

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 2024



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Posters with UP CM Yogi's photo 'batenge to katenge' message surface in Mumbai



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UK rejects claims by Trump's team of US Prez poll interference



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Yuvraj Singh's NGO sparks controversy by referring to breasts as 'oranges'

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WINDOWS



Disha Patani during an event in Mumbai on Wednesday. — PTI

SC: States have power to regulate industrial alcohol

New Delhi: In an 8:1 majority verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday overturned a seven-judge bench judgment and held that states have regulatory power over the production, manufacture and supply of industrial alcohol. Industrial alcohol refers to denatured alcohol which is unfit for human consumption. Chemical compound ethyl alcohol (95 per cent concentration) is an industrial form of alcohol. The SC held that the phrase "intoxicating liquor" in Entry 8 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution would include industrial alcohol within its ambit. Full report on Page 5

Waqf meet: BJP seeks Kalyan's suspension

New Delhi: Sparks flew between the BJP and Opposition over TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee's unruly conduct at a sitting of the parliamentary panel on the Waqf bill, with the BJP seeking his immediate suspension from LS and the DMK, AIMIM and AAP targeting panel's chairman Jagdambika Pal. Full report on Page 5

N. Korean troops sent to Russia to fight in Ukraine

Seoul: The US on Wednesday said there is evidence that North Korea has sent troops to Russia, as South Korea's spy chief told legislators that 3,000 North Korean troops are receiving training on drones and other equipment before being deployed to Ukraine. — AP Full report on Page 6

COUNTERPOINT



We demanded 22 seats and succeeded in getting 2 seats!

WEATHER

Max: 33°C
Min: 20°C
RH: 45%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Shubhakrut: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Aswayuja Bahula Ashtami ill 2 am
Star: Punarvasu till 6.15 am
Varjyam: 2.44 pm to 4.25 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.05 am to 10.51 am; 2.41 pm to 3.27 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.42 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.28 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.50 PM
MOONSET TODAY 1.24 PM

India, China SRs to meet soon on boundary issues

Modi, Xi hold key talks to 'rebuild ties'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/KAZAN, OCT. 23

In their first landmark "structured" bilateral meeting that took place in five years to "rebuild ties", Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 16th Brics summit at Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday, during which Mr Modi "underscored the importance of properly handling differences and disputes and not allowing them to disturb peace and tranquility". He also "welcomed the recent agreement for complete disengagement and resolution of issues that arose in 2020 in the India-China

India-China relations are important for the people of our countries, and for regional and global peace and stability. Mutual trust, respect and sensitivity will guide bilateral relations.

— Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

It is in the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples that China and India correctly grasp the trend of history and the direction of development of bilateral relations.

— Xi Jinping
China President

border areas". At the meeting, the "two leaders agreed that the special representatives (SRs) on the India-China boundary question will meet at an early date to oversee the management of peace and tranquility in

border areas and to explore a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question", New Delhi said in a statement. "The relevant dialogue mechanisms at the level of foreign ministers and other

officials will also be utilised to stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations," it added. Prime Minister Modi and President Xi agreed on Wednesday that India and China can have a "peaceful and stable" relationship by displaying maturity and mutual respect. In a post on X, Mr Modi said: "India-China relations are important for the people of our countries, and for regional and global peace and stability... Mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity will guide bilateral relations." The MFA further said that "the two leaders affirmed that stable, predictable, and amicable bilateral relations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 16th Brics summit in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday. — PTI

Both back patrolling pact, hopes for normalcy at LAC

Won't let disagreements & disputes disturb peace: PM

Confusion in MVA on list; 182 picks for Mahayuti out

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, OCT. 23

While the confusion over the MVA's seat-sharing agreement continued on Wednesday, the Mahayuti alliance comprising the BJP, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP have declared candidates for 182 out of 288 Maharashtra Assembly seats. The NCP announced 38 candidates, including 26 sitting MLAs. The Shiv Sena has declared 45 candidates, including CM Eknath Shinde. The BJP announced its candidates for 99 seats. On Wednesday, the Congress, the NCP(SP) and the Shiv Sena (UBT), though, announced reaching a seat-sharing agreement of contesting 85 seats each; the deliberations to seal a final pact are still underway. Interestingly, even before the MVA claimed they reached an agreement, the Uddhav-led party announced its first list of 65 candidates and quickly withdrew it. The Shiv Sena(UBT) list of 65 candidates, which included Aadiya Thackeray's name, was released at around 6.50pm. However, within half-an-hour party leader Sanjay Raut clarified that the list was not the final one and it was released by mistake. Full report on Page 4

JMM picks 41 candidates for J'khand polls

New Delhi/Ranchi, Oct. 23: The ruling JMM has released a list of 41 candidates for the Jharkhand Assembly polls, fielding chief minister Hemant Soren from the Barhait seat and Rajya Sabha MP Mahua Maji from Ranchi. Earlier in the day, the JMM announced its first list of 35 candidates, nominating Mr Soren's wife Kalpana Soren from Gandey. The second list included the candidature of Ms Maji from Ranchi. In its third list, the party named five candidates, with incumbent MLA Chamra Linda to contest from the Bishunpur seat. Meanwhile, sources said there was resentment among the INDIA bloc constituent Congress over JMM's Ranchi pick. Full report on Page 4

India backs dialogue, diplomacy to end global conflicts: PM tells Brics

'No place for double standards on terror' Pak, Turkey seek to join

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Stating clearly that India "supports dialogue and diplomacy, not war" to resolve global conflicts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear at the Brics summit in Russia's Kazan city on Wednesday that decisions (on further expansion of the grouping) "should be taken by consensus, and that the views of Brics founding members (including India) should be respected". In January this year, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia and the UAE had joined the grouping as new members, adding to the existing Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, taking the total number of members to nine. A group photo taken showed leaders of the nine member-nations standing together in solidarity. In the obvious backdrop



Russian President Vladimir Putin (from left), Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and Brazilian foreign minister Mauro Vieira at the 16th Brics summit in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday. — AFP

of reports and widespread speculation that nations such as Pakistan and Turkey want to join the grouping, Mr Modi said "the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures adopted during the Johannesburg summit (last year) should be complied with by all members and partner

countries". The PM, however, made it clear that "India is ready to welcome (more) new countries as partner countries" of the grouping. Mr Modi further told the grouping that "we have to give the world the message that Brics is not a divisive organisation but one that works in the

IN A veiled message to China, that is seen to have stonewalled UN action against Pak-based terrorists repeatedly, PM Modi said "in order to counter terrorism and terror financing, we need the single-minded, firm support of all" interest of humanity", and warned that "we must be careful to ensure that this organisation does not acquire the image of one that is trying to replace global institutions, instead of being perceived as one that wishes to reform them". In a veiled message to China, that is seen to have stonewalled UN action against Pakistan-based terrorists repeatedly, Mr Modi said "in order to counter terrorism and terror financing, we need the single-minded, firm support of all" Full report on Page 4

Yogi & Bhagwat talk of BJP, RSS 'unity' in bypolls

Review UP coordination in Mathura

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath met the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in Mathura late on Tuesday, where issues including the coming Assembly bypolls in the state also came up for discussion. RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale was also present. The meeting comes ahead of the national executive meeting of the RSS and its affiliates. Mr Bhagwat is in Mathura to participate in the RSS's annual Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal meeting, also known as the "Diwali baithak", scheduled for October 25-26. The UP CM had reached Mathura to review the preparedness of the meeting in the tem-

THIS WAS the first meeting between the UP CM and the RSS supreme after the Lok Sabha polls, in which the BJP's tally came drastically down, both nationally and in the state. According to sources, Mr Adityanath, Mr Bhagwat and Mr Hosabale discussed organisational issues and coordination between the RSS cadre and the BJP in the state ahead of the crucial bypolls, the lack of which was said to be one Full report on Page 4

'Abetting crime': Centre raps X on bomb threats

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Amounts to "abetting crime", the ministry of electronics and information and technology on Wednesday is learnt to have pulled up the officials of microblogging site X for not acting against the miscreants involved in issuing over 100 hoax bomb threats targeting various airlines. During a virtual meet-

ing with the representatives of various airlines and social media platforms X and Meta, the government, in very sharp words, told X that their handling of the situation was not satisfactory and it amounted to "abetting crime". The government also questioned the X and Meta representatives on the steps taken to prevent the spread of such rumours. Full report on Page 2

Priyanka files for Wayanad LS debut

Holds massive roadshow Sonia, Rahul, Kharge, others join

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 23

AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took Wayanad by storm on Wednesday as she filed her nomination papers for the forthcoming bypoll in the Lok Sabha constituency, marking her debut in electoral politics. Ms Vadra submitted three sets of nomination papers at the Kalpetta old collectorate. The 52-year-old Congress leader was



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at a roadshow in Wayanad, Kerala, on Wednesday. — PTI

their son, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal were also present at the collectorate. The Wayanad seat became vacant when Mr Gandhi, who had won from two parliamentary constituencies in the last Lok Sabha elections, chose to retain Rae Bareilly. Wayanad goes to the polls on November 13. Ms Vadra is pitted against CPI's Sathyan Mokeri and Full report on Page 4



NDRF personnel during a rescue operation after an under-construction building collapsed in Bengaluru on Wednesday. At least eight people were killed and six workers were injured in the incident. Full report on Page 4

Terror attack on top Turkish defence firm near Ankara: 4 dead, 14 injured

Ankara, Oct. 23: Four people were killed and 14 others wounded in an attack on the headquarters of a top Turkish defence firm near Ankara, Turkish officials said Wednesday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was holding talks in Russia with Vladimir Putin at the time, confirmed the toll, and condemned what he said was a "heinous terrorist attack" at state-run Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI). Interior minister Ali

REPORTS CLAIMED a suicide attack had also occurred and that there were hostages inside the building. THE INCIDENT happened as Prez Erdogan was meeting Putin at Brics summit in Kazan. Yerlikaya said three of the injured were in critical condition and that two attackers "a woman and a man, have been neutralised". He said work was under

way to determine their identities but did not say whether there were any other attackers still at large. Some media reports claimed a suicide attack had occurred and that there were hostages inside the building, though officials have not confirmed this. The incident happened as Mr Erdogan was meeting Vladimir Putin at a summit in Kazan, with the Russian leader expressing his condolences over the attack. Full report on Page 6

IN BRIEF

Teen dies, 4 hurt as fire erupts in house

New Delhi: A 16-year-old boy died while four members of his family suffered burn injuries after a fire broke out in their house in southwest Delhi's Kishangarh area early Wednesday. A PCR call regarding the fire in a residential building on Shani Bazar Road was received at 3.22 am, according to an official of the Delhi fire service (DFS). Two fire tenders were pressed into service which took two hours to control the blaze, he said. "Initially, it was suspected that the fire broke out due to a leakage from a gas cylinder but the cylinder was found safe and reason for the fire is still not known," deputy commissioner of police (southwest) Surendra Choudhary said. The fire broke out on the fourth floor of the residential building, he added. While the 16-year-old boy identified as Akash died, his father Laxmi Mandal (42) mother Anita Mandal (40) and brothers Sunny (22) and Deepak (20) suffered injuries. While Laxmi, Anita and Deepak are admitted to Safdarjung Hospital, Sunny is undergoing treatment at the AIIMS.

18-year-old held for harassing girlfriend

New Delhi: An 18-year-old youth has been detained for allegedly harassing a girl and passing offensive remarks at her in front of her school in central Delhi, the police said on Wednesday. According to the police, when the incident occurred on Tuesday, a PCR van was positioned near the school when a person ask the deputed staff to help the girl who was allegedly being harassed by the boy. "The staff immediately reached there and took the alleged person to police station for inquiry," a senior police officer said. The girl told the police that she knew the accused for the last two years through social media, the officer said. The police said they both are friends and the boy had also visited the house of the girl. According to the girl's statement, the two were in a relationship and had some argument, the officer said.

MARITAL RAPE: CJI DEFERS HEARING PLEAS BY 4 WEEKS

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, who is demitting office on November 10, on Wednesday deferred hearing by four weeks on pleas challenging the immunity granted to husbands in cases of marital rape, saying the hearing would not be concluded before the Diwali vacation for the verdict to be rendered. A bench comprising the CJI and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, which commenced final hearing on October 17 on the pleas, asked lawyers about the time they would be needing individually to argue. Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for a party, said he will take at least a day to complete his submissions as he did not want to stifle the elaborate pleadings needed to be advanced in an important matter like this.

■ 'Pollution-free environment fundamental right' ■ Pulls up Punjab, Haryana for failing to curb stubble burning

'Toothless environment law': SC blasts Centre

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Underscoring that there is a fundamental right of every citizen to live in a pollution-free environment, the Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up the Centre for making the environment protection law "toothless" as there was no enforcement mechanism under the CAQM Act to penalise stubble burning violators.

The apex court also pulled up the Punjab and Haryana governments for not implementing court orders in cases of stubble burning. A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, and Augustine George Masih said, "Time has come to remind us to the government of India and state governments that there is a fundamental right of every citizen of India to live in a pollution-free environment."

"These are not the matters of implementing the existing laws but these are matters of blatant violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the bench said.

The top court noted that in Punjab more than 1,000 and in Haryana over 400 cases of stubble burning have been reported till now.



Raisina Hill shrouded in smog as air quality deteriorates in New Delhi on Wednesday. — G.N. JHA

It said both Punjab and Haryana were adopting arbitrary methods in implementing provisions of law. The bench said it is not only a question of implementing the orders of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) and taking action for breaches of law, the governments must also address the question of how they are going to protect the lives of citizens and allow them to live with dignity and in a pollution-free environment.

Concurring with amicus curiae Aprajita Singh's contention that nothing happens at ground level despite the top court's orders against stubble burning, the bench said, "We fully agree with amicus and we put all concerned to notice that stricter action has to be taken against those who are responsible for violation."

The bench directed the Centre and NCR states to file a detailed affidavit on compliance with all orders of the court by the next date of hearing.

It asked the Delhi government to submit details about action taken with regard to 13 pollution hotspots in the city, where open garbage burning happens. The top court said at present those who violate the environmental laws "are going scot-free" as no action can be taken against them.

It also noted the assurance given by additional solicitor general (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati that within two weeks the entire machinery will be in existence.

BJP using pollution as weapon: CM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Accusing the BJP-ruled Haryana and Uttar Pradesh of discharging industrial waste into the Yamuna river, chief minister Atishi on Wednesday said that the water treatment plants in Delhi have been affected due to high ammonia levels in the river.

Talking to media persons during her visit to the Wazirabad Water Treatment Plant, she alleged that the BJP was using pollution as a "weapon against Delhi."

Chief minister reiterated her charge that both the rising pollution levels in the Yamuna and the



Delhi chief minister Atishi during an inspection at the Wazirabad barrage in New Delhi. — ASIAN AGE

worsening air quality in the capital are the result of the BJP's "dirty politics".

"They are sending untreated water through drains into the Yamuna at Wazirabad and other

areas like Kalindi Kunj, which has now turned into a toxic drain, especially during the Chhath Puja," she alleged.

Meanwhile, the BJP and the Congress slammed the AAP-ruled Delhi government over the spike in pollution to life-threatening levels. While the BJP demanded the resignation of environment minister Gopal Rai, accusing him of prioritising the "political interests" of the Punjab government over the pollution related health concerns, the Congress demanded chief minister Atishi's resignation as she has lost trust of the public.

Citing data from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Mr Sachdeva said Punjab recorded 1,581 stubble-burning incidents this year alone, more than the combined total of Haryana (665) and Uttar Pradesh (740).

Centre slams X as many flights get bomb threats

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Elon Musk-owned microblogging site X, formerly known as Twitter, is on the receiving end of the Indian government as the Union ministry of electronics and information and technology on Wednesday is learnt to have pulled it up for not acting against the miscreants using its platforms to send threat messages to various airlines in the last few days.

Over 100 hoax threat calls or messages have been made in India over the last few days delaying flights, and causing inconvenience to thousands of passengers. During a virtual meeting called by ministry joint secretary Sanket S. Bhondve with the representatives of various air-

lines and social media platforms X and Meta, the government in very sharp words told X officials that their handling of the situation was not satisfactory and it amounted to "abetting crime."

The government also questioned the X and Meta representatives on the steps taken to prevent such acts and stop rumours being spread from its platforms.

The government's outburst came after the Delhi police failed to get the details of the user's ID or domain of a few X accounts that were found to be involved in posting threat messages to flights.

Three accounts on X, @adamlanza111, @psychotichuman, and @schizobomer777, have been found involved in posting maximum threat messages to flights.

Wasn't told about prior nod to felling of trees, Saxena tells SC

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Delhi lieutenant-governor (L-G) V.K. Saxena on Wednesday informed the Supreme Court that he was not made aware of the need for prior permission for the felling of trees in the Ridge area and necessary legal action has been initiated against the erring officials of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

In an affidavit, the L-G informed a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that he had learnt about the development only after the incident of felling of trees took place between February 16 and February 26.

The intimation, he said, came via a letter by the DDA vice chairman on June 10. "Though a mistake, the



V.K. Saxena

work done by them (DDA officials) was bona fide and in the interest of public good. However, action has been initiated departmentally by the DDA against the erring officials," the affidavit said.

According to the affidavit, a complaint under the provisions of the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA) read with the provisions of the BNSS (Bharatiya Nagarik (Suraksha Samhita) was filed against the erring officials of the DDA on July 5, 2024.

'No concrete solutions being offered': L-G hits out at Atishi

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

As the national capital Delhi battles soaring levels of air pollution with its air quality being in the 'very poor' category, Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena on Wednesday wrote to chief minister Atishi criticising her for offering no solutions to the pollution problem. He noted that the Air Quality Index (AQI) is already approaching 400, with hospitals and OPDs filling up with patients suffering from respiratory issues. The overall AQI of Delhi was recorded at 363, while more areas fell into the "severe" zone.

"We have once again been branded the most polluted city in the world. Our residents, especially the poor, apart from having their lives shortened by deadly air, are also facing a loss of livelihood. As in the past, no concrete answers are being provided, and no solutions are being offered," Mr Saxena said in his letter.

In response to the letter, the ruling AAP said, "Delhi is the only state where a Summer Action Plan, Winter Action Plan, and targeted efforts against pollution are implemented. As a result, the pollution in Delhi has dropped by over 31%, and this year, Delhi is breathing its cleanest air in the last decade. This achievement is due to the long-term and short-term measures taken by the Arvind Kejriwal government."

However, Mr Saxena in his letter said that he has "written pleading letters to the CM", expressing his concerns after reviewing the pollution situation on multiple occasions.

"This has been my experience as lieutenant-governor, the national capital of India, over the past two years or so. In the discharge of my duties, I reviewed the situation on many occasions, wrote pleading let-



A foreign tourist wears a face mask at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Experts say use activated charcoal for skin benefits

New Delhi, Oct. 23: As air pollution rises in the national capital, experts have advocated the use of activated charcoal as a natural remedy for preventing clogging of skin pores and keeping out toxins. The experts said the activated charcoal masks effectively reduce sebum (oily substance) from the face skin, thus helping treat acne as they have good absorbing properties.

Dr R.P. Parasher, the national president of the Integrated Medical Association (Ayush), said that activated charcoal — dubbed as "Black Diamond" has good sebum absorbing properties.

Chemicals like lead and nitrogen, which increase in the atmosphere during the pollution surge, may

damage the skin and may even enter the bloodstream through the skin pores which may further damage organs in the body in the long term, Dr Parasher said.

"Activated charcoal is not absorbed in the skin but absorbs the toxic elements as well as microbes present in the acne and in this way it saves the skin from getting damaged," he said.

A study "Review of Green Synthesis: Activated Charcoal to Reduce Sebum Levels in Oily Facial Skin" by researchers from Indonesia stated that the porous texture of activated charcoal positively captures and attracts negatively charged molecules.

reality we must live with, I would request all of us in positions of power — ministers, policymakers, and officers, who are largely confined to posh areas — to come out and see for themselves how simple and easy it is to overcome what has been made to appear insurmountable due to the neglect and apathy of those in charge. As always, I am ready to work with you to help mitigate the dust disaster in the city," the L-G stated in his letter.

IIT-D student hangs self in hostel room

New Delhi: A 21-year-old IIT Delhi student allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a ceiling fan in his hostel room, the police said on Wednesday.

It said it found no suicide note in the room but Kumar Yash, an M.Sc. second-year student from

Jharkhand's Deoghar, was under psychiatric treatment and had visited the IIT Hospital on Tuesday as well.

Kumar was found hanging using two towels. His friend and the institute's staff cut the towels and brought him down, said the officer.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system.

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1	09242122	BACK STOP (BG.)	3120 NOS	18.11.24
2	02241875	ESTI PROTECTION SWITCH WITH CARTRIDGE	887 NOS	18.11.24
3	07241454	SCREW COUPLING ASSEMBLY	954 NOS	19.11.24
4	07240336	IMPROVED HIGH TENSILE TIGHT LOCK CENTRE BUFFER COUPLER WITH AAR H TYPE	777 NOS	19.11.24
5	77249065	RUNNING CONTRACT FOR DIAMOND & SCISSORS CROSSINGS	275 SET	20.11.24
6	09242220	DISTRIBUTOR VALVE INCLUDING ADAPTOR WITH ISOLATING COCK	517 NOS	25.11.24
7	15245130	CUSTOMIZED HYDRAULIC RE-RAILING EQUIPMENT	02 SET	25.11.24

Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

Tender Notice No. 65/2024-2025 Dated: 23/10/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 3286/24

BJP to downplay Purvanchalis in Delhi polls

SHASHI BHUSHAN and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

The BJP has sought to downplay the influence of "Purvanchalis" in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections by suggesting a reduced demographic presence of the community, which has historically played a pivotal role in the electoral success of any party seeking power in the national capital. "Purvanchalis" refers to people from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. Their electoral significance is evident in the Delhi government's initiative to build 1,000 ghats along the Yamuna river for Chhath Puja, a major festival celebrated by the community. However, the BJP's lack of engagement with Purvanchalis has raised concerns. Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, in an audacious move, recently skipped an important meet-

ing of the party's Purvanchal Morcha, which upset many community members. Although Purvanchalis have generally supported the BJP in national elections since 2014, they have favoured the AAP in Assembly elections due to the BJP's poor outreach.

Well-placed sources within the party indicated that during an extended core committee meeting in Ranthambore, Rajasthan, last month, the BJP leadership drastically reduced their estimates of Purvanchali voters in Delhi, significantly lowering their perceived importance.

At this meeting, they even dropped the term "Purvanchali" the party's discussions, with their estimated electoral strength cut in half from approximately 45 per cent.

Delhi BJP Purvanchal Morcha president Santosh Ojha told this newspaper that Purvanchalis make up

to 40 to 45 per cent of Delhi's voters. The sources stated that a presentation at the Ranthambore meeting suggested that voters from Uttar Pradesh represent 17 per cent and from Bihar 6.59 per cent, totalling just 23.59 per cent of the electorate, while locals make up 56.7 per cent.

When asked about this reduced estimate, Mr Ojha said he was not privy to the details of the Ranthambore session.

Despite repeated attempts, Mr Sachdeva could not be reached for comments.

Lowering the number of Purvanchalis vote share has irked many in the party who believe that this oversight could harm the BJP and provide an advantage to political rivals, particularly the AAP, which has done its maths well to field and win around a dozen MLAs hailing from the region in the outgoing Assembly.

A section of the party said that underreporting the

numbers of Purvanchalis could potentially trigger increased demands from other communities for a greater share of tickets in the upcoming polls, potentially sidelining candidates from eastern UP and Bihar.

Given the importance of the Purvanchali voter base, the BJP has historically positioned itself as an ally of the community. For instance, in November 2016, the party appointed Lok Sabha member from North East Delhi Manoj Tiwari as president of the city unit, breaking away from its traditional leadership rooted in the Baniya and Punjabi communities.

Notable Purvanchali-dominated constituencies in Delhi include Burari, Seemapuri, Gokalpuri, Karawal Nagar, Kirari, Badli, Nangloi, Rithala, Matiala, Vikaspuri, Dwarka, Uttam Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Deoli, Badarpur, Tughlakabad, Patparganj, Laxmi Nagar, Wazirpur, and Rajinder Nagar.

Widow kills lover with girder stone

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

A mother of four walked into a police station and confessed that she killed her lover with a stone, a hammer, and a knife in her house in Mukundpur area, the police on Wednesday said.

The 28-year-old widow said she killed the man because he was a drunk and frequently abused her and her children, they said.

The woman was arrested on charge of murder, an officer said, and the victim was identified as Mohammad Tawarak alias Sahil Khan.

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH

CORRIGENDUM

Ref: Global Tender Enquiry Notice No. PI(EP)/24-25/G/10/HFW-01

Following changes are made:

S.No	Equipment/Item Name	Original Bid submission Date	Revised Bid Submission Date	Original Bid Opening Date	Revised Bid Opening Date	Deptt Name
4	Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation Machine	22.10.2024	22.11.2024	23.10.2024	25.11.2024	CTVS
6	Advanced Phacoemulsification System	23.10.2024	02.11.2024	24.10.2024	04.11.2024	AEC
7	Magneto Therapy	23.10.2024	02.11.2024	24.10.2024	04.11.2024	Physiotherapy
8	Ventilators	23.10.2024	22.11.2024	24.10.2024	25.11.2024	GI Surgery, HPB and Liver Transplantation

Ref: Global Tender Enquiry Notice No. PI(EP)/24-25/G/02

Following changes are made:

S.No	Equipment/Item Name	Original Bid submission Date	Revised Bid Submission Date	Original Bid Opening Date	Revised Bid Opening Date	Deptt Name
*1.	Digital PET-CT	26.10.2024	23.11.2024	28.10.2024	25.11.2024	Nuclear Medicine
2.	Robotic Surgical System for Soft Tissue on Buyback Basis	26.10.2024	05.11.2024	28.10.2024	06.11.2024	Urology
*3.	Gamma Camera with Accessories	26.10.2024	23.11.2024	28.10.2024	25.11.2024	Nuclear Medicine
*4.	Mass Spectrometers (Including combinations with Liquid-Gas Chromatography)	26.10.2024	21.11.2024	28.10.2024	22.11.2024	Pediatrics
5.	High End Operating Microscope	26.10.2024	05.11.2024	28.10.2024	06.11.2024	Neurosurgery
*6.	Flow Cytometry (on buy back basis)	28.10.2024	21.11.2024	29.10.2024	22.11.2024	Pediatrics
8.	Ultra Low Height/Double Abduction Operating Table with Radiolucent Top	28.10.2024	07.11.2024	29.10.2024	08.11.2024	Neurosurgery
9.	High End Operating Microscope	28.10.2024	07.11.2024	29.10.2024	08.11.2024	OHSC
10.	Full Endoscopy Lumbar IT & ED set	28.10.2024	07.11.2024	29.10.2024	08.11.2024	Neurosurgery
11.	High Resolution Manometry System	29.10.2024	08.11.2024	30.10.2024	09.11.2024	Gastroenterology
*13.	Thromboelastogram (TEG)	29.10.2024	22.11.2024	30.10.2024	25.11.2024	GI Surgery, HPB and Liver Transplantation

Ref: E-Tender Notice No. PI(EP)/24-25/03

Following changes are made:

S.No	Equipment/Item Name	Original Bid submission Date	Revised Bid Submission Date	Original Bid Opening Date	Revised Bid Opening Date	Deptt Name
2.	Blood Donation Vehicle	22.10.2024	29.10.2024	23.10.2024	30.10.2024	Transfusion Medicine

All other details shall remain the same. Professor In-Charge (EP)

FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2024

In order to clear extra rush of passengers during Deepawali and Chhath Puja Festival, Northern Railway, in association with other zonal railway, has planned to run the following Festival Special Trains as per schedule given below:-

LIST OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS ORIGINATING/TERMINATING IN NORTHERN RAILWAY						
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Frequency / Day	Period
02252	New Delhi	08:25	Patna Jn	20:00	Tri-weekly	Wednesday, Friday, Sunday
02251	Patna Jn	07:30	New Delhi	19:00	Tri-weekly	Thursday, Saturday, Monday
02270	Lucknow	14:15	Chhapra	21:30	6 Days a week	Except Tuesday
02269	Chhapra	23:00	Lucknow	06:30	6 Days a week	Except Tuesday
02248	New Delhi	08:25	Patna Jn	20:30	Tri-weekly	Tues, Thurs & Saturday
02247	Patna Jn	07:30	New Delhi	19:35	Tri-weekly	Wed, Fri & Sunday
04052	New Delhi	14:20	Jaynagar	15:40	Date Wise	Sat, Tue, Fri, Mon
04051	Jaynagar	18:00	New Delhi	18:50	Date Wise	Sun, Wed, Sat, Tue
04054	New Delhi	14:20	Barauni Jn	11:00	Date Wise	Sun, Wed, Sat, Tue
04053	Barauni Jn	12:30	New Delhi	09:10	Date Wise	Mon, Thu, Sun, Wed
02250	New Delhi	23:55	Patna Jn	16:40	Weekly	Thursday
02249	Patna Jn	17:50	New Delhi	11:00	Weekly	Friday
04075	New Delhi	23:45	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	11:40	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Sunday
04076	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	21:20	New Delhi	09:30	Bi-weekly	Thursday, Monday
04498	Anand Vihar Terminal	19:30	Ballia	13:30	Weekly	Sunday
04497	Ballia	18:40	Anand Vihar Terminal	14:25	Weekly	Monday
04022	Anand Vihar Terminal	11:40	Sitamari	15:45	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Friday
04021	Sitamari	18:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	18:05	Bi-weekly	Thursday, Saturday
04032	Anand Vihar Terminal	05:15	Saharsa Jn	10:30	5 days a week	Mon, Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun
04031	Saharsa Jn	13:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	16:10	5 days a week	Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri, Sun
04624	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	23:45	Varanasi Jn	23:55	Weekly	Sunday
04623	Varanasi Jn	05:30	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	11:25	Weekly	Tuesday
04080	Delhi Jn	19:30	Varanasi Jn	09:45	Tri-Weekly	Monday, Thursday, Saturday
04079	Varanasi Jn	18:25	Delhi Jn	08:50	Tri-Weekly	Tuesday, Friday, Sunday
04530	Bhatinda Jn	20:50	Varanasi Jn	17:30	Bi-weekly	Monday, Friday
04529	Varanasi Jn	20:40	Bhatinda Jn	17:00	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Saturday
04096	Anand Vihar Terminal	09:00	Ayodhya Cantt	22:00	Tri-Weekly	Monday, Wednesday, Friday
04095	Ayodhya Cantt	09:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	22:30	Tri-Weekly	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
04518	Chandigarh	23:15	Gorakhpur	18:20	Weekly	Thursday
04517	Gorakhpur	22:05	Chandigarh	14:10	Weekly	Friday
04060	Anand Vihar Terminal	10:30	Jaynagar	15:15	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Friday
04059	Jaynagar	17:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	19:55	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Saturday
04068	Delhi Jn	19:30	Darbhanga Jn	16:30	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Friday
04067	Darbhanga Jn	18:00	Delhi Jn	16:35	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Saturday
04044	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:15	Gorakhpur	14:00	Bi-weekly	Saturday, Tuesday
04043	Gorakhpur	17:25	Anand Vihar Terminal	10:40	Bi-weekly	Sunday, Wednesday
04217	Varanasi Jn	06:25	Lucknow Jn	11:45	Daily	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
04218	Lucknow Jn	16:30	Varanasi Jn	21:50	Daily	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
04010	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:45	Jogbani	05:20	Weekly	Tuesday
04009	Jogbani	09:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	16:05	Weekly	Thursday
04678	Firozpur Cantt Jn	13:25	Patna Jn	17:00	Weekly	Wednesday
04677	Patna Jn	18:45	Firozpur Cantt Jn	22:40	Weekly	Thursday
04211	Varanasi Jn	14:50	Chandigarh	07:45	Weekly	Saturday
04212	Chandigarh	09:30	Varanasi Jn	01:20	Weekly	Sunday
04553	Saharanpur	04:40	Ambala Cant Jn	06:45	Daily	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
04554	Ambala Cant Jn	20:20	Saharanpur	22:30	Daily	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
04682	Jammu Tawi	23:20	Kolkata	13:00	Weekly	Tuesday
04681	Kolkata	23:45	Jammu Tawi	12:30	Weekly	Thursday
04078	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:55	Patna Jn	16:25	Weekly	Monday
04077	Patna Jn	17:50	Anand Vihar Terminal	11:00	Weekly	Tuesday
04646	Jammu Tawi	05:45	Barauni Jn	12:10	Weekly	Thursday
04645	Barauni Jn	15:15	Jammu Tawi	22:30	Weekly	Friday
04038	Delhi Jn	19:10	Azamgarh	11:30	Weekly	Sunday
04037	Azamgarh	13:30	Delhi Jn	06:10	Weekly	Monday
04312	Haridwar Jn	12:30	Howrah Jn	17:10	Weekly	Thursday
04311	Howrah Jn	19:00	Haridwar Jn	23:30	Weekly	Friday
04314	Haridwar Jn	12:30	Muzaffarpur Jn	07:30	Weekly	Friday
04313	Muzaffarpur Jn	09:00	Haridwar Jn	05:30	Weekly	Saturday
04058	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:15	Muzaffarpur Jn	21:15	Bi-weekly	Monday, Thursday
04057	Muzaffarpur Jn	23:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:30	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Friday
04062	Anand Vihar Terminal	09:00	Barauni Jn	06:30	Weekly	Sunday
04061	Barauni Jn	08:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	10:10	Weekly	Monday
02246	Hazrat Nizamuddin	23:55	Patna Jn	16:40	Bi-weekly	Monday, Wednesday
02245	Patna Jn	17:50	Hazrat Nizamuddin	10:50	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Thursday
04526	Sirhind Jn	11:25	Saharsa Jn	17:00	Weekly	Monday
04525	Saharsa Jn	19:15	Ambala Cantt Jn	22:20	Weekly	Tuesday
04006	Delhi Jn	23:05	Jaynagar	23:45	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Friday
04005	Jaynagar	01:30	Delhi Jn	01:30	Bi-weekly	Thursday, Sunday
04048	Anand Vihar Terminal	15:20	Katihar Jn	15:00	Bi-weekly	Tuesday, Friday
04047	Katihar Jn	18:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	17:50	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Saturday
04070	New Delhi	00:20	Rajgir	21:00	Bi-weekly	Saturday, Tuesday
04069	Rajgir	22:50	New Delhi	23:10	Bi-weekly	Sunday, Wednesday
02262	New Delhi	00:20	Darbhanga Jn	21:15	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Sunday
02261	Darbhanga Jn	23:20	New Delhi	20:15	Bi-weekly	Wednesday, Sunday
04608	Jammu Tawi	20:20	Howrah Jn	13:20	Date Wise	Wednesday & Monday
04607	Howrah Jn	23:45	Jammu Tawi	15:20	Date Wise	Friday & Wednesday
04680	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	18:40	Kamakhya	21:00	Date Wise	Monday & Saturday
04679	Kamakhya	06:00	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	06:20	Date Wise	Thursday & Tuesday
04662	Amritsar Jn	20:10	Saharsa	05:00	Date Wise	Tuesday & Sunday
04661	Saharsa	10:00	Amritsar Jn	18:20	Date Wise	Thursday & Tuesday
04520	Ambala Cant Jn	19:00	Darbhanga Jn	19:00	Date Wise	Friday
04519	Darbhanga Jn	21:30	Amritsar	06:30	Date Wise	Saturday

LIST OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS PASSING THROUGH NORTHERN RAILWAY NETWORK						
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Frequency / Day	Period
03575	Asansol Jn	10:15	Anand Vihar Terminal	08:05	Weekly	Friday
03576	Anand Vihar Terminal	10:15	Asansol Jn	10:20	Weekly	Saturday
03435	Malda Town	09:30	Anand Vihar Terminal	14:10	Weekly	Monday
03436	Anand Vihar Terminal	15:45	Malda Town	23:30	Weekly	Tuesday
03255	Patna Jn	22:20	Anand Vihar Terminal	15:00	Bi-weekly	Sunday, Thursday
03256	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:20	Patna Jn	17:20	Bi-weekly	Monday, Friday
02391	Patna Jn	22:20	Anand Vihar Terminal	15:00	Weekly	Saturday
02392	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:20	Patna Jn	17:20	Weekly	Sunday
03257	Danapur	07:30	Anand Vihar Terminal	00:30	Weekly	Sunday
03258	Anand Vihar Terminal	05:00	Danapur	20:45	Weekly	Monday
05219	Muzaffarpur Jn	13:30	Anand Vihar Terminal	06:00	Daily	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
05220	Anand Vihar Terminal	08:00	Muzaffarpur Jn	00:45	Daily	Upto 01.01.25
05109	Chhapra	17:45	Anand Vihar Terminal	11:50	Weekly	Wednesday
05110	Anand Vihar Terminal	12:55	Chhapra	06:45	Weekly	Thursday
05023	Gorakhpur	21:15	Anand Vihar Terminal	13:15	Weekly	Sunday
05024	Anand Vihar Terminal	15:15	Gorakhpur	04:45	Weekly	Monday
05301	Mau Jn	04:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	20:30	Weekly	Thursday
05302	Anand Vihar Terminal	00:25	Mau Jn	17:45	Weekly	Friday
05005	Gorakhpur	14:40	Amritsar Jn	09:30	Weekly	Wednesday
05006	Amritsar Jn	12:45	Gorakhpur	08:50	Weekly	Thursday
05049	Chhapra	09:55	Amritsar Jn	09:30	Weekly	Friday
05050	Amritsar Jn	12:45	Chhapra	14:00	Weekly	Saturday
02525	Kamakhya	22:45	Anand Vihar Terminal	08:50	Weekly	Friday
02526	Anand Vihar Terminal	17:20	Kamakhya	03:40	Weekly	Sunday
05671	Guwahati	15:00	Anand Vihar Terminal	08:50	Weekly	Wednesday
05672	Anand Vihar Terminal	23:45	Guwahati	14:15	Weekly	Friday
05734	Katihar Jn	11:40	Amritsar Jn	00:10	Weekly	Thursday
05733	Amritsar Jn	04:25	Katihar Jn	15:00	Weekly	Saturday
03413	Malda Town	07:10	New Delhi	07:30	Bi-weekly	Thursday, Sunday
03414	New Delhi	10:30	Malda Town	07:55	Bi-weekly	Friday, Monday
03483	Bhagalpur	11:00	New Delhi	07:10	Bi-weekly	Saturday, Tuesday
03484	New Delhi	10:30	Bhagalpur	04:10	Bi-weekly	Sunday, Wednesday
05565	Saharsa Jn	19:30	Sirhind Jn	00:05	Weekly	Thursday
05566	Sirhind Jn	02:00	Saharsa Jn	09:45	Weekly	Saturday

03107	Sealdah	00:10	Lucknow Jn	00:10	Weekly	Saturday
03108	Lucknow Jn	01:40	Sealdah	23:50	Weekly	Sunday
09075	Mumbai Central (Via Bareilly)	11:00	Kathgodam	14:30	Weekly	Wednesday
09076	Kathgodam (Via Bareilly)	17:30	Mumbai Central	20:55	Weekly	Thursday
07363	Hubballi Jn	20:30	Yog Nagari Rishikesh	23:30	Weekly	Monday
07364	Yog Nagari Rishikesh	06:15	Hubballi Jn	06:30	Weekly	Thursday
09657	Daurai (via Barabanki Jn)	15:00	Barhni	13:25	Weekly	Saturday
09658	Barhni (via Barabanki Jn)	19:15	Daurai	19:20	Weekly	Sunday
03423	Bhagalpur	13:55	Haridwar Jn	17:55	Weekly	Monday
03424	Haridwar Jn	19:55	Bhagalpur	21:20	Weekly	Tuesday
05736	Katihar Jn	21:00	Amritsar Jn	09:45	Weekly	Wednesday
05735	Amritsar Jn	13:25	Katihar Jn	23:45	Weekly	Friday
05047	Banaras	22:00	Ghaziabad	11:45	Weekly	Tuesday
05048	Ghaziabad	12:35	Banaras	05:35	Weekly	Wednesday
02397	Gaya Jn	14:15	Anand Vihar Terminal	07:10	6 Days a week	Except Saturday
02398	Anand Vihar Terminal	08:20	Gaya Jn	00:30	6 Days a week	Except Sunday
02393	Patna Jn	20:10	New Delhi	12:10	6 Days a week	Except Thursday
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Patna Jn	07:00	6 Days a week	Except Friday
04123	Prayagraj Jn	14:30	Hazrat Nizamuddin	11:10	Bi-weekly	Sunday, Wednesday
04124	Hazrat Nizamuddin	15:50	Prayagraj Jn	09:00	Bi-weekly	Monday, Thursday
05193	Chhapra	14:00	Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan	22:10	Weekly	Saturday
05194	Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan	00:05	Chhapra	08:00	Weekly	Monday
02417	Prayagraj Jn	21:30	Delhi Jn	08:55	Weekly	Friday
02418	Delhi Jn	09:30	Prayagraj Jn	19:45	Weekly	Saturday
04145	Prayagraj Jn	21:30	Delhi Jn	08:55	Weekly	Thursday
04146	Delhi Jn	09:30	Prayagraj Jn	19:45	Weekly	Friday
02421	Subedarganj	21:35	Delhi Jn	08:55	Weekly	Sunday
02422	Delhi Jn	09:30	Subedarganj	19:40	Weekly	Monday
03309	Dhanbad Jn	10:10	Jammu Tawi	22:40	Weekly	Tuesday
03310	Jammu Tawi	23:25	Dhanbad Jn	14:00	Weekly	Wednesday
09195	Vadodara Jn (via Varanasi Jn)	19:00	Mau Jn	20:45	Weekly	Saturday
09196	Mau Jn (via Varanasi Jn)	23:15	Vadodara Jn	00:45	Weekly	Sunday
09417	Ahmedabad Jn (via Varanasi Jn)	09:10	Danapur	20:30	Weekly	Monday
09418	Danapur (via Varanasi Jn)	23:50	Ahmedabad Jn	11:10	Weekly	Tuesday
09405	Sabarmati (via Lucknow)	18:10	Patna Jn	02:00	Weekly	Tuesday
09406	Patna Jn (via Lucknow)	05:00	Sabarmati	13:30	Weekly	Thursday
09525	Hapa (via Varanasi Jn)	00:40	Naharlagun	16:00	Weekly	Wednesday
09526	Naharlagun (via Varanasi Jn)	10:00	Hapa	00:30	Weekly	Saturday
09183	Mumbai Central (via Lucknow)	2				

SHORT TAKES
Toll at 8 in B'uru building collapse

Bengaluru: Seven more bodies were recovered during search and rescue operation after an under-construction building collapsed at Babusapalya here, taking the death toll to eight, police said on Wednesday. Teams from the fire and emergency department, National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force have been pressed into rescue operations since the incident occurred during heavy downpour on Tuesday, they said. "Bhuvan Reddy, son of Muniraja Reddy under whose name the building is being constructed and the contractor Muniyappa who was building it have been taken into custody," a senior police official said.

Police arrests 11th in Siddique's killing

Mumbai: The Mumbai police have made the 11th arrest in connection with the murder case of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique. The suspect identified as Amit Hisamsing Kumar is the resident of Haryana's Kaithal. As per reports, Kumar was the link between Gurmait Baljit Singh, one of the suspects arrested on the spot immediately after the murder and absconding accused Mohammad Zeeshan Akhtar, who allegedly got the murder contract. A police official said that 29-year-old Kumar was arrested from Haryana after his alleged role in the crime was revealed by the arrested suspects during their custodial interrogation.

Yogi & Bhagwat talk of unity

Continued From Page 1
of the main reasons behind the BJP's poor performance in the Lok Sabha polls. At the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal meeting, review of the "RSS 100" plan and the Vijayadashami speech of Mr Bhagwat will be the main focus. During his Vijayadashami speech in Nagpur earlier this month, Mr Bhagwat had stressed Hindu unity while referring to atrocities on the community in Bangladesh. He also talked about demographic imbalance due to infiltration, cultural degradation, forces trying to weaken the Indian society and creating disharmony among the society. The RSS will be celebrating its centenary next year. The two day long meeting will discuss how to mark the centenary across the nation. Several socio-political issues are also likely to come up for discussion during the meeting. The meeting in Parkham village near the temple town of Mathura will also discuss the "organisational goals" that have to be achieved by next year when the RSS completes 100 years of its foundation.

Mahayuti out with 182 picks for Maha polls

MVA confusion continues: Sena-UBT releases list of 65, withdraws it later

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, OCT. 23

While the confusion over the Maha Vikas Aghadi's (MVA) seat-sharing agreement continued on Wednesday, the Mahayuti alliance, comprising the BJP, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, declared candidates for 182 out of 288 Maharashtra Assembly seats. The BJP has announced candidates for 99 seats. While the NCP has announced 38 candidates, including 26 sitting MLAs, the Shiv Sena has declared 45 candidates, including chief minister Eknath Shinde. Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, NCP state president Sunil Tatkar and BJP leader Devendra Fadnis are in New Delhi to hold talks

Clash of Pawars in Baramati again

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, OCT. 23

With the NCP officially announcing the candidature of party chief Ajit Pawar on Wednesday, the high-profile Baramati Assembly seat is likely to witness yet another "Pawar vs Pawar" battle in the upcoming Assembly polls in Maharashtra as the Sharad Pawar-led NCP(SP) has finalised the name of Yugendra Pawar. The NCP(SP)'s likely nominee is the grandnephew of Sharad Pawar and nephew of Ajit Pawar. The NCP fielded Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar from the Baramati constituency as part of its first candidate list for the Maharashtra elections. There was uncertainty over the possibility of Ajit Pawar fighting the elections as the NCP chief himself a few months back had said he was no longer interested in contesting from Baramati.

with top BJP leaders over 18 to 20 disputed seats. The Mahayuti candidates will start filing nominations on Thursday. On Wednesday, the Congress, the NCP(SP) and the Shiv Sena (UBT),

however, announced reaching a seat-sharing agreement of contesting 85 seats each; the deliberations to seal a final pact are still underway. Interestingly, even before the MVA claimed they

reached an agreement, the Uddhav Thackeray-led party announced its first list of 65 candidates and quickly withdrew it. The Shiv Sena(UBT) list of 65 candidates, which included Aaditya Thackeray's name, was released at around 6.50 pm. However, within half an hour party leader Sanjay Raut clarified that the list was not the final one and it was released by mistake. "We are aware that the list includes candidates on certain seats that we have agreed to give to our alliance partners Congress, NCP(SP) and Peasants and Workers Party. It happened because of some administrative error. We will find out how it happened and the actual list of candidates will be issued tomorrow," Mr Raut said.

Posters of 'Batenge to katenge' with Yogi's photo resurfaces

Mumbai, Oct. 23: Ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls, posters with a photo of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and bearing the message "batenge to katenge", implying disastrous impact of division, have come up in several parts of Mumbai. While Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar said their party has not put up the posters, he maintained that people feel the society will suffer if there is division of votes. The posters carry the messages — "batenge to katenge" (divided we fall), and "if we stay united, we will be noble and secure." Written in red, the message has a background

THE POSTERS, surfacing ahead of the November 20 Maharashtra polls, bear the name of one Vishwabandhu Rai colour combination of saffron, yellow and green. The posters, surfacing ahead of the November 20 Maharashtra polls, bear the name of one Vishwabandhu Rai. Asked about it, BJP leader Shelar said, "The party has not put up the posters, and Rai does not hold any position in the party either." In reference to the message, Shelar said, "It is the feeling of a sizeable number of people here that if votes are cut, the society will suffer due to lack of

development. Many people feel they should stay united and focus on voting unitedly for development and prosperity." Notably, senior BJP leader Adityanath had in August urged people to stay united to reach the pinnacle of prosperity saying the mistakes in Bangladesh should not happen in India. At an event in Agra, the CM had said, "Aap dekh rahe hain Bangladesh mein kya ho raha hai? Wo galatyan yahan nahi honi chahiye. Batenge toh katenge! Ek rahenge to nek rahenge, surakshit rahenge aur samridhhi ki parakashitha pahuchenge," the CM said in Hindi. —PTI

SC restores Byju's case of insolvency, pulls up NCLAT

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

In a major setback to Byju's, the Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's verdict that had stopped insolvency proceedings against the embattled ed-tech firm.

A bench of Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra also reversed the order of the NCLAT approving Byju's ₹158.9-crore dues settlement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India and directed the cricket board to deposit the settlement amount of ₹158.9 crores with a committee of creditors.

The bench held that the US firm Glas Trust Company LLC, being the creditor, has the locus to intervene in matters related to the corporate insolvency proceedings at the NCLAT and in the apex court as an affected party. The top court rapped the insolvency appellate tribunal, NCLAT, for flouting established rules in stopping the insolvency proceedings against the ed-tech firm by taking recourse to its inherent powers.

"The NCLAT cannot be considered a post office that merely puts a stamp on the withdrawal application submitted by the parties to the corporate insolvency resolution

Strictly abide by bail terms: SC in Lakhimpur clash

New Delhi, Oct. 23: The SC on Wednesday directed former Union minister Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, an accused in the murder case linked to the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri clash, to strictly abide by the bail conditions imposed on him. A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan allowed the victims to file a contempt plea after they alleged violation of bail conditions by Mr Mishra by holding a public rally on October 2.

"You have to strictly abide by the bail conditions," the bench told senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for Mishra. Advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for one of the victims said the SC while granting bail to Mr Mishra on July 22, directed him to abide by the bail conditions.

process (CIRP)," the bench said. The top court said the withdrawal plea should have been moved by the IRP (insolvency resolution professional) and not by the corporate debtor or other parties.

The exercise of discretionary powers by the NCLAT was not warranted in the present circumstances, it said.

Sarma: Driving out infiltrators focus in J'khand

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/JAPLA (JHARKHAND), OCT. 23

Assam chief minister and Jharkhand election co-in-charge Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that driving out infiltrators is the BJP's priority and the Husainabad sub-division will be a separate district soon after the saffron party comes to power.

Addressing a rally in Japla's Karpoori ground, seeking votes for Hussainabad Assembly constituency candidate and an NCP turncoat Kamlesh Singh, he said that this sub-division in Palamu district will be made a separate district if the Bharatiya Janata Party comes to power and it will be named after Lord Ram or Krishna.

JMM's 3rd list out, Soren will contest from Barhait

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/RANCHI, Oct. 23

The ruling JMM has released a list of 41 candidates for the Jharkhand Assembly polls, fielding chief minister Hemant Soren from the Barhait seat and Rajya Sabha MP Mahua Maji from Ranchi. Earlier in the day, the JMM announced its first list of 35 candidates for the upcoming polls, nominating Mr Soren's wife Kalpana Soren from Gandey. The second list included the candidature of Ms Maji from Ranchi. In its third list, the party named five candidates, with incumbent MLA Chandra Linda set to contest from the Bishunpur (ST) seat.

Ms Maji, who was elected opposed to the Rajya Sabha in June 2022, previously served as the chair-

SOURCES SAID there was resentment among the INDIA bloc constituent Congress over JMM's nominee from the Ranchi seat

person of the Jharkhand state commission for women and was the former president of the JMM's women's wing.

After "initial hiccups", the RJD, the INDIA bloc partner and part of the coalition government in Jharkhand, announced its six nominees on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, sources said there was resentment among the INDIA bloc constituent Congress over JMM's nominee from the Ranchi seat.

Earlier in 2022, when Ms Maji's name was announced as Rajya Sabha candidate, the Congress maintained that there was "a contradiction between

what was discussed in Delhi and the decision that was taken by the JMM".

Mr Hemant Soren is the sitting MLA from the Barhait (ST) constituency in Sahibganj district. He won the seat by 25,740 votes over his nearest BJP rival Simon Malto in the 2019 Assembly elections.

His wife Kalpana Soren has been re-elected for Gandey, which she won in a bypoll by 27,149 votes over her nearest BJP rival Dilip Kumar Verma. The seat had fallen vacant following the resignation of JMM MLA Sarfaraz Ahmad. Of the 36 JMM nominees, Basant Soren, who is brother of the chief minister, will contest from Dumka, Assembly Speaker Rabinranath Mahto from Nala, state minister Mithilesh Thakur from Garhwa, Sonu Sudivya from Giridih and Bebi Devi from Dumri.

Wayanad will have 2 members in Parl: Rahul

Wayanad (Kerala), Oct. 23: Wayanad is the only constituency in the country that will have two members in Parliament, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday, as he asked the people of the hill region to take care of his sister, Priyanka Gandhi, just as they had protected and looked after him when he needed it most.

The former Wayanad MP, while addressing a public meeting at Kalpetta here after the massive roadshow held by Priyanka ahead of filing her nomination for the Wayanad Lok Sabha bypoll, said the Rakhi he was wearing was made by his sister and it was a symbol of a brother's protection to her.

"I think all of you understand very well the relationship I have with the people of Wayanad. In her speech, Priyanka said that you protected me, looked after me when I needed it most." "The Rakhi I am wearing was made by my sister. I don't take it off till it breaks. This is a symbol of a brother's protection to his sister. That is why I request the people of Wayanad to look after my sister and protect her. She will put her entire energy into the problems of Wayanad and to protect you," said Rahul who represented the Wayanad seat in Lok Sabha from 2019 to 2024. —PTI

India backs dialogue, diplomacy to end global conflicts: PM tells Brics

Continued From Page 1
support of all", and that "there is no place for double standards on this serious matter". He further said that "we need to take active steps to stop radicalisation of youth in our countries", while adding "we must work together on the long-pending matter in the UN of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism".

Speaking at the closed-door plenary session of the summit in Kazan, he further pressed for "time-bound reforms in global institutions such as the UN Security Council". In his address, Mr Modi said: "Our meeting is taking place at a time when the world is facing several pressing challenges such as wars, economic uncertainty, climate change and terrorism. The world is talking about the North-South divide and the East-West divide. Preventing inflation, ensuring food security, energy security, health security, water security, are matters of priority for all countries in the world."

On the cyber domain, he added: "In this era of technology, new challenges have emerged such as cyber deepfake, disin-

formation. At such a time, there are high expectations of Brics. I believe that as a diverse and inclusive platform, Brics can play a positive role in all areas... Our approach must be people centric. We need to work on global regulations for cyber security and for a safe and secure AI." Mr Modi further said: "Brics is an organisation which is willing to evolve with time. By giving our own example to the world, we must collectively, and in a united manner, raise our voice for reforms of global institutions. We must move forward in a time-bound manner on reforms in global institutions such as the UN Security Council, multilateral development banks, and the WTO."

Batting for the developing world, he said: "The hopes, aspirations and expectations of the countries of the Global South must also be kept in mind. During our Voice of Global South summits and the G-20 presidency, India put the voices of these countries on the global stage. I am pleased that these efforts are being strengthened under Brics as well. Last year the countries of Africa were integrated into Brics."

Priyanka files for Wayanad LS debut

Continued From Page 1
BJP's Navya Haridas.

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) displayed a massive show of strength with a nearly 3-km roadshow stretching from Kalpetta's main bus stand to the collectorate. She, accompanied by Mr Gandhi, Muslim League leaders Panakkad Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, P.K. Kunhalikutty, PCC president Sudhakaram, Mons Joseph and Anoop Jacob in an open jeep, was greeted by hundreds of people who gathered on both sides of the road.

The absence of the flags of the Muslim League and the Congress was noticeable at the roadshow. In 2019, the BJP launched a nationwide campaign depicting the Muslim League green flag as the Pakistani flag. As a strategic decision, the UDF chose not to display any flags at the roadshow to avoid controversy this time.

Speaking at a public gathering just before submitting her nomination papers, Ms Sadra reflected on her 35 years of campaigning for her family and other leaders. "I began campaigning for my father when I was 17 years old. However, this is the first occasion I am asking for your support in my own election campaign. It's a novel experience for me. I am deeply thankful to the Congress president for the chance

to run as a UDF candidate from Wayanad," she said. The Congress general secretary expressed her commitment to the people of Wayanad, stating she will share their joys and sorrows. "This marks the beginning of a new chapter for me. Each of you teaches me something valuable. It was the support from Wayanad that fortified Rahul's resolve. We owe a great debt to Wayanad," she stated.

She mentioned that Mr Gandhi had briefed her on local issues such as the night travel ban and the need for a medical college. "As a mother of two, I have always supported my family through thick and thin. Now, you are my family and I will stand by you," she declared.

Mr Gandhi, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, remarked that Wayanad is unique in having two parliamentary representatives. "My sister will serve as the official representative of Wayanad, while I will act as the unofficial representative. I am confident that the people of Wayanad will extend their full support to her," he concluded. "After our father's demise, Priyanka took care of our mother. She is someone who sacrifices everything for her family. She regards the people of

Wayanad as her own family. From a young age, Priyanka has always stood by her friends, regardless of the challenges they encounter. Thus, I am confident that Priyanka will stand with the people of Wayanad through any adversity," stated Mr Gandhi.

"I hope the affection bestowed upon me will also be given to Priyanka. I entrust my sister to the people of Wayanad. This rakhi that Priyanka tied on my wrist symbolises the brother's vow to always protect his sister. I am certain that the people of Wayanad will embrace her as one of their own and provide unwavering support," he added.

In 2019, Mr Gandhi secured the seat with a margin of 431,770 votes. However, in the last Lok Sabha elections, his victory margin shrank by 5.25 per cent when he defeated CPI national leader Annie Raja by a margin of 364,422 votes. UDF leaders assert that Ms Vadra's victory margin will exceed 5-lakh votes.

Mr Gandhi, Mrs Gandhi, Mr Kharge, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah, Kerala Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, KPCC president K. Sudhakaram, Muslim League leaders and other Congress leaders attended the public meeting in Kalpetta.

PM, Xi hold key talks to 'rebuild ties'

Continued From Page 1

between India and China, as two neighbours and the two largest nations on earth, will have a positive impact on regional and global peace and prosperity".

The leaders underlined the need to progress bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, enhance strategic communication and explore cooperation to address development challenges, the MEA added.

At a media briefing in Kazan, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said the expectation was that Wednesday's meeting will result in an easing of the situation at the Line of Actual Control and pave the way towards normalcy.

He further said the recent pact announced pertained to the Depsang and Demchok areas (in Ladakh). Asked if Russia had played peacemaker, Mr Misri said: "We are in Kazan and thankful to Russia for the venue".

The meeting follows the pact announced on Monday between the two Asian giants on patrolling rights along the LAC, under which the patrolling rights of soldiers and the grazing rights of herdsmen would revert to what it was in 2020.

This was the first bilateral meeting of the two since the Mahabalipuram summit near Chennai in 2019 and since the deadly clash in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh in June 2020 between troops of both sides. Mr Modi and President Xi had last interacted and had exchanged pleasantries dur-

AT A media briefing in Kazan, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said the expectation was that Wednesday's meeting will result in an easing of the situation at the Line of Actual Control and pave the way towards normalcy

ing the G-20 summit two years ago at Bali, Indonesia. However, perhaps due to tensions with India, President Xi had skipped the G-20 summit hosted by India in New Delhi in September last year, although Beijing was represented at a senior level. Foreign secretary Vikram Misri had said earlier on Tuesday that the focus of both India and China would first be on military disengagement and only then on issues like de-escalation and de-induction.

He also said there would be efforts to ensure that after the pact, there will be no clashes at the border between the troops of both nations. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar had said earlier this week that the pact was a "product of a very persevering diplomacy" and after a "very patient process".

It is expected the two sides are now moving towards resolution to the face-off in the Depsang and Demchok areas of Ladakh with this pact reached on patrolling. Monday's announcement was the fourth such agreement between the two sides in the past four years. It may be recalled that the first

announcement between the two sides on military disengagement took place in February 2021 in the Pangong Tso area.

The second was on disengagement in the Gogra area (PP17A) in August 2021. The third was on disengagement at Gogra-Hot Springs (PP-15) in eastern Ladakh in September 2022. It had now taken two more years for the fourth pact.

Earlier, in 2017, the two nations had resolved another military face-off with each other at Doklam in Bhutanese territory.

The Chinese state media, meanwhile, reported Wednesday that Mr Xi told Mr Modi that China and India should strengthen cooperation.

"It is in the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples that China and India correctly grasp the trend of history and the direction of development of bilateral relations," state broadcaster CCTV quoted Mr Xi as saying.

"The two sides should strengthen communication and cooperation, properly handle divergences and differences, and realise each other's development dreams," it added.

CCTV said Mr Xi told Mr Modi that the two countries should "shoulder international responsibilities, set an example for developing countries to seek strength through unity, and contribute to a multi-polar world and democratisation of international relations".

SHORT TAKES

Tension in Manipur dist over molestation

Imphal/Churachandpur: Tension was palpable in the Tuibong sub-division of Manipur's Churachandpur district, where a bandh was called on Wednesday to protest the alleged molestation of an 11-year-old girl by a non-local person. Apprehending an escalation of the situation, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 were also imposed in the sub-division, banning gatherings of five or more people, officials said. Shops and markets were shut, schools were closed and vehicles remained off the roads due to the bandh, which was called by Kuki-Zomi Village volunteers. The shutdown began at 5 am and was called off around 3.30 pm, they said. Bandh supporters burnt piles of unused materials, including old tyres at Tuibong Bazar. — PTI

'Govt plans event on Patel's birth anniv'

New Delhi: The Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday announced that the government will commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel with a two-year-long nationwide programme from 2024 to 2026 to honour his monumental contribution to the country. He said Sardar Patel's enduring legacy as the visionary behind the establishment of one of the world's most robust democracies and his pivotal role in unifying India from Kashmir to Lakshadweep remains indelible. "To honour his monumental contributions, the government of India, under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodiji, will commemorate his 150th birth anniversary with a two-year-long nationwide celebration from 2024 to 2026," he wrote on X. This celebration will serve as a testament to his remarkable achievements, Mr Shah said.

PK changes 2 picks for Bihar byelections

Arrah, Bihar: With just a couple of days left for filing of nomination papers, Prashant Kishor's fledgling Jan Suraj party on Wednesday announced it was changing its candidates for two of the four Assembly seats in Bihar where by-polls are scheduled. At a press conference in Arrah, the headquarters of Bhojpur district, the party said social activist Kiran Singh will be contesting from Tarari, in place of Lt. Gen. Shri Krishna Singh (Retd) a former Army Vice-Chief whose candidature was announced with much fanfare last week. The party also said Khilafat Hussain, an academician from Belagani, was being replaced with Mohd Amjad, a former panchayat mukhya. — PTI

OMAR CALLS ON SHAH, DISCUSSES J&K STATEHOOD

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

The newly elected chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, met Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday and discussed issues related to the Union territory, including early restoration of statehood. On his first visit to the national capital after assuming office last week, Mr Abdullah spent nearly 30 minutes with the home minister. He later said that it was a courtesy call, during which he apprised the Union home minister about the situation and also discussed the issue of restoration of statehood. The J&K CM visit follows the terror attack in the Gangangir area of Ganderbal district, where terrorists mercilessly killed seven individuals, including a doctor, just three days ago. Since the reorganisation of J&K into a Union territory in 2019, the police force has been under the jurisdiction of the Union home ministry. During his stay in Delhi, the CM is scheduled to meet the central leadership, including an anticipated meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mr Abdullah's NC achieved a remarkable victory in the recent J&K Assembly polls, securing 42 out of the 90 seats.



Omar Abdullah

States can regulate industrial alcohol, says SC in 8:1 verdict

Top court overturns its '90 order giving Centre due power

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

In an 8:1 majority verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday overturned a seven-judge bench judgment and held that states have regulatory power over the production, manufacture and supply of industrial alcohol. Industrial alcohol refers to denatured alcohol which is unfit for human consumption. Chemical compound ethyl alcohol (95 percent concentration) is an industrial form of alcohol. The apex court held that the phrase "intoxicating liquor" in Entry 8 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution would include industrial alcohol within its ambit. The majority bench comprised Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Abhay S. Oka, J.B. Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish

INDUSTRIAL ALCOHOL refers to denatured alcohol which is unfit for human consumption. Chemical compound ethyl alcohol (95 percent concentration) is an industrial form of alcohol.

Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih. Justice B.V. Nagarathna, however, dissented and held that states did not have the legislative competence to regulate industrial alcohol.

The majority verdict overturned its 1990 seven-judge bench judgment in Synthetics & Chemicals Ltd. v. State of Uttar Pradesh holding that the Centre had the regulatory power over the production of industrial alcohol.

The majority verdict and writing on behalf of the seven judges, said Entry 8 sought to regulate everything from "raw materials to production of intoxicating liquor".

In its 364-page judgment, the SC said, "Parliament cannot occupy the field of the entire industry merely by issuing a declaration under Entry 52 of List I. The State Legislature's competence under Entry 24 of List II is denuded only to the extent of the field covered by the law of Parliament under Entry 52 of List I."

The majority judgment said the phrase "intoxicating liquor" in Entry 8 included all alcoholic liquids which could harm public health.

While Entry 8 in the State List under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution gives the states the power to legislate on the manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of "intoxicating liquors", Entry 52 of the Union List and Entry 33 of the Concurrent List mention industries whose control was "declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest".

Have made statement on violent act by TMC MP, says Pal 'I haven't made Waqf meeting public': JPC chair rejects claim

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill Jagdambika Pal on Wednesday denied the Opposition's allegations of violating "norms of secrecy" by going public about Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Kalyan Banerjee smashing a glass bottle and hurling it at the chair during a meeting of the panel. The incident took place on Tuesday.

DMK member A. Raja and AAP MP Sanjay Singh alleged that Mr Pal violated rules of procedure for conduct of parliamentary panel meetings. "I have not revealed any proceedings or deliberations of the committee. I have only made statements about an incident of violence, during the panel meeting, by a member and his subsequent suspen-

BJP seeks Banerjee's suspension from LS for violence at panel meet

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Sparks flew between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Opposition members over TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee's unruly conduct at a sitting of the parliamentary panel on the Waqf Bill, with the ruling party seeking his immediate suspension from Lok Sabha.

The BJP MPs urged that an FIR may be lodged against Banerjee for "unprecedented goondaism, unpardonable violence and life-threatening attack" on Mr Pal, followed by his immediate police custody, interrogation and probe by the competent law enforcement agencies. — PTI

...I have always adhered to rules of parliamentary procedure and upheld the dignity of the House," said Mr Pal, while defending himself. "Yesterday during the Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee broke a glass bottle and threw it with anger and fury at me, it is God's grace that I narrowly escaped, as it fell in close

to me...I have informed the (Lok Sabha) Speaker about the entire incident, but this is a serious attack on the parliamentary system...Kalyan Banerjee was allowed to speak the most...I will resign if someone accuses me of not giving enough time to speak in the JPC...We have passed a resolution and expelled Kalyan Banerjee from the next meeting of the JPC," he added.

"There can be disagreements on the issues that is why the JPC is hearing it. The government wants to consult a larger number of stakeholders. You may not agree with it but you can't hit people with bottles. We are in the middle of a process. Over 65 hours of hearing in 16 meetings has taken place so far. I give everyone enough time to speak during the meetings," the JPC chair further said.

In a post on X, Mr A. Raja wrote, "In spite of the unpleasant incident that took place in the meeting, the attitude and the manner in which the meetings are conducted in haste by the chairman has created doubts in the minds of the members and public that justice will not be secured... It is unfortunate that the chairman of the joint working committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024 conducted a press conference."

Heavy rains likely in south WB dists

150 trains cancelled on Oct. 24 and 25 as Cyclone Dana nears Bengal coasts

Kolkata, Oct. 23: Cyclonic storm "Dana", which formed over east-central Bay of Bengal on Wednesday, is set to bring heavy rainfall in several south Bengal districts, including Kolkata, the IMD said.

Eastern and southeastern railways cancelled over 150 trains on October 24 and 25, in view of the cyclone.

The storm is likely to intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm over northwest Bay of Bengal, and make landfall between Bhitarkanika National Park and Dhamra port in Odisha early Friday, with wind speeds of up to 120 km/h.



Locals wait for boat after ferry service closed in South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal on Wednesday in the wake of cyclone "Dana".

The IMD said. The cyclone lays 520 km southeast of Paradip and 600 km south-southeast of Sagar Island at 8.30 am on Wednesday, it said.

The Met warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy downpours in isolated places in the south Bengal districts of North and

South 24 Parganas, Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly on October 24 and 25.

Advising fishermen not to venture into the sea from October 23 to 25, the Met warned that wind speed is likely to reach 60 km/h along and off Odisha-West Bengal coasts from October 23, and gradually increase to 120 km/h, from October 24 night till October 25 morning.

More than 150 express and passenger trains running through South Eastern Railway (SER) jurisdiction have been cancelled in view of the severe cyclonic storm, an official said. — PTI



Passengers pose near the old non-AC rake during its "Heritage Run" on Wednesday to celebrate 40 years of Kolkata Metro service. — PTI

Priyanka files ₹12cr assets in poll affidavit

Wayanad (Kerala), Oct. 23: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday declared assets worth over ₹12 crore, which include her ₹5.63 crore house in Shimla, in the election affidavit filed for the Wayanad Lok Sabha bypoll.

In the affidavit, the Congress candidate also declared that her husband, Robert Vadra, has movable assets worth over ₹37.9 crore and immovable assets worth over ₹27.64 crore.

According to her declaration, she had a total income of over ₹46.39 lakh in the financial year 2023-2024, which includes rental income and interest from banks and other investments.

Ms Vadra said she has movable assets worth over ₹4.24 crore, which include deposits of varying amounts in three bank accounts, investments in mutual funds, PPF, a Honda CRV car, and over 4,400 grams (gross) of gold worth ₹1.15 crore. — PTI

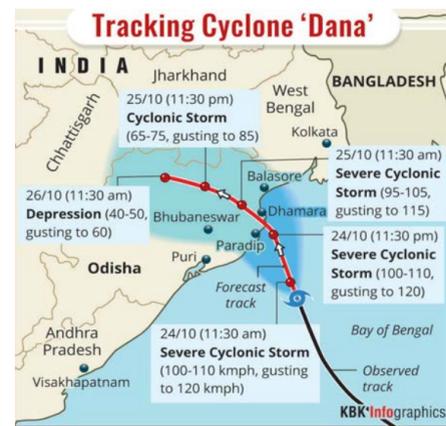
Dana to make landfall between Puri & Sagar Island on Oct. 25

Odisha govt mobilises 288 rescue teams across 13 dists

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, OCT. 23

The deep depression formed over the east-central Bay of Bengal intensified into cyclonic storm "Dana" on Wednesday, prompting red alerts in several coastal districts of Odisha. The India meteorological department (IMD) has forecast that Cyclone Dana will further strengthen into a severe cyclonic storm by the morning of October 24 and is expected to make landfall between Puri and Sagar Island during the night of October 24 or the early hours of October 25.

According to the IMD, Dana will bring winds of 100-110 km per hour (km/h), with gusts reaching up to 120 km/h as it crosses the north Odisha and West Bengal coasts. The state government has mobilised 288 rescue teams across 13 districts to manage potential emergencies during and after the cyclone's landfall.



Of these 288 teams, 19 belong to the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), 51 to the Odisha disaster rapid action force (ODRAF) and 178 are from the fire services. An additional 40 fire services teams are on standby. Five NDRF teams from

Bathinda, Punjab, have also arrived to support the ongoing preparations.

Districts such as Balasore, Bhradak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur have each received three NDRF teams and six ODRAF teams.

Australia named as 'Country of Focus' at Goa film festival

SHASHI BHUSHAN NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Australia has been nominated as the "Country of Focus" at the 55th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) to be held in Goa from November 20.

Announcing the decision, the ministry of information and broadcasting said that this special recognition aims to celebrate the dynamic contributions of Australian cinema to the global film industry, highlighting its rich storytelling traditions, vibrant film culture and innovative cinematic techniques.

India and Australia have already signed an "audio-visual treaty" to boost co-productions by offering incentives to

COUNTRY OF Focus segment offers a dedicated showcase of a nation's best contemporary films at International Film Festival of India

filmmakers from both countries.

The "Country of Focus" segment — a key feature of IFFI — offers a dedicated showcase of a nation's best contemporary films. "Australia's diverse cultural background and globally acclaimed filmmakers have had a lasting impact on cinema, making it a fitting selection for this year. This inclusion reflects the strengthening collaboration between the Indian and Australian film industries," the ministry said.

The Iffi will present a carefully-curated selection of seven Australian films, offering a diverse blend of genres — from critically acclaimed dramas to powerful documentaries, visually stunning thrillers, and light-hearted comedies. These films will showcase the unique cultural identity of Australia, reflecting the vibrant spectrum of stories from its indigenous and contemporary communities.

The Film Bazaar — the largest South Asian film market — held alongside the Iffi, will see a sizeable Australian participation, with a strong delegation from "Screen Australia", "State Screen Commissions" and also Ausfilm — the agency promoting Australia as a filming destination.

'Govt formulating new policy for OTT platforms'

Chennai, Oct. 23: The Centre is formulating a new broadcast policy following complaints that the Over-The-Top platforms (OTT) are not adhering to self-regulatory practices, minister of state for information and broadcasting and parliamentary affairs, L. Murugan said on Wednesday.

At an event here, Mr Murugan said the government was holding "detailed conversations" with various stakeholders to allow private FM radio channels to broadcast news bulletins in addition to the service rendered by All India Radio.

To a query on regulation of Over-The-Top platforms, the minister said that the Centre has introduced self-regulatory practices like classifying a movie based on the age of the viewership and the content to be provided on it. — PTI

Puri hails Modi for extension of Kartarpur pact

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 23

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri welcomed the decision of India and Pakistan to extend the validity of the agreement on Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor for a period of five years.

Welcoming the decision in a post on X, Mr Puri said, "Big news for Sikh Sangat! Guided by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji and his immense affection for members of Sikh Sangat and respect towards our religious feelings, the validity of the agreement to facilitate the visit of pilgrims from India to the historic Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur through the Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor has been extended for five more years."

Recalling his presence during ground breaking of the corridor, Mr Puri said, "By divine will of Baba Nanak Ji, I was fortunate to be present during the groundbreaking ceremony of the corridor



Hardeep Singh Puri

in 2018, and was blessed to be a part of the first Jattha flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji to pay obeisance at the Gurudwara Sahib in November 2019."

Listing Mr Modi's commitment for the "Sikh Sangat", Mr Puri said, "In addition to the opening of Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor, PM Modi Ji also took personal interest in organising befitting celebration of 550th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, 350th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, 400th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji & removal of GST from 'Langar Seva' and FCRA approval for donations."

Sebi chief may appear before Parl panel today

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch is scheduled to appear before the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee on Thursday, in what may turn out to be a stormy meeting following a senior BJP member's allegation that political motivations are guiding the actions of the panel's chairman and Congress MP K.C. Venugopal. The meeting's agenda includes oral evidence of representatives of the finance ministry and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) as part of the committee's decision to go for the "performance review of regulatory bodies established by an act of Parliament".

Mr Venugopal's move to call Ms Buch has raised hackles of the BJP members as she has been at the centre of a political row ignited by a US firm Hindenburg's allegations against her, of conflict of interest and financial misconduct. — PTI

Modi has bilaterals with UAE, Uzbek Prez on Brics sidelines

Kazan (Russia), Oct. 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday met leaders of Uzbekistan, the UAE and Egypt on the sidelines of the Brics summit in Kazan and discussed ways to advance cooperation with their countries in a host of sectors.

Mr Modi, who arrived in Russia's heritage city of Kazan on Tuesday for the 16th Brics summit, said he had a "wonderful meeting" with Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, during which they "discussed ways to boost bilateral cooperation between India and Uzbekistan, including trade and cultural linkages". "PM @narendramodi held wide-ranging talks with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval during a plenary session of the 16th Brics summit in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday. — PTI

Brics Summit in Kazan. They deliberated on ways to advance cooperation between both our countries in a host of sectors. The PMO said in a X post. Prime Minister Modi also met Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE, on the sidelines of the Brics summit in Kazan. "Glad to have met my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE," he posted on X. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

NEW SNAKE SPECIES NAMED AFTER DICAPRIO

Mumbai, Oct. 23: A new genus and snake species discovered in the Himalayas has been named after the Academy Award-winning Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio — the “Titanic” star who is also a passionate environmentalist, officials said on Tuesday.

The newly described snake species, *Anguiculus dicaprio* is distributed from central Nepal to Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh.

Meanwhile, *Anguiculus rappii* is distributed in Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.

BELARUS TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL VOTE ON JAN. 26

Moscow, Oct. 23: Belarus will hold a presidential election on January 26, four and a half years after widespread allegations of vote rigging in the last ballot led to mass protests.

Belarus, a key ally of Russia, has been ruled since 1994 by strongman President Alexander Lukashenko, who has eliminated all forms of opposition and jailed hundreds of critics and protestors.

The election commission said in a statement on social media that Parliament had approved the date of the vote, which the opposition said would be a total “sham”.

VIETNAM TYCOON DEATH ROW PLEA TO BEGIN IN NOV.

Hanoi, Oct. 23: The appeal trial of a Vietnamese property tycoon sentenced to death for fraud totalling \$27 billion will begin in November, state media said on Wednesday.

Property developer Truong My Lan was found guilty in April of swindling cash from the Saigon Commercial Bank (SCB) — which prosecutors said she controlled — and sentenced to death in one of the biggest graft cases in history.

Tens of thousands of people who had invested their savings in the bank lost money, shocking the communist nation and prompting rare protests.

UNREST IN LISBON AFTER POLICE SHOOT POÇ MAN

Lisbon, Oct. 23: Two nights of disturbances have shaken outskirts of the Portuguese capital Lisbon following the fatal police shooting of a person of colour (PoC), with buses and rubbish set ablaze and stones hurled, according to authorities and TV images.

The unrest began Lisbon's Amadora suburb after a 43-year-old man was shot dead by police on the early hours of Monday.

Media said about 30 people took to the streets on Monday night. However, it was unclear how many came out on the second night.

3 MIGRANTS DIE AFTER BOAT SINKS OFF CALAIS

Paris, Oct. 23: Three migrants died on Wednesday after a boat carrying a large group capsized off the coast of Calais, a local French authority said.

The authority highlighted the challenges for the British and French governments as they aim to tackle the issue of illegal immigration.

The local prefect added that 45 people who had been on the same boat were rescued and brought to safety.

STORM TRAMI CLAIMS 14 LIVES IN PHILIPPINES

Manila, Oct. 23: At least 14 people were killed in the Philippines as Tropical Storm Trami flooded villages, inundated rivers and forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes as it approached the eastern coast.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday ordered responders to prepare for the main storm's landfall over the province of Isabela during the night or early Thursday morning.

42 reported killed in Gaza as Israel intensifies siege

Sirens sound in Tel Aviv as projectiles intercepted near Blinken's hotel

Cairo, Tel Aviv, Tyre, Oct. 23: Israeli strikes across Gaza killed 42 people on Wednesday as Israeli forces intensified a siege of northern parts of the Palestinian enclave, surrounding hospitals and refugee shelters, and ordering residents to head south, medics and residents said.

Air raid sirens echoed across Tel Aviv on Wednesday as US secretary of state Antony Blinken prepared to end a visit. Smoke, apparently from an intercepted projectile, could be seen in the sky above the hotel where Blinken was staying.

Blinken said Israel needs to pursue an enduring strategic success after its recent tactical victories against Hamas, urging it to seek a deal to end the war and bring back dozens of hostages before leaving for Saudi Arabia, as part of his 11th visit to the region since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Meanwhile, AFP correspondents reported several strikes on Lebanon's Tyre on Wednesday after the Israeli army warned residents to evacuate swaths of the coastal city which boasts a Unesco world heritage site. At least 28 people have been killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon in the last 24 hours, bringing the total toll since October 2023 to 2,574, the Lebanese government said.

Israeli forces began the operation in the north about three weeks ago with the declared aim of preventing Hamas fighters from regrouping. — Agencies

JAPAN AND U.S. KICK OFF JOINT MILITARY DRILLS

Tokyo, Oct. 23: Japan and the United States kicked off 10 days of joint military drills on Wednesday involving tens of thousands of personnel, a week after China held large-scale exercises around Taiwan.

China's military build-up, and growing defence ties among Washington and its allies have raised fears of a conflict over self-ruled Taiwan — which Beijing claims as its own — or over other territorial disputes in the region.

“Keen Sword” will involve 45,000 Japanese and US troops, 40 vessels and 370 aircraft, as well as some forces from Australia and Canada. The exercises, which take place every two years, will be held across Japan.

“We have a strong sense of urgency that we can't rule out the possibility of a serious situation resembling Ukraine happening near our country,” said General Yoshihide Yoshida. — AFP

ISLAMIC GROUP MEMBERS IN DOCK FOR CRIME

Kuala Lumpur, Oct. 23: Twenty-two members of an Islamic business group, including its CEO, were charged on Wednesday for being part of an organised crime group after hundreds of children believed to have been sexually abused were rescued last month from welfare homes linked to the group.

Nasiruddin Mohamad Ali, CEO of Global Ikhwan Services and Business Holdings (GISB), and his wife Azura Mohamad Yusof were among dozens detained last month as police investigations widened to include human trafficking and money laundering.

Islamic authorities are also investigating GISB for deviant teachings linked to the banned Islamic cult Al Arqam. Global Ikhwan was established by Al Arqam leader Ashaari Mohamad and flourished after his death in 2010. — AP



A man prepares to toss a bag of bread for another person as people crowd while queueing for bread amidst a flour shortage outside a bakery in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. — AFP

After we strike Iran, all will know our preparations: Israel

Jerusalem, Oct. 23: Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant said on Wednesday that after Israel strikes Iran, the world will understand the preparations that went into such an operation.

“After we attack in Iran, they will understand both in Israel and in other places what your preparation process includes, and the arrangements and your readiness,” Gallant said in a video statement during a visit to an air force base. — Reuters

HEZBOLLAH OFFICIAL EXPECTED TO BECOME GROUP'S LEADER KILLED

Beirut, Oct. 23: Israel said on Tuesday that one of its airstrikes outside Beirut earlier in the month killed a Hezbollah official widely expected to have replaced the militant group's long-time leader, killed by an Israeli airstrike in September.

Hezbollah confirmed on Wednesday that Israel killed Hashem Safieddine, the apparent successor of Hassan Nasrallah, in a strike, without saying when or where it happened.

Safieddine was killed in early October in a strike that also killed 25 other leaders, according to Israel, whose airstrikes in recent months have killed many of Hezbollah's top leaders, leaving the group in disarray. — Reuters

UK rejects claims by Trump team of US poll interference

London, Oct. 23: The government in London on Wednesday played down claims of meddling in the US election, after Donald Trump's team charged that having members of Britain's ruling Labour party work for his opponent Kamala Harris's campaign was “blatant foreign interference”.

More than 23 million voters have cast ballots, either through in-person early voting or mail-in ballots, according to tracking data from the Election Lab at the University of Florida.

Trump's legal team filed an official complaint to the US Federal Election Commission, alleging that the “British Labour Party made, and the (Kamala) Harris campaign accepted, illegal foreign national contributions”.

The submission cited media reports that Labour officials, including the prime minister's new chief of staff Morgan McSwaney, travelled to the US to advise the Democratic party campaign.

They also included a now-deleted LinkedIn post by Labour director of operations Sofia Patel calling for volunteers to travel to North Carolina, and offering to “sort out your housing”.

Foreign nationals are allowed to volunteer in US elections but may not be compensated. — Agencies



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump acknowledges supporters after speaking at a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum in Greensboro, North Carolina, on Tuesday. — AFP

Lock up Trump 'politically': Biden

Concord, Oct. 23: President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that Republican Donald Trump is a threat to democracy and should be locked up “politically,” as he exhorted Democrats at a New Hampshire campaign office to win the November 5 US election.

“We got to lock him up,” Biden said to applause at a Democratic campaign office in Concord, New Hampshire. “Politically lock him up. Lock him out. That's what we have to do.” “Trump, the Republican candidate and former president, wants to disregard the safeguards of the US Constitution,” Biden

said. “Our democracy is at stake if Trump beats the Democratic candidate, Vice-President Kamala Harris,” he said.

When he ran for president in 2016, Trump repeatedly presided over rallies in which crowds chanted “lock her up,” referring to Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. He did not discourage them.

“This year, during rallies for Harris, her crowds sometimes chant ‘lock him up,’” referring to Trump, who has been convicted of 34 felony counts in New York related to covering up hush money paid to a porn star. — Reuters

ALERT FOR LANKA

ISRAEL'S NATIONAL security council on Wednesday called on Israelis to immediately leave some tourist areas in southern Sri Lanka over the threat of a possible terrorist attack. The agency said the warning pertained to the area of Arugam Bay and beaches in the south and west of Sri Lanka.

US DEFENCE secretary Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday that he had not seen evidence that there was a Hezbollah bunker filled with cash hidden under a hospital in Beirut, adding that Washington would continue to work with Israel to get better insights.

THE WORLD HEALTH Organisation said on Wednesday that “intense bombardment” and “escalating violence” in northern Gaza had forced it to postpone the final phase of a child polio vaccination drive. The necessary second round of vaccinations has been completed in central and southern Gaza, and was to begin on Wednesday in the north.

U.S. READY FOR WOMAN PREZ, ASSERTS HARRIS

Washington, Oct. 23: Kamala Harris said on Tuesday that America is “absolutely” ready to elect its first woman president but downplayed her historic bid, saying she simply wants to turn the page for a nation “exhausted” by Donald Trump.

With two weeks to Election Day, Harris and Trump are saturating swing states with rallies and taking to the airwaves and podcasts on the hunt for an advantage in a race that polls suggest is effectively tied.

Speaking on the national NBC network, Harris responded “absolutely” when asked if America was ready to elect its first woman — but also noted her candidacy was about “turning the page.” “People are exhausted with Donald Trump and his approach, because it's all about himself,” she said. Trump, speaking to supporters in North Carolina, pitched a very different message.

“This election is a choice between whether we will have four more years of incompetence, failure and disaster, or whether we'll begin the four greatest years in the history of our country,” he said. — AFP

Justice Yahya Afridi, the third most senior judge after the outgoing chief justice (CJ), was picked by a parliamentary panel following a constitutional amendment that changed the way the top judge is appointed, officials said.

He will replace the outgoing CJ, who retires on Friday, for a three-year term, law minister Azam Tarar said. Earlier, the

Putin offers his condolences Ankara terror attack kills 4

Ankara, Oct. 23: Four people were killed and 14 others wounded in what the government called a terrorist attack at the Turkish Aerospace Industries' (TUSAS) headquarters on Wednesday, after witnesses said they had heard gunfire and an explosion at the site near Ankara.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed condolences to his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan over the deadly attack. Putin and Erdogan are holding a meeting on the sidelines of the Brics summit in Russia's Kazan.

Interior minister Ali Yerlikaya said two attackers were killed in the attack, adding three of the injured are in critical condition. TV broadcasters showed footage of armed assailants entering the TUSAS building.

“Two terrorists were neutralised in the terror attack on the TUSAS Ankara Kahramankazan site. Sadly, we have 4 martyrs and 14 wounded in the attack,” Yerlikaya said.

Erdogan condemned the attack. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the United States and the European Union also condemned the attack.

The cause of the blast and perpetrators of the attack remained unclear. No group had claimed responsibility. Prosecutors have launched a probe, state-run Anadolu

SOME MEDIA reports claimed a suicide attack had occurred and that there were hostages inside the building, though officials have not confirmed this.

Agency reported. Some media reports claimed a suicide attack had occurred and that there were hostages inside the building, though officials have not confirmed this.

Witnesses told Reuters that employees were taken to shelters and no one was permitted to leave for a few hours. They said the blasts they heard may have taken place at different exits as employees were leaving work for the day.

Witnesses later said evacuation of personnel from the TUSAS campus had started and the buses were allowed to leave as the operation had ended.

Broadcasters showed images of a damaged gate and footage of an exchange of gunfire in a parking lot, as well as attackers carrying assault rifles and backpacks as they entered the building. Ambulances and helicopters later arrived.

TUSAS is Turkey's largest aerospace manufacturer, currently producing a training craft, combat and civilian helicopters, as well as developing the first indigenous fighter jet, KAAN. — Reuters

US: Proof of NK troops in Russia

Seoul, Rome, Oct. 23: The United States said for the first time on Wednesday that it had seen evidence of North Korean troops in Russia, and South Korean lawmakers said about 3,000 soldiers had been sent to support the Kremlin's war in Ukraine with more to follow.

US defence secretary Lloyd Austin, speaking in Rome, said it would be “very, very serious” if the North Koreans were preparing to fight alongside Russia, as Kyiv has alleged, though it remained to be seen what they would be doing there.

“There is evidence that there are DPRK troops in Russia,” Austin told reporters, using North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In Seoul, South Korean lawmakers said that North Korea has sent 3,000 troops to Russia and thousands more were expected to follow.

Pyeongyang had promised to provide a total of about 10,000 troops, whose deployment was expected to be completed by December, the lawmakers said after being briefed by South Korea's national intelligence agency. The figure is twice a previous estimate of numbers of troops already in Russia.

“Signs of troops training inside North Korea were detected in September and October,” Park Sun-won, a parliamentary intelligence committee member. — Reuters

Pak new process helps choose CJ WIFE OF IMRAN GETS BAIL IN STATE GIFTS CASE

Islamabad, Oct. 23: Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday approved the selection of the next chief justice who was chosen through a new process that the government's opponents say is designed to undermine judicial independence.

Justice Yahya Afridi, the third most senior judge after the outgoing chief justice (CJ), was picked by a parliamentary panel following a constitutional amendment that changed the way the top judge is appointed, officials said.

He will replace the outgoing CJ, who retires on Friday, for a three-year term, law minister Azam Tarar said. Earlier, the most senior judge after the CJ automatically became top judge. — Reuters

Seeds expected in Feb. from Sudan, a country ravaged by war and famine Palestinian seeds join Arctic doomsday vault

Oslo, Oct. 23: A “doomsday vault” in the Arctic designed to safeguard the world's plant diversity has received a new deposit of thousands of seed samples, including Palestinian ones amid war and hunger in Gaza, it said on Wednesday.

Opened in 2008, the Global Seed Vault offers a safety net in case of natural catastrophe, war, climate change, disease or manmade disasters.

More than 30,000 samples from a record 23 organisations in 21 countries were deposited in the vault in Norway's Svalbard archipelago on Tuesday, the Crop Trust, one of the project's partners, said on Wednesday.

Buried inside a mountain near Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen Island, about 1,300 km (about 800 miles) from the North Pole, the “Noah's Ark” of food crops is also aimed at preserving plants that can feed a growing population facing climate change.

Launched in 2008 with funding from Norway, the three cold chambers are today home to some 1.3 million varieties of seeds that their owners can withdraw at any moment.

Among those deposited on Tuesday were 21 Palestinian species comprised of vegetables, millet and herbs, provided by the Palestinian non-profit Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC). According to the Crop Trust, a new delivery of seeds is expected in February from Sudan, a country also ravaged by war and famine.

“Climate change and conflict threaten infrastructure and impact food security for over 700 million people in more than 75 countries worldwide,” Crop Trust director Stefan Schmitz said.



The vault in Norway's Svalbard archipelago is designed to be able to resist catastrophes, as it is located far from conflict zones and placed at an altitude that will protect it from rising sea levels. — AP

THE ASIAN AGE

24 OCTOBER 2024

Modi-Xi handshake sends a strong message of peace

Keeping up the recent diplomatic momentum aimed at easing LAC tensions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping shook hands to show the world that there is no insurmountable obstacle to relations among nations.

Briefly ignoring the hand that Mr Modi was just extending to shepherd him to a place in the spotlight with the flags in the background, Mr Xi then offered his hand for the ceremonial handshake that was sealed with a broad smile from the Chinese President as he looked down from the advantage he holds of a few inches in height.

The message they wished to convey in their first bilateral meeting in five years since President Xi journeyed to the beach town of Mahabalipuram near Chennai in 2019 is clear. China and India are really trying to mend ties. All the cynicism around it, given the history of mistrust and suspicion, was not going to come in the way of two leaders seeking a new path amid increasingly complex global geopolitics.

The Kazan meeting in one of Russia's largest and wealthiest cities was a milestone moment that could become historic if it leads on to a betterment of ties between the world's two most populous nations whose three billion people could be somewhat better off for the peace it could bring if indeed there is a restoration of tranquillity on the LAC.

The Kazan meeting in one of Russia's largest and wealthiest cities was a milestone moment that could become historic if it leads on to a betterment of ties between the world's two most populous nations

The optics of the meetings among leaders may have tended to overshadow the BRICS summit of leaders representing 40 per cent of the world's population. The ambience of comfort as Russia's President Vladimir Putin and India's Modi laughed over the state of India-Russia ties amid their own easy relationship and there being no need for translation of Russian words was notable.

Given the prominence of the host Vladimir Putin sitting between Mr Modi and Mr Xi throughout the summit, it does appear the Russian President played a role in bringing about this rapprochement between India and China even as he admitted to being comfortable enough with Mr Modi often bringing up the Ukraine question and recommending dialogue and diplomacy to end the war, as the Indian PM has maintained over the last two-and-a-half years.

The value of peace has been never more stressed in recent times than now when two wars are raging in Europe and in the Middle East. In stressing on how much peace might mean for both countries, Mr Modi may have sounded a bit more anxious than Mr Xi speaking about the need for cooperation after their 21st meeting in the last 10 years, but the first meaningful one with a full delegation in support after several years.

For Mr Putin, basking in this role as host bringing together nations from mostly the Global South, the greater meaning of BRICS in a multipolar world and lofty ideas of managing money flows in a dollar-dominated world might have meant less than showing to the US and the West that he is not without support despite Russia's clear expansionism in Ukrainian territory. He has used the summit as adroitly as China and India did in forging their own road map to address mutual concerns.

Flight hoax calls: Stop menace

The Indian aviation industry is facing an unprecedented situation in the wake of bomb hoaxes flooding social media networks. In the last few days, over 170 flights run by Indian airlines and thousands of passengers bore the brunt of these fake threats.

Security experts attributed the hoax bomb calls to factors ranging from malicious intent and attention-seeking to mental health issues.

Worried over the sheer number of fake bomb threats, the Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) tweaked its aviation security protocol based on a set of new "red flags". There is a common pattern in all these fake bomb threats, which include the use of virtual private networks (VPN), and recently created social media accounts. However, if the security agencies ignore threats based on these parameters, but the bomb threat does turn out to be true, it would erode people's trust in air travel.

Even if the intent behind such bomb threats is mere pranking, the government should not consider this practice as the new normal that passengers must get adjusted to. A step in this direction would leave the Indian aviation industry and air passengers vulnerable to terrorist attacks, meeting the same fate as the shepherd boy did in the 'Cry Wolf' story.

There are calls for banning people behind these hoax calls from flying for their entire life. However, this punishment could be excessive.

That said, disruption in a flight due to the bomb threat causes a loss of Rs 30 lakh to Rs 40 lakh to an airline. Thousands of passengers, too, suffer mental trauma and loss of precious time.

For many in India, air travel is still not a default option and they choose it because of speed and comfort. If these very factors turn out to be mirage, the Indian aviation industry will take a serious hit. As this industry is intimately linked to economic growth, the government should brook no excuse from the pranksters involved in this sinister game and try to recover the losses from mischief makers under the Revenue Recovery Act.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



EC sends mixed signals ahead of polls in J'khand & Maharashtra

The Election Commission of India has taken two very different stands in handling police appointments in the poll-bound states of Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

In Jharkhand, the EC has directed the removal of acting director general of police (DGP) Anurag Gupta, appointed in July 2024. This decision follows a history of complaints lodged against him during previous elections, which raised concerns about his ability to remain impartial. The Jharkhand government has been asked to submit a panel of senior IPS officers, and Ajay Kumar Singh is expected to be reappointed as DGP. The move is seen as an effort by the EC to ensure neutrality and fairness in the state's electoral process.

In contrast, the EC rejected calls from the Maharashtra Congress to remove DGP Rashmi Shukla. Opposition leader Nana Patole had claimed that Ms Shukla's extension beyond her retirement date violated the Maharashtra Police Act and would unfairly benefit the ruling alliance. However, the EC clarified that her appointment had been cleared by the UPSC through the standard procedure, emphasising that her position would remain unchanged during the election period.

The EC's differing decisions in these two states highlight a perplexing inconsistency in handling what is essentially the same issue, fuelling speculation and allegations of favouritism from the

Opposition. In Jharkhand, the leadership change aims to sidestep potential controversies, while Maharashtra remains steadfast in its procedural approach, leaving its top police post unchanged. This stark contrast raises questions about the EC's commitment to electoral integrity and feeds the rumour mill, suggesting that political biases may influence administrative fairness across different states.

TWIST IN HARYANA'S TOP APPOINTMENTS

Rajesh Khullar's recent appointment as chief principal secretary to Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini seemed like a routine move, but it took an unexpected turn when the decision was abruptly put on hold just hours later. While Mr Khullar's initial appointment didn't raise eyebrows, the sudden reversal certainly did, and it left many wondering what was going on behind the scenes.

Mr Khullar, who had previously represented India and its neighbours at World Bank, was recalled to Haryana ahead of his term's completion and seemed a natural choice for the top administrative post. However, political insiders hint that internal groups within the ruling party may have played a role in delaying the finalisation of his appointment.

The timing couldn't be more interesting, as chief secretary T.V.S.N. Prasad is set to retire at the end of the month. Naturally, there's been speculation

over who will replace him.

There is talk that the Centre might follow a familiar pattern, where top Union secretaries are repatriated to their home cadres to take over as state chief secretaries. We've seen this happen in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan recently. As Mr Prasad's retirement looms, DoPT Secretary Vivek Joshi, who still has a fair amount of service left, is being tipped as a potential successor.

GUJARAT IAS vs IPS: A PHONE POLICY DIVIDE

There's a notable rift among IAS and IPS officers in Gujarat regarding mobile phone policies during meetings, as revealed by a recent survey from Gujarat Samachar Digital. On the one hand, we have the IAS officers, who generally allow visitors to keep their phones. They champion transparency and accessibility, which is fantastic. On the other hand, some IPS officers insist that visitors surrender their devices, fearing unauthorised recordings of sensitive information.

This clash of perspectives became particularly evident during an encounter between Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani and ADG Rajkumar Pandian. During a meeting intended to discuss issues facing the Dalit community, Mr Pandian asked Mr Mevani to leave his phone outside. Unsurprisingly, this didn't go over well, and it sparked a bigger conversation about how different branches of government

handle such situations.

Every single IAS collector surveyed was on the same page: they don't make visitors leave their phones outside. One collector even stated, "We're government officials. If someone records in our office, so be it! We'll take calls at odd hours for public concerns." It's encouraging to see such an openness to dialogue and accountability.

Conversely, some IPS officers voiced concerns about the potential misuse of recordings. They highlighted the importance of preventing misinformation and protecting sensitive discussions. One SP pointed out that while they don't have a strict rule about phones, they might request them to be left outside based on the circumstance.

S.D. Sharma, the joint secretary of the Central government's personnel and training department, added that there's no Central order about mobile phone policies in government offices, allowing IAS and IPS officers to adapt their rules as needed.

The survey also revealed a rising trend of officials using WhatsApp calls, likely driven by concerns over call recordings. But balancing transparency with security is essential.

Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades dilipcherian@hotmail.com.



Israel can celebrate Sinwar's killing, but no end to war yet



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

Israeli jubilation at the elimination — the politically correct term for murder — of the Hamas commander, Yahya Sinwar, may be a trifle premature. If the killing does "pave the way for a change that will lead to a new reality in Gaza", to quote Israel's foreign minister Israel Katz, that change may indicate West Asia's future polity rather than just the removal of Hamas and Iranian control, as Mr Katz hopes.

True change demands, especially in the aftermath of drone attacks on the private residence of Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, some innovative thinking on both sides of what now looks like a permanently impenetrable barrier of enmity. The Oslo Accords, that pair of interim agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation that were signed in Washington DC in 1993 and in Taba, Egypt, in 1995, must underlie any long-term arrangement, but we must also recognise that they are less and less likely directly to shape the future.

The brutality of Hamas's October 7 raid last year, which is blamed for the present cycle of Israeli violence, may turn out to be a crucial turning point in the sad history of what Palestinians denounce as the "Naqba", the Catastrophe, that overwhelmed their lives in 1948. Put bluntly, this means that the two-nation solution on which this columnist — among others — has been harping may not be the decisive mantra for tomorrow. The reason is that Israel will not permit it.

The United States will not compel Mr Netanyahu, and the international order is not strong enough or willing to compel the US.

Nothing speaks more eloquently than numbers.

Comparing national riches at a meeting in Haifa on my only visit to Israel more than half a century ago, a veteran leader of Histadrut, Israel's national trade union, told me that India's people made it one of the richest countries in the world. Money might appear to be more effective in the short run, but he was convinced that in the long term nothing compares with manpower, properly inspired and mobilised.

Management is crucial for the most effective Arab force, the Arab Legion, later renamed the Royal Jordan Army, was most effective when a British general, Sir John Glubb, was its commander.

Applying the Histadrut official's logic, 9.9 million Israelis present a puny adversary against more than 473 million Arabs. The phenomenal oil wealth of many Arab nations is irrelevant; it's because of their manpower that Hamas and Hezbollah have been able to withstand the ferocity of Israeli attacks all these weeks, sustaining more than 42,000 deaths in Gaza alone. It is because of the strength of numbers that Hamas still has not surrendered some 100 of the hostages that it took on October 7, when it also killed about 1,200 Israelis.

Recalling that Mr Netanyahu proclaimed in early October that Israel's campaign, Operation Swords of Iron, had two goals — to destroy Hamas and free the hostages — it must be admitted that despite a fearful loss of life and the destruction of towns, villages and most of even the basic facilities of civilisation, the campaign has been a failure. Mr Netanyahu has not destroyed Hamas — not yet, anyway — and he has not freed all the hostages.

Moreover, the recruitment drive by Hamas and Hezbollah shows no sign of

More than 500,000 Israelis have moved into the West Bank excluding East Jerusalem, where an additional 220,000 Jews reside. Another 20,000 Israelis live in settlements in the Golan Heights...

flagging. With the Arab population going up by leaps and bounds every year, unimpeded by any question of birth control, there will always be an abundance of martyrs ready to die for the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, what Israel has gained is considerable, if only the Israelis were not greedy for more. The Oslo process begun after secret negotiations in Norway's capital, resulted in both the recognition of Israel by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the recognition by Israel of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and as a partner in bilateral negotiations. Even if this peace process does not achieve a peace treaty based on Resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations Security Council, it does provide a basis for Israelis and Palestinians to co-exist without friction.

Plenty of instances worldwide assert that institutional sovereignty is not essential for nationhood. Even if the Dalai Lama fades out, the Central Tibetan Administration and its democratic institutions will remain as the legitimate political successor of His Holiness. Sri Lanka's Tamils are a nation even if Colombo refuses to discuss devolution despite a bitter and bloody 30-year war.

Quebec was not allowed to secede. The sovereign Kurdistan that the 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised never materialised. The autonomy of Iraq's Kurds, comprising roughly 20 per cent of the population, is upheld in the 2005 constitution, which designates Kurdistan an autonomous federal region.

There are plenty of models to choose from. It

should not be impossible to find a federal arrangement with international guarantors for the people of Gaza and the West Bank and supervised no-fly zones as in Iraq. One obstacle is that despite the PLO's recognition of Israel, Israel has never acknowledged the exclusive identity of the Palestinians. For Israel, the Palestinians are either Arabs pretending to be something else, or Jordanians who flaunt a fancy name. But these are only words like Israel calling the West Bank by the mythic Biblical names of "Judea and Samaria".

More dangerous than the fantasy of claiming that Judea and Samaria are part of Eretz Yisrael (Greater Israel) is the Israeli tactic of fragmenting the West Bank into 165 "islands", where the Palestinians live, and 230 settlements for Jews.

More than 500,000 Israelis have moved into the West Bank excluding East Jerusalem, where an additional 220,000 Jews reside. Another 20,000 Israeli citizens live in settlements in the Golan Heights, captured from Syria.

In addition, the West Bank is criss-crossed by military roads and riddled with check-posts and watchtowers manned by the Israeli military. There can be no movement in the terrain without Israeli military clearance, and reports indicate that Palestinian fields, farms and olive groves are not safe from the depredations of armed Israeli vigilantes. No power can or will compel the Israelis to dismantle the elaborate and extensive security structure they have been allowed to erect since the 1967 war. They might as well be asked to remove the mobile all-weather air defence system called the Iron Dome that protects Israel from the fusillade of Palestinian rockets and missiles. The task for the global community is to ensure that Palestinian autonomy is not extinguished by these pressures.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS
INCOMPETENT COPS

The recent police misbehaviour during the Bhaichand procession, allowing miscreants to set the area ablaze, along with the BJP workers' vandalism in an attempt to promote their party ahead of elections, is intolerable by all standards. Unfortunately, such incidents are not new to India — thousands have occurred over the years. Why do the government, authorities, and police personnel fail to learn from the past? Despite the police presence, how did this violence erupt? How were provocative songs allowed to be played? Have the police turned a blind eye, or worse, become complicit in fueling the violence?

Jakir Hussain
Kanpur

RESTORE CORDIALITY

IT WOULD BE an understatement to say that it is a breakthrough moment as after long negotiations and deliberations India and China have agreed to return to the patrolling arrangements along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh that were in place before the Galwan clashes in 2020. Hopefully China would also agree to de-escalation of forward deployed troops at Demchok and Depsang which is essential for restoration of the status quo that existed before April 2020. Needless to mention that the 2020 standoff marked a dismally low point in India-China bilateral relations. It is in the larger interest of the region from geopolitical and strategic point of view that both India and China share cordial relations.

Bal Govind
Noida

STOP BLAME GAME

WHILE THE DELHITES are facing high levels of pollution, both the Delhi government and the Centre are playing the blame game with equal ease. While the Delhi government is relying on measures such as asking drivers to turn off their car engines at traffic lights, this time, they don't have a concrete programme. Why can't they sit together and solve the pollution menace? During the festive season, firecrackers are burnt without any restrictions and it appears that there is no authority to stop this. Meanwhile, UP farmers this time have surpassed even their Haryana counterparts in stubble burning. But authorities are simply waiting for November to pass when winter will approach and sowing begins.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	81,973.05	0.73
Nifty 50	25,127.95	0.66
S&P 500*	5,851.25	0.62
Dollar (₹)	84.05	-0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	109.72	-0.14
Euro (₹)	91.86	-0.11
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	76,061.246	-0.32
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	78.01	-1.30
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.782	-0.006
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.096	0.002

* As of 8:30 PM IST

JP Morgan arm elevates Pranav as bank CEO

J P Morgan Chase Bank India on Wednesday said it will elevate Pranav Chawda as its chief executive officer (CEO). Chawda joined J P Morgan in 2019, and has been heading the commercial banking vertical. In order to improve client experience, the entity is integrating its commercial and corporate banking in India, which is also in line with the firm-wide announcement early this year, the company statement said.

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Gold hits lifetime high of ₹80,000, silver ₹1 lakh

Yellow metal appreciated by ₹5,000 in a month due to global cues

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 23

Recording fresh high levels continuously for the past six days, gold prices touched ₹81,000 per 10 gm in the Delhi spot market, while silver zoomed past ₹1 lakh per kg. Though profit-booking could see some weaknesses in the precious metals in the short-term, the medium to long-term prospects are intact.

In the Delhi spot market, 24 carat gold prices, which is inclusive of GST rates, made a high of ₹81,000 while silver was seen above ₹1,01,000 per kg. In the multi commodity exchange (MCX), which excludes the GST rate, gold made a new high of ₹78,919 per 10 gm and silver touched ₹1 lakh. However, profit booking led to technical correction in both the metals as prices closed lower.

"Gold has been rallying

PRECIOUS AND PRICIER			
₹63,225	₹70,000	₹75,000	₹81,000
Jan. 1	April 5	Sept. 25	Oct. 23

● IN JULY, following the import duty cut announced in the budget, gold prices went down. But the prices returned to the pre-cut levels by September 12, after a gap of 50 days.

● IN THE international market, gold made a high of \$2772 an ounce on Wednesday and silver was seen at \$35 per ounce.

● BY MARCH 2025, gold prices may touch ₹85,000 and silver to ₹1,30,000.

● GOLD IS already overbought and hence a technical correction is likely in the short-term.



GOLD HAS BEEN rallying for two-and-half months and has continuously touched new highs in the past six days. Once the prices touched the psychological levels of ₹80,000, technical correction was expected.

— AJAY KEDIA, MD, Kedia Commodities.

for two-and-half months and has continuously touched new highs in the past six days. Once the prices touched the psychological levels of ₹80,000, technical correction was expected," said Ajay Kedia, managing director,

Kedia Commodities. At MCX, gold was trading around ₹63,225 in the beginning of the year. On 5th April, gold touched ₹70,000 levels. In July, following the import duty cut announced in the budget,

gold prices went down. But the prices returned to the pre-cut levels by September 12, after a gap of 50 days.

By September 24, gold rallied to ₹75,000 and has been going up steadily in October.

Waaree Energies IPO gets 97.3L applications

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 23

Solar PV modules manufacturer Waaree Energies initial public offering (IPO) attracted the highest number of applications for any IPO in primary market history so far of over 97.34 lakh applications surpassing Bajaj Home Finance IPO which had received 88.94 lakh

applications. Waaree IPO got overall subscribed 79.39 times and collected ₹2.4 lakh crore in application amount at the upper price band, as per the last update.

The IPO was subscribed more than five times by each category of investors led by qualified institutional buyers as this segment got subscribed 215.03 times, followed by high

net worth individuals which was subscribed 65.21 times.

The retail individual investors category got subscribed 11.18 times and the employee category got subscribed by 5.40 times to the issue.

Just concluded Hyundai public issue had received over 21.49 lakh applications despite retail investors' portion remain-

ing undersubscribed by 50 per cent.

This shows how the retail participation in India's hot primary market has seen a huge increase and benchmarks are shifting.

In 2010, Coal India IPO received over 16.64 lakh applications as the largest public issue then of ₹15,199.44 crore was subscribed 15.14 times.

GAMES

Neeraj desires for Mondotrack at NIS

New Delhi: In a meeting to discuss the draft National Sports Governance Bill on Wednesday, ace Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra had an additional plea for the government — to fast-track the process of laying down the currently in-vogue 'Mondotrack' at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. Mondotrack is a new surface being used for track events and it is believed to enhance performance and reduce the chance of injury. The track events at the Paris Olympics and the Diamond League finale in Brussels were held on this track, which has been hailed several top international stars. The track, which is made of vulcanized rubber, absorbs shock and reduces fatigue with its elasticity and uniform dynamic response, helping athletes maintain their posture, stride-length and rhythm. The material used also helps athletes springboard off the track. NIS Patiala, which is a National Centre of Excellence, currently has a traditional synthetic track, which is made of sand, fiber, wax, and rubber. — PTI

Diksha to lead home challenge

Gurugram: The stage is all set for the latest edition of Women's Indian Open, which gets underway on Thursday at the DLF Golf and Country Club. With 114 players from 31 nations, many of whom have been recent winners on the Ladies European Tour, the \$ 400,000 tournament is set for a battle royale. The Indian challenge will feature Diksha Dagar, only the second Indian to have tasted success on the LET, upcoming star Pranavi Urs and the experienced Tvesa Malik Sandhu. Chiara Tamburlini (Switzerland), Manon De Roey (Belgium), Caroline Hedwall (Sweden), Lee-Anne Pace (South Africa) and Trichat Cheenglab (Thailand) will be among the internationals to watch out for.

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ROLE REVERSAL

India look to bounce back against NZ in second Test

Pune, Oct. 23: Jolted by an unexpected loss on home turf, star-heavy India will look for right balance in the line-up to counter-attack against a spunky New Zealand in the crucial second Test beginning here on Thursday.

After being shot out for an embarrassing 46 in the first innings at Bengaluru, India's resolute show in the second innings could not prevent an eight-wicket pounding which saw the top-ranked team in the World Test Championship table dropping points even though it continues to hold the top spot.

Winning the next two Tests will be first priority for Rohit Sharma and his men before they hit the Australian shores for a five-Test affair next month.

With India in a spot of bother, focus has undeniably been on the nature of the pitch here at the MCA Stadium here. It does not have grass cover and is composed of black soil to negate the bounce which New Zealand extracted in Bengaluru.

India's free-flowing batters cut a sorry figure when William O'Rourke and the seasoned duo of Matt Henry and Tim Southee served a wake up call which no one saw coming on a pace-friendly track that was admittedly misread by Rohit despite overcast conditions.



India head coach Gautam Gambhir (center) shares a light moment with teammates Ravindra Jadeja (left) and Virat Kohli during a training session ahead of the second Test against New Zealand at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Wednesday. — PTI

Preparing a rank turner could be one way out of the mire but it has backfired on India twice in the past. Australia hammered them by a monumental 333 runs here eight years ago while the same team handed a nine-wicket defeat to them in Indore last year.

With Shubman Gill priming for a comeback, one

among KL Rahul and Sarfaraz Khan will have to make way. Coach Gautam Gambhir has expressed his desire to give the latter a long rope but Sarfaraz has made a strong case with his second innings 150 in Bengaluru.

One could say a big score for each of the two seniors, Rohit Sharma and Virat

Kohli, is around the corner. The latter, especially, would be keen to draw from his 254 not out here in 2019-20, which paved the way for an innings and 137-run thrashing of South Africa.

By his own lofty standards, Yashasvi Jaiswal endured twin failures in the Bengaluru Test and the

Jio Financial Services may rope in Allianz for insurance partnerships

Mumbai, Oct. 23: Jio Financial Services Ltd., controlled by Mukesh Ambani, has held talks with Allianz to set up an insurance partnership in India as the German firm seeks to scrap two existing joint ventures in the country, according to people familiar with the matter. Allianz and Jio Financial are looking to establish a general insurance and a life insurance company in the South Asian nation, the people said, asking not to be identified as the information isn't public. The discus-



sions are in early stages and both parties may decide not to proceed with the plan, the people said. The Munich-based firm has indicated to its current partner Bajaj Finserv that it's "actively considering an exit" from the ventures, according to a statement from Bajaj on Tuesday after reports of

the planned split. Allianz "has indicated that it remains committed to the Indian insurance market," according to the statement.

The break-up centers around a dispute over the direction of the partnership, people familiar with the matter had said.

"If and when there are any material developments with respect to the company, we will continue to make necessary disclosures in accordance with our obligations, as we always have," a spokesperson said. — Bloomberg

India cannot risk another bout of inflation, says Shaktikanta Das

FALAKNAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 23

India cannot risk another bout of inflation and the best approach at this stage would be to remain flexible and wait for more evidence of inflation aligning durably with the target said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das while voting to keep the repo rate unchanged but changing the stance from withdrawal of accommodation to 'neutral' revealed the minutes of the October policy meeting on Wednesday.

All the six members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI on October 9 had voted to change the stance signalling the central bank's readiness to ease

monetary policy if inflation continues its downward trajectory.

However, one member Nagesh Kumar had also voted for a 25-bps rate cut. Repo rate, the rate at which the central bank lends to commercial banks was kept unchanged at 6.5 per cent marking the tenth consecutive time the rate has remained steady. The RBI has maintained a status quo on benchmark interest rates since April 2023. The last hike of 25 basis points in policy rate was done in Feb. 2023.

Das said that the economy presents a picture of stability and strength. The balance between inflation and growth is well-poised. Despite the near-term uptick in inflation, the outlook for headline inflation towards the

later part of the year and early next year points to further alignment with the 4 per cent target. Das said that a change in monetary policy stance to neutral would provide space to watch out for the uncertainties on the horizon — ranging from heightened geo-political tensions and volatile commodity prices to risks of adverse weather in food inflation.

He said that the momentum in food prices continues even in the first week of Oct. which, if sustained, is likely to keep even Oct. headline inflation high.

Beyond the short-term, however, the outlook for food inflation is becoming favourable with improvement in kharif and rabi season prospects, the RBI governor added.

HOCKEY TEST | SERIES

Wasteful Indians lose to Germany

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Olympic bronze-medallists India wasted chances galore to lose 0-2 to world champions Germany in the first hockey Test of the two-match series here on Wednesday.

Germany, who are reigning Olympic silver-medallists, fielded a young team for the series. It lived up to the expectations, at least in the first match, with Henrik Mertgens (4th minute) and skipper Lukas Windfeder (30th minute) scoring the winning goals.

There was great excitement surrounding the series as international hockey was returning to the national capital for the first time after 2014.

The Major Dhyani Chand Stadium witnessed a good turnout but the fans had to return disappointed as home team's ever-reliable skipper and star drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh endured a rare off day.

The second Test of the series will be played on Thursday.

The Indians were slow off the blocks as Germany

dominated the exchanges in the first quarter. The two teams were clashing for the first time after Germany beat India in the Paris Olympics semifinal.

It took only four minutes for the visitors to take the lead, courtesy some poor defending from the Indians. Mertgens was quick to spot the opportunity and slammed home the ball for the early edge.

HOCKEY BOYS GO DOWN TO AUSSIES

Meanwhile, Australia ended India Colts' unbeaten run at the Sultan of Johor Cup hockey tournament with a resounding 4-0 win in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, on Wednesday.

While India's forward line struggled to break the Australian defence, Daykin Stanger (33', 39', 53') scored a hat-trick of goals with Patrik Andrew (29') opening the deadlock. Despite the defeat, India continued to lead the points table with nine points while Australia (7 points) is placed third after New Zealand, who are in second place with eight points. — PTI

CHAMPIONS | LEAGUE

Vinicius Jr saves Real, Villa go top

Paris (France), Oct. 23: Real Madrid came from behind to beat Borussia Dortmund 5-2 in the Champions League on Tuesday with Vinicius Junior scoring a hat-trick, as Aston Villa maintained their 100 per cent record to go top of the table.

Vinicius struck three times in the second half as Madrid bounced back from two goals down to inflict further anguish on Dortmund — in the repeat of last season's final which Real won 2-0. First-half goals in quick

succession by Donyell Malen and Jamie Gittens had given Dortmund a two-goal lead at half-time.

The 15-times champions duly struck back early in the second period via Antonio Rudiger and Vinicius, before Lucas Vazquez sent Real ahead and the Brazilian netted two more inside the final 10 minutes.

Arsenal emerged 1-0 winners at home to Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk thanks to an own-goal from the visitors' goalkeeper. — AFP