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**BEN STOKES RETURNS
FOR SECOND TEST
AGAINST PAKISTAN**
12 SPORTS



Communal conflagration in Uttar Pradesh

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW**

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



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

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

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

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

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



Manic Monday for Air India

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



Opposition MPs boycott Waqf parliamentary committee meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

MHA hosts Meitei, Kuki, Naga MLAs meeting

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

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



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

SC tells govt to issue River Conservation Zone notification

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

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



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



Gasp! Delhi AQI is already over 200

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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



E-rickshaws, the Capital's ticking time bombs

The untrained drivers carry extra passengers, choke traffic on busy stretches

BY **RAJESH KUMAR**

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

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



PHOTO: **RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER**

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

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

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

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

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

Now, women aged 18-49 years to get Rs 2500 honorarium in Jharkhand

Cabinet nod to hike of Rs 1500 under Maiya Samman Scheme

PNS : RANCHI
Ahead of announcement of dates for Jharkhand Assembly elections, more than 50 lakh women of the state have received a big gift from the state government. This political decision of the Hemant Soren government before the elections is being considered a master stroke. The state government has decided to increase the amount of the Chief Minister Mainiya Samman Yojana from Rs 1000 to Rs 2500. This proposal was approved in the Jharkhand Cabinet meeting held on Monday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

his government does not believe in announcements, but believes in working and taking decisions. This is the reason why it has been decided to increase the amount of Mainiya Samman Yojana from Rs 1000 to Rs 2500. On the claim being made by the BJP about returning to power, Hemant Soren said that now the opposition's fantasy is not going to cook in the state. Cabinet Secretary Vandana Dadel, while talking to reporters after the meeting, said that women and sisters will get this honor amount from the month of December. He said that the women who were getting Rs 1000 transferred to their bank accounts will get Rs 2500 from the month of December. This scheme will put an additional financial burden of about Rs 900



Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Ministers Mithilesh Thakur, Satyanand Bhokta and Banna Gupta during online foundation stone laying ceremony of the proposed Jharkhand Bhawan in Mumbai and 220/33 KV Grid-Sub Station, Pakribarwadhih, in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

crore. Earlier, BJP had announced to provide assistance of Rs 2100 per month to women under 'Gogo Didi Yojana'. But even before BJP, Hemant Soren has tried to woo women voters by increasing the amount of Mainiya Samman Yojana from Rs 1000 to Rs 2500. In today's cabinet meeting, approval to 30 agendas were given a nod by the council of ministers. Apart from hike in amount of Maiya Samman scheme, the cabinet also gave its nod for the establishment of residential schools in Kolhan division, Chaibasa and Santhal Pargana division, Dumka as well as Bokaro district under North Chotanagpur division, Hazaribagh on the lines of Netarhat Residential School,

Netarhat in Jharkhand state. Revised administrative approval of Rs. 109,16,46,200/- (Rupees one hundred nine crore sixteen lakh forty six thousand two hundred) only was given for the reconstruction work (including bridge construction and land acquisition) of "Bilaspur (on NH-75)-Dhurki (on MDR-139) road and Birbal Chowk to Sagma (on MDR-139) link road (total length-31.600 km)" under Road Division, Garhwa. In the financial year 2024-25, Rs. Approval was given for the establishment of Integrated Science and Mathematics Laboratory in primary schools at a cost of Rs. 50,00,00,000/- (fifty crore rupees) only. Approval was given to close Special Purpose Vehicle Patratu Energy Limited (PEL), a sub-

sidary company of Jharkhand Energy Generation Corporation Limited, under the provisions of the Company Act. Multiple Entry - Multiple Exit in State Universities of Jharkhand Regulations, 2024 was approved for implementing the system of Multiple Entry-Multiple Exit in the state universities of the state of Jharkhand under the National Education Policy-2020. Under the National Education Policy-2020, the Implementation of Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYGUP) in State Universities of Jharkhand Regulations, 2024 was approved for implementing the system of Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYGUP) in the state universities of the state of Jharkhand.

Govt cheated women by giving Rs 1000 instead of Rs 2500: BJP

Decision taken in the pressure of BJP: Himanta Biswa Sarma

PNS : RANCHI
BJP's Jharkhand election co-incharge Himanta Biswa Sarma today said that in Haryana, the party had announced to give Rs 2100 per month to mothers and sisters. Earlier, Congress had said that it would give Rs 2000. After the BJP announced Rs 2100, Congress announced to increase it to Rs 6000. However, the people of Haryana trusted Modi ji's Rs 2100. They did not trust Congress' Rs 6000. The people of Haryana said that we know that Congress will not give money after the elections are over. However, whatever Modi ji has announced will be implemented 100 percent.



BJP State President Babulal Marandi and Assam CM-cum Assembly election co-incharge Himanta Biswa Sarma and others during a Milan Samaroh in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

did they cheat women? Why did they take out Samman Yatra to give Rs 1000. If Hemant government had resources to give Rs 2500 to women then why did they give only ?1000. Why did they cheat? They came into action after the announcement of Bharatiya Janata Party. Therefore, this entire system is about cheating. Modi's guarantee is 100 percent. He said that Bharatiya Janata Party has nothing to do with ED's raid. ED keeps doing its work. One should also look at the Lok Sabha election results in Mithlesh Thakur's area. Three lakh jobs will be given to the youth. If there is a job in someone's house, then there will be no need for such a scheme. If the youth get three lakh jobs and 5 lakh additional jobs, then they themselves will take care of

their mothers and sisters at home. He said that the date of the interview will be announced even before the formation of the government. 2 lakh 78 thousand jobs will be given to the youth. There will be no irregularity in this. There will be no question paper leak. Everything will be transparent. Sarma said that let the BJP government remain for one year. I promise that there will be no issue of any kind during Muharram and Durga Puja. Muslims themselves will participate in Durga Puja and Ram Navami. The whole situation will change. The procession of Tajia, Ram Navami and Durga Puja will come out in a better way. There will be no problem anywhere. Just give one year's time to BJP after the formation of the government. He said that everything has been decided regarding

He said that till now lakhs of women have filled the form in the Gogo Didi scheme. Their data has been entered. The party is also answering everyone that we are committed to fulfill the announcement we have made. Gogo Didi scheme will be implemented as soon as the government takes oath. There will be no wait of four years for this. He said that what will happen if Hemant government approves giving Rs 2500 in the cabinet. Elections will be announced in a few days. Then from where will they be able to give money to women. This is like cheating people. If Hemant government had resources and could give Rs 2500 then why did it start with Rs 1000. Why

ED raids locations linked with IAS officer, minister's kin in drinking water scam

The raids were conducted at 23 places in connection with multi-crore scam in the Jal Jeevan Mission

PNS : RANCHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted multiple raids at the premises of secretary level officer, brother of minister and other persons in connection with multi-crore scam in the Jal Jeevan Mission of the Drinking Water and Sanitation Department. Jal Jeevan Mission is a scheme of the central government. Premises linked to senior IAS officer Manish Ranjan, Harendra Singh, a personal staffer of drinking water and sanitation minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur, Thakur's brother Vinay Thakur, some government officials, contractors and businessmen were searched by the agency, the sources said. Ranjan was questioned by the ED earlier in a separate money laundering case, in which it arrested former minister Alamgir Alam. According to ED sources, the agency is conducting these raids as part of an investigation into irregularities in the Jal Jeevan Mission of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation. Notably, Prime



Minister Narendra Modi during his recent visit to Hazaribagh had also raised the issue of irregularities in the Centrally funded scheme Jal Jeevan Mission. In the State capital, the raids were conducted at Morhabadi area, Indrapuri area of Ratu Road, Harmu and other places also raids were conducted at Chaibasa and Garhwa. Mithilesh Thakur, a contractor-turned-politician, holds significant influence in the current administration. Manish Ranjan, who was previously under the ED's scrutiny in connection with a rural development scam, served as secretary in the Drinking Water and Sanitation Department for a considerable period. This scam in the Drinking Water and Sanitation Department is reported to be of substantial scale, with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) already filed alleging a scam of over Rs 4,000 crore. The money laundering

case stems from a December, 2023 FIR lodged by the Jharkhand Police against one Santosh Kumar, a former cashier-cum-upper divisional clerk (UDC), posted at the office of Drinking Water and Sanitation Suvarekha Division, Ranchi along with unknown others. The police FIR alleged that Santosh Kumar, in connivance of other government officials, "dishonestly" made fake payee ID of an entity and used the account details of his own and his company Rockdrill Constructions (OPC) Private Limited to fraudulently withdraw funds of Rs 2,71,62,833 causing wrongful loss to the state government. "It is found that a total of Rs 23 crore has been credited into the accounts of Santosh Kumar and his company from the Treasury Office, Ranchi. This amount was subsequently withdrawn by Santosh Kumar and distributed among the other officials," the FIR stated. Meanwhile, Minister Thakur charged that the raids were "politically motivated" as he refused to "buckle under pressure" of the saffron brigade to join the BJP.

Gangster Aman Shahu shifted to Chhattisgarh

PNS : RANCHI
Chhattisgarh Police took criminal Aman Sahu, lodged in Chaibasa jail, to Raipur under production warrant. Late on Sunday night, a 10-member team of Raipur Crime Branch came to Chaibasa and took Aman Sahu with them under tight security. Aman Sahu is accused of firing outside the office of a businessman in Telibandha police station area of Raipur three months ago. Police took him to Raipur to investigate the matter further. It is worth noting that the local

police has obtained protection from the court five to six times to bring Aman Sahu to Raipur under production warrant, but till now Aman could not be brought to Raipur. Criminal Aman Sahu, lodged in jail, has been shifted from one jail to another nine times in the last two and a half years. Even after this, his terror is not decreasing. Sahu has been continuously threatening and extorting money from businessmen of different districts from the jail itself. Two months ago, Aman Sahu had

written a letter to the Chief Justice of the High Court claiming that a conspiracy was being hatched to kill him. He had alleged that police officers, coal mafia and politicians were involved in the conspiracy. As part of the conspiracy, he was being shifted from one jail to another. Sunil Meena of Aman Sahu gang, whose arrest remains a challenge for Jharkhand Police, is originally from Naya Mandi of Ghadsana in Sriganganagar district of Rajasthan. Sunil has been among the trusted people of Lawrence Bishnoi



gang, Sunil went to Malaysia from India on a work visa. During his stay in Kuala Lumpur, he came in contact with Lawrence through Rohit Godara, Goldie Brar and Sampat Nehra of Lawrence Bishnoi gang and from Malaysia it started establishing his roots in the world of crime. He has started carrying out incidents like murder, extortion, firing in many districts of Rajasthan and Punjab at the behest of Lawrence Bishnoi.

108 ambulance services on halt for two days

PNS : RANCHI
Ambulance services in Jharkhand remained stalled for the second day on Monday. Patients are facing a lot of problems due to the ambulance being stalled. Ambulance employees are angry due to non-payment of salary and have gone on strike. Due to this, the operation of about 500 ambulances operating in the state has stopped. Hundreds of employees surrounded the residence of Health Minister Banna Gupta in Morhabadi. Employees say that when the Secunderabad based company EMRI Green Health Services was working in place of the old company M/s Ziqitza Health Care Limited. After the tender ended, M/s Ziqitza has not paid the salary for two months. At the same time, after the tender of EMRI Green Health Services also ended, the work has been handed over

to the new agency M/s Samman Foundation. Employees fear that after the change of agency, the salary of the month of September may also be pending. At the same time, they say that they do not even get the facility of PF. There is no fixed time for work, despite having a 12-hour duty, they have to work for longer hours. At the same time, the employees are also demanding permanent employment. They say that until their demands are met, they will remain on indefinite strike. Around 1500 employees are associated with this agency in the state. On Saturday itself, the employees associated with the agency started affecting the work. But its effect started showing from Sunday. At the same time, EMRI Green also has a pending amount of Rs 40 crore. For the payment of which, continuous correspondence is going on with the Health Department.

Every vehicle will be checked at checkpoints during polls: CEO



Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar during a meeting in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Electoral Officer, Jharkhand, K. Ravi Kumar said that during the assembly elections, the enforcement agency should work diligently to impose a complete ban on illegal activities, it will be monitored at every level. He said that to conduct clean, fair and peaceful voting, the officers engaged in the work of the election should follow the instructions given by the Election Commission of India. He was addressing the training session organized through online medium for the officials of FST

and SST constituted for the upcoming assembly elections in all the districts today. Kumar said that in the assembly elections, all FST and SST have to keep a close watch on the cases of illegal election expenditure and MCC violation. He said that the officers of FST and SST have to work in coordination with the contact information given by their nearest police station and headquarters level. During the election, every vehicle will be checked at all the check posts. Also, all the check posts will be monitored through webcasting. No negligence of any kind will be tolerated at the check post, prompt action will be taken against the officer who is negligent. The CEO said that by deputing CAPF as per the requirement in all the check posts, the movement of banned materials like illegal liquor, illegal cash, weapons etc. which can affect the election has to be completely stopped during the election. For this, all the officers should take action by complying with their duties and rights. On this occasion, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer Dev Das Dutta made the officers aware of the duties of FST and SST and miking, communication plan, C-Vigil etc. related to ethical voting. At the same time, System Analyst S.N. Jameel gave detailed information about the installation and implementation of mobile applications used by FST and SST. On this occasion, officials of FST and SST of all districts were present online.

CM hands over appointment letters to about 500 CHOs in State

Lays foundation of proposed Jharkhand Bhawan in Mumbai

PNS : RANCHI
The caravan of appointments in the State is continuously moving forward. There will not be any month when the appointment letter distribution ceremony is not organized. About 500 community health officers are getting appointment letters. In this way, now all of you will fulfill your responsibilities as an integral part of the government," said Chief Minister Hemant Soren while addressing the appointment letter distribution ceremony organized by the Department of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare in the Jharkhand Ministry on Monday. On this occasion, the Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone of the proposed Jharkhand Bhawan in Mumbai and 220/33 kV Grid-Sub Station Pakribarwadhih online and expressed commitment to achieving self-reliance in the field of energy. The CM told the community health officers who received the appointment letters that Jharkhand is counted among the poorest and backward states of the country. "You have been appointed to improve the health care system. All of



Chief Minister Hemant Soren hands over appointment letters to a newly appointed community health officer at the appointment distribution ceremony at the Jharkhand Ministry on behalf of the Department of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare in Ranchi on Monday. Pix by Ratan Lal

you are getting an opportunity to work in the remote and rural areas of the state. I want to tell all of you that you should try to live up to the responsibility you have been given towards the people of this state. Perform your service with full honesty and integrity, so that the villagers continue to trust you. This will help us in strengthening the system of this state," he said. The CM said that the government is constantly making efforts to strengthen the health care system in the state. The health system cannot be improved just by

building a building. For this, it is necessary to provide adequate doctors and medical personnel and proper facilities related to treatment in the hospitals. Keeping this in mind, our government is taking concrete steps to strengthen all the systems related to health. Today, along with the appointment of doctors and medical personnel, providing modern medical resources and facilities, there is also a proper system for the maintenance and repair of hospitals. Many health schemes are being run for the poor and needy people of the state.

Our effort is to provide better medical facilities to the people of the state. Soren said that the government is continuously working towards providing world-class health facilities in the state. In this regard, we are taking the help of private sector institutions which have made a name for themselves for providing better services in the field of health on the world stage. In this episode, the foundation stone of Apollo Hospital has been laid recently. At the same time, a world class medical college and hospital is being built in Itki, Ranchi, by Azim Premji Foundation. I am confident that very soon the people here will not have to go to big hospitals in other states for treatment. They will get better and modern medical facilities in their own state. The CM said that today many new diseases remain a challenge for us. Since Covid-19, we are constantly moving forward in the direction of strengthening the health system. In this episode, efforts are on to make treatment of serious diseases possible in this state. For this, with the help of private organizations, institutions and hospitals

working in the field of health, efforts are constantly being made to provide modern treatment related facilities. The CM said that generally women and girls are associated with nursing. But, I believe that men should also participate in nursing. That is why the government has decided to ensure admission of men in nursing institutes. If men and women work equally in the field of nursing, then patients will get better service. The CM said that many links have been added towards strengthening the health system in the state and providing better medical facilities to the patients. The government has also made the service of air ambulance available at an affordable rate, so that if serious patients need to be taken out for treatment in an emergency, they do not have to face problems. On this occasion, Ministers Satyanand Bhokta, Banna Gupta, Mithilesh Kumar Thakur, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Principal Secretary Ajay Kumar Singh and Campaign Director Abu Imran were present.

Various programmes held in RINPAS on WMHW

Following the direction of Director, RINPAS, Kanke, Ranchi, Dr Jayati Simlai on the occasion of World Mental Health Week (WMHW) the Psychiatric Institute has conducted a series of impactful activities aimed at promoting mental health awareness across diverse groups, including our patients, staff, students, and the wider community in Kanke. Here's a summary of the various initiatives carried out such as painting competition, movie screening, skit on Workplace Stress in the OPD, skit on maternity mental health at the community health centre, Kanke and stress management program at Kasturba School, Kanke.

BJP to contest nine seats in UP by-elections, efforts underway to placate Nishad Party

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

After deciding to field candidates in nine of the ten upcoming by-elections in Uttar Pradesh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is now working to resolve tensions with its ally, the Nishad Party, which had staked a claim to two seats. The BJP has allocated one seat to the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), but the Nishad Party remains unsatisfied with the BJP's current proposal, leading to internal friction within the ruling alliance.

In an effort to resolve the issue, BJP state president Bhupendra Chaudhary, along with Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, have been tasked with negotiating with Nishad Party President Sanjay Nishad. The dispute revolves around the Katehari and Majhawan constituencies, which Sanjay

Nishad claims should be allocated to his party, as they were in the 2022 assembly elections. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the three BJP leaders to engage in discussions with Sanjay Nishad in hopes of reaching a compromise. However, sources suggest that the BJP is inclined to offer only one seat to the Nishad Party, and that too with the condition that the candidate would contest under the BJP symbol. This proposal has reportedly not been well-received by Sanjay Nishad, who has yet to agree to the offer. The BJP finalized its strategy for the by-elections in a high-level meeting held in Delhi on Sunday. The party has decided to contest nine of the ten assembly seats, with the Meerapur seat being reserved for its ally, the RLD. Meerapur, historically an RLD stronghold, has been given back to the party for the by-elections, further compli-



...cating the situation with the Nishad Party. An official announcement of BJP's candidates is expected soon, and the dates for the by-elections are likely to be declared within a few days. Sources indicate that the central leadership, after thorough discussions with the BJP Core Committee, finalized the list of candidates based on a panel

submitted earlier. Sanjay Nishad, however, remains firm in his demand for both the Katehari and Majhawan seats. He has underscored the importance of "Alliance Dharma" (alliance principles), questioning why the Nishad Party's claims have not been honored, especially since these constituencies were allocated to his party in the 2022 elections. Nishad drew a parallel to the Meerapur seat being reserved for the RLD, emphasizing that similar consideration should be extended to his party. "Alliance Dharma should be followed," Nishad remarked. He argued that just as Meerapur was allocated to the RLD due to their past victory, the Katehari and Majhawan seats should likewise be given to the Nishad Party, maintaining consistency with previous arrangements. Upcoming by-elections and political implications

The upcoming by-elections will be held in the constituencies of Karhal, Milkpur, Katehari, Kundark, Ghaziabad, Khair, Meerapur, Phulpur, Majhawan, and Sisama. Out of these ten seats, five are currently held by the Samajwadi Party (SP), while the RLD and Nishad Party each hold one seat. The remaining three seats are under the control of the BJP. For the BJP, these by-elections are seen as a significant opportunity to consolidate its position in the state ahead of the general elections in 2024. At the same time, it faces challenges in maintaining its alliance dynamics, particularly with the Nishad Party. Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party, led by Akhilesh Yadav, has forged an alliance with the Congress for the by-elections. The SP plans to field candidates in six seats, with speculation suggesting that it may allocate two seats to Congress as part

of the agreement. This alliance is viewed as a critical counterbalance to the BJP-led coalition. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has also finalized its list of candidates for most constituencies, adding another layer of complexity to the political landscape. With multiple parties vying for control of key constituencies, the by-elections are shaping up to be a litmus test for the broader political landscape in Uttar Pradesh. The by-elections are being closely watched as they are expected to set the tone for upcoming political battles in the state. For the BJP, the challenge lies not only in securing the maximum number of seats but also in managing alliance partners like the Nishad Party. For the SP-Congress alliance, the by-elections represent an opportunity to regain lost ground and present a united front against the ruling coalition.

J and K BJP to elect LoP soon

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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



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

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

Baba Siddique murder accused facing nine criminal cases: Cops

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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



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

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

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

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

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



vehicle users at five entry points of Mumbai. Inordinate delays at toll booths and poor condition of roads even after paying toll were some of the important grievances of these regular users. There would not be any financial burden on the vehicle users". "Given that all vehicle owners have paid one time Motor Vehicle Tax, there is no declaration of Total capital Outlay prior to issuance of toll notification and given the location of toll booths, the toll collection at five entry points was mala fide, arbitrary, capricious, illegal and violative of article 14 read with article 19(1)d of the Constitution of India especially as regards vehicle owners in Thane; and ultra vires of Sec. 20 of Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Tax Act and articles 265 of the Constitution of India," Wategaonkar said. Welcoming the decision, MNS chief Raj Thackeray said: "We demanded that all roads should be toll-free. We were criticized for vandalizing the toll plazas, but extreme steps were necessary to draw the government's attention. At least, now the Mumbaiers shall be free of paying tolls and we are happy that our agitations were successful". Terming the decision as "politically motivated", State Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said: "The ruling MahaYuti is aware of the public angst and fears losing power. So it is taking such 'feel-good' decisions. But why can't it be extended even for HMVs? Why continue paying the contractors?"

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

A crucial high-level meeting between the Bengal State administration led by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant and a delegation different doctors' organizations, including Indian Medical Association (IMA) failed to produce desired results "for want of any concrete initiative from the government's side," the representatives of the doctors associations said. The meeting was hosted to end the present gridlock emerging out of the indefinite fast resorted to by a group of junior doctors demanding justice for the Kolkata doctor rape and murder victim and resolution of many other issues including the alleged "mafia and syndicate raj" in medical institutions. "We came out hopeless as there was no positive intent shown by the Government," said the IMA representatives ... the Government said that they are taking steps towards resolving issues ... but there was no concrete proposal ... there was no show of intent ... nothing in writing was given to us ... only they said 'we are doing ... we are looking into it' ... the Health Secretary whose resignation the junior doctors have been asking for and who should have been present in the meeting was not present and we were told that he is absent ... this is the most insensitive Government that we have ever seen," the doctors emerging out of the meeting said. The meeting was held in the backdrop of the junior doctors' indefinite fast entering its tenth day on Monday with four doctors already having been shifted to hospital with their parameters falling drastically, sources said. "What illegality is there in the doctors' demands ... they are asking for justice for their lady colleague who was raped



and murdered on August 9 inside the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital ... They are asking for a foolproof system including centralized real system with real time monitoring, enhanced security network, end of mafia and syndicate raj, timely students' union elections so as to keep the corrupt authorities in check ... these can all be done The doctors are The IMA reportedly gave in writing to the Government about the existence of a "mafia and syndicate raj inside the government hospitals including the medical colleges --- of which the RG Kar incident was an upshot." The senior doctors during their meeting with the Government representatives demanded immediate removal of the present Chairman of the Patients' Welfare Committee Dr Sudipto Roy who is also a Trinamool Congress MLA, besides they asked for the "dissolution of the State

Medical Council which is the breeding ground of medical mafias" generating hundreds of crores, sources said. The doctors also demanded the "publication of a proforma from the Government wherein a mass resignation could be made legally tenable," the IMA representatives said adding, the State Government had earlier said that it was not taking the matter of mass resignation of the doctors seriously as there was no procedure for such mass resignations as "resignations are individual affairs." Referring to the meeting the Chief Secretary however said that the Government would deliberate over things at appropriate level. "In the meeting we told the doctors that we have noted their issues and concerns and would intimate them at appropriate time .. we also told them that the main concern is the deteriorating health of the junior doctors ...

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

Uddhav undergoes angioplasty procedure at Lilavati hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
MUMBAI



Less than a week after he was diagnosed with three blockages in his coronary arteries, Shiv Sena's executive president Uddhav Thackeray underwent an angioplasty at the Lilavati Hospital here on Friday. Four days after they conducted an angiography on him, a team of cardiologists, led by Dr Samuel Mathew, carried out an angioplasty on Uddhav and removed three major blockages in his arteries. The medical procedure lasted for nearly two hours. "The procedure was successful. He is doing well. His heart is functioning normally. We will be discharging him on Sunday," Dr Mathew told media persons. Replying to a question, Dr Mathew said: "He is fully conscious. Immediately after the procedure, he spoke to

Lilavati Hospital on the afternoon of July 16, on hearing that Uddhav was undergoing angiography that afternoon. Later that evening, Raj had sprung another surprise by driving Uddhav back to his Bandra residence, after the latter was discharged from the hospital. Raj's touching gesture had unleashed speculation about the possibility of reconciliation between the two estranged Thackeray cousins. The angiography had revealed that Uddhav had three major blockages in his coronary arteries. Though the doctors had advised Uddhav to undergo by-pass surgery, the Sena leader opted for angioplasty as an alternative to remove the artery blockages. Apart from making anxious enquiries about his cousin's health since then, Raj visited "Matoshri" on Thursday night and met Uddhav, ahead of his angioplasty.

Implemented robust action plan this festive season: Railways

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
PATNA/ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The Northern Railway Zone on Monday said it has implemented a robust action plan this festive season to provide passengers with a comfortable journey and accommodate the surge in demand with 2,950 special trains. The zone said it has achieved about 172 per cent jump in the number of festival-special trains running from October 1 to 30, compared to last year. Speaking about the arrangements, Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railway, said, "Out of 2,950 trains, around 83 per cent festival specials will cater to the passengers of east-bound states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Assam, among others." "The towns or cities such as Barauni, Samastipur, Saharsa, Varanasi, Ayodhya,

Gorakhpur, Jainagar, Darbhanga, Jogbani, Patna, Kolkata, Guwahati, Howrah, Muzaffarpur, Katihar, Tatanagar, and Lucknow are some of the popular destinations of these special trains originating from the National Capital Region," Upadhyay added. The officer also mentioned various steps to enhance passenger safety and facilities such as strict measures to prevent unauthorised entry into reserved coaches, curbs on carrying inflammable materials, and steps to check smoking and littering in trains and on the station premises. The Northern Railway, in a statement, said, "It may be noted that Northern Railway in association with other zonal railways is operating more than 2,950 Festival special trains during the festival season from 01.10.2024 to 30.11.2024." "Last year in the correspond-

ing period a total number of 1,082 specials were arranged by Northern Railway, hence this year, there will be an increase of approximately 172 per cent in comparison to last year," it added in the release issued today. According to Upadhyay, the Northern Railway would also run unreserved special trains to clear the extra rush in case of need on a real-time basis. "A total of 52 extra coaches are being added to various trains, making 2,740 trips and accommodating over 2.06 lakh passengers during the festive period," the railway press release said. According to Upadhyay, other amenities taken by Northern Railway amid the festive rush include increased deployment of ticket checking staff and RPF personnel to manage crowds on foot-over bridges, entry and exit points, platforms, booking offices, and other areas.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Speeding up 'GatiShakti'

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

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



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

By improving logistical efficiency, reducing costs and promoting seamless connectivity, the initiative can significantly bring down the cost of production. China's rapid economic growth provides a valuable lesson for India. Over the past few decades, China has focused heavily on large-scale infrastructure

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Navigating the complex path of integrity

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

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



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

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

The year was 2000 and the list of Padma Awardees sent to the Rashtrapati Bhawan had included a list of super achievers. The scholarly constitutionalist in President K R Narayanan went through each name carefully, as he always did. The list had included luminaries like Pandit Hariprasad Churasia, Prof J B Bhagwati, Rajnikanth, Tarlok Singh etc., but one particular name brought a smile to the face of the otherwise reserved and ultra-correct Rashtrapati K R Narayanan, and it was the name of the then relatively young, 63-year-old Chairman of the Tata Group, Ratan Tata. Arguably the most accomplished President ever, with a curriculum vitae of achievements that included recognition as the 'best diplomat of Indian Foreign Service', Ambassadorship to countries like USA, China etc., Vice Chancellorship of JNU, 3 consecutive wins as Member of Parliament, posts of Union Minister, Vice President of India, all on merit was no small achievement. Unbeknownst to many, his brilliant journey had the benefit of winds in his sails instilled by the Tata Group, long back! K R Narayanan had never forgotten what the Tatas had done to make its version of the 'Indian Dream' - the story from Uzhavoor in Kottayam to the Rashtrapati Bhawan had an unmistakably selfless, generous, and humble hand of the Tatas.

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



SANJAY CHANDRA

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

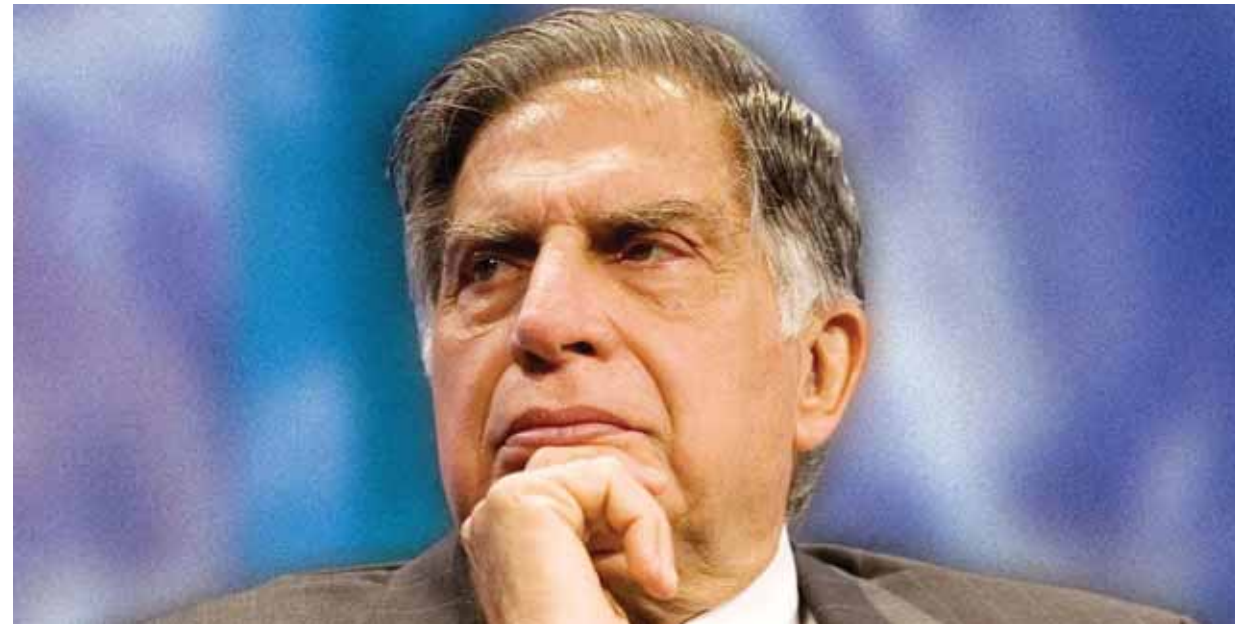
(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

Ratan Naval Tata: A gem of a person

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



BHOPINDER SINGH



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RSS CALLS FOR HINDU UNITY

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

Narratives have been set on caste divisions weakening and dividing Hindus for more than a century on misrepresentation of oppression bereft of any evidence, whereas the former rulers of various princely states, entrepreneurs of traditional businesses, and defeated warriors faced persecutions by the Mughal and British rulers and were reduced to penury and ruins and classified later as lower castes. Such narratives should be busted. The movies and OTT platforms are equally responsible for inculcating inferiority complexes among Hindus selectively. Lately, there is a noticeably undercurrent among Hindus against those who are insulting Hindus and their Gods and undercutting their religious faiths. The constitutional term secular has been misused to the extreme for dividing Hindus. The demand for caste census selectively for Hindus only while excluding other religions, though not provided in the Constitution is yet another shot to divide Hindus and create vote banks. Sangh Pramukh's message is loud and clear.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

TRAIN CRASH SPARKS PANIC

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

Md Siraj appointed as DSP



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

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

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

M Pradyu | Kannur

panic among railway passengers. This is a serious lapse and it will be treated as a human error to save heads from sacking. Following a collision between Darbhanga-bound Bagmati Express and a stationary goods train on Friday night, the Railways ordered a high-level inquiry to ascertain the cause.

Nine injuries and no fatalities have been reported, although 11 coaches of the express train derailed on impact, leaving a parcel van in flames and mangled coaches strewn across the crash site. After crossing Ponneri railway station, the Darbhanga-bound train received the green signal to pass through the main line towards the next station, Kavaraipeetai, near Gummidipoondi. However, the express train carrying more than 1,600 passengers experienced a "heavy jerk" while entering the station. It ended up entering the loop line instead and colliding with the rear of a goods train stabled there around 8:30 PM, according to the Railways. This is a serious lapse on the part of the railways and heads must roll.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

BABA SIDDIQUE ASSASSINATED

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

MR Jayanthi | Trichy

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE CHANGING FACE OF RAM LEELA

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



VINOD TAKIAWALA

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

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

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



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

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

At one Ram Leela in Delhi, the organisers spared no expense in creating luxurious settings for themselves, while visitors had minimal or no facilities. A statue of Lord Ram was placed in an open field, and the idols of other Hindu deities were carelessly laid out on the ground. Meanwhile, the organisers and their close circle enjoyed lavish facilities in opulent tents with exclusive arrangements for food, photoshoots, and private promotions. Ordinary visitors, who came with their families to enjoy the performance, often struggled to gain entry. Once inside, they were met with private security guards employed to serve the organisers' guests, who sometimes treated the common people poorly.

Ram Leelas have now become major attractions and money-making opportunities, with little consideration for the people who come to witness them. The entire event is chaotic, and all one can hope for is that it concludes without any unfortunate incidents. The ideals of Ram seem to be the last thing on the minds of those who organise these events. The essence of Ram Leela has been overshadowed by the spectacle of wealth and status. Even the story of Ram is distorted, and the dialogues are awkward—but that is the reality of modern-day Ram Leela.

(The writer is a freelance journalist; views are personal)

Why RBI should not look at food inflation



UTTAM GUPTA

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



On October 9, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das announced the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its fourth bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY). It has kept the policy rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) unchanged at 6.5 per cent. However, it has altered its policy stance from "withdrawal of accommodation" to a neutral stance. In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalised framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates including the policy rate for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate in such a manner as to maintain the Consumer Price Index or CPI (it corresponds to a basket that includes food, fuel, manufactured goods and select services) within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). The RBI decides the policy rates once in two months during each FY.

The mandate initially given for five years ending March 31, 2021, has since been extended till March 31, 2026. The other crucial policy instrument the banking regulator uses for targeting inflation is Liquidity - a jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system. Pumping more liquidity along with a reduction in the policy rate represents a scenario which in jargon is described as an 'accommodative' policy stance. The terminology was coined by Das in June 2019 when he started going for aggressive cuts in the policy rate and an increase in credit availability. Since June 2022 the RBI changed its stance to "withdrawal of accommodation" and has since stuck to it till date.

From October 9, 2024, it has decided to go for what it terms a "neutral" stance. A "neutral" stance connotes that the RBI has vowed to keep its options flexible meaning it will neither squeeze liquidity by restricting credit availability and keeping policy rates high nor go

for unrestrained lending at low interest rates.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

India is ready to stun the world once again, not only with its glamorous presence but also with its captivating storytelling at the 2025 Oscars. With Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies chosen as India's official entry for Best International Feature Film, the global stage is about to witness a film that exemplifies the power of Indian cinema where tradition meets modernity, and women's stories are told with gradation, strength and authenticity.

From the grand stages of Cannes and TIFF to the prestigious halls of the Oscars, India's cinematic journey continues to break boundaries, capturing hearts across the globe. The selection of Laapataa Ladies



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

stands out as a justified move that speaks volumes about the direction the Indian cinema will take in the future.

It signifies not just a bold statement but also a deeper narrative that India aims to convey to the world. The decision has stirred passionate discussions about the nature of Indian cinema, the evolving landscape of

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

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

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



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

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

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

identity and empowerment in a way that transcends cultural boundaries. As 'Laapataa Ladies' makes its way to the Oscars, it carries with it the hopes of millions who believe in the power of authentic storytelling. The film's emotional depth, paired with Rao's visionary direction, is set to make waves on the international stage, showing Hollywood and the world what Indian cinema is truly capable of. With 'Laapataa Ladies', India has not just sent a film—it has sent a message.

(The writer is a former additional DG, DFF, and festival director at IFFI. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan; Views are personal)

RBI calls for cheaper, faster remittances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



time gross settlement (RTGS) to settle transactions in major trade currencies such as dollar, Euro and Pound can be explored through bilateral or multilateral arrangements. India and a few other economies have already commenced efforts to expand linkage of cross-border fast payment systems both in the bilateral and multilateral modes, he said. These include Project Nexus, a multilateral international initiative to enable instant cross-border retail payments by interlinking domestic Instant Payment Systems (IPSS) of four ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and

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

to overcome the serious financial stability concerns associated with cryptocurrencies. "A key challenge could be the fact that countries may prefer to design their own systems as per their domestic considerations. I feel we can overcome this challenge by developing a plug-and-play system that allows replicability of India's experience while also maintaining the sovereignty of respective countries," he said. Talking about the risk of digitisation, the RBI Governor said, in the modern world with deep social media presence and vast access to online banking with money transfer

happening in seconds, rumours and misinformation can spread very quickly and can cause liquidity stress. Banks have to remain alert in the social media space and also strengthen their liquidity buffers, he said.

The RBI Governor also raised concerns over misuse of Artificial Intelligence in the banking space saying it could lead to more cyber attacks and data breaches. "Banks and other financial institutions must put in place adequate risk mitigation measures against all these risks. In the ultimate analysis, banks have to ride on the advantages of AI and Bigtech and not allow the latter to ride on them," he said.

Observing that the global economy is more financially integrated than ever before, Das said, the divergence in global monetary policies monetary easing in some economies, tightening in a few, and pause in several other economies can be expected to lead to volatility in capital flows and exchange rates, which may disrupt financial stability. Private credit markets have expanded rapidly with limited regulation, he said, adding, they pose significant risks to financial stability, particularly since they have not been stress-tested in a downturn. The accelerated institutional

Blockchain leaders discuss future opportunities

PTI ■ DUBAI

Participants from across the global blockchain and cryptocurrency community gathered at the Future Blockchain Summit 2024 to explore the latest advancements and opportunities within the blockchain ecosystem. The event features a series of sessions under the theme 'Investments in Blockchain & Gaming.'



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

Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman & CEO, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), talked about the potential impact of AI, crypto and gaming in the future of trade. "I think from 2026 you won't recognise your life. It will continue to change. Security will be the deciding factor of how far we go, but automated systems, AI and blockchain would be very well embraced," he said. The accelerated institutional

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

illiquid assets such as real estate and commodities, making them accessible to a broader audience, he said. "Today, crypto is not just an asset class, it is a growing community. Geographically, we see regions like Southeast Asia, Middle East and Africa becoming key players in driving innovation and creating new crypto markets," Williams said. Meanwhile, Blowfish Studios, a fully-owned subsidiary of Animoca Brands, showcased their AAA open-world space adventure with integrated blockchain technology as well as a new cooperative game mode where players can team up to complete objectives online, offering attendees a hands-on experience of the future of blockchain gaming.

Consumer Affairs Minister criticises air purifier false claims

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



Addressing an event commemorating World Standards Day, Joshi expressed concern over misleading marketing tactics adopted by some air purifier companies. "Discussion on air pollution has begun. Looking at Air Quality Index (AQI) on mobiles, people out of fear, go and buy air purifiers. Air purifiers make such false claims. ...We see air purifiers and so much is written but nothing is there in it. There is just a fan in it, yet claims are still made," the minister stated.

Joshi called for a collaborative approach involving the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the consumer affairs ministry and consumers to address the issue. While praising the BIS for their "exceptionally wonderful job" in recent years, the minister emphasized that more needs to be done. "I do not blame BIS for this. BIS in the last few years has done an exceptionally wonderful job. But both BIS and the consumer affairs ministry and consumers together need to create

awareness. It is important, and I strongly feel (this way)," the minister said stressing the collective responsibility in combating misleading product claims. He emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring every Indian has access to safe, reliable, and high-quality products and services. These comments come as concerns grow about air quality in major Indian cities and expansion of the air purifier market. Joshi also announced plans to make BIS standards mandatory for public procurement on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. "BIS standards are partially implemented on GeM. We'll try to make it mandatory." The minister highlighted the government's focus on quality standards, noting that Cabinet proposals now include global standard notes.

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

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

This note mentions which countries perform best in the particular field, rules and how India can achieve it. "So, we have to match every Cabinet note with the global standards. This helps our government to make decisions to set high standards whether it is quality infrastructure or urban metro trains." Implementation of standards at national level has been given a top priority by the government and is actively bringing more products under mandatory quality controls, he said. He said that over 22,300 standards are currently in force, with 94 per cent harmonized with international standards. The number of Quality Control Orders has risen from 14 (covering 106 products) in 2014 to 174 (covering 732 products) now. Also, 94 per cent of Indian Standards are harmonised with international standards.

Indian markets outperform China in last five years, says SEBI



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sebi Whole-time Member Sananth Narayan G on Monday reminded investors that Indian equities have consistently delivered 15 per cent returns over the last five years whereas the same has been zero or even negative in China. "That's like 'sone pe suhaga'. It's like the best of all worlds: low risk and very high return," Narayan said, underlining that there are side effects of this as well. Making it clear that it will not be the same going forward and investors should not assume it to be a one-way street, Narayan said such handsome returns can lead to complacency and pointed to a lot of youngsters opening up demat accounts to join the bandwagon. Educating people about risks is very important, Narayan said, giving the analogy of driving a car. "There has to be a light push on the accelerator to get more investors to provide risk capital for the economic growth, we also need to be aware of risks and use the brakes if need be."

Awareness Week at NSE, Narayan said FY24 was a "remarkable" year for India, with the benchmark indices returning 28 per cent and the volatility just 10 per cent.

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

On its part, the capital markets regulator is trying hard to ensure that fund-raising clearances are done early so that there is a steady stream of quality paper supply in the market. From a broader, longer-term perspective, Indian markets will only go north from here given the economic growth prospects in the country, Narayan said, issuing specific advice to investors.

Investors need to have the right intermediaries to capitalise on this opportunity presented by India, and not fall for the unregistered and fly-by-night 'influencers' who might be driven by vested interests, he said. Using the oft-repeated idiom of "all roads lead to Rome", Narayan remarked that Rome is not a traveller-friendly place and one may get scammed there as well. Therefore, it is important to seek advice from the right people for the investors, he said.

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

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



WPI inflation rises to 1.84 per cent in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The wholesale price index (WPI) inflation was 1.31 per cent in August. It was (-)0.07 per cent in September last year. Inflation in food items shot up to 11.53 per cent last month against 3.11 per cent in August. This was led by 48.73 per cent inflation in vegetables as against (-)10.01 per cent in August. Inflation in potato and onion continued to be high at 78.13 per cent and 78.82 per cent, respectively in September.

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

"Positive rate of inflation in September 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, food products, other manufacturing, manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers & semi-trailers, manufacture of machinery & equipment, etc," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which mainly takes into account retail inflation while framing monetary policy, kept benchmark interest rate or repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its monetary policy review earlier this month.

Mobius Foundation calls for Green Curriculum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

highlighted the critical role of the National Education Policy 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework 2023 in furthering sustainable education efforts. The recognition of these policies as instrumental in embedding environmental consciousness into curriculums was one of the event's key takeaways. This year's ICSE focused on the emerging importance of "green education" and "green jobs" as essential components in driving future sustainability initiatives in India and beyond. By advocating for the integration of these elements into educational systems, The conference aimed to foster a collective movement towards a more sustainable world.

Windergy India 2024 set to propel wind energy growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The sixth edition of Windergy India, a key international trade fair and conference for the wind energy sector. It will be held from October 23-25, 2024, at the Chennai Trade Centre, Tamil Nadu. The event will host over 300 exhibitors from 25 countries, showcasing cutting-edge innovations and driving discussions on India's renewable energy future. The conference, themed "Wind: Powering India's Energy Transition," will feature industry leaders, policymakers, and innovators addressing key topics such as: policy frameworks,

technology trends, and investment strategies. India, a global leader in wind energy, ranks fourth in installations and aims to achieve 140 GW of wind power capacity by 2030. The Union Cabinet recently approved 1 GW of offshore wind projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, with an investment of Rs 7,453 crore, highlighting the nation's commitment to its Net Zero 2070 goals. Hosted by the Indian Wind Turbine Manufacturers Association (IWTMA) and PDA Ventures Pvt Ltd, Windergy India 2024 is supported by the Ministry of Power, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and Niti Aayog.

BACL breaks ground on major Bengaluru Business Park

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bengaluru Airport City Limited (BACL), a subsidiary of Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), broke ground for its ambitious two million sq. Ft. Business Park, aimed at promoting the city as a global hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs). This comes as part of the Karnataka Government's new GCC policy (2024-2029), which aims to create 3.5 lakh jobs and contribute USD 50 billion to the economy, a BIAL statement said on Monday. Located within the larger Kempegowda International Airport's (BLR Airport) campus, Bengaluru Airport City is being developed as a mixed-use destination, featuring business parks, an education & health district, R&D hubs, and multiple entertainment and hospitality options, it said.



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

SW Energy arm, NTPC sign agreement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Renew Energy Thirteen Ltd, a step-down subsidiary of JSW Energy, has signed a 25-year power purchase agreement with state-owned NTPC. The tariff for the 700 MW solar project is Rs 2.59/kilowatt hour, JSW Energy said in an exchange filing. JSW Renew Energy Thirteen has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with NTPC for ISTS/STU-connected solar capacity of 700 MW, the company said. The project is expected to be commissioned by June 2026. The current solar pipeline capacity stands at 3.2 GW, with PPAs signed for 2.0 GW.

walking distance from the Business Park, will enhance connectivity to Bengaluru's city centre, providing faster and eco-friendly travel for employees and visitors, it was noted. As a future entertainment and hospitality hub, plans include India's first 'Concert Arena' within an airport ecosystem and a Convention & Exhibition Centre, it added.

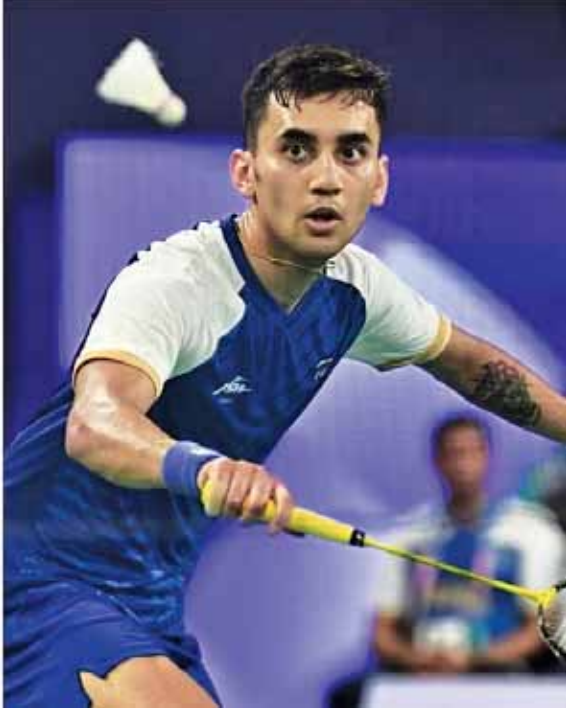
SINDHU, LAKSHYA AIM TO REGAIN FORM AT DENMARK OPEN

PTI ■ ODENSE (DENMARK)

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

At Arena Fyn in Odense, they will hope for better results as they lead India's challenge in this prestigious tournament, the 13th event of the 2024 BWF World Tour. Sen, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, went down fighting to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen last week.

Here, the 23-year-old from Almora will face China's Lu Guang Zu in his opening match an opponent he is yet to meet in professional badminton. Should he advance, Sen might face Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the second round, with reigning world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand will, in all likelihood, be waiting for him in the quarter-finals. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will need to quickly address the issues affecting her performance after a disappointing first-round loss to Canada's Michelle Li, an opponent she had previously defeated 10 times. Under the guidance of new coaches Anup Sridhar and Korea's Lee Hyun-il,



she will open against Chinese Taipei's Pai Yu Po and could potentially face China's Han Yue in the second round if she progresses. In addition to Sindhu, India will have several other competitors in women's singles, including the in-form Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap, and promising talent Unnati Hooda. Bansod, who had reached the quarterfinals of China Open, will go up against Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy

Linh at first, while Kashyap faces Thailand's Supanida Katethong. Hooda, the 2022 Odisha Open winner, will compete against Lauren Lam from the USA. While there will be no Indian representation in men's doubles, Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who had missed the Paris Olympics, will compete in the women's doubles, taking on the fifth-seeded Malaysian duo of Pearly Tan and Thinnah

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



Australia faces toughest of challenges in Asian World Cup qualifying

AP ■ TOKYO

Australia faces the most daunting road trip in Asia on Tuesday when it faces a dominant Japan at Saitama Stadium, knowing a win would put the Socceroos back on track for a sixth successive World Cup appearance after a mixed start in the third round of qualification. The Group C meeting is also a chance for new coach Tony Popovic, appointed in September to replace Graham Arnold, to make a statement win in his second game in charge and cross swords with a former team-mate. Popovic played for Japanese club Sanfrecce Hiroshima from 1997 to 2001 alongside Hajime Moriyasu - now coach of Japan. "I know their

head coach very well; he was my captain during my time in Japan. A remarkable person who has dedicated years to developing the national team," said Popovic. Japan is on course for an eighth successive World Cup appearance with three wins against China, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, scoring 14 goals and conceding none. "This is undoubtedly a significant challenge, but it also presents a fantastic opportunity to etch our name in history by winning in Japan," Popovic said after defeating China 3-1 in his first game in charge on Thursday, a result that took Australia to four points in the group, five behind Japan. The top two teams from each of the three groups of six

qualify automatically for the 2026 World Cup with the third and fourth place finishers advancing to the next stage. Like Australia, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have four points and meet in Jeddah, while winless China hosts Indonesia at home. The top two in Group B meet as South Korea hosts Iraq with both teams on seven points. The game has been switched to the city of Yongin, due to the poor condition of the playing surface at Seoul World Cup Stadium. South Korea will be without English Premier League stars Tottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min and Hwang Hee-chan of Wolverhampton Wanderers due to injury.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 350 players from around the world will go under the hammer in the inaugural women's Hockey India League auctions here on Tuesday. After a seven-year hiatus, the highly-anticipated HIL is making a grand return with an expanded format, featuring both men's and an exclusive women's league for the first time. The historic auction will witness over 250 domestic players and more than 70 overseas players vying for a spot in the inaugural season of the women's HIL. India's top women players, including seasoned goalkeeper Savita, national team captain Salima Tete, rising drag-flicker Deepika, the most-capped women's player Vandana Katariva, and forward Lalremliam are some of the big names from the country. Additionally, former Indian stalwarts such as Yogita Bali, Lilima Minz, and Namita Toppo have registered, adding further excitement to the auction.



On the international front, renowned players such as Delfina Merino (Argentina), Charlotte Staphenhorst (Germany), Maria Granatto (Argentina), Rachael Lynch (Australia), and Nike Lorenz (Germany) are set to participate, ensuring a global spectacle. Notably, the maiden season of the women's edition of the HIL will witness participation of total four teams, while two more teams will be added in the second season of the tournament. The participating teams for this season include Soorma Hockey Club, Shrachi Rahr

Bengal Tigers, Delhi SG Pipers, and Odisha Warriors. For the second season, Hyderabad Toofans and a team owned by the BC Jindal Group will be added, expanding the lineup to six teams. Each team will consist of 24 players, including 16 Indian players (with a mandatory inclusion of four junior players) and eight overseas players, aligning with HIL's vision of promoting both local and global talent. Franchises will have a purse of Rs 2 crore to select players, with athletes categorised under three base price slabs --

Rs 10 lakh, Rs 5 lakhs, and Rs 2 lakh. The historic women's auction marks a major milestone in the world of hockey, showcasing the sport's growth and the increasing prominence of women's hockey. It also stands out as one of the rare instances in India where both men's and women's editions of a major sports league will run concurrently. "This is not just a revival of the Hockey India League but also a celebration of the growth of women's hockey in India. We are proud to host the first-ever women's auction, which is not just about building teams but also about building legacies," Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey said. We are excited to see our domestic talent go head-to-head with some of the best international players and create new heroes for the next generation. The Women's HIL 2024-25 promises to be a watershed moment for Indian hockey, further propelling the sport's growth on both national and international stages."

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ISSF World Cup final here has been robbed of some sheen as three of Britain's top shotgun shooters, including Paris Olympics trap gold-medallist Nathan Hales, will not be competing in the prestigious year-ending event owing to "confusion" over paperwork that led to denial of visa to them. The World Cup final got underway at the Karni Singh Ranges with elite shooters from across the world, including Olympic and world championship medallists, taking part in the training sessions on Monday. The competitions will start on Tuesday. "No, he's (Hales) not (coming). They couldn't get their business visas in time. I don't know the exact ins and outs of it, but there was a complication...I think, what happened is that one of them (shooters) applied for a tourist visa, which was accepted," former shooter Peter Wilson, personal coach of Hales in the Paris Games, told PTI. "But, then, they were told that they had to apply for a business visa and there was, for whatever reason, a complication and it was either revoked and the rest were left pending and they just didn't have the time for it to be processed," added the legendary double-trap marksman who won a gold in the 2012 London Olympics. Wilson, who had recently expressed his



desire to coach the Indian trap team, said it was a huge setback for British shooters. "Obviously, it's a massive shame that they're not competing. So, there were three (shooters), two in men's trap, Hales and Matt Coward-Holley, and one in men's skeet Ben Llewellyn. Ben got a tourist visa but was then told by our federation that he should reapply for a business visa. "He applied incorrectly and at that point he had left it too late; apparently he was refused... I don't know why he was refused," Wilson revealed. Asked if the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) had provided these

shooters details on the visa they should apply for, Wilson said, "I would assume so, but I think at the moment no one knows quite where the blame lies. "But it's just a shame that of all the teams, we've not got the Great Britain team and the Olympic gold medallist here, so it's a real shame." NRAI president Kalikesh Singh Deo said, "I think there was some confusion with the way they applied." Most of India's Paris Games squad will compete at the World Cup. A prominent who would skip is double bronze-medallist Manu Bhaker, who is on a break after her exploits in the French capital.

Tough competition expected at Delhi Half Marathon elite field

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ethiopia's two-time 5000m world champion Muktar Edris is expected to challenge Paris Olympics 10,000m winner Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda for the top prize in the men's elite race at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon on October 20 here. Fresh from his victory in the 10,000m in Paris, the 28-year-old Cheptegei is set to make his debut at the Delhi Half Marathon. He has been a three-time world champion in 10,000m and boasts a personal best of 59:21 seconds in half marathon. He is the current world record holder for both the 5000m and 10,000m and holds the world's best time over the 15km distance. A three-time world champion in the 10,000m, he made his international debut in India at the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2014, finishing second. Cheptegei will face formidable opposition from Ethiopia's Edris, who will be returning to the Delhi Half Marathon after 2022. A star of the sport at the junior level, Edris finished fourth on debut in the Delhi Half Marathon in 2020 with an impressive run of 59:04 seconds. Before that, he won two world



championship titles in the 5,000m in 2017 and 2019. His half marathon personal best is better than that of Cheptegei at 58:40 seconds, which he had clocked in Valencia, Spain in 2021. The women's elite field will be led by 2022 Commonwealth Games 10000m champion Eilish McColgan of Great Britain. McColgan holds the European record for the 10km road race and British records for multiple distances. She has also represented Great Britain in four Olympic Games (2012-2024) and Scotland in three Commonwealth Games (2014-2022). She won the Berlin Half Marathon with a personal best time of 65:43 seconds in 2023.

Several top athletes, including Kenya's Cynthia Limo (66:04), Ethiopia's Yalemget Yaregal (66:27s), Tiruye Mesfin (66:31), and Tanzania's Magdalena Shauri (66:37), are joining McColgan in the women's race. With five women having clocked times under 67 minutes, the competition promises to be a fast-paced one. Ethiopians Amdework Walelegn (58:53) and Yalemzerf Yehualaw (64:46) held the men's and women's course records in the Delhi Half Marathon since 2020. A World Athletics Gold Label Road Race, the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon, with a prize pool of USD 260,000, will be flagged off from Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

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

AP ■ LONDON

After three wins from four as England interim coach, Lee Carsley appeared to distance himself from taking on the job full time. A 3-1 victory against Finland in the Nations League on Sunday saw England get back to winning ways after the shock 2-1 home loss to Greece. But Carsley sounded uncertain about his credentials to succeed Gareth Southgate in one of the biggest management roles in world soccer. "This job deserves a world class coach that's won trophies and been there and done it and I'm still on the path to that," Carsley said after goals from Jack Grealish, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Declan Rice secured the win in Helsinki. Carsley led England's under-21 team to victory in the European Championship last year and was seen as one of the leading contenders to replace Southgate, who stepped down in July. But after naming an experimental team that lost to Greece on Thursday, questions about his suitability were raised. If not for some errant finishing from No. 64-ranked Finland, Sunday could have been another



uncomfortable night for an England team ranked 60 places higher. Carsley said he hadn't enjoyed the days following the loss to Greece. "I'm just not used to losing with an England team. I don't take losing very well," he said. Grealish helped lift his mood when opening the scoring

from close range in the 18th minute at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium after being set up by a clever flick from Angel Gomes. Alexander-Arnold doubled England's lead in the 74th with a trademark free kick and Rice converted at the near post 10 minutes later from substitute Ollie

Watkins' cross. Arttu Hoskonen scored a consolation for Finland in the 87th. Carsley said his remit was to take charge of the six Nations League games before the end of the year, with two remaining against Greece and Ireland next month. "My bosses have made it

totally clear what they need from me," he said. **GREECE WINS:** Greece still leads Group B2 after extending its perfect start in the Nations League with a 2-0 win against Ireland. Anastasios Bakasetas and Petros Mantalos scored the goals that kept Greece three points ahead of England. Before the game, Greece's players held up the jersey of defender George Baldock, who was found dead at his home in Athens on Wednesday. **NORWAY ROUTED:** Not even Erling Haaland could prevent Norway from a humbling 5-1 loss against Austria. The Manchester City striker became his country's all time leading scorer this week with 34 goals. But he was kept quiet by Austria in Group B3. Marko Arnautovic opened the scoring at Austria's Raiffeisen Arena before Alexander Sorloth evened the game before halftime. In the second half Austria took control with Arnautovic scoring again. Philipp Lienhart, Stefan Posch and Michael Gregoritsch also scored. Norway still leads the group but is level on seven points with Austria in second and third-place Slovenia, which beat Kazakhstan 1-0.

IT MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF WE TOOK CHANCES: MUZUMDAR

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



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

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

Ben Stokes returns for second Test against Pakistan

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

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



Cummins to lead Australia in Pakistan ODIs, McGuirk retained

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

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

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



PTI ■ BENGALURU
India head coach Gautam Gambhir is not too concerned about the recent lukewarm form of Virat Kohli, insisting that the star batter remains as hungry as he was when he made his debut and should not be judged after every match. Kohli has made only one fifty, a 76 against South Africa at Centurion in December 2023, in his last eight innings, and him regaining his touch is crucial for India against New Zealand in a three-Test rubber starting on Wednesday and during the five-match series against Australia next month. Gambhir is confident that Kohli will come good very soon. "See, my thoughts about Virat have always been very clear that he is a world-class cricketer. He has performed

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

of the world. Obviously, we know how good India are in their own conditions, the quality of their bowlers and batters. It shows how hard it is for a team to come and win here. So, it's difficult," he added. Ravindra banked on his previous experience of playing cricket in India to come good in the upcoming Test rubber. The Kiwi played in this part of the world during last year's ODI World Cup before appearing for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL 2024. "Although it is different formats, it gives you confidence that you can perform in this part of the world. I think it's (Test cricket) a different challenge entirely and it's something I'm really looking forward to. "As you've seen, those two tournaments (ODI WC and IPL) were amazing, the crowds and the passion and the hype and the

buzz around them. So, I'm excited to have a full-fledged series here," he noted. From a team perspective, the 24-year-old said the tourists will have to keep focus on their game plans rather than worrying about India's approach. "The brand of cricket they play is very positive, especially in their own conditions. The way they've evolved over the last few years has been amazing, especially away (from home). "As New Zealanders, we don't necessarily try and look at the opposition too much. We know what a quality side they are and what they bring to the table, but I think if we're able to play our game and be consistent and put our best foot forward, hopefully, that will result in a win," he added. New Zealand's preparation for the series against India has been far from ideal as they lost 0-2



against Sri Lanka recently, while their one-off Test match against Afghanistan was a washout at Noida. However, Ravindra was confident that the team can lean upon the learnings from those experiences against India. "We did some really good stuff during the Sri Lankan series, obviously, came on the wrong side of the win and loss column. But I think as a group there were times where we really pushed and that first Test was close," he said. In the first Test against the Islanders at Galle, the left-hander made a fine 92 but the Kiwis lost the match by 63 runs while chasing 275. Ravindra wanted his side not to repeat the mistake of faltering at the crunch moments. "I think we've got to understand that we've got to do it (fighting) for long periods of time because that's what Test match cricket is about. Obviously, Sri Lanka and

India are different places, but similar in terms of the amount of spin you might play.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Riyaz Ansari, Father Late Fayaz Ansari, R/o village-Thana Toli, Thana and District Lohardaga (Jharkhand) have changed my name from Amit Kumar to Riyaz Ansari as per affidavit no. 13123, dated- 05 October 2024.