTR has taken a toll on the city's road infrastructure which cater to both the Delhiites and floating population from the National Capital Region (NCR) regions like Noida, Gurgaon resulting in daily chaos. The Pioneer has already sustained a month long campaign on traffic congestion, solution and this time the Capital's new age destination across "Jamuna Paar" Anand Vihar has been carved out, to off load the in-traffic situation and has several commuters facilities like a Railway Station,

Interstate Bus Terminus (ISBT), Metro and Rapid Railway Transit System (RRTS) have come up. Due to heavy traffic congestion, it is now considered one of the busiest areas in Delhi since it lies on the border, close to the bustling metropolis of Ghaziabad and Noida and millions throng here each day. The Anand Vihar ISBT falls under the Madhu Vihar traffic circle. According to Delhi police, it has started a crackdown and issued 205 challans under different heads were also issued against the violators and encroachers. During a visit by senior police officers recently, it was observed that the road was

encroached by illegal vendors, and hawkers from both sides. They display articles on the pathways, clothes are hung on hangers and rings and illegally parked vehicles such as TSRs, Buses, Private Taxis add to the heavy traffic congestion, police said on Saturday. Due to this, the once wide road has been shortened from both the sides and pedestrians and commuters were not getting enough space to even walk on footpaths. Analysing the situation, the police evolved a strategy to clear IN/OUT congestion at the road of Anand Vihar ISBT and to make carriageway congestion free. A meeting was then arranged with the Deputy Commissioner, Municipal

Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Shahdara South Zone and local police and they were requested to arrange joint drives for removal of encroachment at Anand Vihar ISBT. A special drive was carried out along with MCD, to clear congestion and most of the encroachments were removed. Anand Vihar is a major transit hub connected with Railway, RRTS and Metro network and is always abuzz with lakhs of commuters using various modes of transport. It is surrounded by densely populated Indirapuram, Surajmal Vihar, Ramprastha in Ghaziabad, Noida, Dilshad Garden, Shahdara, Mayur Vihar, Patparganj. This leads to chaos and traffic congestion due to encroachers and heavy traffic volumes. It takes road commuters 15 to 20 minutes to cross the outside the ISBT on Chaudhary Charan Singh Marg. Buses, autorickshaws, e rickshaws and private vehicles are always stationed at wrong points leading to traffic jams. A large number of non destined vehicles entering Delhi from UP also added woes to the commuters. It is around 9 pm, when the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border at Anand Vihar becomes messy as the legal time to enter into the Capital for the commercial vehicles begins. Besides increasing parking fees, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena issued orders to regulate traffic / buses inside and outside the three ISBTs including Anand Vihar last month. Inside the ISBT, the situation has improved but outside, it remains the same.

BJP ready for Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI / NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday released its list of 66 candidates for the Jharkhand Assembly elections, fielding party president Babul Marandi from Dhanwar, and former Chief Minister Champai Soren from Saraikela. The party named Sita Soren, the sister-in-law of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader and Chief Minister Hemant Soren, as its nominee from Jamtara. The list also has the names of Geeta Kora and former Union minister Sudarshan Bhagat. The BJP is contesting 68 of the 81 Assembly seats in the state, leaving the rest for its allies. Assembly polls will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20 and counting will take place on November 23. Champai Soren, who contested from Seraikela, joined the BJP on August 30, two days after he resigned from the JMM citing "insult" and dissatisfaction with the party's current style of functioning and facing "bitter humiliation". The joining of the 67-year-old leader in the BJP was seen as a significant boost for the party's efforts to strengthen its connection with the Scheduled Tribes, a strong support base of the JMM. Meanwhile, fissures surfaced among INDIA Bloc partners ahead of the Assembly elections as the Rashtriya Janata Dal



(RJD) expressed disappointment over announcement of JMM and Congress contesting 70 of 81 seats in the State. The RJD said

the decision on seat sharing by the two INDIA Bloc constituents was "unilateral". "We express our disappointment over the offer of

seats to us. The decision is unilateral", RJD spokesperson Manoj Kumar Jha said.

Continued on page 2

Remove acting DGP Anurag Gupta: ECI

PNS ■ RANCHI

Ahead of the Jharkhand polls, the Election Commission on Saturday directed the state government to remove Acting Director General of Police (DGP) Anurag Gupta from his post with immediate effect due to a "history" of complaints against him in previous elections, sources said. The Jharkhand Assembly elections will be held in two phases - November 13 and 20. The decision to remove Gupta was based on a history of

complaints and action taken by the Commission against him during previous elections, the sources said. As an interim, the charge of the DGP will now be handed over to the senior most DGP-level officer in the cadre, they said. The state government has also been asked to submit a panel of names of senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers by October 21 morning to enable the EC to pick an officer to be named the next DGP. The state government has to submit a compliance report of these directions by Saturday evening.

During the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Gupta was relieved of his duties as ADG (Special Branch), Jharkhand, following allegations of biased conduct made by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). He was reassigned to the resident commissioner's office in Delhi and barred from returning to Jharkhand until the election process was completed, the sources recalled. During the Rajya Sabha elections from Jharkhand in 2016, Gupta, then an additional DGP, faced serious charges of misuse of authority. The Commission had formed an inquiry committee following which a charge sheet was issued to him for departmental enquiry.



We will not give Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Setting the stage for the first round of showdown between the newly elected government in Jammu and Kashmir and the Union government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has approved the resolution passed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah-led Cabinet urging the Centre to restore the statehood to the Union territory. The Central leaders including PM Modi and the Union Home Minister Amit Shah had repeatedly announced and reiterated the commitment made on the floor of the Parliament that the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir would be restored at an appropriate time. According to the spokesperson of the Department of Information and Public Relations, J and K the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Minister to take up the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Government of India for restoration of statehood. He said the CM will go to New Delhi in the coming days to meet the Prime Minister and Union Ministers in this regard. Meanwhile, the cabinet headed by Omar Abdullah has also decided to summon the Legislative Assembly at Srinagar on November 4 and advised the LG to summon and address the assembly, the spokesperson of the



Department of Information and Public Relations said in a written statement released on Saturday. The draft address of the Lt Gov to the Legislative Assembly at the commencement of the first session was also placed before the Council of Ministers which the Council decided shall be further considered and discussed, he said. "The Cabinet which met under the chairmanship of Omar Abdullah earlier on Thursday passed a unanimous resolution for restoration of statehood in its original form," an official spokesperson said. The spokesperson further added that the restoration of statehood will be the beginning of a healing process, reclaiming the constitutional rights and protecting the identity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Protection of Jammu and Kashmir's unique identity and constitutional rights of people remains the cornerstone of the newly-elected government's policy, the spokesperson said. However, the Omar Abdullah-led government faced criticism as Kashmir-based political parties described the resolution only on statehood and not on Article 370 as an "utter surrender" and a departure from the stand of the ruling National Conference. Various political parties, including the People's Democratic Party (PDP), People's Conference (PC) and Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), denounced the move, reminding the NC of its poll promise to "strive to restore (Articles) 370-35A and statehood as prior to August 5, 2019", and saying it was a departure from the pre-election stand.

Dancing drones will light up Ayodhya's night sky this Deepotsav

Lights mounted on 500 drones will showcase key episodes from the Ramayana

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government is all set to enhance the grandeur of Deepotsav in Ayodhya with a stunning aerial drone show. The event will feature a captivating display of 500 drones equipped with colourful lights, set to illuminate Ayodhya's night sky. The 15-minute show, a major highlight of the Deepotsav celebrations, will showcase the prowess of Made-in-India drones. Attendees can expect to witness a breathtaking presentation of the 'veer mudra' of Lord Ram, Laxman, and Hanuman, brought to life through a combination of laser

lights, voiceovers, and musical narration. The show will also include dynamic displays depicting key episodes from the Ramayana, such as Ravan Vadh, the Pushpak Viman, scenes from Deepotsav, Ram Darbar, Valmiki, Tulsidas, and the Ram Temple. "The mesmerising visuals promise to enthral the audience, with the logos of Deepotsav, the UP government, and the tourism department also projected onto the sky," the government spokesman said. This year's Deepotsav holds special significance as it marks the first celebration since the idol of Lord Ramlala was enshrined in the grand temple. To make this occasion unforgettable, meticulous



preparations are underway to ensure the drone show meets international standards. A full rehearsal is scheduled for October 29, one day before the main event, to ensure flawless coordination and precise drone formations. The grand show will take place at the iconic Ram Ki Paidi. The drone show will feature 15 distinct formations in the sky. To execute this, a detailed storyboard with animations will be prepared and submitted to the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department for approval. Various elements such as concept development, screenplay, background music composition, voiceovers, narration, and laser light effects are being

meticulously crafted to support the aerial displays. In addition to the drone show, Ram Ki Paidi will host a laser light and sound presentation that highlights the inspiring moments from the life of Lord Shri Ram. While daily laser and sound shows are a regular attraction at Ram Ki Paidi, this special presentation during Deepotsav remains a centrepiece of the festivities. Complementing the drone spectacle, a sound and laser display featuring artistically crafted green firecrackers will further elevate the atmosphere, lighting up the skies above Ayodhya and the event venue, making this Deepotsav a memorable celebration for all.

FILE PHOTO

Maharashtra Assembly polls: MVA resume seat sharing talks, to sign pact on Monday

T N RAGHUNATHA
MUMBAI

After AICC General Secretary Ramesh Chennithala met Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray amid reports of stalled seat-sharing talks, three constituents of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) resumed negotiations on Saturday afternoon with a resolve to finalise the seat tie-up among them for the November 20 Maharashtra Assembly polls by Monday.

Ahead of the start of nominations for the State Assembly on Tuesday (October 22), the MVA constituents -- Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) -- are expected to make a formal announcement about their seat-sharing arrangement

among them on Monday. A day after Uddhav cautioned the MVA constituents that "the differences should be stretched to breaking point", the Congress high command rushed Chennithala to meet the Sena (UBT) chief to sort out issues between the two parties over the sharing of seats in Vidarbha regions. Chennithala met Uddhav on Saturday morning, following which the stalled talks among the MVA constituents resumed at 3 pm.

The meeting between Uddhav and Chennithala should be seen in the backdrop of a statement by Sena (UBT) spokesperson who had openly accused State Congress chief Nana Patole of adopting an "adamant approach" in the seat-sharing negotiations in



matters relating to the seats in Vidarbha. However, Patole had said that he was merely following party protocols in consultation with his party leaders based in New Delhi. Informed sources in the MVA said that the three major constituents -- Congress, Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) had reached a consensus on 265 out of the total 288 Assembly seats in the state. A majority of the remaining undecided 23 seats are from Vidarbha. From these seats,

the Sena (UBT) has staked a claim on 12 seats including Ramtek, Kamthi, Nagpur (south), Warora, Armori, Bhandara, Sindhkhed Raja, Aarni, Wardha, Yavatmal and Digraj. On its part, the Congress -- which it considers as its bastion -- is reluctant to give that many seats to the Sena (UBT). However, during the final round of seat-sharing negotiations -- in which State Congress president Nana Patole, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut and NCP (Sharad Pawar) state president Jayant Patil are taking part -- were expected to adopt "give-and-take" approach to sort out the differences over the under-decided seats either on Saturday night or on Sunday. "Though the three parties will arrive at the seat-tie during the next 24 hours, we

will make a formal announcement about the seat-sharing arrangement on Monday ahead of the start of the nomination process on Tuesday," a senior MVA leader said.

According to the MVA sources, the major MVA constituents will give out seats to smaller parties like the Samajwadi Party (SP), CPI, CPI-M and Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP) from their respective seat quotas.

For instance, the Samajwadi Party was earlier insisting on 12 seats and now it has scaled down its demand to 6 seats. The Congress is dealing with the Samajwadi Party on the sharing of seats for the State Assembly polls. Earlier on Friday, Patole of the Congress and Sanjay Raut had exchanged words between them. A miffed

Raut had said that Patole's "adamant attitude" was coming in the way of the MVA formalising the seat-sharing talks and said that the Sena (UBT) would not take part in the seat-sharing talks if the State Congress chief takes part in the talks. On his part, Patole said that if someone talks about the Congress leaders, it was natural that he would respond to the statements. He had admitted that a certain procedure was adopted in the seat-sharing by his party in consultation with his party high command. However, the stalemate between the Congress and Sena (UBT) over the sharing of seats in Vidarbha region ended. Both Patole and Raut participated in the final round of resumed talks on Saturday afternoon.

Pradhan to visit Singapore, Australia soon to strengthen education ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

In a significant move to enhance bilateral cooperation in the education sector, Union Minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan will visit Singapore and Australia from October 20 to 26 October. The visit is expected to foster collaboration, participation, and synergy in critical areas of mutual interest in education, ministry of education said here on Saturday.

Giving details, officials said during the two day visit in Singapore, Pradhan will address the members of Indian diaspora on Sunday. The next day, he will meet Prime Minister of Singapore Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong, Education Minister Chan Chun Sing and Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. Pradhan will visit the National University of Singapore ranked number one in Asia. He will also visit



a local secondary school to discuss the scope of syllabus integration, keeping AI in focus. He will meet academicians, eminent representatives from alumni of IITs and IIMs and engage in discussions related to the education ecosystem of both countries.

During the three-day visit to Australia, on October 23, Pradhan, in Melbourne, will meet Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education. Pradhan will also deliver the plenary address at the Australian International Education Conference. The

Minister will be visiting the South Melbourne Primary School which is known for integrated approaches to learning. He will visit 'Discovery to Device' at RMIT University which is a unique centre for MedTech prototyping and manufacturing. The visit will explore collaborative approaches to the commercialisation of medical technologies and role of industry-academia linkages in driving innovation.

Pradhan will meet Jacinta Allan MP, Premiere of

Victoria along with Australian Education Minister Jason Clare MP. He will also visit Monash University to observe their Innovation Lab and Centre for Nano-fabrication. During his stay in Melbourne, the minister will also interact with senior academics of Indian origin. To explore opportunities for partnerships in educating early childhood education workforces, Pradhan will visit Auburn Long Day Child Care Centre in Sydney on October 24. The Minister will interact with the representatives of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) and will attend the 2nd Australia India Education and Skills Council.

The next day, he will visit the Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School. Pradhan will visit the site of the Macquarie Park Innovation District (MPID). As home to over 180 multinational companies, MPID facilitates the practical application of

Term life insurance, health cover for senior citizens may get GST exemption

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Term life insurance policies, and senior citizens' health insurance premium are likely to be exempted from GST as most members of a state ministerial panel favoured cutting taxes to benefit the common man, an official said on Saturday. The GoM to decide on GST on health and life insurance premiums in its meeting on Saturday decided to exempt GST on premiums paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh. However, 18 per cent GST will continue to be levied for health insurance cover of over Rs 5 lakh.

Separately, the GoM on GST rate rationalisation, too, met on Saturday and suggested that the GST Council re-jig tax rates on a host of goods, including packaged drinking water, bicycles, exercise



notebooks, luxury wrist watches, and shoes. A final decision on GST on health and life insurance premiums, as well as rate rationalisation, is likely to be taken by the GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state counterparts, in its meeting scheduled to take place next month. "The rate re-jig exercise will help the states and Centre to realise revenue gain of Rs 22,000 crore, which will help cover the revenue loss from reduction in GST rates for insurance premiums," the official added. The GoM on rate rationalisation proposed

reducing GST on packaged drinking water of 20 litre and above to 5 per cent from 18 per cent. If the GoM's recommendation is accepted by the GST council, GST on bicycles costing less than Rs 10,000 will be reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent. Also, GST on exercise notebooks will be reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent. The GoM also proposed hiking GST on shoes above Rs 15,000/pair from 18 per cent to 28 per cent. It also proposed hiking GST on wrist watches above Rs 25,000 from 18 per cent to 28 per cent.

Talking to reporters after the GoM meetings, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, who is the convener of the health and life insurance GoM, said "every GoM member wants to give relief to people. Special focus will be on senior citizens. We will submit a report to the Council. A final decision will be taken by the Council".

BJP wants to gain power not for serving Delhi people but to stop AAP Government's schemes, says Kejriwal

PTI NEW DELHI

The BJP wants to come to power in Delhi not to work for the people but to stop the AAP government's schemes like free electricity, education and healthcare, party supremo Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday.

Addressing a party workers' meeting in Pitampura, Kejriwal warned them against infighting saying it could lead to AAP's defeat in the Delhi Assembly polls in February.

"Do not care for who is there (in the elections) because Kejriwal will be fighting on all these 70 seats. I will get your work done no matter who is elected as an MLA," he said. Kejriwal said if the BJP comes to power, it will stop all the free schemes including those for electricity, water, bus ride for women, healthcare and education.

"My worry is not that AAP may not come to power. I am worried what will happen to the government schools if AAP does not win -- the rates of electricity and water will go



provided by the AAP government," claimed the AAP convener.

The BJP wants to gain power not for working to serve the Delhi people but to stop their works, he charged.

Kejriwal said the 'mandal' (ward) in-charges of the party will have a most crucial role in the coming Assembly polls to connect with booth level workers and the voters.

Each 'mandal' unit in-charge will supervise five booths and teams of 11 workers for each booth.

Kejriwal asked the AAP workers to be ready to take off for next three-four months from their jobs and other works to help the party win Assembly elections.

"The AAP was founded for the country, not for power. If Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar, Gandhiji and Nehru had worked part time, the country would not be free now," he said.

He said the Assembly polls are meant for saving Delhi and the schemes for the welfare of the people.

up..." Kejriwal claimed.

He said works like road repair, old age pension, free medicines at hospitals, Farishtey scheme for free treatment of accident victims and free coaching for reserved category schemes were stopped when he was in jail. All these are being restarted now, and the Farishtey and the free coaching schemes have already been resumed, he said.

"They (BJP) have government in 22 states where people are now demanding free electricity, schools and hospitals. So they want to come to power in Delhi at any cost to stall the schemes

Omar reacts strongly to allegations that NC is party of 'Muslims'

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

On his maiden visit to Jammu after occupying the 'hot seat', Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Saturday reacted strongly to the allegations that the National Conference is a party of 'Muslims' and a Kashmir-based dynastic party that cannot tolerate leaders from Jammu.

Addressing a gathering of party leaders and workers who accorded a warm reception to him here at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan, Omar said the National Conference was under no compulsion to appoint a deputy chief minister like the previous coalition governments headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Ghulam Nabi Azad and himself to give representation to both the regions. My only aim was to send a message to the people of Jammu that they have an equal share in the government, just like Kashmir.

"The Congress has so far not taken any decision to join the new cabinet. We took a decision and appointed a



deputy chief minister (Surinder Choudhary) from our party.

"It was an answer to those who during election campaigning used to say that NC is a party of Muslims and a Kashmir-based dynastic party that cannot tolerate leaders from Jammu. Now we have a deputy CM who is a Hindu and has nothing to do with my family," the chief

minister said.

In a veiled reference to the BJP, Omar said the delimitation and reservation were done in a way to benefit one party but "all tactics including use of government machinery can never help you win elections".

On the occasion, Omar Abdullah assured the people that they would be heard by his government and "your

voices won't be lost in the darkness anymore". He asked the party workers not to "misuse the government" for their benefit.

The chief minister also asked the party workers not to lose their hearts and said JK is presently a UT which cannot be such for long.

"We will get back our rights. We will fight for all that which was taken away from us and

there is no need to get annoyed or disappointed," he said.

In a lighter vein Omar shared his personal experience of losing the Lok Sabha elections, admitting that at the time, he felt it was difficult to rise again. "But nature has its ways. Many officers and friends must have thought, 'Khatam, Maklou, it's over for Omar'. But today, the same people greet me in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Many ask if I've had lunch. Many now text me, 'Good night, have a nice sleep'. This is the Almighty's way of doing things," Omar said. "But we should not be arrogant about winning the elections. Just as the people have given us this opportunity, they can punish us tomorrow."

Omar also reached out to the media fraternity, assuring them that no iron-fist policy will be applied to the media in Jammu and Kashmir. "I will not punish you for writing against me. I will ensure that the media remains free and works in a free and fearless environment."

Two ITBP personnel killed, 2 policemen injured in Naxalite IED blast

PTI NARAYANPUR

Two personnel of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were killed and two policemen injured on Saturday when Naxalites carried out an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, police said.

The incident occurred around 12 noon near Kobjhiya village in Adulimaar area when joint teams of security personnel were out on an anti-Naxal operation, a police official said.

The personnel belonging to the ITBP, Border Security Force (BSF) and District

Reserve Guard of police were involved in the operation launched from Orcha, Irakbhatti and Mohandi areas, he said. The blast took place when patrolling teams were returning after the operation.

The four injured personnel were shifted to hospital, the official said.

"Two ITBP personnel succumbed to injuries while the condition of the injured policemen was stated to be out of danger," he said. Those killed were identified as Amar Panwar (36) of Satara in Maharashtra and K Rajesh (36) of Kadappa in Karnataka, he said, adding that the duo belonged to 53rd battalion of ITBP.

Nightmare in the skies

From page 1

A Star Air flight from Lucknow to Kishangarh received a bomb threat on Saturday afternoon, leading to heightened security measures at Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport (CCSI). According to a statement from the CCSI Airport spokesperson, the threat was received at 1:52 pm. The Airport's Bomb Threat Assessment Committee immediately convened to assess the situation and implement necessary security protocols, it said.

Most of the hoax threat messages and calls are made using VPN which makes it difficult to trace them. Police have intensified their investigation into several hoax bomb threats targeted at domestic and international flights. The Civil Aviation Ministry plans to put in place strict norms to prevent incidents of hoax bomb threats to airlines, including placing the perpetrators in the no-fly list.

BJP ready for...

From page 1

Earlier in the day, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren announced that the JMM and the Congress would contest 70 seats in the upcoming Assembly elections. Jha claimed, "We were not consulted. All options are open to us." He said that the RJD has identified at least 15 to 18 seats in Jharkhand where it has potential to defeat the BJP on its own. Last time the party had contested seven seats and ended as runner-up in five of them.

In 2019, the JMM-led alliance won 47 seats in the Jharkhand assembly, including 30 of JMM and 16 of the Congress. The BJP had secured 25 seats, JMM-P 3, AJSU Party 2, CPI-ML 1, NCP- 1 and independents 2.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi while addressing a meeting in Ranchi claimed that the Constitution is "under attack" by the BJP as he accused the saffron

party of controlling institutions such as the Election Commission, bureaucracy and central agencies. He also said no force can stop the caste census and removal of the 50 per cent cap on reservation.

"The Constitution is under constant attack from all sides, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, and it needs to be protected," Gandhi alleged while addressing 'Samvidhan Samman Sammelan' in Ranchi ahead of the Jharkhand Assembly polls.

In a no-holds-barred attack, he accused the BJP of "controlling the Election Commission, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax department, bureaucracy and judiciary". "The BJP also controls funds and institutions but we possess honesty. The Congress fought the Lok Sabha elections without money," he claimed.

Naxalite couple with cumulative bounty of ₹8 lakh on their heads surrender in Maharashtra

PTI GADCHIROLI

A Naxalite couple with a cumulative bounty of Rs 8 lakh on their heads surrendered on Saturday in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, a police official said.

The official identified them as Asin Rajaram Kumar (37) alias Anil and his wife Anju Sulya Jale (28) alias Soniya. "Kumar was area committee member of the Maoists' press team in Odisha. He is a resident of Narwana in Haryana and was staying under assumed identity in an area near Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. Jale, a resident of Gadchiroli, was also part of the same press team in the eastern state and was staying in HP," the official said.

"They surrendered in front of officials of Gadchiroli police and CRPF. Kumar has worked for the Jagrut Chatra

Morcha and was recruited in the Maad area press team in 2006. He was living in HP under a fake name since 2018 along with Jale.

The couple has two encounter cases registered against his name," he said. Jale was an aide to Naxal "commander" Dinkar from 2007 and also worked as a teacher at the Maoists' 'janatana sarkar school' in Ghamandi village in Maad, the official added.

"Kumar had a reward of Rs 6 lakh against his name, while the bounty on Jale was Rs 2 lakh.

As part of the Maharashtra government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, they will get Rs 11 lakh in total. Kumar will get Rs 5 lakh, Jale Rs 4.5 lakh, while Rs 1.5 lakh will be given as additional assistance since the surrendered persons are a couple," the official said.

Sunil Soni gets ticket in role reversal with Brijmohan

BJP ropes in Soni from Raipur South Assembly seat for Nov 13 by-poll



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday named Sunil Soni as its candidate for

the Raipur South Assembly seat in a by-election to be held on November 13.

The seat became vacant after Brijmohan Agrawal was elected to the Lok Sabha from

the Raipur. Soni was the earlier MP.

The BJP has lost an election since the assembly constituency came into existence.

PM to dedicate Mahamaya airport in Ambikapur today



STAFF REPORTER ■ AMBIKAPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Sunday dedicate to the public the Mahamaya Airport at Darima in Chhattisgarh's Ambikapur district.

Modi will do this virtually from Varanasi, where he will

simultaneously dedicate to the nation development projects worth Rs 6,100 crore.

A government official said the design of the airport is influenced and derived from the common elements of heritage structures of the region.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Governor Ramen Deka are expected to arrive at the airport to attend the inauguration

Governor Ramen Deka are expected to arrive at the airport to attend the inauguration.

The airport will have the capacity to receive big airplanes too. This has been possible through an 1,800 m airstrip constructed at Rs. 48 crores. This entire area is spread over 374 acres of land.

Two ITBP troopers martyred in Narayanpur blast



STAFF REPORTER ■ NARAYANPUR

Two Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) troopers were killed and two policemen injured on Saturday when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted by Maoists exploded in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh.

The incident took place around 12 pm near a forest of Kodliyar village when the ITBP, Border Security Force, District Reserve Guard and

police were on an anti-Naxalite operation, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar said. The IED exploded while the patrolling team was returning to the camp.

The ITBP personnel who died were identified as Amar Panwar and K Rajesh, both aged 36 and from the 53rd battalion. Panwar hailed from Satara in Maharashtra and Rajesh was from Kadappa in Andhra Pradesh. The two policemen are said to be out of danger.

Chhattisgarh Police gets President's Colour Award

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Police has achieved a milestone of receiving the prestigious 'President's Colour' award from the Indian government.

This honour is bestowed upon select police units across the country and symbolizes 25 years of exemplary service and dedication to the nation.

The Chhattisgarh Police earned this accolade through its courageous and steadfast efforts in combating Naxalism, reflecting the commitment to exceptional service.

With this recognition, police personnel in Chhattisgarh will now wear a replica of the award flag as an



insignia on their uniforms, symbolizing their valour and service. The 'President's Colour'

award is the highest recognition for any police or military force, representing national appreciation for loyalty, dedication and diligence.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said "This honor is a testament to the courage, discipline and patriotism of the Chhattisgarh Police. Our officers have achieved significant success against Naxalites, even under challenging circumstances, playing a vital role in maintaining law and order."

He added: "This honour... is a tribute to the brave personnel who have dedicated themselves to maintaining peace and security in the state, often at great personal risk."

Indian Bank holds health, loan distribution camp



STAFF REPORTER ■ DURG

The Indian Bank on Saturday provided free health checkups and disbursed loans at a camp in Chhattisgarh's Durg district.

Renowned doctors

examined people and gave them medical advice and educated them about precautions needed to be taken for good health. The bank's officials provided sanction letters for housing, micro, small, and medium industries as well as vehicle loans.

Congress leader killed in Bijapur

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

A local Congress leader was killed on Saturday in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh.

Unidentified persons killed Tirupati Bhandari (35) with sharp weapons when he was distributing rice at a ration

shop in Usoor village, Bijapur. Additional Superintendent of Police Chandrakant Governa said.

It seems to be handiwork of Maoists but all possible angles are being probed.

Bhandari was the Usoor Block Congress Committee General Secretary and was earlier a deputy sarpanch.

Couple electrocuted



STAFF REPORTER ■ KORBA

A couple was on Saturday electrocuted in their house in Korba district in Chhattisgarh.

The victims were Duryodhan Mahanta and his wife Bharati, Korba Superintendent of Police Siddharath Tiwari said.

They hailed from Odisha and were residing in Adarsh Nagar.

The woman was drying washed clothes on an iron string when electric current gripped her.

When Mahanta attempted to pull his wife out of danger, he too got electrocuted.

The couple were declared dead in a hospital.

Advisory issued to prevent firecracker accidents



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

In view of the upcoming Diwali festival, authorities in Chhattisgarh have issued an advisory for firecracker vendors and people to prevent firecracker accidents, an official communiqué

said on Saturday.

The State Disaster Response Force and Fire and Emergency Services issued the advisory.

For vendors, the advisory says that temporary firecracker shops should not be made from flammable material like bamboo or cloth tents. They should be made of

non-flammable material like tin sheds.

Each shop should be set up at a distance of at least three metres.

Every shop should possess a fire extinguisher and have 200-litre capacity water drums with buckets at some intervals in front of them.

The phone numbers of the fire department and emergency medical services should be on display.

The advisory urges people to buy firecrackers only from licensed vendors to reduce the risk of accidents.

Always light firecrackers in open spaces, away from flammable materials. Do not light them in places that can block emergency exits.

Keep a bucket of water nearby for potential emergencies. Dispose of used crackers safely in a bucket of water so that any remaining spark does not cause a fire, it said.

Do not attempt to relight faulty firecrackers, instead dispose of them safely after waiting for an appropriate time.

In case of any injury or burn, seek medical attention immediately.

Students' ideas sought for cattle free road drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

Authorities in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur have invited ideas from school and college students as part of the Cattle Free Road Challenge Hackathon until October 24.

This includes points like identification and management of cattle for shelter or enclosure to keep them away from the roads. It also involves tracking cattle and involving the local community in programmes



like adoption.

The participant with the best suggestion will be rewarded. The top five runners-up will be honoured. The suggestions and

models received through this challenge will be included in the campaign to keep cattle safe and away from the roads.

Interested parties can apply at hackathon.iccbbilaspur.in

AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED
(CIN:L65922RJ2011PLCO34297) Regd. & Corp. Office: 201-202, 2nd Floor, South End Square, Mansarovar Industrial Area, Jaipur. 302020

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred upon me under section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice calling upon the borrowers mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 9 of the said rules on the dates mentioned as below.

The borrower and Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED for an amount mentioned as below and further interest thereon.

Name of the Borrower	Date & Amount of Demand Notice	Description of Property	Date & Type of Possession
ABHISHEK BANCHHOR, HEMA V BANCHHOR GUARANTOR : TIKESH KUMAR BENCHHOR (A/C NO.) LNRAI00720-210153036 & LNRAI09522-230226264	9 JAN 24 Rs. 1272141/- & Rs. 913066/- 8 JAN 24	PROPERTY PART OF KH. NO.411/44 SITUATED AT MAUJA TEMAREI, PH.NO.115/54, R.N.M. RAIPUR-1, TAHSIL & DISTRICT RAIPUR CHHATTISGARH 492001 AREA-800 SQ.FT.(0.0280HECT.)	PHYSICAL POSSESSION TAKEN ON 17 OCT 24

Place : Jaipur Date: 20-10-2024 Authorised Officer Aavas Financiers Limited



The Indira Gandhi Agricultural University in Raipur received the 'Special Jury Recognition Award' for outstanding work in research, innovation and entrepreneurship development at the '19th Higher Education Summit' in New Delhi held on October 18 and 19.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Regional Office, Jeevan Prakash, L.I.C. Building, Pandri, Raipur (C.G.), PH: 0771 - 4222611, 4222612 E-mail: recovery.raipur@bankofbaroda.com

POSSESSION NOTICE

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to the following borrowers / guarantors calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The under mentioned Borrower / Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantors and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 and under section 14 of the Act of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002.

S. N.	Branch Name / Ph.No.	Name of Borrower / Guarantor	Description of Property	Demand Notice Date, Amount & Symbolic / Physical Possession Date
01	Sunder Nagar Branch Raipur 9752098094	Mrs. Ritu Kumari W/o Mr. Rahul Tripathi Ram Krishna Param Hans Ward No. 02, Mouza Kota 3, RNM Raipur 1, District - Raipur, Chhattisgarh, PIN - 492001	Equitable Mortgage of Residential Property, bearing KH.No. - 130/260 (Part), P.H.No. - 107, Online B-1 KH.No. 130/260, P.H. No. - 51, Plot Area 800 Sqft. Bounded by- North: others House, South: Road, East: Road, West: Others House, Ram Krishna Param Hans Ward No. - 02, Mouza Kota 3, RNM Raipur 1, District - Raipur, Chhattisgarh, PIN - 492001, belongs to Mrs. Ritu Kumari W/o Mr. Rahul Tripathi.	22.07.2024 Rs. 27,54,034.00 + interest + other charges 15.10.2024 Symbolic Possession

The Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagees in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the above mentioned property and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Bank of Baroda for above mentioned amount interest and other charges thereon.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 20.10.2024, Place: Raipur, Chhattisgarh Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

PM Modi to inaugurate multiple projects in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay foundation stone of multiple airport projects worth over Rs 6,100 crore during his visit to Varanasi on Sunday. He will also inaugurate multiple development initiatives in Varanasi. A statement by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) here on Saturday said he will visit Varanasi on Sunday. At around two PM he will inaugurate R J Sankara Eye Hospital. Thereafter, at around 4:15 PM, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects in Varanasi. The eye hospital will offer comprehensive consultations and treatments for various eye conditions. Prime Minister

will also address the gathering on the occasion. In line with his commitment to boost connectivity, Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for expansion of airport runway and construction of a new terminal building and allied works of Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Varanasi worth

around Rs 2,870 crore. He will also lay the foundation stone of New Civil Enclave at Agra airport worth more than Rs 570 crore, at Darbhanga airport worth around Rs 910 crore and at Bagdogra airport worth around Rs 1,550 crore. Prime Minister will inaugurate new terminal buildings of Rewa Airport, Maa Mahamaya Airport, Ambikapur and Sarsawa Airport worth over Rs 220 crore. The combined passenger handling capacity of these airports will increase to more than 2.3 crore passengers annually. The designs of these airports are influenced and derived from the common elements of heritage structures of the region. In line with his vision to provide top-quality infrastructure for sports, Prime Minister will inaugurate Phases 2 and 3 of redevelopment of Varanasi Sports Complex worth over Rs 210 crore under Khelo India scheme and the Smart City Mission. The project aims to create a state-of-the-art sports complex featuring a National Centre of Excellence, players' hostels, sports science centre, practice fields for various sports, indoor shooting ranges, combat sports arenas among others. He will also inaugurate 100-bed girls' and boys' hostels and a public pavilion at Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Sports Stadium, Lalpur. Prime Minister will inaugurate tourism development works of Buddhism related areas in Sarnath. These enhancements include the construction of pedestrian-friendly streets, new sewer lines and upgraded drainage system, organised vending zone with modern designer vending carts to promote local handicraft vendors, among others. He will also inaugurate multiple other initiatives like tourism development works at Banasar Temple and Gurudham Temple, beautification and redevelopment of parks etc.

Military leaders must embrace critical thinking and technological advancement: Rajnath Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday here called upon the military leaders to think critically, adapt to unforeseen circumstances and leverage latest technological advancements to gain a strategic advantage in today's ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. Addressing the MPhil Convocation ceremony of 62nd National Defence College (NDC) course (2022 batch), he urged the officers to become strategic thinkers who are capable of anticipating future conflicts, understanding global political dynamics and leading with both intelligence and empathy. "Warfare, today, has surpassed the traditional battlefields and now operates in a multi-domain environment where cyber, space and information warfare are as critical as conventional operations. Cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns and economic warfare have become tools that can destabilise a whole nation without a single shot being fired. There is a need for military leaders to possess the ability to analyse complex problems and devise innovative solutions," Rajnath said. He described the rapid technological advancements in today's times as the most crucial force which drives the evolution of a future-ready military. "From Drones and Autonomous Vehicles to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum Computing, the technologies shaping modern warfare are evolving at a breath-taking pace. Our officers must understand these technologies and be able to harness them," he stated. The defence minister exhorted the defence officers

to carry-out in-depth analysis on how best to leverage niche technologies, such as AI, which has the potential to revolutionise military operations. He also stressed on the need to decide on the threshold level of the decisions AI is allowed to take, highlighting the importance of human intervention. Increasing reliance on AI in decision-making processes can raise concerns about accountability & the potential for unintended consequences, he said. Rajnath underlined the need to stay prepared to tackle the possibility of adversaries weaponising the tools and technologies used by people on a daily basis. "The mere thought that our adversaries exploiting the tools serves as a reminder of the urgency with which we must prepare for these threats. Institutions like NDC must evolve their course curriculum to not only incorporate case studies on such unconventional warfare but also to drive strategic innovation. The ability to anticipate, adapt and respond will define our readiness in the face of ever-evolving challenges," he said. On the aspect of ethical dilemma faced by military leaders about the extent to which machines should make life-and-death decisions, the defence minister said academic learning in ethics, philosophy and military history will provide officers with the tools to handle the sensitive subject and make sound decisions. He highlighted the critical role played by defence academic institutions, such as NDC, in instilling the moral framework in future leaders to deal with the challenges of present-day warfare. He urged the officers to have a firm grasp of geopolitics, international relations and the complexities of global security alliances, as the decisions made by them can have far-reaching consequences that extend beyond the battlefield and into the realm of diplomacy, economics and international law. Rajnath added that the curriculum of academic institutions must remain dynamic and adaptable to ensure its relevance to practitioners in the field. He described the challenges of modern warfare, ethical dilemmas, and strategic leadership as not just topics for reflection, but the foundation upon which the future of India's national security will be built. Emphasising that learning must be a continuous process not confined to the duration of a course, he suggested the introduction of online, short-term modules on critical subjects to extend the reach and impact of NDC. Defence Secretary-designate R K Singh, Commandant NDC Air Marshal Hardeep Bains, Registrar, University of Madras Professor S. Elumalai, senior officers of Ministry of Defence and faculty members of NDC were present on the occasion.

AIIA protocols focusing on breast cancer



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Protocols focusing on integrative management strategies for breast cancer, comparative organoleptic profiling of herbs, and standard guidelines for labor and post-natal care through ayurveda were key highlights of discussion at the three-day global event by All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) here that was concluded on Saturday. The initiative seeks to validate and adapt ancient wisdom to address contemporary health challenges so as to explore and integrate these time-tested practices into modern healthcare solutions. On the last day of the international conference, 'Advancements of Research & Global Opportunities for Holistic Ayurveda - AROHA-2024', Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Nesari, Director AIIA, said the event represents a milestone in the global recognition and integration of Ayurveda into modern healthcare systems. "Our collaborations with esteemed institutions worldwide and the exchange of knowledge during this conference will undoubtedly drive new innovations and opportunities in Ayurvedic research and practice," she added. The event successfully brought together some of the brightest minds from around the world to discuss and advance the role of Ayurveda in addressing global health challenges. The three-day conference featured 15 scientific sessions and workshops, with over 400 research papers presented, covering a broad range of topics, including ethnomedicine, quality control, diagnosis, and the globalization of Ayurveda, as per a statement here. In his keynote address on the inauguration day, Minister Prataprao Jadhav said, "Ayurveda's global recognition has grown tremendously. This conference signifies our continuous efforts to integrate traditional wisdom with modern science, making Ayurveda a part of mainstream healthcare." AIIA's global footprint spans over 17 countries, with academic and scientific collaborations with renowned organizations like the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, FIGZ Germany, AIST Japan, Western Sydney University Australia, UHN Canada, and national institutions such as IGB, AIIMS, CSIR, and IIT, said the statement.

Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar is NCW's ninth chairperson

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar has been appointed the ninth chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW) succeeding Rekha Sharma, according to an official order. The appointment made under Section 3 of the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, will be for a period of three years or until she reaches the age of 65, whichever comes first, a government notification issued on Saturday said. Rahatkar's tenure will begin with immediate effect. The announcement will also be published in the Gazette of India. In addition to the appointment of Rahatkar,

Archana Majumdar has been officially named a member of the NCW for a tenure of three years, as per a notification issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The NCW, a statutory body, is empowered to work towards the advancement of women's rights. Its mandate includes reviewing the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women. According to a statement issued by the Union Women and Child Development Ministry, Rahatkar has demonstrated leadership skills across various political

and social responsibilities. During her tenure as the chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (2016-2021), she spearheaded initiatives like "Sakshama" (support for acid attack survivors), "Prajwala" (linking self-help groups to Central government schemes), and "Suhita" (a 24x7 helpline service for women). She also worked on legal reforms focusing on issues like Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), anti-triple talaq cells, and anti-human trafficking units. Rahatkar also introduced digital literacy programmes and launched a publication named "Saad" dedicated to women's issues.

ED raided YSRCP MP and others in money laundering probe

PTI ■ HYDERABAD



The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday raided the premises of former YSRCP MP and Telugu film producer M V V Satyanarayana and some others in Andhra Pradesh as part of a money laundering probe linked to a land grab case, official sources said. At least five locations in Visakhapatnam, including that of the former MP and an auditor, were being raided by the officials of the federal agency, they said. The agency officials collected some documents during the raids, according to the sources. Satyanarayana, a YSRCP MP from 2019 to 2024, unsuccessfully contested the Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls earlier this year from Visakhapatnam East seat. He has produced a number of Telugu films. The money laundering case stems from a Visakhapatnam police FIR filed against Satyanarayana and others on June 22 for allegedly grabbing government land meant for building a residential facility for senior citizens and orphans.

The complainant in the police case is Ch Jagadeeswarudu who said he and his wife were promoters of Haigreeva Infratech Projects Ltd., a company which was registered in April 2006. He said they were given 12.51 cents of land in Yendada village by the Andhra Pradesh government in 2008 to build homes for senior citizens and orphans. Jagadeeswarudu told police that he engaged an auditor named G Venkateswara Rao, who in turn introduced him to Satyanarayana and a man named Gadde Brahmaji for developing the government-

Enforcement Directorate issues new guidelines for summons

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh circular directing its officials or Investigating Officers (IOs) to not question people called on summons at "unearthly" hours and not keep them waiting for hours at their office. The technical circular was issued on October 11 after the Bombay High Court directed ED to issue directives in this context as it took up the petition of a person who was summoned by the ED and "detained overnight and interrogated." The HC found that the 64-year-old petitioner was summoned to the ED office for questioning and was kept waiting post mid-night. Recording of his statement, at unearthly hours, "definitely results in deprivation of a person's sleep, basic human right of an individual", it said. The court said it "disapproved" of such a practice by the agency and directed it to issue a circular or directive to its IOs regarding timing and

recording of statement of people following issuance of summons under section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED subsequently informed the court that it has issued a fresh technical circular on October 11 in this context. The circular said that the authorised officer or IO of the ED "shall be well prepared with copies of documents to be confronted as well as questionnaire to examine the person summoned at appointed date and time". The IO, while fixing the date and time of the compliance of the summons, should ensure that the person so summoned is taken up for examination on appointed time and date without keeping him waiting for hours, said the circular.

The circular added that considering the nature of money laundering offence, where a person can transfer or conceal the proceeds of crime or destroy digital evidence in short time using online tools or by using mobile phone or other digital media, the IO "shall endeavour to conclude the examination of the person summoned expeditiously, ideally on the same day or the following day". "This approach may minimize the opportunity to the person summoned either to transfer or conceal proceeds of crime or to fabricate make believe and concocted explanations," it said. The circular added that the IO should be made to record statement of person summoned during "earthly hours", which is during office hours rather than stretching it too late at night. It added examination of senior citizens, persons with serious medical condition, sick or infirm (subject to verification of medical records or condition), should be "restricted" to earthly hours and that it would be "appropriate to adjourn the examination to next date or any other mutually agreed date as a matter of practice". In exceptional circumstances, the circular said, where the IO has "credible" information or material that the person if allowed to leave without completion of examination will either alienate proceeds of crime or destroy evidence or past conduct of person summoned or abscond or may not join investigation, the IO may record the statement "beyond earthly hours" after recording such reason on case file and taking approval of a senior officer. The HC bench of Justice Prithviraj K Chavan and Justice Revati Mohite Dere asked the ED to put up this circular on its website and X handle in its final order issued while disposing off the petition on October 14. The ED has power to question people linked to a case investigation and accused under the PMLA, the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA).

BJP government is 'anti farmer' : Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Abhay Dubey alleged that the way the Modi government has "mistreated" farmers in the last 10 years, this has made it clear that "Narendra Modi is anti-farmer". "Our demand farmers should get legal guarantee of MSP. The support price for soybean crops of farmers of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh should be fixed at least at Rs 6,000. "If the support price for this crop is fixed at Rs 6,000, then the difference amount should also be deposited in the accounts of those farmers who have already sold their crop for less. PM Modi should consider the formality of declaring the support price," Dubey told reporters. He claimed that one of the first decisions taken by the Modi government after coming to power was that if the state government gives a bonus of Rs 150 to farmers

on MSP on paddy and wheat, they will stop buying grains on MSP. In the second decision, he said, the BJP government brought three ordinances to trample the law brought by the Congress government on fair compensation for farmers' land. In the third decision, the Modi government gave an affidavit in the Supreme Court saying if farmers are given a support price of 50 per cent of the cost, the market would collapse, he said. Narendra Modi said in a rally that 'we are bringing the world's best crop insurance scheme', but the

result was that this scheme became a profit-making scheme for private companies," he alleged. Dubey claimed that a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee has made a shocking revelation that the then agriculture minister Narendra Tomar was writing letters to Narendra Modi since 2017 to remove GST on agricultural equipment but the Modi government never took cognisance of it. "Now the Modi government has announced the support price for the Rabi season but every time neither adequate procurement is done nor a fair price is given nor is there any legal guarantee of the support price. That means in the last 10 years, the Modi government has always beaten the farmers with sticks and hit them hard," he said.

Nari shakti blessings inspire PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that blessings from women inspire him to keep working to build a developed India, after a BJP leader shared a story of a tribal woman who insisted on giving Rs 100 to convey her gratitude to Modi. Sharing pictures, BJP vice president Baijayant Jay Panda said in a social media post that he met the tribal woman during the party's membership drive in Odisha's Sundargarh district. "This Adivasi lady insisted on giving me Rs 100 to 'convey thanks' to PM Narendra Modi. She brushed aside my demurrals & explanations that it wasn't necessary, &

simply would not take no for an answer until I finally relented. "This is a reflection of the transformation that Odisha & Bharat is experiencing," he said in his post. Modi responded, "Very touched by this affection. I bow to our Nari Shakti for always blessing me. Their blessings inspire me to keep working to build a Viksit Bharat."

Please give up hunger strike: Mamata appeals to junior doctors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday appealed to the junior doctors protesting the rape and murder of their colleague at R G Kar Hospital to end their fast-unto-death, stating that most of their demands have been addressed while rejecting their insistence on removing the state health secretary. Speaking to the doctors over the phone during a visit by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant and Home Secretary Nandini Chakraborty to the protest site in Esplanade, Banerjee said, "Everybody has the right to protest, but it shouldn't affect healthcare services. I would request you all to withdraw your fast." The junior doctors have been demanding the removal of the state Health Secretary Narayan

Swaroop Nigam, besides addressing other issues. In response, Banerjee acknowledged their frustration but said, "You know why I did not remove the health secretary. It is not possible to remove everybody in a department in one go. We had earlier removed the DHS and DME. Please rise above politics and rejoin work." "How can you decide which officer will be removed or not? Is this logical?" she questioned. The junior doctors have been on a fast-unto-death for two weeks, demanding justice for their deceased colleague and calling for systemic changes in the state's healthcare infrastructure. So far, six doctors on hunger strike have been hospitalised due to deteriorating health, while eight others remain on an indefinite fast, demanding that the state government take constructive action by October 21

to resolve the deadlock. The Chief Minister stressed that the doctors should withdraw their strike and meet her at state secretariat Nabanna on Monday to further discuss their demands. "I have removed the Commissioner of Police (CP), the Director of Medical Education (DME), and the Director of Health Services (DHS), but I cannot remove everyone in the department," Banerjee explained. "Some of your demands need policy decisions. We will cooperate to the fullest extent possible, but it is not acceptable that you will dictate to the government what should be done," she asserted. She appealed to their sense of responsibility, emphasising the impact the strike was having on healthcare services in the state. "People are dependent on you for treatment. Where will the



West Bengal on October 22 if their demands were not met. Moreover, they are in discussions with their counterparts in other states about holding a countrywide strike on Tuesday, further intensifying the pressure on the West Bengal government. The demands of the junior doctors include justice for their deceased colleague, whom they believe was failed by the sys-

tem. They are seeking accountability and a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragic incident. Banerjee reassured them that the case is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), saying, "I hope that CBI will bring you justice." The doctors are also calling for systemic reforms to improve workplace safety in medical institutions. In addition to the removal of Health Secretary Nigam, which the chief minister has so far resisted, the junior doctors are also demanding the holding of elections in medical colleges. Banerjee acknowledged this demand but asked for more time, citing the upcoming Diwali celebrations and by-elections in the state. "Please give me three to four months, which are needed to hold the student elections," she said. While the chief minister has

promised to address most of their concerns within three to four months, the doctors remain firm in their demand for immediate action. A mega rally is planned for Sunday to further press their demands, and the threat of a statewide and potentially nationwide strike looms on October 22 if no resolution is reached. Banerjee said her government has taken some steps to address the doctors' grievances. She pointed out that Rs 113 crore had been allocated for the upgradation of health infrastructure in the state, including 43 multi-specialty hospitals, but more doctors are needed to staff these facilities. She also assured the doctors that steps have been taken to enhance security and protection for healthcare workers at their workplaces. "Please restore normalcy and

we will cooperate to the fullest extent possible. It is up to you whether you want to restore normalcy or not," she said, urging the doctors to return to work while their demands are being addressed. "Some of your demands require policy decisions, but they cannot be implemented overnight. Please rise above politics and think about the people who depend on you for their treatment," Banerjee said in her closing appeal to the doctors. The junior doctors went on a 'cease-work' following the alleged rape-murder of their fellow medic at R G Kar hospital on August nine. The hunger strike began on October five, following nearly 50 days of 'cease work' in two phases, after the tragic rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee inside state-run R G Kar Medical College on August nine.

With focus on dalits, backwards, Yogi holds meeting to strategise for UP bypolls

BISWAJEER BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a crucial meeting at his residence to discuss the upcoming by-elections for nine assembly seats in the state. The meeting included ministers in charge of each of the ten constituencies and other cabinet ministers. It is anticipated that discussions during the meeting will focus on the party's candidates for these by-elections. Previously, CM Yogi Adityanath appointed three ministers in charge for each seat, making a total of thirty officials participating in this strategic meeting. The by-elections for the nine seats are scheduled for November 13. However, the election for the Milkpur seat in Ayodhya is pending due to an ongoing



petition. According to sources, a key agenda of the meeting is how to attract support from Dalits and other backward communities for the upcoming elections. There will also be an emphasis on effectively communicating the government's welfare schemes to these groups.

the Chief Minister, we will fight the elections with full force. The tenth seat will also be declared soon, and we are confident of winning all seats." Cabinet Minister Rakesh Sachan added, "The election dates have been announced, and we aim to secure victory in all nine constituencies. Our instructions are clear—convey the government's initiatives to the public with greater strength." State Minister KP Malik echoed similar sentiments, saying, "We discussed the by-elections, and directions have been issued to ensure victory on all nine seats." Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak highlighted the government's broader vision, stating, "The meeting was held for the comprehensive development of Uttar Pradesh, focusing on strengthening the state's law

and order as well as progress in various sectors." Minister Ashish Patel emphasized the importance of the meeting, saying, "Today's meeting centered on the by-elections, and we are determined to win all nine seats." In addition to the by-elections, the Uttar Pradesh government has initiated preparations for the state's 2025-26 budget. The Finance Department has issued directives to draft budget estimates, requesting a maximum of five key points from each department. These points should highlight the state government's policies, priorities, flagship schemes, notable achievements, and new initiatives. Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Deepak Kumar has issued these guidelines to ensure a comprehensive budget plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

Sea phase of MALABAR 2024 concludes at Visakhapatnam: Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The sea phase of MALABAR 2024 concluded on Friday at Visakhapatnam, navy said here on Saturday. This edition of MALABAR, witnessed participation of warships with their integral helicopters, long range maritime patrol aircraft and submarine. Units participated in complex and advanced exercises in the domains of surface, sub-surface and air warfare. Major exercises included surface weapon firings, anti-air shoots, air defence exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, extensive operations of ship borne helicopters, seamanship evolutions including fueling from tankers and maritime inter-



operations. MALABAR 2024 Sea Phase serves as a testament to the commitment of participating nations towards enhancing understanding, collaboration and engagement in the maritime domain as the world grapples with increasingly complex maritime security challenges. The sea phase culminated with a closing ceremony that included a review of operational aspects of the sea phase and enabled all participating navies to interact and exchange views by sharing experiences and best practices.

Don't give communalists room to create issue at Sabarimala temple: UDF

PTI ■ WAYANAD

The opposition UDF on Saturday urged the Left government in Kerala not to give any room for communalists to create an issue at the famous Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple during the upcoming pilgrimage season. While addressing reporters here, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly V D Satheesan said the hill shrine has been witnessing heavy rush as it opened on the first day of Malayalam month of Thulam for monthly pujas and rituals. He said the pilgrims had to queue up for seven hours for darshan and the government didn't make any arrangements there, including providing drinking water or deploying adequate police personnel. The opposition had already issued a warning in the state Assembly in this regard recently, he said. Last year, the number of virtual queue booking was 90,000 per day and the spot booking was 15,000, the LoP pointed out. This year, a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan



had limited this to 80,000 only per day, he said. Urging the government not to create a situation in which devotees have to go back without having darshan at the Lord Ayyappa Temple due to restrictions, Satheesan asked the CM not to "mess up" the Sabarimala pilgrimage as had happened in Thrissur Pooram in April this year. The disruption of various rituals during the Pooram day had triggered a political row in the state recently. Noting that the UDF does not want Sabarimala to be a topic of controversy again, the LoP also urged the government not to

Derogatory language against women has no place in courtrooms: CJI

PTI ■ PANAJI

Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Saturday said all forms of derogatory language, particularly against women, have no place in courts, noting that insensitive words can perpetuate stereotypes and may disproportionately affect women and marginalised communities. The CJI referred to complaints from women judicial officers about the use of derogatory language by some members of the administrative establishment towards women. Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of the North Goa District Courts Complex near Panaji, the CJI said, "We must actively work to dismantle all barriers to have truly democratic access to justice." "As we strive for inclusivity within our courtrooms, the language which we use must reflect our ethos. We must be vigilant in our choice of words ensuring that our language is not only precise but also respectful and inclusive," the CJI said.



He said the insensitive or dismissive language can perpetuate stereotypes and may disproportionately affect women and marginalised communities. "Very often, I hear the complaint from women judicial officers that some members of the administrative establishment use derogatory language towards women," the CJI said, adding that all forms of derogatory language, particularly towards women, must have no place in our courts at all. The CJI said the language

level, must remember the thumb rule of uplifting the legal discourse. "The litigants come before the court with a sense of trust and a sense of vulnerability; practices within the court should uplift legal discourse rather than undermining the dignity, often the faith.... Future of the individual is in your hands," the CJI noted. He said another crucial step to democratising legal access is ensuring that judgements and orders are available in all regional languages. "I am glad to inform you that the Supreme Court (orders) are also being translated into Konkani. That process has to be expedited. I am sure the chief justice of the Bombay High Court will ensure that the judgements of the Bombay HC are also translated into a language that the people of the state can understand," he added. The CJI observed that the idea of a "conscientious court" lies at the heart of the judicial system which is acutely aware of societal realities and multifaceted difficulties encountered by those

seeking justice, reflecting the idea of a conscious court. Mentioning the redesigning of the statue of the Lady of Justice, the CJI stressed the law is not blind and that it views everyone equally. "The Lady of Justice in the Supreme Court does not carry a sword but instead carries with her the Constitution of India, a document which has the transformative power to break the bonds of social hierarchies and inequalities," he said. The blindfold of the statue which meant impartiality has been removed, the CJI said. "After all, the law is not blind. It views everyone equally and is equally aware of social realities. The equality of the law is not a formal sense of equality but substantive recognising that offers security," he said. CJI Chandrachud further said that equality is rooted in an understanding of historical disadvantages, privileges, and certain communities. "Every individual who walks through the doors of our courts brings his own experiences, struggles, and hopes," the CJI added.

Andhra CM restarts CRDA project works

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday restarted the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) project works here. The works at Rayapudi village in the capital region were restarted after a hiatus of five years, following the erstwhile YSRCP government abandoning Naidu's 'dream project'. Later, addressing a press conference at the CRDA office at Rayapudi village, the chief minister said that the cost of Amaravati capital city project rose by Rs 7,000 crore in the past five years to reach Rs 52,000 crore now. The tenders for 55 capital city works, which were called at Rs 42,519 crore between 2014 and 2019 got inflated by Rs 7,000 crore due to the alleged interruption caused by the previous YS Jagan Mohan



Reddy-led government between 2019 and 2024, he said. "Because all those (capital) works got stalled, we are making new estimates. Because of their (YSRCP government's) deeds, the financial burden has increased by Rs 7,000 crore to Rs 52,000 crore. We will start the works with Rs 52,000 crore," the Chief Minister said. Naidu noted that the banks

CRDA office could start functioning in four months' time and all regions of the state would be developed along with Amaravati. Noting that Amaravati would be a 'self-financing' city, Naidu said some more land would be left in the 54,000 acre greenfield capital city after developing it. Calling Amaravati a 'capital of goddesses', the CM said the city will have wide roads, underground power lines and underground water pipelines through ducts. The TDP chief said the centrally located Amaravati will emerge as a green energy hub equipped with electric vehicle charging stations, and other environmental friendly features. Highlighting that work in the greenfield capital is going apace, Naidu reminded officials that they only have three years' time to bring out a proper tangible structure to Amaravati.

Death toll in hooch tragedy rises to 37 in Bihar, two more succumb to spurious liquor

PTI ■ PATNA

Two more persons died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor, raising the toll in the hooch tragedy in the dry Bihar to 37, an official said on Saturday. The latest deaths were reported from Baikunthpur in the Gopalganj district which shares border with Siwan and Saran districts, he said. "As far as the death toll of Siwan and Saran is concerned, it's 35. It has not increased further. Now the total toll in all three districts under Saran range is 37," Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Nilesh Kumar told PTI. Twenty-eight people died in Maghar and Auriya panchayats in the Siwan district, while seven people died in Ibrahimpur in the Mashrakh police station area of Saran district after allegedly consuming spurious liquor.



Over 25 people from the two districts are still battling for their lives at different hospitals in Siwan, Saran and Patna districts, officials said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination, and the exact cause for the deaths can only be known after receiving the reports, the DIG said. Following the incident, the opposition RJD questioned the efficacy of the ban on the sale and consumption of liquor,

to ensure that the consumption of liquor increases in dry Bihar. According to the report of National Family Health Survey (NFHS), despite prohibition in Bihar, more people drink alcohol in Bihar than in Maharashtra. Currently, 15.5 percent people consume alcohol in Bihar. In comparison, in Maharashtra, where there is no prohibition, the percentage of people drinking alcohol is just 13.9 percent," he said in a post on X. Yadav said more than 400 people are arrested in alcohol-related cases every day in the state, and about 6,600 raids are conducted daily. "This means on average 275 raids are conducted every hour. This means that Bihar Police and the prohibition department conduct raids at about 2 lakh places every month and 24 lakh places every year, but even after this, the illegal liquor business continues unabated," he said.

Drone targets Netanyahu's house as strikes in Gaza kill 50

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The Israeli government said a drone targeted the prime minister's house Saturday, though there were no casualties, as Iran's supreme leader vowed Hamas would continue its fight following the killing of the mastermind of last year's deadly October 7 attack. Sirens wailed in Israel warning of incoming fire from Lebanon. The military said dozens of projectiles were launched. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the drone targeted his house in the Mediterranean coastal town of Caesarea, though neither he nor his wife were home.

The barrage comes as Israel considers its expected response to an Iranian attack earlier this month and presses its offensives against Hamas militants in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In Gaza, Israeli forces fired at hospitals in the battered northern part of the Palestinian enclave, and strikes in the strip killed more than 50 people, including children, in less than 24 hours, according to hospital officials and an Associated Press reporter there.

In September, Yemen's Houthis rebels launched a ballistic mis-

sile toward Ben Gurion Airport when Netanyahu's plane was landing. The missile was intercepted.

Barrages from Lebanon target northern Israel: In addition to the drone launched at Netanyahu's private residence, Israel's military said some 55 projectiles were fired in two separate barrages at northern Israel from Lebanon on Saturday morning. A 50-year-old man was killed after being hit by shrapnel while sitting in his car in northern Israel, and four people were injured, Israel's medical services said. Israel's war with Lebanon's Hezbollah — a Hamas ally backed by Iran — has intensified in recent weeks. Hezbollah said Friday that it planned to launch a new phase of fighting by sending more guided missiles and exploding drones into Israel. The militant group's longtime leader, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in late September, and Israel sent ground troops into Lebanon earlier in October.

Israel also said Saturday it killed Hezbollah's deputy commander in the southern town of Bint Jbeil. The army said Nasser Rashid supervised attacks against Israel.

In Lebanon, the health ministry



Smoke rises from an Israeli airstrike on Dahiyeh, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, on Saturday. AP/PTI

said an Israeli airstrike Saturday hit a vehicle on a main highway north of Beirut, killing two people. It was unclear who was in the car when it was struck.

Israeli strikes pound Gaza as Hamas rejects hostage release: A standoff is also ensuing between Israel and Hamas, which it's fighting in Gaza, with both signalling resistance to ending the war after the

death of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar this week.

On Friday, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Sinwar's death was a painful loss but noted that Hamas carried on despite the killings of other Palestinian militant leaders before him. "Hamas is alive and will stay alive," Khamenei said in his first comments on the killing. Since Israel claimed Sinwar's

death Thursday, confirmed by a top Hamas official Friday, Hamas has reiterated its stance that the hostages taken from Israel a year ago will not be released until there is a ceasefire in Gaza and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The staunch position pushed back against a statement by Netanyahu that his country's military will keep fighting until the hostages are released, and will remain in Gaza to prevent a severely weakened Hamas from rearming. Sinwar was the chief architect of the 2023 Hamas raid on Israel that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped another 250. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians but say more than half the dead are women and children.

More strikes pounded Gaza on Saturday. The Palestinian Health Ministry said in a statement that Israeli strikes hit the upper floors of the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya, and that forces opened fire at the hospital's building and its courtyard, causing panic among patients and medical staff.

At Al-Awda hospital in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza, strikes hit the building's top floors, injuring several staff members, the hospital said in a statement. Three houses in Jabaliya were struck overnight Friday, killing at least 30 people, more than half of them women and children, said Fares Abu Hamza, head of the health ministry's ambulance and emergency service. At least 80 people were injured.

In central Gaza, at least 10 people were killed, including two children, when a house was hit in the town of Zawayda, according to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where the casualties were taken.

Another strike killed 11 people, all from the same family, in the Maghazi refugee camp, the same hospital said. Associated Press journalists counted the bodies from both strikes at the hospital.

The strikes knocked out internet networks in northern Gaza, said Paltel, the Palestinian communications company, on Facebook Saturday. The war has destroyed vast swaths of Gaza, displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people, and left them struggling to find food, water, medicine and fuel.

Putin plans to end dominance of US dollar

PTI ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the multinational BRICS group should explore a SWIFT-like cross-border payments system immune to Western sanctions as well as use national digital currencies in financing investment projects to end US dollar dominance.

Ahead of the 16th annual summit of leaders of BRICS to be hosted by Russia, Putin also said the time has not come yet for a common BRICS currency but added that the 10-nation bloc is exploring the use of digital currency for which his country is working with India and other nations.

Russia, which was slapped with sweeping sanctions by the US and its allies in the aftermath of the conflict with Ukraine that erupted in February 2022, wants to circumvent the global financial system by creating a new payments system based on a network of commercial banks linked to each other through the BRICS central banks. Advocating a cautious approach in creating a new reserve currency due to differences in the structure and quality of the economies of the BRICS member states, Putin said these countries should focus on the use of the national currencies, new financial instruments and the creation of an analogue of SWIFT.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the summit in the Tatarstan city of Kazan on October 22 and 23. It will also be the first ever summit of the grouping after its expansion with the entry of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are the original members of the BRICS.

"At this point of time it (a BRICS currency) is a long term prospect. It is not under consideration. BRICS will be cautious and act gradually, move slowly. The time has not come yet," Putin told a select group of senior editors from the BRICS member states at a media interaction on Friday at his official residence in Novo-Ogaryovo, about 50 km from Moscow.

The Russian strongman's remarks came in reply to a question about plans by the BRICS — a grouping conceived as a geopolitical and geo-economic counterweight to the West — to create a reserve cur-

rency.

Replying to a question, Putin said the BRICS was now studying the possibility of expanding the use of the national currencies and creation of instruments that would make such work safe. In particular, the BRICS states were considering the possibility of using electronic instruments, he added.

"We are looking into the possibility of expanding the use of national currencies and settlements, and want to establish the tools that would make this safe and secure enough." Putin said the grouping will have to come up with a toolkit that will be under the supervision of the respective BRICS institutions.

"It may be another very good step in the development of the Global South with our direct active engagement. We will be talking about that during the (Kazan) summit. We are already in consultations with the Chinese and the Indian friends with the Brazilians. Also, we have had a round of consultations with South Africa."

On a potential BRICS reserve currency, Putin said the member states needed to work gradually without haste.

"Considering their population the BRICS economies in terms of structure should be comparable and more or less equal. Otherwise, we will face even bigger issues than those that occurred in the European Union (EU) for one when a single currency was introduced to the countries whose economies were not comparable and not equal. So it is a long term prospect," he said.

The Russian president also underlined the need for establishing relations between the central banks and to ensure reliable exchange of financial information that is independent of those international instruments of international information exchange that introduce "certain restrictions for political reasons and violate the principles of global economy."

He said he was referring to the formation in BRICS of an analogue of SWIFT, something that "ensures international settlements." SWIFT provides the main messaging network through which international payments are initiated.

Putin mentioned that Russia, along with other BRICS members, has already been working on a SWIFT-like financial messaging system and the use of national digital currencies in financing high-growth investment projects.

UN expands arms embargo on Haiti to all types of arms

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council voted unanimously Friday to expand the arms embargo in Haiti to all types of weapons and ammunition, expressing grave concern at the extremely high levels of gang violence and criminal activities in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

The resolution authorizes the 193 UN member nations to take "appropriate steps to prevent the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel in Haiti." UN experts have said increasingly sophisticated weapons that end up in the hands of gang members and criminals are being trafficked from the US, especially from Florida.

The resolution also extends a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals on the UN sanctions blacklist for a year. In late September, the council committee monitoring sanctions on Haiti added two people to the list, which included five gang leaders.

One was Elan Luckson, leader of the Gran Grif gang, which killed at least 115 people in the town of Pont-Sondé in the Artibonite region next to the capital in early October in one of the biggest massacres in Haiti in recent history. The other was Victor Prophane, a former member of the Haitian parliament accused of being involved in arms trafficking. The power of gangs in Haiti has grown since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, and they are now estimated to control up to 80% of the capital, Port-au-Prince. They also have moved into surrounding areas.

The surge in killings, rapes and kidnappings has led to a violent uprising by civilian vigilante groups. The Security Council voted unanimously in early October to extend the mandate of the Kenya-led multinational force trying to help the Haitian

National Police quell the gangs. The leaders of Kenya and Haiti last week urged international partners to honor their commitment to the UN-backed force in Haiti, saying the mission needs more resources and that its budget will run out in March 2025.

Kenyan President William Ruto, who met with Haiti Prime Minister Garry Conille in Nairobi a week ago, said Kenya would deploy 600 additional officers next month to join the 400 officers already in the country.

Nearly two dozen police officers and soldiers from Jamaica are also in Haiti, but the numbers fall significantly short of the 2,500 pledged by various countries, including Chad, Benin, Bangladesh and Barbados, for the mission.

The council resolution adopted Friday, co-sponsored by Ecuador and the United States, also encourages the Haitian government to reinforce the management of police weapons, ammunition as well as seized arms and "to strengthen border and customs control to curb illicit trafficking and diversion."

It extends the panel of experts monitoring the implementation of sanctions for 13 months. Ecuador's political coordinator, Irina Barba Bustos, told the council after the vote that sanctions are part of the comprehensive response that is essential to address the crisis in Haiti and promote a political solution and a peaceful and prosperous future for its people.

The arms embargo previously applied to "small arms, light weapons, and ammunition." The resolution expands it to include "arms and related materiel of all types."

Bustos said the expansion of the arms embargo "bolsters our efforts to combat transnational organized crime, which uses all forms of violence against the civilian population, particularly against women."

UK's ex-minister claims blocking India FTA over visa demands: Reports

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's former business and trade secretary Kemi Badenoch, who is the frontrunner to succeed Rishi Sunak as Conservative Party chief and Opposition Leader, has claimed that she blocked the India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) over demands for more visas, according to UK media reports.

The Nigerian heritage shadow minister, who is going head-to-head in an ongoing Tory membership vote with former Cabinet colleague Robert Jenrick, has indicated that one of the reasons the FTA could not be signed off by the Sunak-led Tory government was due to the Indian side expecting more concessions over the issue of migration.

"As business secretary, even as I was trying to do things to limit immigration, we had an India FTA where they kept trying to bring in migration and I said no. It's one of the reasons why we didn't sign it," Badenoch reportedly told 'The

Telegraph'. But some of her former Tory ministerial colleagues countered in 'The Times' that the claims are unlikely because Badenoch was pushing for a deal as she oversaw several rounds of negotiations towards an FTA expected to significantly enhance the GBP 38 billion a year bilateral trading partnership.

"Kemi just wanted to get a deal at all costs and didn't really think that the objections that were being put forward were serious. She said they were ideologically driven, that they were impractical and weren't conducive to good relations with the Indians," a former Cabinet minister was quoted as saying.

"Kemi wanted a trophy to show post-Brexit benefits and there was a zeal to achieve it," the former minister said. "The reality was, all the bargaining power was with the Indians and they had more leverage in negotiations than we did. There was a lot more

pressure on us to do all the running, and they were quite nonchalant about doing a deal. That was where the balance of power lay and we were always starting from a weaker position," the ex-minister said.

A source close to Badenoch, however, denied claims that she was prepared to sign a deal at any cost and said that the Indian government had decided not to sign a deal with the Conservative government in the hope that it might be able to negotiate better terms under Labour.

"Kemi didn't want to do a deal that would have changed any UK immigration rules. It's categorically untrue, she would have never done that. India held out because they knew that under a Labour government, they would get a better deal on students and social security," the source was quoted as saying by 'The Times'.

"She did not put visas on the table, she did not sanction her officials to offer up access to the labour market at any point," the

source added. Meanwhile, while reports from India indicate the FTA negotiations under the Prime Minister Keir Starmer-led Labour Party government are set to commence next month, officials in the UK are not setting any timeline for picking up after 14 rounds of negotiations. "We remain committed to securing a trade deal with India and intend to resume talks as soon as possible," Starmer's foreign affairs spokesperson at 10 Downing Street told PTI this week.

Badenoch and Jenrick are trading blows on various policy areas, with immigration emerging as a key focal point as they continue on the campaign trail to win votes from an estimated 140,000 Conservative members.

Sunak's successor is scheduled to be declared on November 2, following the British Indian leader's resignation in the wake of the party's bruising general election defeat in July under his leadership.

France vows support for Ukraine's plan to end Russian invasion

AP ■ KYIV

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot pledged his support for Ukraine's plan for ending the two and a half-year war with Russia, telling reporters in Kyiv on Saturday that he will work with Ukrainian officials to secure other nations' backing for the proposal.

Unveiled by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier this week, Kyiv's so-called "victory plan" hopes to compel Russia to end its invasion of Ukraine through negotiations. The proposal is being considered by Ukraine's Western partners, whose help is vital for Kyiv to resist its bigger neighbour. A key element would be a formal invitation

into NATO, which Western backers have been reluctant to consider until after the war ends.

"A Russian victory would be a consecration for the law of the strongest and would push the international order toward chaos," Barrot said at a joint press conference with his Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiba. "That is why our exchanges should allow us to make progress on President Zelenskyy's victory plan and rally the greatest number possible of countries around it."

Barrot also said that France would deliver the first batch of Mirage 2000 combat jets to Ukraine in the first three months of 2025, with Ukrainian pilots and mechanics also trained to fly and maintain them.

Since the 2022 invasion, France has been one of Ukraine's staunchest military, diplomatic and economic supporters in Europe. It is currently training and equipping what will become a full new brigade of Ukrainian soldiers for front-line deployment.

"By resisting against the invader with exceptional courage, you are not only fighting for Ukraine's territorial integrity, but you are also holding a front line that separates Europe from Vladimir Putin's Russia, that separates freedom from oppression," the French minister said in Kyiv.

Russia and Ukraine exchange POWs: Barrot's visit coincided with a prison-

er swap between Russia and Ukraine late Friday night that included 190 POWs traded by the two sides under a deal negotiated by the United Arab Emirates.

Among the 95 Ukrainians were 34 Azov fighters who defended Mariupol and the Azovstal steelworks, the fortress-like plant in the now-occupied city of Mariupol where their last-ditch stand became a symbol of resistance against Moscow's invasion.

"Ninety-five of our people are home again. These are the warriors who defended Mariupol and Azovstal, as well as the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Kherson regions," Zelenskyy wrote in a post on X.

The head of the Azov regiment, Denys Prokopenko,

said on Facebook that 34 Azov fighters had been returned, but that another 900 remained in Russian captivity.

A well-known Ukrainian human rights activist and service member, Maksym Butkevych, was also among the 95 exchanged. His release was announced by the ZMINA Human Rights Center, the organisation that he co-founded. The swap follows the repatriation of 501 dead soldiers to Ukraine Friday in what appeared to be the biggest repatriation of war dead since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Most of the soldiers were killed in action in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine, mostly around the city of

Avdiivka that Russian forces captured in February after a long and gruelling battle, Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said in a statement.

Russia also received the bodies of 89 of its soldiers, Russian lawmaker Shamsyil Saraliyev told reporters. Elsewhere, the Russian Ministry of Defence said that it shot down 16 Ukrainian drones over Russia's Bryansk, Rostov, and Belgorod regions in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Local social media channels shared images that appeared to show a blaze at a factory in the Bryansk region specialising in microelectronics. Russian authorities did not confirm the strike.

Four new polio cases reported in Pakistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/KARACHI

Pakistan reported another four cases of poliovirus taking the national tally to 37 this year, a media report said on Saturday. The regional reference laboratory for polio eradication at the National Institute of Health, Islamabad, on Friday, confirmed the detection of wild poliovirus type-1 (WPV 1) in three children from Balochistan and one child from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The Dawn newspaper reported. The children affected by the wild poliovirus include a girl from Pishin, two boys from Chaman and Noshki in Balochistan, and a girl from Lakkhi Marwat district of KP, according to an official of the regional reference laboratory for

polio eradication. Of the 37 cases detected from across Pakistan so far this year, the official said, 20 have been reported from Balochistan, 10 from Sindh, five from KP, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad. "Genetic sequencing of the cases is underway," he disclosed. "These were the first polio cases from Noshki and Lakkhi Marwat this year," he said, adding that both Chaman and Pishin had reported one poliovirus case each earlier as well. Officials claimed that the fight against poliovirus in Balochistan and southern KP suffered in 2023 and early 2024, as immunisation campaigns were either staggered or postponed due to localised protests.



Pet owners walk with their dogs during a Halloween pet party at a mall in Valenzuela city, Philippines on Saturday. AP/PTI

Xi Jinping calls for strengthening deterrence capabilities

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping has inspected a brigade of the military's strategic missile force that underwent a massive purge of officials for corruption in recent years, according to a media report on Saturday. Xi on Thursday visited at Hefei the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Rocket Force, a key arm of the military operating the missiles, including nuclear weapons, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. He urged the strategic missile troops to strengthen their deterrence and combat capabilities and resolutely fulfil the tasks entrusted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the people, the

report said. The Rocket Force, established in 2015 as part of Xi's military overhaul, has been at the centre of the latest anti-corruption campaign targeting the military.

Besides heading the ruling CPC and the Presidency, 71-year-old Xi also heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military. He visited the training field of the brigade which boasts a history of over 50 years, and learned about the tactical and technical performance of the newly-introduced weaponry and equipment, and examined its training in operating the arms.

In a bid to shore up the morale

of the officers and soldiers, he asked them to have good command and make the best use of the weapons in their hands while living up to the trust of the party and the people, the report said.

Later, Xi was briefed on the brigade's work and made a speech stressing the importance of upholding the party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and strengthening party-building at the primary level.

His visit to the Rocket Force, which operates the country's most powerful long and short-range missiles, was considered significant due to the massive purges seen at the key military arm driven by alleged graft at its top echelons in recent years.

SET FOR FIRST TIME CHAMPION AS NEW ZEALAND-SOUTH AFRICA CLASH IN FINAL

PTI ■ DUBAI

New Zealand's golden generation, led by inspirational Sophie Devine, will have one last chance to lay hands on a global ICC trophy when it meets a gritty South Africa in the summit clash of the T20 World Cup which is set to throw a new champion, here Sunday. New Zealand's women's team had won the ODI World Cup back in 2000 but none of the current squad members were part of that historic title triumph. Before this event began, New Zealand were in the trenches having lost 10 matches on the trot in the format but under Devine this bunch, comprising of the venerable Suzie Bates and the assuring Amelia Kerr, has done wonders, bringing the side in contention for the ultimate prize. It is most probably the last time the Black Shirts will have Devine, Bates and Lea Tahuhu playing of the national side in a global tournament. Devine, 35, has more than 7000 runs under her belt in white-ball formats while the 37-year-old Bates has more than 10,000 runs to her name. Pacer Tahuhu, 34, has 112 wickets in ODIs and 93 in T20s.

They won't leave any stone unturned to ensure that they have a World Cup trophy in their cabinet. South Africa on the other side will be equally determined to complete the unfinished business as they had lost the 2023 World Cup final to Australia at home. They have an opportunity to erase painful memories as they had lost by a mere 19 runs in the close contest. New Zealand have one or other player to rise the occasion in the tournament and in the semifinal against the West Indies, if they failed to set a target big enough to daunt the free-flowing Caribbean batters, their bowlers responded with tidy spells throughout the game to eke out a memorable win. Kerr's wicket tally has swelled to 12 in the tournament as she found apt support from the other end in the likes of Eden Carson (8), Rosemary Mair (7) and the experienced Lea Tahuhu. New Zealand announced their intentions with a big win against India first up and followed that up with consistent performances across departments. A 60-run loss to Australia, arguably the strongest team in the competition,

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP FINAL



notwithstanding, the Kiwis weren't unnerved as they went on to pip the West Indies in the final over of their low-scoring semifinal to make their third final. When the tournament began towards the end of the first decade of this century, New Zealand appeared to be the team to beat as they made two consecutive finals but got pipped by England and Australia once each. Bates and Devine, the survivors from those campaigns, will thus get a third crack in winning the first ICC trophy for New Zealand in white-ball cricket since 2000 when the men's team won the Champions Trophy in Kenya. But against them will be the formidable South Africa who scripted history of sorts to have stopped the all-dominating Australian team from reaching their eighth consecutive final in the last 15 years and seven editions of the T20 World Cup. If New Zealand has Kerr topping the charts for most successful bowlers, South Africa have two of their top-order batters - Laura Wolvaardt (190 runs) and Tazmin Brits (170 runs) - lodged at the top of the batting charts in this tournament. South Africa's all-round might will pose the sternest challenge

as the Proteas side is coming off a comprehensive eight-wicket thrashing of Australia, having restricted them to a mere 135/5 and knocked off the target with more than two overs to spare. While a lot will depend on the pair of Wolvaardt and Brits at the top, SA will need the likes of Anneke Bosch and Marizanne Kapp to chip in with the bat too. Similarly, Nonkululeko Mlaba (10 wickets) would also need the rest of the bowlers to replicate their performance from the semifinal, in which they collectively kept it tight to not allow Australia to get away with the bat. **SQUADS:** **New Zealand:** Sophie Devine (captain), Suzie Bates, Eden Carson, Isabella Gaze (wk), Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Fran Jonas, Leigh Kasparek, Amelia Kerr, Jess Kerr, Rosemary Mair, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuhu. **South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt (c), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Ayanda Hlubi, Sinalo Jaftha (wk), Marizanne Kapp, Ayabonga Khaka, Sune Luus, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Seshnie Naidu, Tumi Sekhukhune, Chloe Tryon.



Guirassy's late goal earns Dortmund a Bundesliga win

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)

Serhou Guirassy scored late as Borussia Dortmund beat promoted St. Pauli 2-1 in the Bundesliga on Friday, easing some pressure on the club before facing Real Madrid. Substitute Jamie Gittens invigorated Dortmund's attack, beating a defender and crossing for Guirassy to head the winner in the 83rd minute, just five minutes after Eric Smith had equalized with a thunderous strike for the visitors. Dortmund had dominated from the start but failed to turn possession into chances. St. Pauli goalkeeper Nikola Vasilj twice denied Guirassy when it seemed the Guinea star had to score. Ramy Bensebaini broke the deadlock in the 43rd with a header to Pascal Grof's cross. St. Pauli had a goal by Morgan Guilavogui ruled out through VAR for offside in the 30th. Dortmund next visits Madrid in the Champions League on Tuesday. The two teams met in last season's Champions League final, which Madrid won 2-0. Dortmund was under pressure after losing 2-1 to Union Berlin before the international break.

NZ edges closer to victory after 36 years in spite of Sarfaraz, Pant fight

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

In a stunning display of fight two men stood at the crease, Sarfaraz Khan resumes the day four with a score of (70) along with left hand batsmen Rishabh Pant who started his innings from day 4 after Virat dismissal on last ball of day three. The Right-Left combination of batters piled up 113 runs on the morning session of day both Sarfaraz and Rishabh took India to strong position after first innings failure on day one. Rishabh who struck 53 unbeaten and Sarfaraz who score his maiden century at crucial stage of the match scoring 125 not out from 154 balls with 16 fours and three sixes before rain interrupted the play. Two batters gave India a strong hand to make a



comeback in this match after 177 runs partnership between the duo got broke down with the wicket of Sarfaraz Khan on a mammoth score of 150 runs by Tim Southee and Rishabh Pant who misses out his 7th test century by one run (99). Their innings gave a hope before their dismissals, but their dismissals gave a significant decline for the

William O'Rourke getting advantage of extra bounce and movement off the Chinnaaswamy surface. New Zealand opens begin their chase with Tom Latham and Devon Conway yet to open their accounts, rain brought an early end to the day's play with the visitors playing just four balls in the second innings. After the disintegrated lower order performance India managed to give 107 runs to New Zealand to win the bengaluru test match. Tom Latham's team is on the verge of creating history of winning the test match in India after 36 years. The last time New Zealand won a Test match in India was way back in 1989 when Sir Richard Hadlee got 10 wickets at the Wankhede to ensure a huge 136-run win.

Mohammedan Sporting look to exploit home conditions against visiting Kerala Blasters



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Debutants Mohammedan Sporting Club will seek their first home win in the Indian Super League (ISL) when they host Kerala Blasters FC in a tricky match here on Sunday. Both teams are hungry for victory, but for Mohammedan, this game is crucial, as they desperately need their first home win of the season, and the visiting Kerala Blasters aren't going to make it easy. Mohammedan enter this game after a 0-3 defeat to Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the Kolkata derby. Andrey Chernyshov's men have managed four points from their first four games, leaving them 10th on the points table.

With two winless home results already, a victory against Kerala Blasters can prevent them from joining the likes of Jamshedpur FC, East Bengal, and Punjab FC as teams without a home win in their first three games this season. For Kerala Blasters, an away fixture has thrown up defensive challenges. Their last nine trips on the road have seen them concede at least one goal in each game, managing just one win. A victory on Sunday would not only break that trend but also mark a significant milestone, bringing them their third consecutive win in Kolkata, an unprecedented feat in their history. Their last two visits to Kolkata were fruitful, with a 1-0

victory over Mohun Bagan Super Giant and a 2-1 win against East Bengal FC. A victory on Sunday would strengthen their chances of getting into the top-six and signal their intent for the rest of the season. Sunday's match will be the first face-off between Mohammedan and Kerala Blasters in the ISL. Mohammedan head coach Andrey Chernyshov gave an in-depth analysis of the Kerala Blasters FC setup, but expressed confidence that his team is ready for the challenge. "After a break we started our work for the game. Kerala Blasters are a good and strong team. They have players who have played for a long time in the ISL. This season they are doing well now. "They are really good in attack because they score every match. It doesn't matter if they play home or away because they score. We need to be ready for that. We worked in the training about it. We'll be ready for this situation tomorrow on the ground," Chernyshov said in the pre-match press conference. Kerala Blasters head coach Mikael Stahre admitted that Mohammedan are hungry for success. He insisted that his side will follow their tactical plan appropriately to get a positive outcome on Sunday. "Firstly all the ISL games are competitive. So we have to be humble and organised. They have the hunger and we have a lot of that too. "My job is to prepare tactical things and pass on the energy and instructions to players. We have been practicing well during the international break. We are looking forward to win the game," Stahre said.

Five Indian footballers selected to go through training session at Old Trafford in Manchester

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Five Indian footballers will go through training at Old Trafford in Manchester after emerging as winners in the fourth edition of United We Play, a grassroots football initiative. The event saw the participation of over 15,000 budding Indian footballers across 18 cities, culminating in a grand finale in the presence of Manchester United legend and all-time great Gary Neville in Chandigarh. In the finale, PC Lalchhuana (Mizoram), Shreejal Kisku (Bhubaneswar), Mohd Ayan (Lucknow),



Bhakta Bahadur Pariyar (Nepal) and Chanason Chaiyatham (Bangkok) were shortlisted. These players will be given the opportunity to visit Old Trafford to participate in

activities like a match-day experience, training session with Manchester United Soccer School coaches and legend interactions. "Delighted to see the dedication and passion for football among young children in India," Neville, whose illustrious career includes eight English Premier League titles and two UEFA Champions League titles for Manchester United, said in a release. "Many congratulations to the young players whose hard work has paid off today. I am sure that the experience that they will have at the iconic Old Trafford, will be memories of a lifetime." The launch of the fourth edition of United We Play took place at Kolkata in December last year, where former Manchester United and French footballer Louis Saha kicked-off the programme.

Lando Norris in hot pursuit of Max Verstappen at United States GP

AP ■ AUSTIN (TEXAS)

Max Verstappen and Red Bull are in retreat as the Formula 1 season resumes in Texas. The series returns from a month-long autumn break at the United States Grand Prix with the Dutch driver still leading the championship, but his car has gone backward in terms of performance and results while McLaren's Lando Norris pulls ever closer in the title chase. The last time on the track, Verstappen finished second in Singapore, only to watch Norris drive off in the distance and win by a whopping 21 seconds. It was the kind of gap Verstappen crushed the field with all last season. "After Singapore I just wanted to keep going. We were in a good rhythm. I think we still are in a good rhythm and have been for quite a while," Norris said. Verstappen still has a 52-point lead as he chases his fourth

consecutive championship with six races left. That race gap to Norris in Singapore was worrisome, and raised more pressure on Red Bull to reverse its slide, or at least find something that can keep Norris at bay. The race weekend at the Circuit of the Americas has a lot of points on offer that Norris can snatch if Red Bull continues to struggle. Saturday features the first sprint race since Austria in June. Verstappen has won all three previous sprint races this season and has won the main race in Austin the last three years. But he hasn't won this season since the Spanish Grand Prix on June 23 and has earned just three podium finishes in that span. Verstappen at times has described his once dominant car as "undrivable" and a "monster." McLaren has already overtaken Red Bull to seize the lead in the team constructors' championship, and another

win on a track where Verstappen has been dominant would be a dagger. Red Bull is bringing a package of upgrades it hopes will get its once dominant car back to the front. Verstappen stopped short of calling it a make-or-break race weekend in the title chase, but teammate Sergio Perez called it "crucial" for Red Bull. The first results were positive for Red Bull: Verstappen qualified for pole position for the Saturday sprint race, putting 0.250 seconds between himself and Norris in fourth. "I'm happy with today. The whole day the car was working quite well. Happy to be first, it's been a while," Verstappen said. "We'll do the best we can tomorrow in the sprint, but we know the most points are available on Sunday. That's where we really want to do well." Norris sounded confident this week that McLaren will keep the pressure on Red Bull. "I know people ask every

F1 SEASON RESUMES IN AUSTIN



weekend if this is a weekend that's going to change something. It can go my way. It can go Max's way," Norris said. "But I'm happy with what we're doing as a team and how we're working together. ... It's not easy. I need more than just me first and Max second." Mercedes driver George Russell predicted Norris to win the title based on current form,

despite the points gap. "I think Lando can absolutely win this championship and I would probably say he's (the favorite) to do so with their form right now comparing with Red Bull," Russell said. McLaren chief executive Zak Brown tapped the brakes on that just a bit. "A lot of racing left to go," Brown said. "We're going to

need Lando to win a lot of races and Max to have an unusually bad day." Red Bull inspection Red Bull allowed race stewards to inspect Verstappen's cockpit in front of television cameras to give them a look at a device it is believed could be used to adjust the height of the car. Rival teams have worried it could be used to change car

height between qualifying and a race, which is strictly prohibited. Red Bull has insisted the device is inaccessible once the car is assembled, and that the team never cheated. Still, the FIA said it will tighten parc ferme requirements, and applied a seal to the device in the Red Bull cars that will show if there is any tampering. Small talk Verstappen said he will continue to give short answers in official race news conferences after he was punished by the sport's governing body FIA for swearing in Singapore. "I prefer of course to talk less, so it's fine anyway for me," Verstappen told reporters gathered Thursday on the porch of the Red Bull team hospitality tent. Russell, who is a director of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, said the drivers will likely issue a statement on the matter next week ahead of the Mexico City Grand Prix. "We don't want to be taking

away the heat of the moment emotions that drivers show during a race," Russell said. "For the drivers, it is very challenging when you have a microphone, you're talking with your team, you're in the middle of battle," Russell said. "But if it's an environment like this maybe we have a duty to be conscious of our words." Smooth surface Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc were disqualified from their second and sixth place finishes in Austin last year when their cars failed post-race inspections for worn down skid blocks. Mercedes blamed the problem in part on the bumps around COTA, which other drivers, notably Verstappen, had complained as not worthy of an F1 venue. The track has since then been completely resurfaced. And it has already seen some racing. The Lone Star Le Mans World Endurance Championship race last month broke in the new surface.



A BOLD CELEBRATION OF MODERN GROOMING

At 'BAARAAT by Tasva', Bollywood icon Ranbir Kapoor took the spotlight, redefining the modern groom with breathtaking designs by acclaimed designer Tarun Tahiliani. This fashion showcase brilliantly celebrated individuality, effortlessly merging traditional elegance with contemporary style, leaving the audience impressed, writes SAKSHI PRIYA

In a breathtaking display of fashion and culture, TASVA, the men's Indian wear brand by Aditya Birla Fashion Retail Ltd, partnered with the renowned designer Tarun Tahiliani to present 'BAARAAT by Tasva'. Set against the regal backdrop of Travancore Palace, this event was not just a fashion show; it was a vibrant celebration of what it means to be a modern groom in today's wedding landscape. The evening truly began with Ranbir Kapoor's grand entrance, and what an entrance it was! Arriving in a charming vintage wedding car, he set the tone for the night with an effortless charm that had everyone captivated. Clad in a stunning sherwani that exudes luxury, his outfit was a masterclass in combining tradition with modernity. Every intricate detail of his ensemble reflected the spirit of the Tasva man - confident,

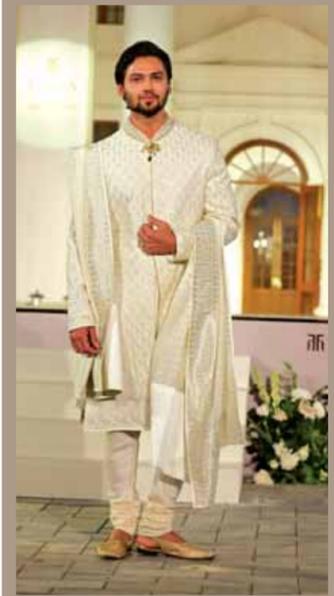


stylish and deeply connected to his roots. It was impossible not to feel the excitement in the air as he stepped onto the runway, a moment that resonated with everyone present. Social media erupted with praise, as fans shared videos of Ranbir's magnetic presence. One enthusiastic observer captured the sentiment perfectly: "It's like Ranbir is still in the Channa

Mereya era, dancing like that in the show!" The sheer joy he radiated reminded us why we adore him; he brought an infectious energy to the event, making it memorable for all. Ranbir's words about the collection struck a chord, "This collection gives grooms the chance to express their individuality while honouring their roots." This perspective is

a refreshing shift in wedding fashion, emphasising that grooms should no longer fade into the background but rather stand out and express their unique styles. The Tasva collection beautifully achieves this, showcasing an array of sherwanis and bandhgals that cater to diverse tastes, allowing each groom to shine in his own right. What makes 'BAARAAT by Tasva' truly remarkable is its focus on the groom as an integral part of the wedding narrative. In a world where bridal fashion often steals the show, this event boldly flipped the script. It's a powerful reminder that weddings are not just about the bride; they're about two individuals coming together, each with their own story to tell. With Ranbir Kapoor leading the charge, Tasva has crafted a message that resonates with modern grooms: it's time to embrace your identity, wear your heritage with pride, and make a statement on one of the most significant days of your life. As we witnessed this fabulous evening, it was clear that the modern groom is not just a participant but a true star of the show, ready to step into the spotlight and make his mark.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar



NEW OFFERINGS



A MODERN TWIST ON ANCIENT STORIES
Meenakshi Jha Banerjee's solo exhibition, "Aadhura Kuch Bhi Nahin," offers a unique blend of contemporary artistry and Mithila folk traditions. With over two decades of experience, she reinterprets ancient motifs through a modern lens, showcasing her mastery in merging simplicity with intricate detailing. Her work reflects a dialogue between tradition and innovation, inviting viewers to explore the depth of her creative journey. Don't miss the chance to witness this unique exhibition, mark your presence!

EVENT DETAILS
Exhibition Dates: Till October 21, 2024
Timings: 11 AM - 8 PM
Venue: Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi

EXPERIENCE THE PASSION
"IN SOFT STROKES" by Art Konsult Featuring the Art of Awani Kant delves into the themes of love, desire and passion through vibrant and expressive paintings. His distinctive style merges sensuality and symbolism, using everyday elements to highlight the beauty of the female form while grounding it in life's realities. This exhibition invites viewers to reconnect with deep, forgotten emotions through a captivating visual journey. Art enthusiasts and the curious are encouraged to immerse themselves in this evocative experience and discover how Awani Kant's works can inspire reflection and conversation about the beauty of human emotion.

EVENT DETAILS
Exhibition Dates: Till 30th October 2024
Venue: Art Konsult, 1, Basement, Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi - 110016
Visiting Hours: 11:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

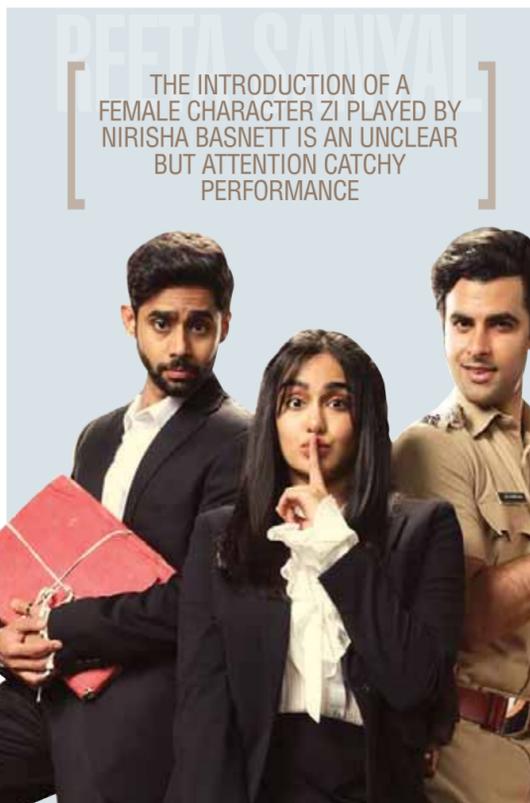
AMERICAN PECAN FESTIVAL
Indulge in the rich and versatile taste of American pecans with "The Indulgent" American Pecan Festival menu at Andaz Delhi by Hyatt. This exclusive menu showcases savoury and sweet pecan-infused delights like Pecan Quiche, Pecan Stuffed Mushrooms, Miniature Monkey Bread, and a Pecan Infused Café Mocha. Don't miss this culinary experience that brings the health benefits and unique flavours of pecans to your plate.

EVENT DETAILS
Venue: Andaz Delhi by Hyatt, Asset No. 1, Aerocity, New Delhi
Dates: October 15 - November 15
Price for Two: Rs 1700

REETA SANYAL THE ADVOCATE OF THE UNEXPECTED

Reeta Sanyal has a promising start, but with a loose plot and flat comedy, writes ABHI SINGHAL

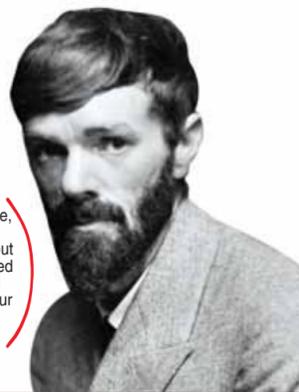
Stepping into the world of comedy and crime, 'Reeta Sanyal' is a legal crime thriller TV series on Disney Plus Hotstar, starring Adah Sharma as Reeta Sanyal in the lead, Rahul Dev as M. Raj Thakral, Manik Papneja as Ishan Dwivedi, and Ankur Rathee as Jai Vardhan. The episodes for the ongoing series release every Monday to Friday. The first episode of the series opens with a light and funny scene of Reeta Sanyal (Adah Sharma) as the advocate and protagonist defending a case of the dog Rocky but frustrated in need of new and bigger cases. The story unfolds with Reeta encountering Keshav outside the courtroom when Keshav's mother was arrested by the police in the case of local MLA Parav Rane's death. When Reeta forces Keshav for more information, he tells Reeta that it wasn't his mother who committed the crime, but he claimed that he killed the MLA like a "perfect murder." When Reeta decides to take on Keshav's case, she discovers that her opponent advocate is none other than Raj Thakral (played by Rahul Dev), a man with whom she shares a complicated history relating to her own father. Talking about the characters, Adah Sharma plays a serious and humorous role within the series. She shines as usual being the



THE INTRODUCTION OF A FEMALE CHARACTER ZI PLAYED BY NIRISHA BASNETT IS AN UNCLEAR BUT ATTENTION CATCHY PERFORMANCE

only one in the web series, making it gripping and giving a reason to the audience to watch. A strong entry for Adah stayed missing from the series but was covered up by her acting skills. Rahul Dev has a short but strong opening presence as a bad guy episode in the story till the first four episodes. The introduction of a female character Zi played by Nirisha Basnett is an unclear but attention catchy performance. Manik Papneja as Ishan gives his bit as a companion to Adah. Ankur Rathee as Jai Vardhan, a handsome cop in the series having a liking feeling towards the protagonist. The upcoming episodes might also explore the romantic angle between either Adah and Ishan or Adah and Jai, still unclear in the opening. Despite a strong performance by Adah in the beginning, 'Reeta Sanyal' fails to deliver a gripping narrative. The series struggles with a weak plot and uninspiring humor, leaving viewers feeling discontent. Concluding to say that, 'Reeta Sanyal' comes across as an incompetent, and the first five episodes bring nothing new.

“Love is the flower of life,
and blossoms
unexpectedly and without
law, and must be plucked
where it is found, and
enjoyed for the brief hour
of its duration”
—DH Lawrence



A SYMPHONY OF BLOSSOMS IN THE HIMALAYAS

PHOTO: SATISH JAKHMOLA

A journey to the Valley of Flowers is nothing short of a magical experience. It overwhelms and rejuvenates like no other place on the planet, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

During the last rainy season, I packed my bags to venture into a rather unexplored destination, a hidden gem – the *Valley of Flowers*. Nestled in the heart of the western Himalayas, it is a vibrant tapestry of natural beauty and a haven for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, located in Uttarakhand, India, is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, diverse flora, and serene ambience. My trip to this enchanting valley was nothing short of magical, filled with memorable anecdotes that made the journey truly unique.

However, it is not for the faint-hearted or those accustomed to leisurely travel. From the very start, you must brace yourself for adventure at every turn. From the food to the transport to accommodation, everything has a distinct local flavour. You quickly get to know the place and its people as you go. If you are visiting during the rainy season, which is the best time, be prepared for landslides, traffic jams, packed hotels, and sudden downpours that begin and stop at will. A raincoat comes in handy; an umbrella, however, flies away.

The journey to the *Valley of Flowers* began in Rishikesh, a bustling town known for its spiritual significance and adventure activities. After a night of rest, we set off early in the morning, winding our way through the scenic roads that led us to the small village of Govindghat. The drive itself was a prelude to the beauty that awaited us, with the Alaknanda River accompanying us on one side and towering mountains on the other. From Govindghat, we embarked on a 13-kilometre trek to Ghangaria, the base camp for the *Valley of Flowers*. The trail was a blend of steep ascents, gentle slopes, and narrow pathways, each offering a unique view of the surrounding landscapes. Along the way, we encountered cheerful pilgrims heading to Hemkund Sahib, a sacred Sikh shrine situated nearby. One particular moment that stood out during the trek was a sudden downpour. As we took shelter under a large rock, a local guide shared tales of how the valley transforms with each season, painting vivid pictures of snow-covered landscapes in winter and vibrant blossoms in summer. His stories, combined with the rhythmic sound of raindrops, added a mystical charm to our journey.

Reaching Ghangaria, we spent the night at the Gurudwara, preparing ourselves for the main highlight of the trip. It is a

“
NESTLED IN THE HEART OF THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS, IT IS A VIBRANT TAPESTRY OF NATURAL BEAUTY AND A HAVEN FOR NATURE ENTHUSIASTS AND ADVENTURE SEEKERS. THIS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE, LOCATED IN UTTARAKHAND, INDIA, IS RENOWNED FOR ITS BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES, DIVERSE FLORA, AND SERENE AMBIENCE
”



beautiful and humbling place where most travellers to the *Valley of Flowers* or Hemkund Sahib take rest. The hotels in town are modest and almost fully booked during the season. The next morning, we began the 4-kilometre trek to the *Valley of Flowers*. Some paperwork needs to be completed, and certain precautions must be taken, as everyone is required to return on the same day. There are no resting places, not even a tea shack, in the valley. As we entered the valley, the sight that greeted us was nothing short of spectacular. A vast expanse of colourful flowers stretched out before us, with hues of red, blue, yellow, and pink creating a natural mosaic. Walking through the valley, we encountered a variety of flowers, each with its own unique charm. From the delicate Brahma Kamal to the vibrant Blue Poppy, the valley was a botanist's dream. One of the most memorable moments was when we stumbled upon a group of rare Himalayan Monal pheasants, their iridescent feathers glistening in the sunlight. While the flowers were undoubtedly the stars of the valley, the fauna added an element of surprise and delight. We spotted a herd of Bharal, or blue sheep, grazing on a distant slope. Their graceful movements, against the backdrop of snow-capped peaks, created a postcard-worthy scene. Taking a break by a bubbling brook, we enjoyed a simple picnic of sandwiches and fruit. The sheer tranquility of the place, with only the sound of the water and occasional bird calls, made it a perfect spot for reflection. In that moment of quietude, I truly appreciated the untouched beauty of the *Valley of Flowers*.

As we made our way back to Ghangaria and eventually to Govindghat, I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for the experience. The *Valley of Flowers* is not just a destination; it's a journey that immerses you in nature's splendour and leaves you with



memories that last a lifetime. The camaraderie with fellow trekkers, the tales of local guides, and the sheer beauty of the landscape all contribute to making it a one-of-a-kind adventure. The *Valley of Flowers* serves as a reminder of the incredible diversity and beauty that our planet holds. It calls us to explore, appreciate, and preserve these natural wonders for future

generations. If you ever find yourself yearning for an escape into nature's embrace, the *Valley of Flowers* awaits, ready to enchant and inspire. As I left from the *Valley of Flowers*, I realised it wasn't just the destination that left a lasting impression, but the journey itself, each step revealing nature's unspoiled beauty. It's a place that calls adventurers to return, with new tales waiting to be discovered on every visit.

DURING HOLI, MY MOM PREPARES LOVELY PURAN POLIS, AND EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY MAKES AN EXCEPTION IN THEIR DIET PLAN TO INCLUDE THIS DELICIOUS FOOD ITEM!
— SONALI BENDRE

Rose Café

A BLEND OF NOSTALGIA AND NEW CULINARY DELIGHTS

For anyone seeking a haven of timeless elegance and warmth, the newly opened *Rose Café* at Malviya Nagar's Eldeco Centre is a must-visit, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

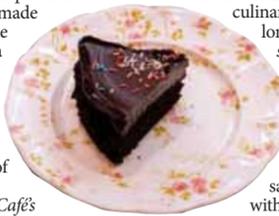


Nestled within the vibrant neighbourhood of Malviya Nagar, *Rose Café* has opened its doors at the *Eldeco Centre*, offering a delightful retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city. With its charming vintage-inspired interiors, welcoming atmosphere, and a menu that celebrates home-style cooking with a Mediterranean twist, this beloved *New Delhi* eatery continues to create a space where time slows down, and cherished memories are made. Founded in 2012 by the mother-daughter duo *Sarita* and *Tarini Ahuja*, *Rose Café* first began its journey in the serene bylanes of *Saidulajab*. Now, with its new location in *Malviya Nagar*, the café retains its timeless charm while introducing a fresh and airy space where patrons can

unwind. The high ceilings, chandeliers, floor-to-ceiling windows, and distressed furniture create an ambience that is both captivating and comforting. Hand-painted murals, petal-patterned floors, and custom-made furniture add unique touches that evoke a sense of nostalgia and renewal, making every visit feel like a step back in time, without losing the comfort of contemporary style. At the core of *Rose Café's* philosophy is *Sarita* and *Tarini's* passion for home-style cooking and crafting joyful dining experiences. Their aim is not just to offer meals, but to create moments where guests can relax, connect, and feel at ease. Whether it's a casual lunch, a romantic dinner, or an

all-day breakfast indulgence, the café's commitment to heartfelt hospitality ensures that every visit feels special. Even pets are welcomed with open arms, with the café's pet-friendly policy making it a perfect spot for furry companions to join in the fun. Owner *Sarita Ahuja* says, "Whether you're joining us for a quick bite, high tea, or a comforting dinner, we aim to make every visit special. We invite you to savour our home-style food, experience our hospitality, and become a part of our café's ongoing story." The café's décor also reflects the *Ahuja* family's personal history. Treasured knick-knacks passed down through generations are displayed thoughtfully throughout the space, blending seamlessly with more modern design elements to evoke the warmth of a familiar, lived-in home. This DIY ethos extends to the handcrafted details, from custom-designed chandeliers to hand-painted blackboards and rose accents, all contributing to the charm of the atmosphere.

Rose Café's menu is a delightful blend of classic comfort foods and new culinary offerings. Alongside long-loved dishes such as *spaghetti* and *meatballs*, *skinny pizzas*, and *bangers* and *mash*, the new location introduces exciting additions with a Mediterranean twist. Diners can indulge in savoury *churros*, made with parmesan and truffle for an irresistible blend of flavours, or savour the richness of *sun-dried tomato* and *pesto cream ravioli* served with burnt butter, adding a luxurious touch to an already beloved pasta dish. For those craving a taste of Lebanese cuisine, there are options like *hummus*



aromatic spices. Mediterranean food, more broadly, features an array of *grilled vegetables*, *seafood*, *flatbreads*, and *flavourful dips*. Together, they offer a rich culinary tradition that balances light, wholesome fare with bold, satisfying tastes. *Rose Café* brings these to the heart of *Delhi* with its own improvisations. The food is, of course, served with a smile by warm staff, complementing the warmth of the place. Though new in *Malviya Nagar*, it is creating a lot of interest among people who relish exotic food. The café's all-day breakfast menu ensures that early risers and brunch enthusiasts can indulge in delights like *berry compote-topped French toast* or *creamy scrambled eggs* served with artisanal breads. Sweet treats like the signature *lemon cake*, *homemade gelatos*, and *chocolate chip cookies* remain menu staples, offering a familiar taste of comfort to loyal patrons. At *Rose Café*, the dining experience extends beyond just a meal—it's a chance to savour the beauty of the surroundings and lose track of time in a space that feels like an extension of one's own home. The café caters to every kind of visit, be it a relaxed high tea, a cosy lunch, or a romantic dinner date. The airy, light-filled environment invites guests to linger, enjoy the view through the floor-to-ceiling windows, and soak in the café's elegant yet homely ambience. The combination of vintage charm, Mediterranean flavours, and thoughtful hospitality sets it apart as a place where the simple joys of life are celebrated over delicious meals and comforting surroundings. Whether you're revisiting an old favourite or experiencing the café for the first time, *Rose Café* offers a dining experience that leaves you feeling refreshed, connected, and truly at home.

platters paired with *warm pita*, *falafel wraps* bursting with fresh vegetables, and roasted vegetable salads dressed in light, fragrant olive oil and herbs. These Mediterranean-inspired dishes complement the café's classic favourites, inviting diners to explore a range of flavours that are both comforting and adventurous. Mediterranean and Lebanese cuisines are known for their fresh, vibrant flavours and healthy ingredients. Rooted in the use of olive oil, fresh herbs, grains, and legumes, these cuisines emphasise simplicity and the natural taste of ingredients. Lebanese dishes often include staples like *hummus*, *falafel*, *tabbouleh*, and *baba ghanoush*, with generous use of garlic, lemon, and



INDIA'S LARGEST FOOD FESTIVAL

The *Grub Fest*, India's largest food festival, made a grand return to Delhi at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. With an exciting blend of culinary delights and live entertainment, this year's event offered food enthusiasts a memorable experience, celebrating the vibrant food culture of India, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi was alive with excitement as it welcomed *The Grub Fest*, India's largest food festival, back to the iconic Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. This year's festival promised a vibrant celebration of culinary diversity, live entertainment and community spirit, creating an unforgettable experience for food enthusiasts and families alike. Since its inception in 2015, *The Grub Fest* has evolved into a significant cultural phenomenon, expanding its reach across major cities, including Gurugram, Pune, Mumbai and Chandigarh. This year's edition proved to be the most ambitious yet, featuring over 100 stalls showcasing a diverse range of flavours from local street food to gourmet delights. Renowned restaurants such as *Indie QLA*, *Perilicious*, and *Leos Pizzeria* participated, presenting an array of dishes that delighted the taste buds of festival-goers. As attendees entered the festival grounds, they were



enveloped in a magical atmosphere enhanced by stunning decor, cascading flowers, twinkling fairy lights and art installations inviting exploration and engagement. The vibrant layout of the stalls was complemented by intoxicating aromas wafting through the air, promising culinary adventures at every turn. Music played a vital role in the festival, with an impressive lineup of live performances that entertained the crowd. The rhythmic beats and melodic tunes encouraged festival-goers to dance and sing along, fully immersing themselves in the experience. Families found ample opportunity to relax and bond



in the dedicated Picnic Park, a serene space equipped with cozy seating and interactive games for children. Meanwhile, the Beer Garden catered to adults, providing a charming setting where craft beer enthusiasts could sip refreshing brews while enjoying the lively entertainment. The festival

also featured themed booths and a Ferris wheel, ensuring there was no shortage of photo-worthy moments. Aman Kumar, the visionary behind *The Grub Fest*, expressed his passion for curating exceptional experiences that celebrate the rich culinary heritage of Delhi. His commitment to showcasing the city's diverse food culture was evident in the meticulous planning and execution of the event. The festival was not just a gathering; it was a celebration of the community, where people from all walks of life came together to savour, connect and enjoy. In a noteworthy parallel to *The Grub Fest*, *AVA Experience* had taken place earlier at The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa in Gulmarg, Kashmir. Speaking about the vision for the event, Samir Sehgal, Co-Founder of *AVA Experience*, shared, "Our vision for *AVA Experience* is to redefine India's music festival landscape with house music in Kashmir, creating community-

led experiences." The event aimed to offer a unique fusion of music and scenic beauty, setting a new benchmark for music festivals in India. Both *The Grub Fest* and *AVA Experience* demonstrated a shift towards innovative and engaging events that went beyond traditional formats. They reflected a desire for meaningful experiences that resonated deeply with audiences, highlighting the power of food, music and community to create lasting memories. As *The Grub Fest* unfolded in Delhi, attendees were treated to a weekend filled with an extraordinary array of flavours, live performances and vibrant interactions. This celebration showcased the best of India's culinary scene and created a sense of unity and joy, reminding everyone of the simple pleasures of good food and shared moments. The event solidified its place as a hallmark of the city's cultural calendar, setting the stage for future festivities that promise to delight and inspire.

CHEERS TO CULINARY CHAMPS!



BY TEAM AGENDA

The Indian Culinary Forum (ICF) held its 21st Annual Chef Awards at Hotel Ashok, coinciding with International Chefs Day. This prestigious event gathered esteemed chefs and industry leaders to recognise the exceptional contributions of culinary artists who have significantly impacted Indian cuisine on a global scale. Among the distinguished guests was *Nakul Anand*, former Executive Director of ITC Hotels, who presented awards to the night's winners. The presence of influential figures like *Chef Davinder Kumar*, President of the ICF and *Chef Vivek Saggur*, General Secretary, underscored the importance of the event in nurturing culinary talent. *Chef Kumar* expressed pride in showcasing the creativity and dedication of chefs, highlighting the event's role in inspiring future culinary professionals. This year's awards honoured 17 talented chefs across various categories, including the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, which went to *Chef Sanjiv Mediratta*. Other winners included *Chef (Dr.) Gautam Chaudhry*, who received the Golden Hat Chef Award and *Chef Divyas Wadhwa*, who was awarded the Silver Hat Chef title. Such recognition



The event was marked by a spirit of camaraderie and competition, with 150 chefs participating in rigorous culinary challenges leading up to the awards. The ICF continues to play a vital role in promoting the culinary arts in India, offering a platform for chefs to connect, learn and innovate. As the evening concluded, it was clear that the 21st Annual Chef Awards not only celebrated culinary excellence but also reinforced the community's commitment to elevating Indian cuisine on the world stage.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar



SAFEGUARDING 'UNPROTECTED' CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INTACH

India's unprotected cultural heritage is vast and diverse, requiring active public participation for its preservation. Community engagement ensures the relevance and sustainability of these cultural assets

BY SUKHDEV SINGH

India, being a vast country with diverse populations, topography, and climate, and consequently, a rich cultural heritage, requires the active participation of its people to safeguard this heritage in various ways. Firstly, as genuine stakeholders, people should take ownership of it. Secondly, with public involvement, cultural heritage gains relevance in people's lives and becomes integrated into their everyday use and socio-economic activities. Thirdly, community participation ensures cost-effective and sustainable conservation. Lastly, it encourages local and authentic craftsmanship in its preservation, enriching the process with diverse knowledge resources based on geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious variations.



Considering the immense diversity and long, disparate historical timeline that has shaped India's cultural imprints, its natural and human heritage cannot be confined to what is protected by the Central and State governments under the AMASR Act of 1958 (amended in 2010). The act provides for the protection and preservation of structures and sites of monumental value that are over 100 years old. These structures are primarily owned by the government and are preserved as abandoned monuments. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) oversees the care and conservation of monuments, sites, and remains of national importance, while State Departments of Archaeology and Museums manage monuments of state (regional) significance. Other structures are regulated under the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972 (Rules 1973).

However, the scope of these acts is limited and costly. As a result, much of India's vast cultural heritage, which is under threat from pressures other than natural decay, remains unprotected. Since the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention, the understanding of cultural heritage has evolved significantly. It now includes a broader, people-centred approach, recognising that cultural heritage is not only about grand monuments but also encompasses everyday structures, such as common houses, shops, and other ordinary buildings, as well as the living traditions and environments that shape communities.

These cultural legacies, which form 'cultural landscapes' in the streets, markets, and avenues of old townships, are as valuable as monumental heritage but remain unprotected by any legal provisions and are under constant threat from insensitive urbanisation, modernisation, and development policies. Several initiatives have been introduced to safeguard this unprotected cultural heritage. These include the listing of sites, buildings, objects, and intangible systems for record, research, and conservation purposes; heritage walks to raise awareness and connect people to their own and others' cultural heritage; and heritage regulations by state governments and local bodies to create some legal provisions for safeguarding unprotected heritage. Listings serve as inventories for the identification, advocacy, and preservation of unprotected cultural heritage. These inventories



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can together form a National Register of Historic Properties for research and conservation action. Listed buildings may be graded and classified as Grade A, B, or C in descending order of importance, guiding decisions about conservation. Additionally, in modern cities, old townships displaying their existing architecture can be designated as 'Cultural Landscapes' or 'Heritage Zones', requiring sensitive planning within routine or comprehensive development initiatives. These landscapes can also be listed in the Master Plans of cities. To regulate development in such zones, state and local governments can pass heritage regulations that control interventions involving the modification of unprotected historical or old buildings and sites. To engage people with their cultural heritage,

heritage walks can offer a meaningful path forward. These walks could be made more popular by improving civic amenities and enhancing the visual appeal of heritage areas by reducing the clutter of advertising boards, electric and internet cables, and satellite dish wiring. Heritage walks and conservation projects would also boost the local economy by generating employment in crafts, local shops, and the service sector. This concept of 'living heritage' holds a symbiotic relationship with its architectural and natural surroundings. While protected monuments and archaeological sites must be conserved with minimal intervention as pure and true testaments to the past, other significant architectural structures and sites can be preserved with more flexible interventions, reclaiming

their meaning, relevance, and role as markers of the past within the present. In this way, the 'past' and 'present' are not seen as separate entities but as part of a continuous, evolving timeline. This approach supports 'living heritage' models in the form of heritage lanes, heritage trails, or zones of individual heritage structures. Separating cultural heritage from nature is impractical and artificial, as human culture depends on nature—not only using its elements, such as sand, soil, metals, and plants, but also incorporating natural systems, designs, and processes, like altering materials, colouring them, and varying patterns. This understanding of cultural heritage recognises its continuity and relevance through systemic arrangements. Established in 1984, the Indian

National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has developed into a think tank and practical resource for the protection of unprotected cultural heritage. INTACH is tasked with engaging the people of India in this effort by enrolling citizens as members while also engaging skilled human resources. INTACH has been cataloguing buildings over 50 years old that have architectural, historical, archaeological, or aesthetic value, organising heritage walks, and advocating for heritage regulations. It works in partnership with other organisations and individuals, complementing rather than competing with them.

Professor (Retd) SUKHDEV SINGH
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Vice-Chairman, Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, New Delhi



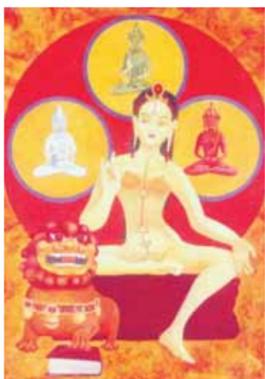
YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19
This week presents an excellent opportunity to channel your focus into your professional endeavors and see substantial results. You are currently harmonized in your physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions, radiating an aura of positivity. However, enhancing your communication skills could prove beneficial. Aim to be precise and persuasive in your interactions, as your ability to inspire others through your actions and words will be particularly impactful. Exercise caution, as not everyone may appreciate your successes; some might even attempt to undermine your efforts. Despite the competitive environment, your dynamic energy and resilience will help you overcome any negativity. Success hinges on your dedication—avoid overconfidence and hasty decisions. Health should not be overlooked; maintaining a well-regulated lifestyle with proper nutrition and exercise is crucial.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Aquamarine
Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22
This week, your natural leadership shines as you focus on humanitarian efforts, setting personal ambitions aside. A significant opportunity may arise, possibly involving a pivotal job role or an invitation for a high-responsibility position. Maintain your core principles and unique perspective throughout. Embrace a proactive and supportive approach to foster better relationships both professionally and personally. Recognize the counterproductive nature of anger; mastering your responses can enhance communication and prevent conflicts. Rest assured, any challenges are only temporary, and you will soon regain control. Towards the week's end, you might encounter some disruptive influences prompting an emotional response. Remember, this is not the time for dejection or prolonged disappointment. Persistence and faith are your allies in navigating through this period.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21
This week brings a wave of prosperity, enhancing your financial well-being. Expect an uptick in your financial reserves, signaling a phase of economic growth and stability. Your interactions with family and friends will be harmonious, enhancing your personal connections. The focus on financial matters might surprise you at times, but it will also bring opportunities for enjoyment and leisure. You'll find yourself adept at juggling your responsibilities with personal pleasures, maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Engage with peers globally through digital platforms, embracing an openness about your life choices, uninhibited by familial expectations. Travel may be on the agenda to fulfill professional obligations. However, as the week progresses, you might find yourself grappling with a newfound discipline that feels restrictive, challenging your ability to balance work with fun.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Tangerine
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20
This week, it's crucial to steer clear of pessimistic thinking as feelings of sadness or overwhelm might make it difficult to feel revitalized. Numerous concerns, particularly about your professional life, may be weighing on your mind. Now is a good moment to reflect on whether you have been fair and diligent in your efforts. If the answer is affirmative, expect to see positive outcomes soon. You'll find that your business gains a solid foundation, and collaborations flourish due to shared goals and effective teamwork. Engaging in both imaginative and logical tasks will prove to be fruitful. As the week closes, a work-related trip appears likely. This journey will not only be enjoyable but also inspire you to set and pursue a new, fruitful objective.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22
This week promises significant advancements in your life, including potential travel or important communications that could lead to exciting contracts or connections. Expect unexpected opportunities that could bring substantial benefits. Those who are meticulous and methodical will find themselves particularly well-positioned to capitalize on these prospects. Your quick wit and creative spirit are your greatest assets, driving you to pursue innovative endeavors that could surprise and impress those around you. Nothing seems to stand in your way as you move towards your well-deserved rewards. Additionally, you might find joy in personal celebrations, possibly welcoming a new addition to the family. Embrace this period of plentiful blessings with open arms, and be ready to embrace each moment as a step towards even greater successes.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19
Embracing change and letting go of old beliefs will benefit you greatly. It's a time for healing, where forgiveness plays a crucial role in moving forward. Reflecting on life with kindness and understanding will guide you through the week. Challenges in relationships and a sense of discontent may arise, signaling a significant transformation ahead. Embrace this shift, leaving outdated traditions behind and welcoming new possibilities. This week is filled with dynamic energies that might unsettle you. To find balance, engage in activities that nourish your soul like gardening, painting, or playing music. If you find yourself at a standstill, immerse yourself in creative endeavors and trust in the divine timing. Tensions might be apparent in your actions and interactions, but seeking solace in spiritual practices can provide comfort and peace.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Emerald
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20
Self-reflection is a powerful method for gaining deeper insights. Although you might feel that a long-cherished goal has eluded you, it's important to recognize that sometimes external circumstances may not align favorably. Persistence is crucial, but so is tuning into your inner guidance and fostering positive interactions. This week, you may find that despite your efforts, the outcomes you're hoping for remain elusive. You might entertain the thought of launching a new venture, yet uncertainty about this path could leave you hesitant. However, clarity will emerge, helping you feel more settled as the week progresses. You're mastering the art of maintaining equilibrium in both professional and personal spheres, and managing your finances wisely.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Slate Gray
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22
This week is set to bring significant financial gains, potentially through unexpected sources. It's crucial to engage in thoughtful discussions with elder family members to maintain harmony. Focusing on proactive measures rather than reactive responses will guide you well during this time. Midweek, it's important to address specific concerns with your business or life partner, fostering a shared commitment to common goals. Decisions made now are likely to yield positive outcomes in the future. Expect a fresh burst of inspiration that could influence your thinking. Trusting your instincts will prove essential in reaching sound conclusions. Some may embark on new enterprises or take on roles that come with substantial responsibilities, marking a period of growth and initiative.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Lilac
Lucky day Saturday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18
This week begins on an upbeat note, filled with the promise of travels, special gatherings, and festive moments. You might find yourself participating in sacred ceremonies or reconnecting with family members from your past. Expect opportunities to journey by air, signaling a period of active engagement and heartfelt pursuits. You may feel an urge to enhance your appearance, making it a good time to indulge in self-care such as spa treatments or wellness sessions. A leisurely stroll outdoors, embracing the natural world, will offer a refreshing boost to your spirits. Health-wise, longstanding ailments may show signs of improvement, bringing a sense of relief and renewal. Legal matters that have been a persistent concern are poised to resolve favorably. Savor these positive developments, though remain prepared for minor challenges—life's way of maintaining balance.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Charcoal
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22
You find yourself deeply entangled in your thoughts, facing restlessness and a sense of being stuck. Recent events might have unfolded rapidly and unexpectedly, leading to a dip in self-assurance and a strain in your spiritual beliefs. At home, minor disagreements, differing viewpoints, or feelings of betrayal in relationships may arise, contributing to emotional unrest. However, it's essential to realize that this period of discomfort is only temporary. Instead of spending nights awake, remember that you still hold the potential to steer through these challenges effectively. Your emotional response may cloud your recognition of the remaining possibilities and opportunities. Soon, positive developments from afar will bring joy and reassurance. As the week concludes, you'll find clarity and direction, either spiritually or materially. Keep faith and let go of the past.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Plum
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21
Those with a giving nature are in a period where their generosity shines, especially when it comes to taking on various responsibilities with ease. You might find yourself supporting a friend or relative financially, and it seems to bring you joy. Now is an opportune time for making wise investments and engaging in monetary exchanges. Acts of kindness towards those in need will enrich your spirit, guiding you along a path filled with deeper spiritual connections. Midweek could bring romantic opportunities, especially for those who are currently single, enhancing chances to connect deeply with someone special. Established relationships are likely to experience strengthened bonds. Emotional satisfaction will be a highlight of your week. However, towards the weekend, seeking balance in your tasks and overall approach will be crucial.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Ivory
Lucky day Sunday



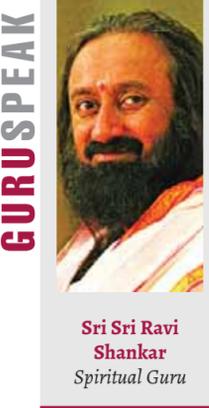
PISCES Feb 19-March 20
Guidance from mentors will stabilize your emotional fluctuations this week. Initially, you might find yourself feeling disheartened, as your efforts seem to yield no results. Challenges in your projects, well-being, and unforeseen setbacks may cause concern. However, by midweek, you will discover signs of encouragement and moments that uplift your spirits. You'll harness your ideas into creative pursuits successfully. Joy also comes through interactions with young ones. You might contemplate initiating a new venture, though financial constraints could pose a dilemma. Consider partnerships or financial assistance, which could come from friends or family, to bridge these gaps. Feeling inspired, you'll aim higher in your aspirations. Engaging with spiritual practices will bring clarity and emotional satisfaction, enhancing your innate compassion and creativity, leading to rewarding outcomes.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Friday

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Is boredom a blessing or a curse?

There are 365 days in a year and there are so many years in your life. If for one or two days you feel you are wasted, life is a failure, it's okay, never mind!



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
Spiritual Guru

When life feels dull, there's this magical moment where everything becomes lively. You can repeat the same thing over and over, and it won't bother you

IN an ocean, the waves keep coming non-stop, it doesn't get boring! Birds sing the same song, every morning, all their life, they don't get bored! It is only human beings who get bored! 'Oh! Once again the same thing.' And why do you get bored? It is because of memory. You remember whatever you have done before, so you get bored. Memory is both a blessing and a curse. It is because you get bored that you feel the need to look for something different, something new, and that is how creativity comes up; you look for the ultimate. Otherwise, you could have remained like an animal doing the same thing every day. But, you can't do it because you get bored!

So, in that sense, boredom is a blessing. Because you get bored, you move on, you look forward, you become a seeker and you rise higher. At the same time, boredom is also a curse because it doesn't

allow you to be centred and steady in one place. So your mind aimlessly keeps jumping from one place to another. Because you get bored of everything, you can't enjoy anything. There are two different paths that boredom leads you to. Boredom is a blessing when it leads you to wisdom. Boredom is a curse when it leads you to frustration and depression. Because you are bored, you can't enjoy it, and when you can't enjoy it you get depressed and frustrated. Or, because you are bored you wake up and begin with a quest.

When life feels dull, there's this magical moment where everything becomes lively. You can repeat the same thing over and over, and it won't bother you. It's like finding a spring of life. Just let go of the past, be like a carefree child, and every moment becomes priceless.

You move ahead and you look into the Self which is fresh all the



time! The Self is ever new. Because you are bored with the ephemeral, the surface, you go deep into the Self. So boredom is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because it takes you away from the routine monotonous life, makes you aware and brings life into you.

And it is a curse because it doesn't let you stabilize. People who are in love don't get bored. The heart knows no boredom. The head knows boredom.

In life both are essential, the heart and the head. If you are only

in the heart, it is no good. And if you are only stuck in the head, that is also no good. Balancing both is Yoga. Spirituality is balancing the heart and head together. Anyone who feels that they are a failure, just wake up! So what?! Life is eternal.

Meditation acts like a bridge connecting your head and heart. Take a few moments to sit down, be open to boredom, and you'll effortlessly move into a deep meditative state. Otherwise, that boredom might just lead you to sleep. It's a choice — either you sleep, become more sluggish, or you seize the opportunity of boredom to delve into a deep meditation.

There are 365 days in a year and there are so many years in your life. If for one or two days you feel you are wasted, life is a failure, it's okay, never mind!

On a full moon, if it is cloudy and the light cannot shine on the Earth, the moon does not get

unset. If on one full moon night, you cannot see the moon rising, so what? The moon is still there. Like that, inside you there is potential, there is divinity which is so complete. If it has not come to the surface in one day, never mind! You have all the great qualities. If some do not exhibit on a particular day, never mind.

Don't blame yourself, don't analyze yourself too much. We start analyzing ourselves too much; to the extent that we feel upset and down. We are so hard on ourselves. I am saying this to those who feel bad about themselves. NEVER MIND, WAKE UP! Never mind if these many years are wasted. The future is bright and there is still so much for you to do. All regrets happen only when you are looking at the past. If you are walking and your head is turned backwards, then that is called regret. Turn your head and look forward, and you will see the future is always bright.