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The Statesman

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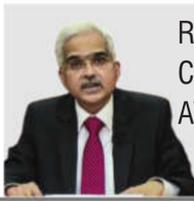
KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'WE SEVERELY
HARMED IRAN'S
DEFENSE CAPABILITIES'

P10



RBI GUV GETS TOP
CENTRAL BANKER
AWARD

P12



COLONIAL
RECKONING

P6

BARCELONA
THRASH REAL
MADRID 4-0

P14



WEATHER

Thunderstorms. Rain developing late. Maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be around 31°C and 27°C respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
Max. 90% Min. 80%
TEMPERATURE
Max. 28.4°C Min. 26.8°C
SUN RISES
05:27 hrs 17:28 hrs
MOON RISES
01:29 hrs 15:05 hrs
Full Moon on 1 November

THUMBNAIS



A young girl at the Diwali Bazaar hosted by the Blind Relief Association on Lodhi Road, Delhi, displaying an array of intricate, handcrafted bracelets and jewellery. ■ SNS

Stampede at Bandra Railway Station in Mumbai, 9 injured: At least nine people were injured in a stampede at Bandra railway station in Mumbai early on Sunday when passengers tried to board a train heading toward Uttar Pradesh. The condition of seven people is stable while two have suffered critical injuries. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said the stampede occurred due to the very heavy rush before Diwali. (Page 5)

KTR kin embroiled in rave party allegation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 27 OCTOBER

A huge political storm was triggered in Telangana after a raid by Hyderabad police during a party at the farmhouse of the brother-in-law of BRS working president KT Rama Rao. While the brother-in-law Raj Pakala was booked for possessing liquor in quantities above permissible limits without an excise license, a guest was arrested for testing positive for cocaine use.

While the BRS blamed the Congress government led by Revanth Reddy of conspiring to trap Mr Rao who has been aggressively attacking the government for its failings, Union minister for home affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar alleged the Congress was shielding the BRS leader and his family members and demanded CCTV footage of the search.

Meanwhile, when police went to search the residence



of the BRS working president, allegedly without a warrant, party leaders, MLAs and activists obstructed them and two leaders were arrested.

According to police, on the intervening night of 26/27 October a raid was organised by Narsingi police, special operation team and excise officials at a farmhouse in Janwada after receiving information about a rave party. There were 21 men and 14 women at the party where liquor was served. No permission was sought from the excise department for serving liquor and seven unauthorised foreign liquor

bottles were found along with 10 Indian ones. Drug tests were conducted with kits and a person called Vijay Madduri tested positive for cocaine. According to the FIR, the women refused to cooperate for the drug test. However, no drugs were found in the entire premise which was searched by sniffer dogs.

The FIR read: "He said his owner Pakala Raj has one software company, in the name of ETG software company at Nanakramguda and Vijay is the CEO of that company. Moreover, he is also having one own company in the name of Fusion AIX software company, he acts as CEO (sic). Occasionally, they used to get together on weekends and used to consume drugs and play with poker coins... Raj Pakala asked him to consume cocaine which he had with him, Vijay agreed and consumed cocaine." (Another report on Pg 4)

Mann Ki Baat: PM Modi stresses importance of self-reliance, addresses issue of 'digital arrest'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that self-reliance has not only become India's policy, it has become a passion. The world is amazed to see the success story of the nation which was doing wonders in every field, he said.

In the 115th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Modi said: "Self-reliance has not only become our policy, it has become our passion. It was not very long ago, just 10 years ago, when someone said that some complex technology was being developed in India, many people would not believe it and many would ridicule it. But today the same people are amazed to see the success of the country. India, which is becoming self-reliant, is doing wonders in every field."

"Just think, India, which used to import mobile phones once upon a time, is the world's



second largest manufacturer today. India, which once was the biggest buyer of Defence Equipment in the world, is now also exporting to 85 countries. Today, in Space Technology, India has become the first country to reach the South Pole of the Moon. And one thing I like the most is that this campaign of self-reliance is no longer just a government campaign now; the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is becoming a people's campaign - we are achieving success in every

field," the Prime Minister said. "In this festive season, we strengthen this campaign of Atmanirbhar Bharat. We do our shopping with the mantra of Vocal for Local. This is the new India where the Impossible is just a challenge... where Make in India has now turned into Make for the world, where every citizen is an innovator, where every challenge is an opportunity. We not only have to make India self-reliant, but also strengthen our country as a Global Powerhouse of

Sitharaman seeks enhanced support from int'l financial institutions for SDGs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman sought enhanced support from international financial institutions to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the G7 African Ministerial Roundtable, the minister discussed country-specific solutions to development finance challenges, and G7 initiatives for development in Africa, on the sidelines of Annual Meetings 2024 in Washington, DC. "FM@nsitharaman especially focused on enhanced support from international financial institutions, especially through the increased lending capacity of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) as vital to achieving Sustainable Development Goals," the ministry said in the post on X. She called for scaling up

access to long-term and affordable financing for development, supported by structural reforms and policy measures to promote domestic resource mobilisation and attract foreign investment to build long-term financial resilience to attain Sustainable Development Goals. Highlighting the deep-rooted partnership between India and Africa, Mrs Sitharaman said: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has redefined this partnership with 10 guiding principles aimed at supporting Africa's growth through capacity-building, enhanced public services, and addressing Climate Change, among others." The Union finance minister underlined India's support to Africa in areas like infrastructure development and the health sector, offering technical expertise and technology transfers, it added.

innovation," he said. Mr Modi also talked about "digital arrest" in today's episode of 'Mann Ki Baat'. "I will reiterate that there is no system like digital arrest in the law, this is just a fraud, deceit, it is a lie, a gang of criminals and those who are doing this are enemies of society. To deal with the fraud that is going on in the name of digital arrest, all the investigative agencies are working together with the state governments," Modi said.

He said for synchronisation among investigative agencies, a National Cyber Co-ordination Centre has been set up. "Thousands of such fraudulent video calling IDs have been blocked by the agencies. Lakhs of SIM cards, mobile phones and bank accounts have also been blocked. Agencies are doing their job, but for protection from scams in the name of digital arrest, it is very important that everyone

is aware, every citizen is aware. Those who are victims of this kind of cyber fraud should let as many people as possible know about it. You can use #SafeDigitalIndia for awareness," the Prime Minister said.

Mr Modi also urged schools and colleges to involve students in the campaign against cyber scams. "We can fight this challenge only with the collective efforts of society," the Prime Minister said.

In his address, the Prime Minister said youths were creating original Indian content which was a reflection of India's culture which was being watched worldwide. "The animation sector has today taken the form of an industry that is giving strength to other industries. Virtual Reality tourism today is getting famous... On October 28, World Animation Day will be celebrated. We must resolve to make India a global animation powerhouse."

Disengagement first step, de-escalation next: EAM

'As far as terrorism is concerned, India has adopted a zero tolerance policy'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said India will focus on de-escalation once the disengagement agreement between India and China to end the military stand-off in eastern Ladakh is fully implemented.

"India and China on 21 October reached a disengagement agreement whereby soldiers belonging to both the countries will resume patrolling as they did before the 2020 border face-off. The agreement is anticipated to ease patrolling in the Depsang and Demchok areas where patrolling will be restored. However, for implementation of this agreement, it will need some time," he said at a press conference in Mumbai.

He further said the next level is de-escalation and the third larger issue is how to manage the border and how to negotiate the boundary settlement.

In response to a question, Mr Jaishankar said India has emerged as a leader in fighting terrorism under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra



Modi.

Further, amid tense global scenarios and ongoing Iran-Israel and Ukraine-Russia war, he said that India is ready to provide all possible support in the times to come.

As far as terrorism is concerned, India has adopted a zero tolerance policy, he asserted.

"I am in Mumbai which has become a counter terrorism centre for the country and for the world especially after the 26/11 terror attacks. The UNSC's Counter Terrorism Council Summit was recently held in Mumbai and in the same hotel which was attacked by the terrorists. We have to be very clear.

We say zero tolerance for terrorism and we should not have a repeat about what happened in Mumbai. It cannot be daytime doing business and nighttime terrorism... this will not be accepted. We will expose terrorism and then we will act," he said.

On the Kashmir issue, Mr Jaishankar said: "We have been very clear that there is cross border terrorism... we have felt that there are many ways to deal with the issue. When Assembly elections were held, voter's turnout was more than 60 per cent and it was a big statement considering the people's response. Who wins is a secondary part. India

won that day, that many people put their faith in the government's move to scrap article 370 and remove the hold of separatist policy."

The minister said that he went to Pakistan recently with a clear message that India would not compromise on its zero tolerance policy.

On the issue of entry of illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar, he said the government's focus is to tighten the border security.

Mr Jaishankar strongly pitched for a double engine government to achieve the Viksit Bharat goal. "For Viksit Bharat, Viksit Maharashtra is necessary. Maharashtra is the most industrialised with a long history. There are factories, technology, research, quality of people, environment but there are new possibilities. With the implementation of Centre's India Middle East Economic Corridor initiative, Maharashtra will benefit a lot with investors investing in ports, logistics, roads and railways. Investors are interested to invest in the state," he added.

(See also Page 5)

Shah calls for change in Bengal ahead of 2026 Assembly polls

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BONGAON, 27 OCTOBER

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday called for change in West Bengal, as he sought to set the tone for the 2026 Assembly elections.

Mr Shah arrived in Kolkata on Saturday night and attended a Border Security Force (BSF) event in Bongaon on Sunday. Even at this official event, Mr Shah voiced a political message, calling for change in Bengal in the 2026 Assembly elections.

He stated that if the BJP comes to power, the problem of illegal immigration in West Bengal will be resolved. The BJP government would stop illegal immigration through the Bangladesh border. He also targeted chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Mr Shah inaugurated the Passenger Terminal Building and Maitri Gate at the Petrapole border. Speaking there, he said: "In the past 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done a lot of work across the country. The people of Bengal have some



grievances, but don't worry; the BJP government will address those grievances after the 2026 elections. Under Modi's leadership, the West Bengal Land Port Authority is doing an excellent job.

The development of the entire area is ongoing. MP Shantanu Thakur informed me that five to six thousand people come from the Bangladesh border every day for treatment at Kalyani AIIMS. Bring change in the state in 2026, and we will put an end to illegal immigration. Development is the sole objective of the Modi

government." The Trinamul Congress has consistently accused the central BJP of not giving West Bengal its due funds. In response, Mr Shah said: "What has Mamata given to Bengal in the last 10 years? Trinamul is allied with Congress. When Congress was in power at the Centre, Bengal received Rs 2.9 crore. In the last 10 years, Modi's government has given Rs 7.74 crore to Bengal. But the funds provided by Modi end up as victims of corruption in Bengal.

"Ache din' (good days) for Bengal are not far away. We will make Bengal more prosperous and fruitful." Mr Shah also noted that trade between Bangladesh and India has increased under the Modi government. "When Modi came to power, trade with Bangladesh was at Rs 18,000 crore, and it has now reached Rs 30,000 crore. Business and employment have increased, which has also created job opportunities in Bengal," he said. (Another report on Pg 3)

MGNREGS sees surge in rural employment: 2,923 cr person days generated over last 10 yrs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Rural employment under MGNREGS witnessed a rapid increase in the last 10 years with 2,923 crore person days generated between FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25, the Ministry of Rural Development said on Sunday.

The Ministry was responding to reports in some sections of the media that rural employment under MGNREGS has dipped by 16 per cent in the

first half of the current year. According to the ministry, the increase over the last decade, from 1,660 crore generated between FY 2006-07 to FY 2013-14 was 76 per cent.

"It may be noted that the total person days generated between FY 2006-07 to FY 2013-14 were 1,660 crore, whereas, the total person days between FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25 has been 2923 crore. Since MGNREGA is a demand driven scheme and

current FY is still ongoing, hence, it is not possible to fix an exact target of person days generation. However, the states/UTs can send proposal for labour budget revision as per the local felt needs (sic)," the ministry said in a statement. The ministry also said it is an inaccurate assessment to state that the budget of MGNREGA and workers' wages are being cut continuously. The Budget estimate for the scheme has been on an increasing trend.



The Statesman

স্টেটসম্যান



Best Face Best Dress

The Statesman is looking for the most beautiful and best-dressed women in Indian and Western attire. And you could be the lucky one to win the coveted prize!

The Statesman is organising a competition and those who wish to participate, can send in their picture in Indian or Indo-western dress.

You can post your pics between 9th October and 2nd November, 2024 at puja@thestatesmangroup.com along with your name, address, phone number and email. The minimum age for participation is 18 years.

The lucky ones will get attractive prizes and their photos and names will be published in the newspaper.*

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Missing SAIL general manager found dead inside Durgapur Steel Plant; probe begins

Samit Bhattacharya, who was the general manager of the Raw Material Handling Plant, had been missing since around 11 a.m. on Saturday

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE ASANSOL, 27 OCTOBER

The body of Samit Bhattacharya (54), General Manager of the Raw Material Handling Plant (RMHP) at SAIL's Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP), was found early this morning inside the plant, nearly 16 hours after he went missing.

Around 3 a.m., officials discovered his body at the bottom of an inundated lift shaft at Junction Bunker (J25) during night shift operations and immediately alerted the department. The circumstances surrounding his death remain unclear.

Colleagues described him as soft-spoken, hardworking, and disciplined. The Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate (ADPC) is awaiting the post-mortem report to determine the cause of death. A high-level investigation into the untimely death of a senior steel executive during working hours within the plant is expected. Both ADPC and CISF will conduct separate inquiries.

CISF personnel, responsible for plant security, will examine CCTV footage from the area. Amit Saran, DIG of CISF, Durgapur Steel Plant unit, also visited the site. BMS leader Manas Chatterjee stated that both man-



Samit Bhattacharya

agement and workers, along with CISF, searched the plant but failed to locate him.



The lift shaft

INTUC leader Debashish Chakraborty confirmed that Bhattacharya had visited various areas as part of his routine duties yesterday but had not been seen in his chamber since around 11 a.m. Prior to that he'd attended a routine production-productivity meeting virtually with senior colleagues at 9 a.m. Mr Chakraborty added that colleagues noticed no unusual behaviour and his death remains a mystery.

Plant officials immediately informed the department, CISF, and local Waria Police Outpost under ADPC. The body was sent to DSP Main Hospital after recovery. Brijendra Pratap Singh, Director-in-charge of Durgapur Steel Plant and Jisco Steel Plant of SAIL, also arrived at the site to speak with officials. After Bhattacharya went missing, attempts to contact him by phone were unsuccessful. His vehicle, with his tiffin box inside, was parked in the office garage. His family in Baghajatin, Durgapur, confirmed that he had left for work in the morning.

Department officials and CISF personnel initiated a search operation, involving sniffer dogs, but failed to locate him. His cell phone signal was traced near the NTPC-SAIL Power Plant, but he was not found there. The area where the body was discovered is rarely accessed. A section of officials speculated that the lift may have malfunctioned, with its door opening even though it was between floors, and that the GM may have un mindfully had stepped into the hollow shaft leading to a fatal fall.

The incident has raised concerns about safety standards at the RMHP, which has been the site of previous accidents. Trade unions have criticised the plant's safety record, citing the death of worker Sumanta Ghosal last year. Bhattacharya is survived by his wife and son. The untimely death of a senior steel executive within the plant has caused a huge stir in the steel city of Durgapur.

Former BJP youth leader joins TMC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BURDWAN, 27 OCTOBER

A once-firebrand youth Morcha president of the BJP joined the Trinamul Congress in Burdwan this evening on a day that senior BJP leader Amit Shah instructed the party's Bengal committee to secure 1 crore membership before the 2026 Assembly polls.

Shyamal Roy, the former district Youth Morcha president of the BJP in East Burdwan was handed the Trinamul Congress flag by the TMC district president Rabinranath Chatterjee.

Mr Roy, accompanied by 50 of his loyalists joined the TMC during party's Bijoya Sammiloni programme at Sanskriti Lokamancha auditorium here.

The district BJP declined to comment on this.

Outrage erupts at Siliguri Hosp after death of 7-yr-old; family alleges negligence, misconduct

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE SILIGURI, 27 OCTOBER

An angry mob staged a protest at the entrance of Siliguri District Hospital today, following the tragic death of a seven-year-old boy.

Family members and relatives of the child expressed their outrage, accusing a doctor of misbehaving and initially refusing to admit the young patient, who had been discharged only a day before.

The boy was declared dead shortly after being readmitted, further fuelling tensions. Police arrived in large numbers to control the situation, while the hospital's Superintendent later issued

a public apology, assuring the crowd that steps would be taken to prevent similar incidents in the future.

According to the boy's father, a resident of Matigara, the child had been suffering from a fever and nosebleeds. He was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday but discharged on Saturday.

However, his condition worsened at home, prompting the family to rush him back to the hospital. When they sought immediate medical attention, the doctor reportedly refused to examine the boy, instructing the family to bring him to the Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) department the following day. Despite their repeated

pleas, the doctor allegedly dismissed them with a remark not to "bleat like a goat", insisting the child was stable.

The family's distress escalated when the boy suddenly collapsed and began convulsing. Desperate, they pleaded with the doctor again, who finally agreed to admit him. Tragically, the boy passed away moments after being admitted.

Members of a local minority organisation also joined the protest, calling for disciplinary action against the doctors responsible for this ordeal. They demanded accountability and emphasised the need for respectful and responsive treatment in emergency situations.

Two dead after electrocution in steel plant at Raniganj

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE ASANSOL, 27 OCTOBER

Two labourers were electrocuted to death while working at a private steel factory owned by the Jai Balaji Group in the Mongolpur industrial belt under the Raniganj Police Station area early this morning.

The incident occurred around 1:30 a.m. when the two labourers, Debajyoti Sarkar (20) of Mejia block in Bankura district and Rakesh Singh (50) of Saran district in Bihar, were engaged in pipe repair work inside the plant. They accidentally came into contact with live electric cables, resulting in their immediate electrocution.

The accident took place in the number three unit of the Jai Balaji Group plant. Debajyoti Sarkar, a contract worker, was the first to be electrocuted. Rakesh Singh,

a senior supervisor, attempted to rescue him but was also electrocuted. The recent heavy rainfall due to Cyclone Dana may have contributed to the incident. The workers were rushed to a nearby hospital, where they were declared brought dead.

Following the news of the fatal accident, trade union leaders, family members, and INTUC leadership arrived at the plant to protest and demand compensation for the victims' families.

Debajyoti Sarkar had only joined the plant seven days ago. After negotiations with district INTUC leadership and local police, Jai Balaji Group officials agreed to provide compensation to the families, leading to the withdrawal of the protest.

The bodies of the victims were handed over to their families after post-mortem examinations today.

DM conducts inspection for NH-14 expansion in Birbhum

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BIRBHUM, 27 OCTOBER

A high-level team of the district administration, led by District Magistrate Bidhan Roy, and officials from the Directorate of National Highway Wing, visited and inspected encroachments along the National Highway-14 expansion project in Birbhum district.

National Highway-14 is a vital link between North and South Bengal. However, due to encroachments on both sides of the highway, traffic flow has been significantly impeded.

The existing two-lane highway from Bhangarh to Morgram will be expanded to four lanes.

This 110-kilometre stretch passes through nine blocks of Birbhum district - Dubrajpur, Siuri, Mohammad



Bazar, Mallarpur, Rampurhat, and Nalhati, connecting with National Highway-34.

The existing two-lane road, originally 20 feet wide, has been reduced to 15 feet in several areas, causing frequent traffic jams. This stretch is lined with medical colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, colleges, and markets.

The proposed four-lane highway will bypass Rampurhat. Following the joint inspection, a detailed project report (DPR) will be prepared and submitted for final approval.

Jayanta Gorai, Executive Engineer in charge of the

project, stated that bypasses or flyovers will be constructed in Nalhati and Rampurhat to accommodate the existing infrastructure. "We have proposed to construct three roads," he added.

Birbhum District Magistrate Bidhan Roy said that the state administration wants the project to be completed as soon as possible - band all required steps will be taken.

Sub-divisional magistrates and land and land reforms officers from the district were also present during the inspection. Local public representatives will be consulted to gather their input. The project will proceed in phases: route finalisation, public hearings, and land acquisition.

Once the DPR is approved, the project will receive funding, sources said.

Sikkim runs to honour soldiers' valour and sacrifice

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE SILIGURI, 27 OCTOBER

The Sikkim Soldierathon, a hill marathon, took place in Gangtok today, commemorating the bravery and sacrifice of India's soldiers.

Organised by Fitistan-Ek Fit Bharat in collaboration with the Eastern Command and Trishakti Corps of the Indian Army, the event aimed to strengthen the bond between the Army and civilians under the theme "Run with our Soldiers."

Over 1,500 participants from across India gathered at Paljor Stadium for the official flag-off ceremony.

The marathon featured three categories: a 5 km Fun Run promoting unity, a competitive 10 km run, and a 21 km race drawing experienced runners from state and national levels.



Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, expressed pride in the initiative, saying, "Every step you take is a tribute to the valour and sacrifice of our soldiers guarding these borders. I am honoured to be part of this new initiative to promote a Fit India and strengthen the bond between the Indian Army and our citizens." Adding to the patriotic spirit, Indian Army personnel presented cultural performances, showcasing India's rich diversity.

All runners who completed the marathon were honoured with medals, making the event a memorable tribute to the nation's heroes. Winners and participants received medals, mementoes, and promotional items at the valedictory ceremony.

Chief Guest M T Sherpa, Secretary of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, and other dignitaries, including District Collector Tushar Nikhare and Major General Amit Kabthiyal, graced the occasion.

IIT Kharagpur's agri-tech start-up expo 2024 showcases innovation and growth

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE MIDNAPORE, 27 OCTOBER

The Agri Business Incubation Foundation (ABIF) at IIT Kharagpur hosted its annual Start-up EXPO from 24-25 October, featuring 37 promising agri-tech start-ups from across India. Organised with the support of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the event provided a platform for entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts to connect and collaborate.

The EXPO was inaugurated by Mr. Partho Saha, Chief General Manager of NABARD's OFDD division, who emphasised the importance of nurturing rural SMEs and the role of agri-tech innovation in strengthening rural value chains. Mr. P.K. Bhardwaj, CGM of NABARD's West Bengal Regional Office, likened the EXPO to a "symphony of efforts," highlighting the collaborative nature of the event.

Under the guidance of Prof. Rintu Banerjee, Deputy Director of IIT Kharagpur, the two-day event featured stalls, pitch presentations, and audio-visual demon-



strations. Prof. Banerjee highlighted IIT Kharagpur's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and the startup ecosystem through initiatives like ABIF, AI4ICPS, SATHI, STEP, and Research Park.

Several start-ups received seed grant awards. In the Graduation Stage, Syangbos Living Food and Beverages Pvt Ltd, Rural Rise Agrinry Pvt Ltd, and Tender Buds Tea & Crafts Pvt Ltd each received Rs 5 lakh.

In the Acceleration Stage, Rudranjali Innovative Agritech Pvt Ltd, Aati Pual Mushroom Pvt Ltd, Rhodotion International Pvt Ltd, Bisuddha Enterprises, Savrog Udyog Pvt Ltd, Farm Genesis Technology Pvt Ltd, Shri Charbhujai Jaivik Farm, Aqua Doctor Solutions, and PR

Linseed Based Products received Rs 2 lakh each. Best Stall Awards went to Kaffa Kuwva Innovations Pvt Ltd, which received Rs 2 lakh as the first prize, Ramanjali Organics, which got Rs 1 lakh and Anwesha Jena from Makkai who received Rs 50,000.

Mr. K.V. Iyer, Director of ABIF, encouraged participants to remain dedicated to their entrepreneurial journey, emphasizing the impact of their work on India's agricultural sector.

With the support of IIT Kharagpur, NABARD, and the investor community, the Start-up EXPO 2024 showcased India's thriving agri-tech landscape and highlighted the potential of start-ups to drive rural development and economic growth.

Four killed in road accident at Tamluk

AGENCIES KOLKATA, 27 OCTOBER

Four people were killed in a horrific road accident on the National Highway number 116 at Tamluk in East Midnapore district of West Bengal.

A person, injured in the Saturday night accident was receiving treatment at a local

hospital. Of the four deceased, three were identified as Prashanta Roy, Rajendra Samanta and Bhaskar Modak. The fourth victim, a woman, was yet to be identified.

Eyewitnesses said that a speedily driven four-wheeler collided head-on with another vehicle coming from the opposite direction.

Because of the collision, the driver of the vehicle lost control, and after hitting three cyclists passing through the same lane, fell into a canal adjacent to the national highway. Two cyclists, Roy and Samanta and the driver of the four-wheeler Modak died on the spot. The deceased woman was the occupant of

the same four-wheeler. The third cyclist, whose identity too has not surfaced as yet, is under treatment now.

The two cyclists who had been killed in the accident are residents of Bhandarberia in Tamluk of East Midnapore district. The deceased driver is a resident of Ghatil in the adjacent West Midnapore

district. Initially, the local people rushed to the spot and started the rescue operations. However, later a huge police contingent from the local police station reached the spot and joined hands in the rescue operations.

The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem.

T E N D E R

Multiple tender notices from Government of West Bengal, KMDA, and other agencies, including details on road works, electrical projects, and construction contracts.

Amit Shah focuses on 2026, skips by-election discussion

He outlined the potential changes under a BJP-led government in Bengal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 27 OCTOBER

Union Home Minister and former BJP national president Amit Shah, during a visit to Kolkata, prioritised the party's goal of achieving one crore members in West Bengal. His speech at the EZCC in Salt Lake primarily focused on the 2026 state Assembly elections, bypassing any discussion of the upcoming by-elections scheduled for 13 November.

While Mr Shah briefly acknowledged the recent tragic incident involving the rape and murder of a female doctor from R.G. Kar Hospital, he did not visit the victim's family or meet with her parents. This visit marked his first to the state since the Lok Sabha election results were announced.

On Sunday afternoon, he inaugurated the BJP's 'Membership Drive' at Salt Lake, where his relatively short speech repeatedly re-



Mr Shah said: "To build a 'Golden Bengal,' join BJP. If BJP comes to power, cattle smuggling and coal smuggling will stop, and no one will have to pay bribes for jobs."

He briefly mentioned the R.G. Kar incident, saying, "Incidents like the one in Sandeshkhali and R.G. Kar will stop if BJP comes to power in 2026."

Making BJP's intent to win in West Bengal clear, he said: "We have won in Haryana. We will win in Jharkhand, Maharashtra. After that, our target is Bengal."

Mr Shah also took a swipe at the Opposition INDIA bloc, claiming that the NDA government had allocated significantly more funds to West Bengal compared to the UPA. He expressed confidence in BJP's ability to win the 2026 state Assembly elections, drawing parallels to the party's recent victory in Haryana.

Referring to the recent Lok Sabha election results, he took a jibe at Miss Banerjee, saying: "Mamata Didi was very happy when BJP won a few fewer seats. Remember, Mamata Didi, BJP is a party that grew from 2 to 370 seats."

Before Mr Shah's address, BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar, actor Mithun Chakraborty, and Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari spoke, emphasising the importance of reaching the one crore membership target.

Mithun Chakraborty expressed disappointment over the recent Lok Sabha election results but remained optimistic about the party's future in West Bengal.

Mr Shah also took a swipe at the Opposition INDIA bloc, claiming that the NDA government had allocated significantly more funds to West Bengal compared to the UPA. He expressed confidence in BJP's ability to win the 2026 state Assembly elections, drawing parallels to the party's recent victory in Haryana.

Junior doctors plan to extend protests to rural Bengal



Tilottama Trust members holding banners and placards stage a protest march demanding justice for the victim of the RG Kar Hospital rape-murder case, in Kolkata on Sunday.

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, 27 OCTOBER

West Bengal Junior Doctors' Front (WBJJDF), the umbrella body of the junior doctors protesting in the aftermath of the rape and murder of a fellow medico here, is planning to expand their base beyond urban bastions in the state to rural Bengal.

"Our movement will continue unless and until the probe on the rape and murder issue reaches a logical conclusion and our demands in the matter are fulfilled in

full. The movement will not now just be restricted to the metro, urban, suburban and district headquarters. This will now be spread to remote rural areas," said Debasish Halder, one of the leading faces of the junior doctors' movement on this issue.

Commenting on the floating of a rival association of junior doctors christened West Bengal Junior Doctors' Association (WBJDA) on Saturday, mainly by those junior doctors who were suspended recently by the college council of RG Kar Medical College



Women's clothes are displayed at a roadside market in a protest against violence against women in the state, in Kolkata on Sunday. The intent was to show that the clothes that women wear cannot be blamed for 'inciting' rape.

on charges of "threat culture", Halder said it is quite queer that those accused of "threat culture" are now floating an association backed by the state's ruling party and making tall talks.

Recently, one such junior doctor associated with WBJDA slapped a legal notice to Aniket Mahato, a junior doctor attached to RG Kar and another leading face of the movement against the rape and murder in context. Mahato was slapped the legal notice for his comments during a meeting with Chief Minister Banerjee, where he

described these "suspended doctors" as notorious criminals.

Those associated with the rival association have claimed that they are the real victims of "threat culture" by a group leading the movement on the rape and murder issue.

Although the college council announced their suspension earlier this month, recently a single-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court stayed the resolution of the council in the matter and observed that only the state government can take a decision on this issue.

FINAL TOUCHES



An artist gives the final touches to an idol of Goddess Kali at his Kumartuli workshop ahead of the Kali Puja festival in Kolkata on Sunday.

Kali Puja, performed by Sadhak Bama Kheyepa, continues to uphold tradition at Chinsurah

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HOOGHLY, 27 OCTOBER

The nearly two-century-old Satyamayi Kali Puja of Tamali Para in Chinsurah continues to be performed in its traditional way, as initiated by Sadhak Bama Kheyepa of Tarapith.

According to the legend, Satyamayi Devi, a housewife from Tamali Para, had a dream instructing her to collect a neem log that would soon float to the nearby riverbank ghat. The next morning, she went to the ghat and found a neem log stuck to the bank. She collected it and took it home.

On the same day, a person from Peyara Bagan in Chinsurah visited Satyamayi Devi's house and revealed that he had also received a divine instruction in a dream to ca-



entered Satyamayi Devi's house, where the newly carved idol of Kali was placed. The place echoed with chants of "Jai Tara, Jai Tara" as Bama Kheyepa performed the Kali Puja.

Rama Mukherjee, a descendant of Satyamayi Devi, said: "Bama Kheyepa visited our house twice to perform the Kali Puja. To this day, the Kali Puja is performed according to traditional rituals, including the sacrifice of a three-month-old he-goat to the Goddess. The nearby riverbank ghat is named after Satyamayi Devi."

Despite its historical significance, the house of Satyamayi Devi and the Satyamayi Devi ghat, where the great saint of Bengal, Bama Kheyepa, had visited twice, remain neglected.

Kolkata Metro installs guard rails at Kalighat station to prevent suicide bids on Blue Line

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 27 OCTOBER

In response to several recent suicide attempts on the city's lifeline transport, the Kolkata Metro Railway has begun installing guardrails on the down platform of Kalighat Metro Station. The authorities aim to complete the installation of these guardrails by Kali Puja.

Kolkata's Blue Line Metro, India's oldest metro corridor, celebrated its 40th anniversary on 24 October.

From its early days with token systems and manual operations to its current state-of-the-art technology, including air-conditioned rakes, digital payments, and even India's first underwater metro, the Blue Line has undergone significant evolution.



Despite advancements like Automatic Train Protection (ATP), Automatic Train Operation (ATO), and Automatic Train Supervision (ATS), incidents of suicide attempts continue to disrupt services on the north-south corridor.

The Kolkata Metro office has reported a recent surge in such incidents, with passengers jumping in front of approaching trains. While newer metro corridors have preventive mechanisms in

place, the older infrastructure of the North-South corridor limits the implementation of such measures.

To address this issue, the Metro authorities have decided to experiment with guardrail installations on platforms. Kalighat Metro Station is the first station where these guardrails, standing four feet tall, are being installed.

The design ensures minimal inconvenience to passengers boarding and alighting trains. So far, seven guardrails have been installed on the down platform, with the remaining 24 expected to be completed by Kali Puja. Kolkata Metro plans to evaluate the effectiveness of these guardrails and passenger feedback before considering their installation at other Blue Line stations.

Birbhum's Siuri set for major revamp under Amrit Bharat stations scheme



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ASANSOL, 27 OCTOBER

Siuri Railway Station under the Asansol Division of Eastern Railway in Birbhum district is set for a major upgrade under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. This initiative aims to improve passenger amenities and enhance the station's overall infrastructure and services.

Siuri Railway Station (Station Code: SURI) is a key station on the Andal-Sainthia branch line under Asansol Division. It serves the town of Siuri, the district headquarters of Birbhum in West Bengal, and its neighbouring villages. The station is a vital hub for pilgrims visiting Bakreswar Temple and its famous hot springs, as well as Data Babar Mazaar (the Dargah of Data Saheb) in Patharchapuri. Siuri Station plays a crucial role in connecting locals and visitors to these important religious and cultural sites.

Key improvements under the redevelopment project include the enhancement of traffic circulation and the beautification of the station's circulating area, providing passengers with better access and a more welcoming environment.

The station's existing facade and elevation will undergo significant improve-

ments, including modern lighting installations and the construction of a new entrance gate. A high-mast tower light will be installed to enhance visibility at night.

For enhanced accessibility, a new lift will be installed between Platforms 2 and 3, and three dedicated drinking water booths will be set up for Diyyangan (persons with disabilities).

Waiting halls, ticket counters, and other public spaces will be revamped with high-quality furniture and modern amenities. Two new platform sheds will be constructed, and new coach indication and train indication boards will be installed. A new parking area will alleviate traffic congestion and provide more convenience for passengers arriving by car.

The redevelopment initiative at Siuri Station is part of Indian Railways' broader efforts to modernise its stations, improve operational efficiency, and elevate the overall passenger experience. Upon completion, Siuri Station will be a more accessible, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing facility, further strengthening its role as a key railway hub in the region.

Ancient myths of Kaliganj's Goddess Kali: Forgotten legends before Nawab Alivardi Khan's reign

RAJIB CHAKRABORTY
KOLKATA, 27 OCTOBER

The Kali Puja in Kaliganj, adjacent to Murshidabad district, was established as a fair and festival during the reign of Nawab Alivardi Khan of Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha. However, the myths surrounding this Puja predate Alivardi's era. For over 300 years, folklore about this Puja has spread across various districts of Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, and even beyond these states.

The village of Kaliganj is named after Goddess Kali. For the past two years, the famed Bhattacharya family Kali Puja in Harinathpur, Kaliganj, was limited to a small symbolic setup due to the pandemic.

However, this year, the



Puja returns with a grand 14-foot Dakshina Kali idol, attracting thousands of devotees from far and wide. Known as "Buro Ma," this towering deity, complete with her crown, draws long queues of devotees seeking her blessings.

Family sources indicate that the origins of this Puja as a festival and fair can be traced back to the rule of Nawab Alivardi Khan (1676-



1756).

Legend has it that Benidas Bhattacharya, along with his sons Nrisimha Torkabagish and Rajaram Siddhanta, migrated from Natore in Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh) to Harinathpur.

Here, Rajaram, in deep devotion, performed intense penance under a banyan tree in Jurandpur, hoping to have Goddess Kali as his divine

consort.

Nrisimha, concerned about his brother's devotion, arranged for his marriage. However, Rajaram received a divine vision instructing him to marry Shachidevi, daughter of Avinandana Saraswati of Mahula village. During the wedding feast, an astonishing event unfolded: Shachidevi's veil slipped, revealing an extra pair of

hands, a divine sign of Goddess Kali. She then disappeared, leaving behind a profound spiritual impact on Rajaram.

Rajaram's descendant, Dinanath Torkalankar, continued the family's spiritual legacy by performing rigorous penance under a neem tree. He too received a divine vision, instructing him to worship Kali in her Dakshina Kali form. Thus began the Bhattacharya family's grand Kali Puja tradition, which gained immense popularity during the reign of Nawab Alivardi Khan.

To this day, the festival is celebrated with tantric rituals, following age-old methods. A symbolic worship of the idol's framework is performed with Ganga water and vermilion on Vijaya Dashami. Starting from Ekadashi, mud

is prepared for the deity's structure, and the festivities continue with dedication and devotion.

Mousumi Bhattacharya, an elderly member of the Bhattacharya family, shared that her elder son, an Air India officer, performs the main puja and yagna as part of the family tradition. The Puja involves elaborate rituals, including the offering of various vegetarian dishes as bhog to the goddess. Devotees receive prasad, and a large gathering takes place, necessitating significant police deployment. While animal sacrifices were once common, they have now been reduced to three.

However, despite its rich history and religious significance, this Puja has not yet received heritage status.

Wayanad Lok Sabha polls: BJP demands rejection of Priyanka's nomination papers

MT Ramesh said the issue of hiding the asset details by the Congress leader in her nomination papers would be raised by the BJP before the returning officer during the scrutiny of the nomination papers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 27
OCTOBER

BJP's Kerala general secretary MT Ramesh has demanded the rejection of the nomination of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra she filed for the Wayanad Lok Sabha by-elections as she allegedly concealed details of her assets in her nomination papers.

Ramesh said on Sunday that Priyanka had concealed her shares in the AJL company and her husband Robert Vadra's property details.



The affidavit filed with the nomination papers does not contain the details of the National Herald case. The assets in other countries in the name of Robert Vadra



are also not provided in the affidavit, MT Ramesh alleged. MT Ramesh said the issue of hiding the asset details by Congress leader Priyanka in her nomination papers would

be raised by the BJP before the returning officer during the scrutiny of the nomination papers and the party will demand to reject her nomination papers. "Four demand

is rejected, BJP will initiate legal proceedings," Ramesh said.

The BJP leader said as per the Representative of People Act, all the candidates con-

testing elections must disclose all their assets in the affidavits filed with nomination papers. She also violated the Supreme Court directive to candidates fighting elections to make full disclosure of their, their spouses and dependents' assets, he said.

Priyanka disclosed in the affidavit submitted to the district Collector Wayanad with her nomination papers that she has a net worth of Rs.11.98 crore. Her husband Robert Vadra has assets of Rs.65.55 crore. However, the BJP claims that Priyanka possesses more assets than this.

Revanth Reddy trying to implicate KTR in false case: BRS

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 27 OCTOBER

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on Sunday alleged that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy was trying to implicate BRS working president K. T. Rama Rao in a false case.

Four BRS MLAs reacted strongly to the allegations against Rama Rao after police and the Excise Department searched the farmhouse of his brother-in-law Raj Pakala.

They claimed that Raja Pakala had hosted a party for his family members at his house. They denied that KTR or his wife were present at the party.

MLAs K. P. Vivekanand, Dr K. Sanjay, G. Srinivas Yadav and Satish Reddy addressed a press conference to condemn the allegations.

They termed the allegations a part of the "government's attempt to divert people's attention from its failure



to honour the poll promises".

The BRS leaders said the Congress government was trying to "defame" KTR and "mentally harass" him.

They alleged that the ruling Congress was unable to digest the "popularity" of KTR among people.

They also claimed that Chief Minister Reddy was becoming unpopular.

"The Chief Minister was making personal allegations against the BRS working president out of jealousy. KTR phobia has gripped Revanth Reddy," they said.

Sharmila working with Chandrababu Naidu to undermine Jagan's leadership: Vijayasai Reddy



AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 27 OCTOBER

YSR Congress Party General Secretary V. Vijayasai Reddy on Sunday accused Andhra Pradesh Congress president Y. S. Sharmila of working with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to undermine the leadership of YSRCP president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Vijayasai Reddy said that Sharmila's actions go beyond a property dispute and are part of a plan to stop Jagan Mohan Reddy from becoming Chief Minister again.

He highlighted the irony that Congress opposes the NDA at the national level, yet in Andhra Pradesh, PCC president Sharmila seems to be supporting NDA interests.

Addressing a press conference in Hyderabad, Vijaya-

sai Reddy questioned if Sharmila has ignored Jagan's efforts to help the public, such as providing support to over 1.5 crore families, financial aid to 80 lakh women, and assistance to more than 40 lakh mothers.

He suggested that Naidu is using Sharmila to turn women against Jagan, but he believes the public will not be misled. He urged Sharmila to reflect on her actions and condemned her partnership with Naidu, whom she once blamed for the leadership of YSRCP president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

He questioned if she had truly forgotten these past issues or was ignoring them for her own benefit.

Vijayasai Reddy questioned how Sharmila's letter to Jagan ended up with Chandrababu Naidu, hinting at a possible collaboration between them.

He suggested Sharmila understand that Chandrababu Naidu, unable to fulfil his election promises, is using her to distract the public and create negativity against Jagan among women.

He criticised TDP and its media for their constant attacks on Jagan, calling Sharmila's role in these actions disappointing.

Vijayasai Reddy alleged that, under Chandrababu Naidu's influence, Sharmila secretly transferred shares Jagan had given her, aiming to get his bail revoked. He claimed this move showed a plan with Naidu to stop Jagan from becoming Chief Minister again.

Meanwhile, Sharmila dismissed the allegations levelled by Vijayasai Reddy. She posted on 'X' that the YSRCP leader read the script of Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The APCC president said she had no personal relationship with Chandrababu Naidu. She said she had only met him to invite him to his daughter's marriage.

Sharmila dared Vijayasai Reddy to take a pledge to deny that Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy wanted his family assets to be divided equally among four grandchildren.

Communal BJP and corrupt DMK our main adversaries: Vijay at TVK rally

MC RAJAN
CHENNAI, 27 OCTOBER

Terming the BJP as communal and corrupt DMK in Tamil Nadu as the primary adversaries of his fledgling Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), actor Vijay on Sunday declared that the party, confident of securing the mandate in the 2026 assembly election on its own, is open for alliance and prepared for sharing power.

"Divisive communal politics and corruption are the prime enemies. Tamil Nadu is a secular land and the people will not allow any space for divisive hate politics based on religion and caste. A family cabal's corruption with a mask is the 'Dravidian Model Government.' They are ruling us," the actor-turned politician said while addressing the conference attended by more than five lakh people, mostly youngsters besides women at a sprawling 200-acre venue in Vikravandi near Villupuram, 50 km from Chennai.

Positioning the TVK as a Centre-Left party, Vijay said: "We wholeheartedly accept Periyar (rationalist reformer and Dravidian icon EV Ramasamy) as our guiding



light, leaving aside his atheism. Secularism, rationalism, women's education and liberation and social justice continue to be our policies. We take pride in accepting BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, whose name evokes fear in the minds of casteists and communalists, as our ideological mentor. Then, we seek inspiration from the valiant queen Velu Nachiyar of Sivaganga, who fought the British and who remained an icon of communal amity and freedom fighter Anjalai Ammal."

"Our policy is to provide food, shelter and jobs to everyone. We will encourage those who are capable of catching fish and to provide fish to those who can't. We are for proportional representation

for which caste census is necessary. On the language issue, the party stands for the two language policy followed in the state and good governance and targeted delivery of services and programmes for holistic development free of corruption," he explained.

This was his maiden address at a political rally and he commenced it by lampooning the way Dravidian parties used to name each leader seated on the dais. "For us, politics is a battlefield and there is no compromise in our fight against hate politics. Our motto 'All are equal by birth' of ancient Sangam era poet Thiruvalluvar makes our enemies rattled. It has clearly shown who our political enemies are and they too are aware of it," the actor maintained.

"Dravidian and Tamil Nationalism are our twin eyes," he made it clear but came down heavily on the ruling DMK terming it as a 'selfish family cabal engaged in looting the state'. Questioning the Dravidian Model, Vijay asked "while criticising them (BJP) as being fascist, are you any different? If their practice is fascism, what about yours? Is it payasam (kheer)?"

'In politics there is no place for sacrifice': SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on seat sharing in Maharashtra polls

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Sunday that the party would try to get an alliance with Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) for the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly election, but if the alliance talks don't go well then they will contest certain seats which would not be harming the MVA.

When asked about why the SP might be 'getting ignored', he told ANI, "We might be in the category of being ignored, but the people who are ignoring us, they should be questioned. But, the Maharashtra president of Samajwadi Party will decide on how many seats to contest. At first, we will try to be in alliance."

He added further that if the alliance doesn't happen then they would be contesting certain seats where they have a presence and where the MVA won't be harmed.

"But, if they (Maha Vikas



Aghadi) won't keep us in the alliance, we will contest on those seats where we will get votes or we have our organisation working there. We will contest those seats which will not harm the alliance. But, in politics, there is no place for sacrifice," he added.

He also hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), claiming that the party is not fighting the election not through its workers but through its officials.

"BJP is fighting the elections not through its workers but through its officials. If any party starts fighting the elections with officials, then its defeat is certain...BJP can do anything, they can cross any limits," he said.

Earlier on Saturday, the party's Maharashtra Chief Abu Azmi expressed concern that the party may face "betrayal" again like the previous two terms. Azmi added that he does not want the Maha Vikas Aghadi to break but he will make his decision within two days.

He also said that if seats are not given to the party, it will have no option but to contest alone.

Speaking to agencies, Azmi confirmed Akhilesh Yadav has given him complete authority to decide on the matter.

The seats which I had been demanding are being announced. I think that we are going to face betrayal like the previous two terms. Looks like they don't want to give seats to the Samajwadi Party. I don't want the MVA to break and the votes to be divided but if they don't listen to us then we won't have an option but to contest alone. I have spoken to Akhilesh Yadav. He has given

me complete authority," he said.

Moreover, Congress released its third list of 16 candidates for the elections, with the party's total candidates coming up to 87.

Congress has fielded Rana Dalipkumar Sanada from Khamgaon seat, Hemant Nanda Chimote from Melghat, Manohar Tulshiram Poreti from Gadchiroli, Manikrao Thakare from Digras as some of the nominees.

Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole had said earlier that each alliance partner, namely Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT), and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) will be contesting 85 seats each.

As the polling date draws near, both the ruling Mahayuti alliance comprising the BJP alongside the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) and Ajit Pawar-led NCP and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have intensified their preparations.

Karnataka Police recover smartphone from Kalaburgi Central Prison

AGENCIES
KALABURGI, 27 OCTOBER

In a search operation at the Kalaburgi Central Prison, the police recovered a smartphone, a basic handset and other contraband items.

Police Commissioner Sharanappa SD on Saturday said that four people had been taken into custody for further questioning on the same.

Speaking to ANI, the Commissioner said "A search was conducted at the Central Prison Kalaburgi and a smartphone, one basic handset and other contraband items were recovered. A case was taken and it was transferred to Central Crime Branch where four people have been taken into custody and are being questioned."

Further, he revealed that the prison inmate to whom the supplies were being made was identified and would be taken into police custody.

"We have identified the prison inmate to whom they were supplying. We will be taking him into police custody as well," he added.

The Commissioner added that it was found during the preliminary investigation that criminal elements were throwing contraband and other items into the prison compound.

"During the preliminary investigation, it was found that criminal elements were found throwing the contraband and other items in the prison compound. In that connection, two cases were solved."

PM Modi gifts exquisite artworks from Jharkhand, Maha to world leaders at BRICS Summit

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

In the recently concluded BRICS Summit in Kazan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted exquisite artworks from Jharkhand and Maharashtra to state heads of Russia, Iran and Uzbekistan.

The gifts that PM Modi gave to world leaders include Jharkhand's popular Sohrai Painting to Russian President Vladimir Putin, a Mother of Pearl vase to the President of Iran, and a Warli painting to the President of Uzbekistan.

With PM Modi gifting captivating paintings and exquisite artwork to the world leaders, the artisans and craftsmen of both states saw their products shine on a global platform.

Sohrai Painting: A timeless folk art tradition
The Sohrai painting from Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district is a beautiful representation of the region's indigenous artistic traditions and is recognised as an ODOP (One District One Product) item.

Sohrai paintings are known for their use of natural pigments and simple tools. Artists often use brushes made from twigs, rice straw, or even fingers to create intricate designs. They have been traditionally created by women, especially during festivals and harvest seasons. The art is a form of gratitude for the harvest and is believed to bring good fortune for the coming year.

Mother of Pearl Vase: A masterpiece of coastal craftsmanship
The Mother of Pearl (MOP) sea shell vase from Maharashtra is a captivating exam-



ple of fine craftsmanship that combines natural beauty with the rich artisanal tradition of the region.

Mother of Pearl, known for its iridescent shimmer, is sourced from the inner layer of certain mollusc shells. It has been prized in many cultures for its symbolic associations with purity, tranquility, and prosperity.

The vase features a visually appealing mosaic design, with small, carefully cut pieces of Mother of Pearl in various shades of yellow, black, white, and gray. It represents the perfect blend of nature's beauty and human craftsmanship. By using sustainable materials from the sea and traditional techniques, artisans create pieces that are as timeless as they are beautiful.

Warli Painting: A traditional art with a modern identity
Warli painting is a tribal art form originating from the Warli tribe primarily located

in the Dahanu, Talasari and Palghar regions of Maharashtra, India, renowned for its simplicity and deep connection to nature and daily life. This tribal art form is one of the oldest in India, with roots tracing back to around 3000 BCE.

The art was traditionally created by Warli women on the walls of their mud homes during special occasions like weddings and harvest festivals. Through their art, they documented their lifestyle, customs, and rituals in a visual storytelling format that transcended language.

What makes Warli art distinctive is its monochromatic colour scheme. Traditionally, Warli artists used a white pigment made from rice paste, applied on the earthen, red ochre background of the mud walls. Warli painting is more than just an art form—it is a living narrative of tribal culture, spirituality, and life's simple yet profound truths.

Classified

<p>CHANGE OF NAME</p> <p>I. RAJLAKSHMI Sen, daughter of late Sukhendu Banerjee, wife of Pradip Sen, residing at 45A Block C, New Alipore, by Affidavit No. 35837, dated: 30-06-2023 before First Class Magistrate shall be known as Rajlaxmi Sen. Rajlaxmi Sen and Rajlaxmi Sen is the same person.</p>	<p>The Statesman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLASSIFIED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TO BOOK AN ADVERTISEMENT PLEASE CALL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">98308 74087 98303 02169</p>	<p>The Statesman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLASSIFIED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TO BOOK AN ADVERTISEMENT PLEASE CALL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">98307 80924 (SHUBHRO DEV MITRA) 98308 74087 033 4801 8471</p>	<p>All Advertisements are carried Free of cost on our website</p> <p style="text-align: center;">https://epaper</p> <p style="text-align: center;">.thestatesman.com</p>
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Modi govt's 'science push' aimed at realising developed India: Jitendra Singh



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday laid out the government's bold and strategic vision for India's science and technology sectors and said that the Modi government's "science push" is aimed at realising "Viksit Bharat".

From launching a Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund to support Space StartUps to introducing the Bio E3 policy aimed at creating a bioeconomy, the Modi government's major initiatives in the first 100 days of its third term signify its commitment to advancing India's role on the global innovation stage, he said at a media interaction.

Mr Singh highlighted that these initiatives not only bolster India's scientific prowess but also contribute to a sustainable, self-reliant

economy that can withstand global shifts in industry and resources.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasising the speed at which India has embraced major reforms in science and technology. "In the first 100 days of Prime Minister Modi's third term, we have laid the groundwork for transformative changes in science, technology, and innovation," he said.

He pointed out that the Prime Minister's vision prioritises long-term, out-of-the-box initiatives to ensure India's leadership in critical domains like space exploration, biotechnology, and meteorology.

One of the major highlights of Dr. Jitendra Singh's interaction was the announcement of a Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund exclusively for the space sector. This fund, approved by the Cabinet, is part of a broader plan to leverage India's growing base of nearly 300 space startups. In the span of just a few years, India has seen a remarkable shift in its space ecosystem, following the government's decision to open the sector to private players.

Gagangir & Botapathri attacks reveal undetected infiltration across LoC

One of the terrorists involved in the Gagangir incident is a foreign terrorist, who is believed to have crossed the LoC in Tulial around March this year

AGENCIES
SRINAGAR, 27 OCTOBER

Investigation into the Gagangir and Botapathri terrorist attacks has revealed that undetected infiltration had been going on the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K for nearly one year, official sources said.

Seven people including six non-local workers and a local doctor were killed on October 20 when two terrorists attacked the workers camp of an infrastructure project company at Gagangir in Ganderbal district.

Sources said that the investigation into the Gagangir attack has indicated significant gaps in intelligence gathering and in the anti-infiltration apparatus.

"Investigation has revealed that one of the two terrorists involved in the Gagangir attack was a foreign terrorist, but the other is believed to be a local youth from Kulgam



district who joined the terrorist ranks in 2023. The foreign terrorist is believed to have infiltrated from the other side of the LoC into the Valley in not very distant past," sources said.

They added that the involvement of a local youth in such an attack is an indication that the "radicalisation" of Kashmir youth is somehow going on though as a highly secretive operation by the handlers of terrorists.

They said that while the local terrorist involved in the Gagangir attack was equipped with the AK-47 rifle, the foreign terrorist was using the US-made M-5 assault rifle.

"The local terrorist from Kulgam could have been involved in helping the infiltration of the foreign terrorist into the Valley through his outfit from Tulial sector of the LoC in Bandipora district," sources added.

The mountain ridge of Tulial directly leads to the upper reaches of the mountains on the northern side of Gagangir.

"The foreign terrorist could have crossed the LoC in Tulial around March this year," sources said.

They added that the terrorists who carried out the Botapathri attack in Gulmarg resulting in the death of three army soldiers and two civilian porters are believed to have remained holed up in Afarwat Hills atop Gulmarg since August this year.

"The revised strategy adopted by infiltrated terrorists is to lie low till their handlers from across the border order them to carry out some attack," said sources.

Meanwhile, J&K L-G has said that the army, security forces and police have reviewed and redrawn their strategy that will completely dismantle the terror infrastructure.

EAM Jaishankar says success of Central govt's policies linked to state's intentions

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 27 OCTOBER

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar said on Sunday that the success of the Central government's policies is linked to the intentions of the state government implementing it.

Addressing media persons at the BJP office in Mumbai, the EAM said, "In some cases the niti (policy) is different but sometimes the niyat (intention) of the state government is also different" and these factors influence the implementation of projects.

"This is why I stress on a double-engine government as this will speed up implementation of development policies on the ground by state governments," he said, hinting at his call to voters to back the NDA-backed Mahayuti coalition in Maharashtra Assembly elections, slated for November 20.

He said the Central government can brand the country's image on the international stage and attract investment but the final decision by an investor has to be made in coordination with states.

"The success of the proposal to set up 12 new industrial cities will, to a large extent, depend on the positive and sincere participation of state governments," he said, adding that the Central government is looking forward to healthy



competition among state governments on attracting investment to the 12 industrial cities.

With reference to the upcoming Assembly elections in Maharashtra, the EAM said that investors interested in bringing capital to the state expect "policy continuity, (and) predictability" in the state.

He also dismissed allegations that Maharashtra is losing projects to Gujarat, saying, "The investor's decision to set up a project in a particular state is based on merits and the state government's alignment with the Central government policies will only be a positive factor."

Referring to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity between Asia, the Persian Gulf and Europe, EAM Jaishankar said that it is the "most talked" about the corridor in the world and it will have the maximum interface in Maharashtra, bringing highest investment in ports and roads to the coastal state.

Stampede at Bandra Railway Station in Mumbai, 9 injured

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

At least nine people were injured in a stampede at Bandra railway station in Mumbai early on Sunday when passengers tried to board a train heading toward Uttar Pradesh.

The condition of seven people is stable while two have suffered critical injuries.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said the stampede occurred

due to the very heavy rush before Diwali. On platform number 1, where a crowd had gathered for train number 22921 (Bandra-Gorakhpur express train) at Bandra Terminus station a few passengers got injured in the stampede, the BMC said.

The injured passengers were rushed to the hospital on stretchers by Railway Police personnel and other passengers.

A video showed a Railway



cop taking an injured passenger on his shoulder. Another

video showed two men lying on the floor with blood stains on their clothes. A man was also seen sitting on a bench, with his shirt torn off, and looked visibly in pain.

The BMC in an update said the situation is under control at the railway station and the injured have been taken to Bhabha Hospital.

As per the information received earlier from the Medical Officer of the Bandra

Bhabha Hospital, nine patients were reported soon after the incident.

The injured have been identified as Shabir Abdul Rehman (40), Parmeshwar Sukhdar Gupta (28), Ravindra Harihar Chuma (30), Ramsevak Ravindra Prasad Pranjapati (29), Sanjay Tilakram Kangay (27), Divyanshu Yogendra Yadav (18), Mohammad Shareef Shaikh (25), Indrajith Sahani (19) and Noor Mohammad Shaikh

(18).

Of these Indrajith Sahani and Noor Mohammad Shaikh were admitted in critical condition.

However, the Indian Railways ACP said that a total of ten people were injured out of which two have been discharged. The ACP said the incident happened due to the rescheduling of the train.

The Railway PRO said the people tried to board the moving train.

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NOTICE REGARDING SUBMISSION OF DIGITAL LIFE CERTIFICATE
West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (WBSETCL) is introducing the Digital Life Certificate (DLC) submission facility for its Pensioners through the Jeevan Pramaan App, effective from November 1, 2024. This new initiative is aimed to provide convenience to the Pensioners, allowing them to submit their Life Certificates digitally, in addition to the existing method of physical submission of Life Certificates.
ICR: NAR03/2024
Visit the Company's website - www.wbsetcl.in for details.



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The Statesman

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Youth Potential

India's demographic dividend - a youthful, rapidly growing workforce - represents a golden opportunity to bolster economic growth and drive innovation. However, reaping this dividend requires more than surface-level measures like skill training programmes. It demands deeper reform in education, a robust support structure for marginalised youth, and a reimagined economic landscape that bridges India's rural-urban divide and tackles systemic gender disparities. The data reveals an encouraging trend in basic literacy and digital literacy among Indian youth, with around 96 per cent able to read, write, and perform simple arithmetic. While skill programmes are in place, their success is deeply tied to foundational education quality. If India's young workforce lacks solid foundational skills, it's akin to constructing a building on shaky ground. The quality of education needs immediate attention, as underscored by the fact that only a minority over the age of 25 have completed secondary education. This shortfall in basic schooling reveals the barriers youth face even before entering skill training programmes. One pressing issue is the 10 per cent of children aged six to 10 who remain out of school, a significant gap despite the Right to Education Act mandating free, compulsory education. These young lives are at risk of falling through the cracks in a system that prioritises higher-level skills over foundational learning. Every out-of-school child represents a lost opportunity not only for the individual but for the economy. Universal enrollment goals cannot be achieved without targeted interventions that address the unique barriers in rural and underserved communities. Furthermore, gender disparities continue to challenge India's progress. Young women face higher hurdles, with nearly 38 per cent of them not in education, employment, or training (NEET) compared to 9.9 per cent of their male counterparts. The reasons are complex: mobility restrictions, limited transport options, and domestic responsibilities, particularly for married women, add layers of difficulty. For these young women, access to skill programmes alone isn't enough - they need supportive policies that address their unique challenges, from safe transportation to childcare options.

India's youth have shown remarkable adaptability in digital skills. Most are familiar with smartphones and the internet, yet their potential is constrained by limited access to resources like libraries or quality vocational training centres. For young Indians, especially those who are first-generation literates, the journey through education often involves immense family sacrifices. Parents who work tirelessly to educate their children in the hope of upward mobility now face the stark reality of their adult children grappling with joblessness or underemployment. If India is to leverage its demographic dividend effectively, it must acknowledge the complex interplay of education quality, gender equity, and resource access. It's not just about training for skills but creating an environment where skills are relevant, valued, and accessible to all youth, irrespective of gender or geography. Policymakers must focus on addressing these systemic challenges holistically, translating this demographic potential into tangible economic progress and a prosperous future.

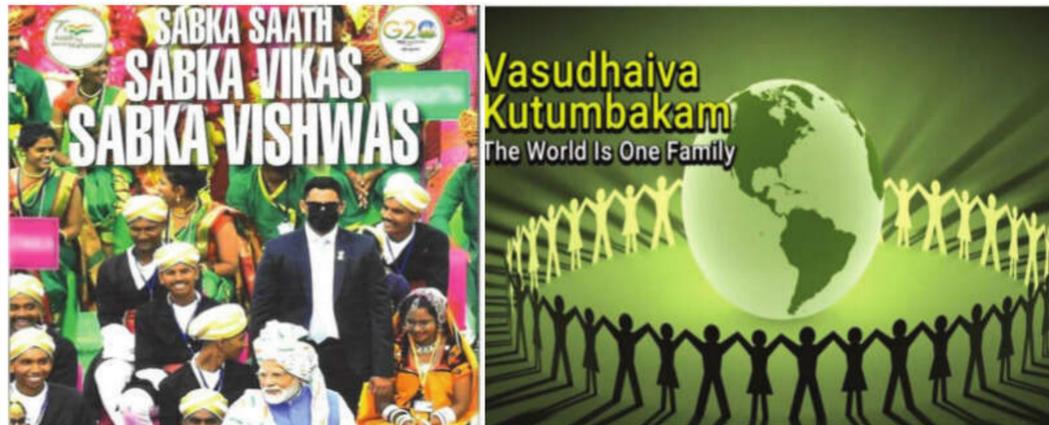
Colonial Reckoning

Australian Senator Lidia Thorpe's recent heckling of King Charles during his address to the country's Parliament has reignited discussions about the British monarchy's role in the ongoing struggles faced by indigenous Australians. Ms Thorpe, a senator of Gunaai, Gunditjmarra, and Djab Wurrung heritage, has long been a fierce advocate for indigenous rights and a vocal critic of colonial legacies. Her actions, while controversial, underline a broader sentiment within many indigenous communities that demands acknowledgment and reparative measures for historical injustices. At the core of Ms Thorpe's protest is a fundamental rejection of the colonial narrative that the monarchy represents. By asserting that King Charles is "not my king," she articulates a powerful statement about sovereignty and identity. This sentiment resonates with many indigenous Australians who feel the scars of colonisation are still fresh and profound. The British settlement led to widespread dispossession, cultural dislocation, and ongoing systemic inequalities that are evident in health, education, and social outcomes for First Nations peoples. Ms Thorpe's calls for a treaty highlight a crucial gap in Australia's approach to reconciliation. Unlike other Commonwealth nations that have established treaties with their indigenous populations, Australia has yet to address this fundamental issue, leaving many indigenous Australians feeling marginalised in their own land. The lack of a treaty not only signifies a failure to recognise indigenous rights but also perpetuates a cycle of disempowerment and exclusion. Ms Thorpe's insistence on this point serves as a reminder that reconciliation must go beyond mere symbolism; it requires tangible commitments to rectify historical wrongs.

The recent referendum on a Voice to Parliament, which sought to constitutionally recognise indigenous Australians, further underscores the complexities surrounding these discussions. Ms Thorpe's opposition to the Voice reflects a significant faction within indigenous communities that believes such measures could dilute the push for genuine sovereignty. The resounding "no" vote in the referendum illustrates a disconnect between political initiatives and the aspirations of many indigenous Australians. For Ms Thorpe, the Voice represented an assimilationist approach rather than a step toward true self-determination. However, Ms Thorpe's approach has not garnered unanimous support among indigenous leaders. Some, like Mr Allira Davis, advocate for a conciliatory stance, suggesting that respect for the monarchy can coexist with the push for recognition and treaty. This divergence in perspectives illustrates the diversity of thought within indigenous communities regarding how best to navigate the legacies of colonisation. Ultimately, Ms Thorpe's heckling of King Charles serves as a potent symbol of resistance against historical injustices. It calls into question the legitimacy of colonial structures that continue to impact indigenous lives today. While not everyone may agree with her tactics, her message echoes the deep desire for recognition, reparative justice, and a genuine commitment to addressing the ongoing impact of colonisation. Australia stands at a crossroads; it can choose to continue down the path of denial or embrace a future rooted in equity, respect, and recognition for its First Nations peoples.

New Age Malady

Probably, the anger vented on social media is the result of unhappiness of a perpetually dissatisfied people; Aristotle's 'eudaimonia,' when people are prosperous, healthy, and pro-social, seems to have eluded us. Briefly put, a high degree of inequality and lack of quality education and decent healthcare are the bane of our society. The path of vasudhaiva kutumbakam and sabka sath sabka vikas, taken in its true spirit will definitely stop the hatred spreading in our society



There was a time prior to the 21st century when Great Britain, now mostly known as the UK, was really great. The same was true about the US and most of Western Europe but the current century has unveiled a different reality; Western countries are still far richer, but Asia, particularly India and China, are indisputably future world leaders.

With falling birth rates and an iron safety net, few young men and women in Europe or the US are interested in working to their full potential, most work only to fund their next tropical holiday. The intellectual advantage of the West vis-à-vis Emerging Market Economies is almost negligible now; while the West still leads in pure sciences, adaptation of new knowledge is now an Asian monopoly. Digital public infrastructure created in India is being replicated the world over; after Aadhaar and UPI, the latest example is adoption of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) Number model by the National Health Service (NHS) of England.

Yet, this is not the time to crow about our achievements. We are facing similar manpower issues as the West, but in a different form. A dismal employment scenario points to the fact that our manpower potential is not being utilised fully. Add the number of underemployed (which does not figure in Government statistics), particularly in the agricultural sector, and you will have an idea of the tremendous waste of manpower in India.

Manufacturing was supposed to provide jobs to Indian youth; Make in India and Production Linked Incentive Schemes, had been launched by the Government, for this very purpose.

However, after spending lakhs of crores of rupees, we find that additional jobs generated in the manufacturing sector are almost negligible, since most advanced manufacturing processes are now automated. Sadly, unable to earn an honest living, a sizeable number of the educated unemployed find their calling in small crime and digital frauds.

Computerisation of offices and automation of processes in India could have been a force multiplier, but due to lack of intelligent assimilation, we find computers replicating manual processes, with poorly paid outsourced workers unthinkingly feeding data into their laptops, and public delivery still remaining poor. Additionally,

very few Government departments have developed the capability to analyse and translate the terabytes of data in their systems into intelligent information.

However, we have not been slow in adopting the latest Western addiction - social media - which is fast emerging as a tool to trigger social unrest. To recapitulate: most of the riots in the recent past in the UK and US were started and nurtured by social media, the most recent example being the anti-immigrant riots of August 2024 in UK, which were triggered by false viral posts accusing a Muslim migrant of stabbing children. These riots led to attacks on mosques, injuries to protestors and policemen, and general mayhem.

Earlier too, Facebook posts had led to the storming of the US Capitol in January 2021. Concerted looting during the UK Riots of 2011 took place after discussions on Facebook. True, the UK has a long history of anti-immigrant atrocities starting with anti-Semitic riots in York (1190), in London (1263); and on the sea coast (1290), yet social media has to take the blame for most of the riots of the last decade and half.

In India, innumerable man-hours are wasted daily on social media, with many users unashamedly promoting extreme religious views, prejudices and hate speech. Daily slanging matches in WhatsApp groups and on sundry TV channels would easily convince one that Indians have degenerated from being peace-loving, rational beings into some species of Angry Birds - spewing venom, always at each other's throats. Leave alone the unlettered, who unashamedly take extremely aggressive religious stances, applaud police 'encounters' and the razing of people's homes; unseemly belligerence has permeated the minds of leaders of society who abuse their rivals in public, equating them with asses or propose to send them to Gaza, Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Also, hate speech has spawned a new and opposing set of people: those who feel perpetually outraged. Both categories are interchangeable; often those who are outraged today become outraged the day after. Current events

suggest that there are a number of people waiting patiently for opportunities to get outraged. Unfortunately, for the country, the politics of outrage has shifted public attention from bread-and-butter issues like runaway inflation and rampant unemployment. Resultantly, to the exclusion of hunger, poverty and joblessness, current public discourse is steadfastly focussed on religious and cultural differences between communities, and other similar divisive topics.

The dangers of such a narrative are manifest; the communal genie, once out of the bottle, can wreak havoc and reduce our country's stature to that of its neighbours. Also, we would be faced with radicalisation of minorities - the problem presently facing Europe - probably because Europe had done nothing to prevent attacks on religious beliefs as a result of which Europe has a very real problem of religious terrorism on their hands. Another category of WhatsApp warriors is that of the 'historical charlatans' who try to re-write history and attribute all current problems to mis-steps by their bête noirs, who are mostly liberals like Jawaharlal Nehru.

Such people are perpetually in conflict with more rational individuals. More dangerously, lessons of history like the need to remain united will soon be lost, if we refuse to admit that our great civilisation was subjugated by invaders because our erstwhile rulers were not competent enough and busy in feuding amongst themselves. Increasing instances of hate speech have lowered our prestige abroad. Some years ago, intemperate comments against the Prophet made by a BJP spokeswoman, in a TV show snowballed in a major international controversy. In no time, the warm welcome accorded to the Vice-President, who was on an official visit to Qatar, turned frosty and the Indian ambassador had to submit an abject apology.

Another spokesman, who had seconded the spokeswoman, drew similar ire. The Government had to apologise for him also. In a weak defence, the Government attributed the statements to 'fringe elements,' not acknowledging the duo as spokespersons of the ruling

party. It would seem that unacceptable and untenable views, previously expressed furtively, now appear in mainstream discourse. Another instance is the downright abusive language used during the recently concluded elections, when with the eyes of the world on us, top political leaders crossed the limits of decency in their diatribes.

Many have been the instances where the Supreme Court was forced to take note of the malaise of hate speech. In one case, the Supreme Court observed: "Is the State impotent? Can't it take timely action against hate speech mongers? If it can't take (timely action), why do we have a State at all?" The unanswered question before ordinary citizens is: "Whether our public discourse should be so crude and unacceptable that the Indian Government has to apologise to tin-pot sheikhdoms and sundry banana republics? Is it not the duty of every citizen not to bring ignominy on the country? Uniformed forces are exhorted to lay down their lives for the country, but is it not our politicians' concomitant responsibility to avoid words that promote strife within and outside the country?"

Briefly put, the anger vented on social media is the result of unhappiness of a perpetually dissatisfied people; Aristotle's 'eudaimonia,' when people are prosperous, healthy, and pro-social, seems to have eluded us. Briefly put, a high degree of inequality and lack of quality education and decent healthcare are the bane of our society. One can still say that education, health and prosperity are long-term goals, and in the short-term, to augment happiness, the Government and society can promote good social behaviour. But the opposite seems to be the goal of politicians who nurture vote banks by creating divisions in society, through language and religion - promoting a 'we' versus 'they' narrative.

The path of vasudhaiva kutumbakam and sabka sath sabka vikas, taken in its true spirit will definitely stop the hatred spreading in our society. This is not difficult, as Nelson Mandela had said: "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Let us eschew hate and work for peace and harmony."



DEVENDRA SAKSENA
The writer is a retired Principal Chief Commissioner of Income-Tax

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Unwise calls

SIR, The recent calls by political leaders like Chandrababu Naidu and MK Stalin urging people in South India to have more children, while meant to address concerns about demographic imbalances between North and South India, raise issues that have negative implications for the country.

Our politicians, unfortunately, have always been more concerned with preserving their power blocs and privileges than with the larger good of our nation.

India already has the largest population in the world with over 1.44 billion people. Our social indices have fallen to abysmally low levels with high levels of poverty, unemployment, income equality and child malnutrition coupled

with poor access to health care and education.

In the 2024 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 105th out of 127 countries - a fact that should make every Indian's head hang in shame.

What then is the solution to the demographic imbalance? Not by increasing the population in the southern States with their lower fertility rates and better development indicators but by improving economic development in the North, introducing population control measures in northern States based on incentives and education rather than coercion and force and encouraging migration between States to promote a more balanced development for

the country as a whole.

By investing in education, skill development, and balanced re-

gional growth, concerns about demographic imbalances can be addressed without placing undue

strain on resources or families.

Yours, etc., I Gopalakrishnan, Kolkata, 23 October.

LINGUISTIC COSMOS

SIR, I refer to the Editorial "Language Conflict". Demographic and linguistic challenges unfolding in India may likely catapult regional languages in conflict with Hindi. In recent years, there has been a growing and consistent push towards making Hindi the primary language of communication.

Celebrating Hindi Diwas for example contradicts the very idea of India as a polyglot nation, and its unique linguistic-cultural diversity. Some of the biggest decline has been observed in South Indian languages and so the unease regarding Kannada. Inward migration is an additional factor towards this anxiety.

The State Government is making strenuous efforts to make Kannada popular in the state to absorb the immigrants into its 'linguistic cosmos' but with mixed results.

It is natural there is concern over the fact that Kannada is lagging behind in terms of its recognition even though it has the tag of a classical language.

Language is important to understand cultures, and for connecting and building relationships with the local people. Migrants should take pride in learning the State language. Neuroscience researchers say that bilingualism or even multi-linguism has many positive benefits for the brain. I was born in this city and am now an octogenarian. I have never hesitated to learn other languages for personal or professional reasons.

Yours, etc., H N Ramakrishna, Bengaluru, 22 October.

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Joint response

South Korea's National Intelligence Service on Friday disclosed three satellite photos of Russian naval vessels transporting North Korean special forces soldiers. The agency said that the ships transported roughly 1,500 North Korean troops from a North Korean region to the Russian Far Eastern city of Vladivostok from Oct. 8-13. It also confirmed the North has decided to dispatch around 12,000 troops from special operations brigades to support Russia in its war with Ukraine.

Ukraine's Center for Strategic Communication and Information Security on Saturday released a video via its official X account showing what it claimed were North Korean soldiers lining up and receiving uniforms and equipment at a training ground in Russia's Far East region. CNN revealed a copy of questionnaires prepared in Russian and Korean asking North Korean soldiers about the sizes of their uniforms and boots. In the face of mounting evidence that North Korea is sending troops to Russia apparently to fight Ukraine, Pyongyang is keeping silent.

If true, it is the first time North Korea has dispatched ground troops abroad to intervene in an international conflict. The North has previously sent contingents of military advisers, mostly to earn foreign currency, but there is no precedent for a large dispatch of its elite troops to carry out combat missions. North Korea has become a key supplier of artillery shells and missiles to Russia in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine. Now, Pyongyang has gone farther. This is a grave issue that threatens global security. If a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

The Korea Herald

goes to war against Russia in response to the North Korean intervention, the nature of the war will change. It is also hard to exclude the possibility that North Korean military support turns the tide of the war. Russia has reportedly experienced a deepening shortage of soldiers on the front lines due to heavy casualties.

Above all, the North's troop dispatch causes concern because it comes after North Korean leader Kim Jong-un signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin in June in Pyongyang.

Under the treaty, if either Russia or North Korea is attacked and enters a state of war, the other party will provide military and other assistance using all available means.

There is a high likelihood that when they signed the agreement, Kim promised to send not only munitions but also troops in return for food, petroleum and above all, Russian technology essential to upgrading the North's nuclear weapons and missiles.

If the North secures a military surveillance satellite with the help of Russia, it will be able to monitor South Korea and US forces in real time. If the North perfects an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the American mainland, the US nuclear deterrent may be neutralized.

If the North secures a nuclear-powered submarine, security on the Korean Peninsula will be badly shaken. In an emergency, Pyongyang will likely demand the same level of cooperation from Russia. Putin is likely to give Kim what he wants in return for sending troops. The massive troop dispatch indicates that Russia-North Korea ties are moving beyond the provision of rifles, shells and short-range missiles to the level of a blood alliance.

North Korea's recent moves are unusual. It exploded all of the northern parts of the roads and railroads to the South. Kim furthermore defined South Korea as an enemy state and is fortifying the North's land border with the South. Close military cooperation between North Korea and Russia is an urgent threat to South Korean security as well as to the international community.

PERSONAL

WISHING all devotees of St. Jude a very happy Feast Day. — DS.

Closed border, open hearts

SANTHOSH MATTHEW

In a world marked by technological advances and digital communication, boundaries seem to blur, especially when it comes to human relationships. The recent online marriage between Mohammad Abbas Haider, son of BJP councillor Tahseen Shahid from Uttar Pradesh, and Antleep Sara, a Pakistani woman from Lahore, has captured the attention of many, not just for its modern take on tradition but for the powerful message it sends about the potential for human connection to transcend political borders.

At a time when Indo-Pakistani relations remain fraught with tension, this marriage serves as a reminder of the people-to-people ties that continue to flourish despite the political climate. It also highlights the growing need for easing travel, facilitating smoother cross-border interactions, and reviving regional cooperation frameworks like SAARC and SAFTA.

This marriage took place virtually because bureaucratic delays in visa processing, exacerbated by strained Indo-Pakistani relations, prevented the couple from meeting in person. Online platforms provided a temporary solution, but it also underscored the limitations imposed by current political realities. Visa restrictions between India and Pakistan have long been a point of contention, impeding families, couples, and friends who wish to stay connected. Imagine a South Asia where such challenges no longer exist - where visa-free travel is not just a dream, but a reality. This is not unprecedented. India already shares such an arrangement with Nepal and Bhutan, allowing citizens to travel freely across borders, fostering not just familial ties but economic and cultural exchanges.

A similar arrangement between India and Pakistan could revolutionize the relationship between the two countries. Cross-border marriages, much like the one between Abbas and Sara, would no longer be anomalies facilitated by technology, but common occurrences, bringing two historically linked nations closer together.

People-to-people contact has long been seen as a way to soften diplomatic tensions. History is rife with examples of how cultural and familial exchanges have played a crucial role in easing hostility between nations. By allowing citizens more freedom to interact, understand each other's culture, and build personal connections, India and Pakistan could lay the foundation for a future that is more collaborative and less adversarial.

The online marriage between Abbas and Sara is also a timely reminder of the potential that exists within the South Asian region for greater cooperation. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), once a promising regional organization aimed at fostering economic and political cooperation among its member states, has been largely dormant in recent years due to geopolitical tensions, primarily between India and Pakistan.

Saarc, along with the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), could serve as the perfect platform to facilitate not just trade, but also cultural and social exchanges. These regional frameworks were designed to promote cooperation in a variety of sectors, from economic development to healthcare and education. By reviving these platforms, South Asia could harness the collective potential of its member states, including India and Pakistan, to tackle common challenges like poverty, health crises, and climate change.

One way to breathe new life into Saarc would be by creating special provisions for people-to-people contact, particularly for families separated by borders. Saarc could introduce a simplified visa process or even work towards establishing a visa-free regime, allowing citizens to travel across member states with minimal restrictions. This would not only help families like Abbas and Sara's, but it would also promote tourism, enhance business relations, and encourage cultural exchanges.

Beyond easing travel restrictions, there is also a growing call for restoring Pakistan's "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) status with India. India



revoked Pakistan's MFN status in 2019 following the Pulwama attack, dealing a significant blow to trade relations between the two countries. Restoring this status would be a vital step towards economic integration, allowing for smoother trade relations and fostering interdependence between the two economies. Cross-border marriages, much like cross-border trade, thrive in environments where borders are porous, both figuratively and literally.

Economic integration through Safta and MFN restoration could create a more interlinked South Asia, where mutual benefits are prioritized over political hostilities. A shared economy would not only reduce poverty in the region but would also foster peace. Economic ties often create a strong incentive for maintaining stable diplomatic relations. In the European Union, for example, economic interdependence has been a key factor in maintaining peace among member states. South Asia could follow a similar model, using trade and economic cooperation as a bridge to ease political tensions.

The role of technology, particularly in the context of online marriages like that of Abbas and Sara, cannot be overstated. In an era where diplomatic

relations are at a low, technology offers a unique solution for maintaining human connections. The rise of online platforms has enabled couples, friends, and families separated by borders to stay connected. But while technology offers temporary solutions, it is no substitute for actual people-to-people contact. The growing trend of online marriages in the South Asian context shows that technology is filling the gaps left by diplomacy. However, it also emphasizes the need for more permanent solutions.

Governments must recognize that citizens on both sides of the border are eager for closer ties. By leveraging technology alongside political reforms - such as easing visa restrictions, reviving SAARC, and restoring MFN status - India and Pakistan could create a framework for more sustainable, long-term relations.

Celebrity couples like Shoaib Malik and Sania Mirza have long served as symbols of Indo-Pak unity, but their relationship also highlighted the bureaucratic hurdles faced by cross-border couples. The recent separation of Shoaib and Sania has led many to speculate that visa complications and difficulties in travel between the two countries may have added stress to their relationship.

Their experience, much like that of Abbas and Sara, serves as a poignant reminder of the need for easier travel regulations between India and Pakistan. Cross-border marriages are not a new phenomenon. Many families in both countries have relatives on either side of the border, a legacy of the Partition in 1947. Yet, the bureaucratic red tape that exists today makes it difficult for such families to maintain regular contact.

The online marriage of Abbas and Sara is more than just a personal story - it is a symbol of the potential for Indo-Pak relations to improve through people-to-people contact. By reviving Saarc and Safta, restoring Pakistan's MFN status, and creating a visa-free travel system, the two nations can foster not only economic cooperation but also personal connections. In a world where political boundaries often divide, human relationships remind us that we are more connected than we think. The time has come for India and Pakistan to embrace these connections and chart a new path forward—one built on understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Centre For South Asian Studies, Pondicherry Central University.)

OCCASIONAL NOTE

In Assam co-operative societies are making steady progress according to the report just issued for the year 1923-24. The majority are agricultural, and these have risen in number during the last three years from 555 to 642, while their membership has increased from 24,579 to 28,420, and their working capital from Rs. 7,07,211 to Rs. 9,77,578. Each year shows an increase. Reviewing all the societies together, the Registrar, Mr. K. L. Barua, points out that, while the steady but gradual progress achieved since the year 1919 may not satisfy ardent enthusiasts, it is well to remember that until 1919 the movement showed little or no progress in Assam; but since then the number of societies has nearly doubled, the membership has more than doubled, and the working capital has grown from 12 1/4 lakhs to 27.5 lakhs. Thus co-operative credit societies evidently are taking root in Assam as their utility—under the competent direction which is essential—becomes known and appreciated. The non-credit societies, however, have decreased, and experience has shown, according to the report, that most of the stores societies, started with much enthusiasm at the beginning, collapsed through apathy and want of support from members. A stores society, as the Registrar says, can prosper only when cash transactions increase and money is not locked up in credit sales. Neglect of this principle explains most of the failures recorded in Assam.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE RANGE OF RADIO

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "STATESMAN."
SIR,—I noticed, a short while ago, a statement in your paper that concerts broadcasted in Great Britain were picked up by Bombay. I have just received a letter from a member of our Club, from Loyabad, B. N. Ry., stating that he picked up the British broadcasting on the morning of October 13, when several orchestra recitals were clearly heard. Two of our members here in Calcutta also picked up the British broadcasting on the same occasion, which would indicate that atmospheric conditions were favourable to broadcasting at the time. It would be interesting to know what type of receiving set was used in Bombay.

Yours, etc.,
C. C. ARMITAGE,
Hon. Secretary,
Radio Club of Bengal,
Calcutta,
Oct. 17.

SHOPPING AT THE NEW MARKET

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "STATESMAN."
In yesterday's Statesman NEVER AGAIN has made an allegation against the Kabuli fruit-sellers to the effect that he has "heard the most objectionable things said to and at ladies in the Kabuli fruit market."
I, on behalf of the Kabuli fruit-sellers beg most respectfully to protest against the allegation made in this letter, and request NEVER AGAIN to report the case to the Secretary of the Sir S. Hogg Market Trade Association to deal with. Through the columns of the Statesman, I would like to let your readers know that if the allegation be proved we shall try our best to severely punish the guilty person and to turn him out of the Market. We formed the Association to keep the good name of the Market.

A STALL-HOLDER
New Market,
Calcutta, Oct. 23.

HOWRAH BRIDGE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "STATESMAN."
SIR,—I have followed with much interest the articles that have from time to time appeared in your columns on the question of the proposed new Howrah Bridge. I would like to offer a humble suggestion to those who are at present puzzling their brains over this vital problem. It has been my good fortune to have trotted round this jolly little globe of ours to some extent and to have seen most of the bridges on it worthy of note. It has struck me that the conditions prevailing in Calcutta are almost identical with those of Constantinople. It would be of much value if those in authority were to study the Galata Bridge which connects Constantinople with Stamboul, over the Golden Horn. It is a most unique specimen of the floating type with every facility for a tramway, possessing a double track; it also serves as a terminal stage for steamers plying on the Bosphorus from which a large revenue is derived. I was informed while there that this bridge's chief feature was the remarkably low figure for which it was built.

A. GLOBE-TROTTER,
Jhajha, Oct. 22.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

Read literature, not politics

I had a disturbing epiphany.

I subscribe to two newspapers. The place where I live has a library which too receives two newspapers. I have a loving niece who thoughtfully sends me digital versions of a dozen more newspapers. This is not very different from my younger days when our family subscribed to two newspapers, but, thanks to my father's job, we received two more from England and two from the US.

But, I realized, there was a big difference. In those days, I spent little time to scan through the newspapers and devoted much more of my time to read literature. Now I spend much more time reading the news; literature gets far less of my attention. I am not sure how this happened. Perhaps the seductive lure of daily political drama made me stray, but the transition did occur.

I became conscious of it by accident. I was tired one evening, lay on a sofa and casually picked up a book of stories, written by my friend Esha and gifted two summers earlier. In quick succession, I read two stories - one about a lost love and the other about a farmer who lives with a tragic and violent past.

Granted Esha is not Chekhov or Turgenyev. Even then I was instantly transported to a different universe, where remarkable things happen,

uneventful events seem momentous, men love and hate passionately, women suffer and exult fervidly, children get lost and are joyously found again, clouds disperse and moons reappear, the most tragic outcomes are outwitted by the most unforgettable triumphs. I am not a kid, but I felt like the most credulous kid in the hands of an artful sorcerer, my friend the storyteller.

That is what literature is, and that is what I have been short-shrifting. How abysmally foolish of me! How ridiculously shortsighted! I was like an obtuse teacher-mentor telling myself, "Read politics and learn how big things happen. Read economics and learn how people make tons of money. Read science and find out how things work. These are the useful things to learn." I was unwise enough to think 'useful things' are important.

Literature is far more important.

Literature is more important because it is far deeper. Science can tell you how things work; even social sciences can only uncover how people connect, one with another. It is only the arts that go beyond and delve inside those people. And of all the arts it is literature, more than painting, even more than music, that goes the deepest. Into regions of the heart and mind that boggle our understanding.

There is simply no treatise that can raise you to the unbelievable height of The Idiot and push you to the nether depth of Anna Karenina.

Literature can do that because it captures your brain and heart at the same time. You think and feel in a way you have never done before. Without the help of Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, or some other master, you cannot do it again either. It takes you where politics or any other kind of learning cannot take you - far beyond yourself, when you have your first glimpse of the untainted, divine core in you that you had never known. Uneasily you realize that, if only you let literature work on you, you can perceive inner dimensions you didn't even know were extant in you.

We perceive the world in our way and only in our way. Rarely, in unusual moments of epiphany, when our child shivers in terror, or our grandfather bites into a gifted chocolate with a beatific smile, we are able to see with others' eyes. But the great writers, Dickens or Dumas, Flaubert or Faulkner, pull off that magic every other night, on every other page. They won't let us live in peace - the peace of the grave while we are still alive - and show us the world in a thousand ways. We see the life around us no longer just with our mortal eyes, but with the immortal insights of the giants.



Illustration by Debabrata Chakrabarty

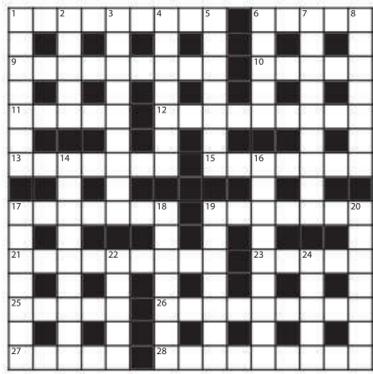
I believe literature is the greatest because, above all, it has no agenda, it does not persuade, it does not try to make me believe anything. It just makes me a child again. As a student, I studied economics. As an executive, I studied organizations. As a diplomat, I studied politics and gobbled newspapers. Maybe I learned something. But none of it compares in thrill - and, I dare say, in value - to the spirit-lifting,

soul-churning, life-altering experience I had when I lay as a kid next to my mother and she read, in her gentle, mellifluous voice, stories after stories, night after night - one luminous miracle after another. That is what literature can do. Only literature.

(The writer is a US-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com)

CROSSWORD

NO-292943



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

- Save dose if arm wobbles about (5,4)
- Wanting bit of rumpy-pumpy? Pester Mark! (5)
- Logic helping the French to accept answer (9)
- Dope and rests taken regularly can be a help (5)
- City were ahead, flipping Hearts pitiful essentially (5)
- English staff in a foreign capital's airfield (9)
- Outgoing old coppers brought into hearing (7)
- Stop heroin without husband's support (7)
- Top record in the charts by foremost of tenors (7)
- Parents down, having half usual amount of energy (7)
- Big cheese in cafe hit, surprisingly (9)
- Her Maj put on crown for a bit of a laugh (5)

DOWN

- A spanner or clip? (7)
- Dope popular with half-cut teller (5)
- Boredom leads to ear's now nightly upper intake (5)
- A shot sunk in a single stroke (4,2,3)
- Want to get rid of bit of dirty mud? (5)
- Sorry Republican felt urge for revolution! (9)
- I'm one mixed up with a lot of passion (9)
- Absolute ecstasy drinking a large cask-fermented beer (4,3)
- One known to question seriousness of court official? (7)
- Flat British countryside (5)
- Conversation is crude so must be changed (9)
- Most violent end (7)
- Old sort of French-style boarding house on Exeter's outskirts (9)
- Police officer in bust making fellow tense Initially (9)
- Hide classified file at base (7)
- Sprint to catch red coach? (7)
- Position of Lord's okay with member (4,3)
- A ruler's working like a dream (7)
- Trust porky husband to eat last of chilli (5)
- Academic must collect old evidence (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

VP Dhankhar praises Centre for enacting new criminal laws

Shift from Danda Vidhan to Nyaya Vidhan is a significant journey unshackling us from colonial legacy, said Dhankhar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, 27 OCTOBER

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday praised the BJP-led government at the Centre for enacting three laws for governing criminal justice that symbolised our unshackling from colonial mindset.

Addressing the audience at a function for inauguration of District Court's AIR library held at the Rajasthan International Centre (RIC) here, he said: "This journey from Danda Vidhan to Nyaya Vidhan is a significant journey unshackling us from colonial mindset and colonial legacy".

Mr Dhankhar said that these three legislations were duly passed after careful analysis.

"I had the good fortune to preside over the Council of States, the House of Elders, the Upper House when these three legislations were passed. A very powerful committee went into each and every

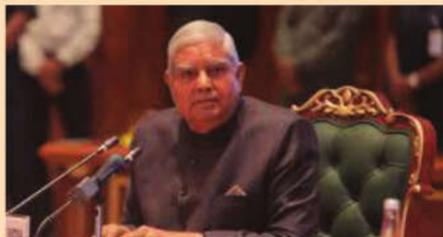
Vice President urges unified approach of 'Bar and Bench'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, 27 OCTOBER

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday expressed full satisfaction with the respect and recognition enjoyed by the Indian judiciary.

Addressing a gathering at a function here on Sunday, Dhankhar said, "We have a robust and independent judiciary. From the Supreme Court down, our judiciary is globally respected for its intelligence, commitment, integrity, and constant availability."

The Vice President said that the phrase "Bar and Bench" comprises two words. However, it signifies a unified sense. For practical purposes, these words reflect a single soul (sense) or meaning. "Therefore, divisive lines should not be drawn, and attempts to



differentiate should not be made," he counselled lawyers. Dhankhar also called for financial support for the judiciary at the district level from business houses, corporate groups, and industrial giants.

and every provision and clause in these laws, he said. Every provision of the laws was finalised after in depth

study and discussion keeping in mind the background circumstances, reasons and objectives of the law. Technology too was duly incorporated for giving scientific dimensions to investigations.

The three new laws that govern criminal justice are the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA). These laws came into effect on July 1 last replacing the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

Mr Dhankhar said that all be aware of the fact that every nation or civilisation is to be assessed and judged on criteria of status and state of affairs in its justice delivery system.

The Vice-President said - "We should also keep in mind that district courts are the basic foundation of our justice administration. Let me say, if we aim at easy access to justice at affordable cost for

all, we have to take care of (interests) of our district courts, magistrates, district judges and young and budding lawyers."

"We have to take care of young lawyers... we have to invest in them. There are good institutions for lawyers and law graduates in the country and it may happen that they may not survive. There should be a collective effort for this," Mr Dhankhar added.

Recalling his connection with the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), Mr Dhankhar said that after he assumed the office of the Vice President, he was invited by the SCBA and he had been its member for quite long.

Earlier, the VP inaugurated the A.I.R. Library and also released "The Lawyers Dairy - 2025".

Mr Dhankhar and his wife Dr Sudesh Dhankhar also planted saplings in the memory of their late mothers, Kesari Devi and Bhagwati Devi at the RIC here.

Nine hotels in Uttar Pradesh, two in Rajasthan, multiple flights get bomb threats

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW/JODHPUR, 27 OCTOBER

Security officials were on their toes after nine premium hotels of Lucknow and two flights arriving in Uttar Pradesh received bomb threat calls on Sunday.

Police here said that the hotels received a threatening email at 10 am today. It said: "There is a bomb in a black bag in the grounds of your hotel. Send 5500 thousand dollars, otherwise I will blow it up with a bomb. Blood will spread everywhere. Any attempt at defusing the bombs will detonate them."

As soon as information about the bomb was received, police and bomb squad teams reached the hotels. After search operations, no suspicious material was detected.

The hotels that received the threats included Hotel Marriott, Saraca Hotel, Piccadilly Hotel, Comfort Hotel, Fortune Hotel, Lemontree Hotel, Clark Awadh Hotel, Hotel Casa and Dayal Gateway hotel.

Two flights coming to UP also received bomb threats. The first flight was Gorakh-

pur-bound from Bengaluru and another was flying from Bengaluru to Ayodhya.

Due to this, an emergency was declared at Gorakhpur and Ayodhya airports.

Separately, intense search operations were launched in Phalodi town in Rajasthan following bomb threats received at two hotels there.

A Rajasthan police spokesman said that top police officers along with bomb disposal team and dog squads rushed from Jodhpur to Phalodi, around 140 km away, after the Lal Niwas and the John Palace hotels there received email messages that warned of bomb blasts, the police said.

Anonymous bomb threats also affected at least two flights bound for airports in Rajasthan. According to police and airport sources, a Vistara flight from Bengaluru landed in Udaipur amid full emergency protocol after authorities received a message of a bomb on board the aircraft.

Likewise, IndiGo flight 6E 133 from Pune to Jodhpur was diverted to Ahmedabad for emergency landing following similar threat call.

Scientist to tag Amur falcons with satellite transmitters to analyse migratory routes

WAARI SINGBUL NETWORK
IMPHAL, 27 OCTOBER

A senior Wildlife Institute of India (WII) scientist will tag satellite transmitters on Amur falcons in Manipur's Tamenglong district early next month to study the migratory routes of the raptors.

The long-distance migratory birds belonging to the falcon family, as seen in previous years, have now landed in large numbers in forest-rich Tamenglong district. A little smaller than a pigeon, Amur falcon is locally known as "Akhuaipuna".

Scientist FofWII, Dehradun, Suresh Kumar, along with the transmitters imported from United Kingdom, will arrive in Tamenglong in the first week of November to carry out the tasks of tagging of the falcons, the district's Divisional



Forest Officer (DFO), Kh Hitler Singh said on Saturday.

Mr Kumar said that first they will select a few Amur falcons and assess their health conditions, adding that "We will then pick two of the healthiest birds to tag with the transmitters." "The flight patterns and migratory routes of the tagged falcons could be examined shortly after

they are released," added the scientist. Considering the one-year lifespan of the transmitters, it is possible to study the tagged falcons' whole migratory cycle during the period, Mr Kumar continued.

A female falcon, which was tagged with transmitter in Tamenglong in 2018, had landed in Somalia after flying continuously for five days and eight hours, and covering 5,700 kms.

On the other hand, diverse measures to protect the falcons have also been taken up by the district authorities and animal lovers' groups of the Zeliangrong-Naga dominated district.

Amur falcons usually arrive in Manipur, mostly in Tamenglong, about 145 km from Imphal, and parts of Nagaland during the first and second week of October from their

breeding grounds in Northern China and South-Eastern Siberia, said wildlife experts.

After roosting for a little more than a month, they leave the state and fly towards the southern and eastern parts of Africa and again roost a short time before flying towards their breeding grounds.

To spread awareness among the people to protect the migratory birds, the forest department supported by local clubs and animal lovers' groups, as done in previous years, will observe "Amur Falcon Festival" in the first and second week of November, Mr Singh said. Last month, district magistrate (Tamenglong), Langshim Dangshawa, as a measure to protect the winged guests during their roosting period in the district, had banned air guns.

Recruitment test of Assam government underway, mobile Internet remains suspended



AGENCIES
GUWAHATI, 27 OCTOBER

Mobile Internet services remained suspended in Assam on Sunday for the smooth, free and fair conduct of government recruitment examination. More than 13 lakh candidates are appearing in

the exam, officials said here. According to an official notification, mobile Internet services were suspended in the state from 8.30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The examination -- Assam Direct Recruitment Examinations (ADRE) -- is being conducted in two shifts -- the

morning shift was from 9 a.m. till noon, and the evening shift is between 1.30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, the voice calls and broadband services were kept active, the official said.

"The written examination is being taken across 28 districts in the state for the recruitment in Grade IV posts in various government departments. More than 13,79,000 candidates applied to appear in the examination which is being conducted in two shifts," the official added.

A senior official said that the state administration wanted the written examination to be conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner to select the best candidates purely on merit. He added that suspension of the services was necessary so that no malpractices took place during

the examination.

He stated, "It has been observed on earlier such occasions that some unscrupulous elements resorted to unfair means using different Mobile Applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X, Youtube and Cam-scanner, etc., which are based on Internet/Wi-Fi/Mobile Data Connectivity and the state government does not want any loopholes in the examination process which might have the potential to create doubt or mistrust in the public mind on the fairness of the recruitment process."

Earlier in September also, the mobile Internet was suspended in the state for the recruitment examination of Grade III posts in the government departments. More than 7 lakh aspirants took part in that examination at 822 test centres across the state.

Shahabuddin's wife Hina Shahab, son Osama join RJD

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Former MP Mohammad Shahabuddin's wife, Hina Shahab, who recently contested the Lok Sabha elections as an independent candidate from Siwan, Bihar, officially joined the RJD on Sunday, along with her son Osama Shahab. They were welcomed into the party by RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav and his son, Bihar's Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav. Tejashwi Yadav emphasised the importance of combating communal forces in Bihar

and maintaining peace and order. "We must stand united to face this challenge," he said.

He remarked that unemployment remains a pressing issue in the state. He also expressed support for Osama Shahab potentially contesting in future elections, stating that he should absolutely contest and the RJD will make the final decision in this regard.

Senior RJD leader Abdul Bari Siddiqui was also present during the event. Taking to social media platform X, Tejashwi Yadav

expressed his optimism, posting photos of the membership ceremony and writing, "We are winning, Bihar is winning."

The Shahabuddin family has deep-rooted ties with the RJD. Osama's father, Mohammad Shahabuddin, held the Siwan parliamentary seat as an RJD MP, while his mother, Hina Shahab, has contested the Lok Sabha elections from Siwan on an RJD ticket multiple times. She last ran as an RJD candidate in 2019, after which her relationship with the party became strained. In response to Hina Shahab's return to the RJD fold, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary criticised the move, stating, "The RJD symbolises criminalisation, hooliganism, and corruption."

Gurukul schools to be revived across UP: Yogi Adityanath

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
VARANASI, OCTOBER 27

Calling Sanskrit the language of science, the chief minister announced a scholarship scheme at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University whereby Rs 586 lakh will be distributed among 69,195 students pursuing Sanskrit studies across the state.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a scholarship scheme at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University here on Sunday whereby Rs 586 lakh will be distributed among 69,195 students pursuing Sanskrit studies across the state.

On the occasion, the chief minister announced his government's plan to revive residential Gurukul-style Sanskrit schools throughout Uttar

Pradesh. Highlighting Sanskrit's potential as a language for science and technical education, he said advocating Sanskrit is akin to advocating humanity. He alleged that previous governments neglected Sanskrit education.

Addressing the gathering, Yogi Adityanath said, "Sanskrit is not just 'Devvani' (language of the divine), but also a scientific language that can apply to modern fields like computer science and artificial intelligence."

Stating that the unique characteristic of Sanskrit makes it simple and technically adaptable, he affirmed his government's commitment to its preservation and promotion.

Explaining the scholarship scheme's significance, the chief minister noted that pre-



viously, only 300 Sanskrit students were eligible for scholarships, that too, with age restrictions. The new initiative aims to extend the benefits of the scholarship to all eligible students. He instructed all students to open bank accounts to ensure direct and

secure transfer of scholarship funds.

Highlighting the significance of Sanskrit and Indian cultural heritage, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced plans to reintroduce the Gurukul education system across Uttar Pradesh.

He said, "This traditional system is the country's true strength and can propel India to global leadership."

The chief minister declared that the Gurukul institutions would receive additional support, with special assistance provided to those offering free accommodations and meals for students. These institutions will also have the autonomy to recruit qualified Acharyas.

Earlier, during his one-day visit to Varanasi on Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offered prayers at Shri Kashi Vishwanath and Kaal Bhairav temples and performed rituals. The Vishwanath Temple Administration welcomed the chief minister, honouring him with a traditional garment (Ang Vastra) and a memento.

TENDER
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT REGISTRAR, HOOGHLY
Chinsurah, Hooghly.
Applications are invited for the appointment of permanent Muslim Marriage Registrar for Haripal and Jangipara Police Station areas of the District Hooghly. Interested Candidates belonging to Shia and Sunni sect of Muslim community, between the age of 25-40 years, having knowledge in Arabic language and Muhammadan Law of Marriage and Divorce may apply. For details visit wbrgistration.gov.in District Registrar, Hooghly

RAIGANJ UNIVERSITY
Notice Inviting E-Tender
Quotations are invited from reputed agencies through online against the procurement.
NIET No.: SSO/RGU-505, Date: 23.10.2024.
Sub: Supply of computer spare parts.
For more details please visit www.wbtenders.gov.in or www.raiganjuniversity.ac.in
Sd/- Registrar

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice No. JHS-N-GSU-08-24 Date: 24.10.2024
E-Tender Notice
By: Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/ GSU/Jhansi, DRM's office, Jhansi, for and on behalf of President of India invite open tender through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following works.
Description of work: Provision of Dual Detection of Track circuit with axle counter on UP/DN main line from VGLJ to BINA section of Jhansi division (17 stations).
Approx Cost: ₹ 192240010.29 Earnest Money: ₹ 1111200/-
Cost of Tender Form: Nil Opening of tender: 15.11.2024 Time 15.00.
Completion period from issue of letter of acceptance: 18 Months
Tender on line can be submitted upto 15.00 hrs. on 15.11.2024. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in (JHANSI DIVISION-GATI SHAKTI, NORTH CENTRAL RLY) 1867/24(DG)
North central railways @CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

Deepotsav 2024: Ayodhya to witness confluence of cultures, traditions, and spirituality

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AYODHYA, 27 OCTOBER

Deepotsav-2024 Ayodhya is set to bring together a grand confluence of spirituality, tradition, and culture, promising a unique celebration this year. Being the first to take place in the sacred presence of Ram-

lala, this Deepotsav in the Ramnagari will be particularly historic. Enhancing the festive glow, a new record is expected with the lighting of 25 lakh earthen lamps across the city, creating a dazzling spectacle of devotion. Officials said here on Sunday that on October 30, Ramkatha



Park will host a vibrant cultural display, featuring the Ramlila of Uttarakhand alongside performances from six countries, showcasing the universal appeal of Ramayana's teachings.

Additionally, a mesmerising Hanuman Chalisa dance drama will be performed on the main stage, adding a spiritual depth to the festivities and captivating the audience with its devotional resonance.

On October 30, the main stage of Deepotsav at Ramkatha Park will showcase a vibrant

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

Ranjana Nev from Saharanpur will bring a dance-filled performance of the Ramayana, while Preeti Singh, known as "Preeti Ke Parindey," from Agra, will present a Hanuman Chalisa dance drama honoring Lord Hanuman.

Maitreya Pahari and his team from Delhi will share a special performance of "Shri Ramcharitmanas Nari Shakti," celebrating women's strength in Ramayanic tales whereas Aparna Yadav from Lucknow will also sing bhajans (devotional songs) on the main stage.

'150th birth anniv of Sardar Patel, Birsa Munda to be celebrated nationwide'

Both faced different challenges but their vision was the same, that of 'unity of the country': PM

AGENCIES
BHUBANESWAR, 27 OCTOBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced that the Union government has decided to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of country's first Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda at the national level, and urged the countrymen to become a part of this campaign.

In the 115th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Modi said in every era India has faced some challenges or the other and in every era extraordinary Indians were born who took on those challenges.

"In today's 'Mann Ki Baat', I will discuss two such great heroes who had courage and farsightedness. The country has decided to celebrate their 150th birth



anniversary. Sardar Patel's 150th birth anniversary year will begin from the 31st of October.

Following that, Bhagwan Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary year will begin from the 15th of November. Both these great souls faced

different challenges but their vision was the same, one that of 'unity of the country', Mr Modi said.

"If you ask me what the most memorable moments of my life have been, I remember many incidents, but there is one moment

In the 115th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Modi said in every era India has faced some challenges or the other and in every era extraordinary Indians were born who took on those challenges.

which is very special. That moment was when on the 15th of November last year, I had gone to Ulihatu village in Jharkhand, the birthplace of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, on his birth anniversary. This visit had a great impact on me. I am the first Prime Minister of the country who has had the privilege of touching my forehead to the soil of this holy land," he said. "At that moment, I not only felt the power of the freedom struggle, but also got an opportunity to connect with the strength

of this land. I realized how the courage to fulfill a resolve can change the destiny of crores of people of the country," the Prime Minister said.

"Although the government has decided to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of these great personalities at the national level, it is your participation that will infuse life into this campaign, make it come alive. I would urge all of you to become a part of this campaign," he said. "Share your thoughts and work related to the Iron Man of India Sardar Patel with the #Sardar150 and the inspirations of Dharti-Aaba Birsa Munda with the #Birsamunda150, thus showcasing this festival to the world. Let us join together in making this festival a celebration of India's unity in diversity, and make it a celebration of progress through heritage," Mr Modi further said.

Nearly 36 lakh people affected due to cyclone 'Dana' in Odisha: Minister Pujari

AGENCIES
BHUBANESWAR, 27 OCTOBER

Odisha Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari on Sunday said that nearly 36 lakh persons were affected due to Cyclone Dana in the state.

Addressing media persons here, Minister Pujari said 35,95,015 persons in 1,671 gram panchayats in 108 blocks and 426 wards in 31 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in 14 districts of the state were affected.

Pujari also said that 8,10,896 people were evacuated from low-lying areas and vulnerable places to cyclone shelters and relief centres in the affected districts of the state before Dana hit Odisha coast on Thursday midnight.

The evacuated people stayed at 6,210 Cyclone Relief Centres, both permanent and temporary, till it subsided completely. As people returned to their homes after the situation was normal, only 1,178 relief centres were operational.



"The people whose houses were partially damaged have been provided with polythene sheets and other necessary items. They can stay in the relief centres and avail the cooked food facility till their houses are repaired completely," said Pujari.

He said power restoration has been completed in affected districts. The RDM minister also said that as many as 28 persons have suffered snakebites during the cyclone.

"The Special Relief Commissioner has written letters to the District Collectors to positively send detailed reports regarding damages to infra-

structure in the 14 affected districts of the state by November 2. The collectors have also been asked to send the report on damages to crops and houses in their respective districts," added Pujari.

He said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi may soon pay an aerial visit to the affected districts and inspect the damages caused by the cyclone.

The Minister further informed that the reports regarding the damage will be sent to the Union government and a Central team will also visit the state to assess the damage.

SMOGGY WEATHER



People walking at Kartavya Path near the India Gate, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ SNS

Baba Ramdev announces plan to establish Acharyakulam in Haryana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The 12th Acharyakulam Annual Celebrations 2023 took place at the Acharyakulam Auditorium of Patanjali Yogpeeth University on Sunday.

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini participated in the event alongside 'Yoga Guru' Baba Ramdev.

During the programme, Baba Ramdev announced plans to establish an Acharyakulam campus in Haryana that will be larger than the one in Haridwar.

He said that a Patanjali-



kulam, 100 times larger, would soon be established in Haryana.

The Haryana Chief Minister praised the move and affirmed that the Haryana government would provide full support to these ambitious projects.

At the event, Baba Ramdev said that it was a dream to open Acharyakulam and Gurukulam in Haryana.

"It will be even grander, more divine, and larger than the Acharyakulam in Haridwar.

I hope that its foundation stone will be laid soon," he said.

"More than 1 lakh children will receive education in the upcoming Acharyakulam. It will focus on character-building and nation-building. I also hope that the Acharyakulam to be established in Haryana will become a major learning centre for the world," he added. On the occasion, Swami Ramdev, Swami Avadheshanand Giri, Finance Minister Premchand Agarwal, Swami Ravindrapuri, Swami Harichetanand, and numerous revered saints and dignitaries were present.

Khap felicitates 1st woman from Palam village to qualify for judicial services

"The largest khap of north India has always encouraged both boys and girls to pursue careers in different fields from education to sports to govt services," Chaudhary Surender said.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Palam 360 Khap, the largest khap panchayat of North India, felicitated Pallavi Solanki on becoming the first woman from Delhi's Palam village to qualify judicial services exam.

Panchayat chief Chaudhary Surender, asserting that the Palam 360 Khap has never discriminated between women and men or boys and girls, lauded Pallavi for bringing the name of her village into the limelight with her achievement.

According to the khap chief, she is the first woman in the history of the Palam village, one of the largest villages of Delhi, to have cleared the judiciary exam of Haryana state and to be appointed as a judicial officer.

He said the largest khap of entire north India has always encouraged both boys and girls to pursue careers in different fields from education to sports to government services.

He said the way a Palam's daughter has brought glory to an entire village and the country at large with her selection for the judiciary service by dint of her talent is a source of inspiration for other youth and girls.

"We, on behalf of Palam 360, extend our congratulations and best wishes to Pallavi and her entire family," he added.

Electronic device working as cell phone jammer seized from Palika Bazar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The Delhi Police have recovered a suspicious-looking electronic device working like a cell phone signal jammer from a shop in the Palika Bazar at the Connaught Place area, sources said on Sunday.

The police said an appropriate action after the verification of the device as the sale of such a mobile network jammer is not legal. Electronic devices such as this can only be used by authorised agencies, especially those undertakings that have permission by the government to supply such items to specific institutions.

Meanwhile, the police have stepped up security measures in the wake of the ongoing festival season. Several initiatives have been undertaken

Electronic devices such as this can only be used by authorised agencies, especially those undertakings that have permission by the government to supply such items to specific institutions.

across all the police districts in the city to thwart any attempt to disturb peace and harmony. Additional police personnel have been deployed for patrolling and checking duties, while market associations, hotels, and malls have been briefed by the concerned police officials on the safety of the people. Police officials are conducting regular checks across marketplaces regarding suspicious activities and objects to rule out every possible bid by the anti-social elements to create a disturbance.

Madhumita Shukla murder case: SC issues notice to U'khand govt

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Uttarakhand government on a plea seeking the premature release of one of the convicts in the 2003 murder case of poetess Madhumita Shukla.

A bench, headed by Justice Abhay S. Oka, sought the response of the Uttarakhand government on a plea filed by Rohit Chaturvedi seeking direction to a competent authority for considering his remission application.

As per the computerised case status, the matter will be heard next on November 14.

Former Uttar Pradesh minister Amaramani Tripathi, his wife Madhumani Tripathi, nephew Chaturvedi, and shooter Santosh Rai were convicted by a fast-track court in Dehradun on October 24, 2007, for the murder. The trial was trans-



ferred from Uttar Pradesh to Uttarakhand on the top court's order.

In December last year, the Supreme Court had ordered that the remission plea be sent to the Uttar Pradesh government as the offence had occurred within its territory. "The State of Uttar Pradesh shall examine the question and take a decision in that regard within a further period of eight

weeks," it said. When the UP government failed to comply with the SC judgment, the state's Additional Advocate General (AAG) was ordered to take instructions.

In September this year, AAG Garima Prasad, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, apprised the top court that an application has been filed seeking recall/modification of the

A bench, headed by Justice Abhay S. Oka, sought the response of the Uttarakhand government on a plea filed by Rohit Chaturvedi seeking direction to a competent authority for considering his remission application.

December 2023 judgment in view of the decision rendered in the second Bilkis Bano case.

In January this year, the Supreme Court held that the Maharashtra government had the jurisdiction to consider the early release application filed by the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case as they were sentenced by a special court in Mumbai, and the Gujarat government was not the appropriate government. It said that the

earlier decision rendered in May 2022 asking the Gujarat government to consider the remission application was obtained by suppressing material aspects and was non-est in the eye of the law.

In a related development, the SC, in August last year, had refused to pass any interim order restraining the early release of Amaramani Tripathi and his wife Madhumani Tripathi on a plea filed by Nidhi Shukla, sister of the deceased poetess. It had issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh government, the Tripathis, and others and said that it would again send the couple behind bars if the complainant's petition succeeded.

The petition challenged the remission order passed by the Uttar Pradesh government directing the duo's early release, though they were sentenced to life imprisonment in the sensational 2003 murder case.

'Phool Waalon Ki Sair': Atishi lauds role of the festival in realisation of social harmony

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Commending the role of the annual fair organised by the flower sellers of Delhi called Phool Waalon Ki Sair, which literally means a procession of the florists, in achieving social harmony bringing, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi said here on Sunday that the festival has upheld the tradition of Delhi's centuries-old Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb (unity in diversity).

Atishi attended the closing ceremony of 'Phool Waalon Ki Sair', a symbol of India's culture and unity as the chief guest. It took place on Saturday night with all its grandeur featuring performances by artists drawn from different parts of India.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister Atishi said, "Phool Waalon Ki Sair' is not a mere festival; it has upheld the tradition of Delhi's centuries-old Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb. In today's times, festivals like Phoolwalon Ki Sair convey the message of humanity and bring people



together."

She further said, "Delhi is a city of people with golden hearts where we don't build walls but share the message of humanity through festivals like 'Phool Waalon Ki Sair'. This festival, which connects people and moves them away from the path of hatred, is the true identity of Delhi's

unity and diversity."

Recalling her childhood experiences, Atishi said, "I grew up in Delhi. My parents were professors at Delhi University, and we lived on the campus. There, festivals were celebrated collectively, and for a long time, I didn't even realise which festival belonged to which religion. Festivals

of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Punjabis, Gujaratis, Marathis, Malayalis, and Tamils were all celebrated together."

Highlighting the unique culture of Delhi, she said, "Delhi's greatest charm is that its people are warm-hearted and do not create divisions. 'Phool Waalon Ki

Sair' is also a festival for the golden hearts, where people of every religion, caste, and language in Delhi come together, enjoy the celebration, and listen to Qawwali throughout the night."

Atishi emphasised that such festivals should remain part of our tradition, and the love shared by people should continue. "It is unfortunate that in today's times, attempts are made to divide people on the basis of language, religion, caste, and community. But ultimately, we are all human beings, and it's essential to recognize ourselves as such."

She urged politicians to stay away from dividing people and focus on their real duties, such as providing good schools, hospitals, better facilities, electricity, and water, securing a bright future for the common man, and offering better job opportunities for the youth.

"If all leaders try to do this," she added, "there would be nothing stopping our country from becoming the world's number one nation."

Atishi also reflected on the efforts of her government over the past decade.

"For the last 10 years, we have worked hard to serve the people of Delhi. Whether it's providing electricity, and water to every street, quality education for the children of even the poorest families, or excellent healthcare, we have tried our best to serve the citizens. We've also facilitated pilgrimage for the elderly and offered free bus travel for women to reach schools, colleges, and workplaces. We have received love and blessings from the people of Delhi so far, and we hope they will continue to support us in the future," she said.

In a post on X, Atishi said, "'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' has preserved the centuries-old Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb of Delhi. I was honored to attend this beautiful and unique festival that promotes humanity, held at Jahaz Mahal in Mehrauli. It is a true representation of Delhi's unity and diversity, connecting people beyond the path of hatred."

NHRC seeks report on Ramayana stage show mishap in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 27 OCTOBER

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Superintendent of Police of Odisha's Ganjam district to furnish a report regarding injury sustained by ten minor children due to electric shock during performance of Ramayana stage show.

The rights panel taking note of human rights lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy's complaint sought for compliance of a report within next eight weeks.

The complainant alleged that the victims, 10 children between the age of 7 to 12 years sustained critical injuries during Ramayana stage show.

The show was being held at Phasiguda village in Diga-

pahandi Tehsil of the district. The villagers had organised the show in view of the inauguration of the village temple. However, some parts of the area near the stage got electrically charged, leaving the kids injured.

"On a perusal of complaint, it is observed that the allegations leveled in the complaint are of serious violations of the human rights of the victims.

Hence, the Registry is directed to send a copy of the complaint to the Superintendent of Police, District Ganjam, Odisha for appropriate action and submitting an Action Taken Report within 8 weeks positively, failing which the Commission would be constrained to invoke coercive steps u/s 13 Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993", the top rights panel stated in an order.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill 22, officials say, as truck ramming near Tel Aviv hurts dozens

'We severely harmed Iran's defense capabilities and its ability to produce missiles that are aimed toward us,' Netanyahu said in first public comments on Iran strikes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEL AVIV, 27 OCTOBER

Israeli strikes on northern Gaza have killed at least 22 people, mostly women and children, Palestinian officials said Sunday, as the Israeli offensive in the hard-hit and isolated north entered a third week and aid groups described a humanitarian catastrophe. Israel said it targeted militants.

meanwhile, said Israeli strikes on the country over the weekend "should not be exaggerated nor downplayed," while stopping short of calling for retaliation, suggesting Iran is carefully weighing its response to the attack.

On Saturday, Israeli warplanes attacked military targets in Iran in response to an Iranian ballistic missile attack earlier this month.

The exchange of fire has raised fears of an all-out regional war pitting Israel and the United States against Iran and its militant proxies, which include Hamas and the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, where Israel launched a ground invasion earlier this month after nearly a year of lower-level conflict.

The Israeli military said Sunday that four soldiers,



including a military rabbi, have been killed in fighting in southern Lebanon, without providing details about the

circumstances. It said five other personnel were severely wounded.

Netanyahu said Sunday that the strikes "severely harmed" Iran and achieved all of Israel's goals.

"The air force struck throughout Iran. We severely harmed Iran's defense capabilities and its ability to produce missiles that are aimed toward us," Netanyahu said in his first public comments on the strikes.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's 85-year-old supreme leader, said "it is up to the authorities to determine how to convey the power and will of the Iranian people to the Israeli regime and to take actions that serve the interests of this nation and country."

Khamenei would make any final decision on how Iran responds. The truck slammed into a bus at a stop as Israelis were returning to work after a week-long holiday, leaving some people stuck under the vehicles. In addition to being near the Mossad headquarters and a

military base, the bus stop is also close to a central highway junction.

Asi Aharoni, an Israeli police spokesperson, told reporters that authorities were treating it as a terror attack. He said the attacker had been "neutralized" without saying if the assailant was dead, and that police are working with Israel's internal security agency to determine the identity of the attacker.

Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said six of the wounded were in serious condition. Palestinians have carried out scores of stabbings, shootings and car-ramming attacks over the years. Tensions have soared since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, as Israel has carried out regular military raids into the occupied West Bank that have left hundreds dead. Most appear to have

been militants killed during shootouts with Israeli forces, but Palestinians taking part in violent protests and civilian bystanders have also been killed. The Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service said that 11 women and two children were among the 22 killed in the strikes late Saturday on several homes and buildings in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya. It said a further 15 people were wounded and that the death toll could rise. It listed the names of those killed, who mostly came from three families. The Israeli military said it carried out a precise strike on militants in a structure in Beit Lahiya and took steps to avoid harming civilians. It disputed what it said were "numbers published by the media," without elaborating or providing evidence for its own account.

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TBILISI, 27 OCTOBER

Georgia's pro-Western opposition disputed the results of the parliamentary election after officials declared Sunday the ruling party led the crucial vote that could decide whether the country remains on the path to joining the European Union or comes under Russian sway.

The Central Election Commission said Georgian Dream won 54.8% of Saturday's vote with almost 100% of ballots counted. Following a divisive pre-election campaign, initial figures suggested turnout is



the highest since the ruling party was first elected in 2012.

Georgian electoral

observers, who stationed thousands across the country to monitor the vote, reported multiple violations and said

the results "do not correspond to the will of the Georgian people."

Georgian Dream has become increasingly authoritarian, adopting laws similar to those used by Russia to crack down on freedom of speech. Brussels suspended Georgia's EU membership process indefinitely because of a "Russian law," passed in June. Bidzina Ivanishvili (photo), the billionaire founder of Georgian Dream who made his fortune in Russia, claimed victory almost immediately after polls closed and said, "It is rare in the world for the same party to

achieve such success in such a difficult situation." He had vowed ahead of the election to ban opposition parties should his party win.

Tina Bokuchava, the chair of the United National Movement opposition party accused the election commission of carrying out Ivanishvili's "dirty order" and said he "stole the victory from the Georgian people and thereby stole the European future." She indicated the opposition would not recognize the results and "will fight like never before to reclaim our European future."

EU leader denounces Russia's 'hybrid war' aiming to destabilise Western Balkan democracies

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PRISTINA, 27 OCTOBER

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Saturday denounced Russia's hybrid attacks against democracies, saying the European Union is fighting daily to debunk misinformation.

Von der Leyen was in Kosovo as part of a trip this week to aspiring EU member states in the Western Balkans to assure them that enlargement remains a priority for the 27-nation bloc.

Von der Leyen denounced Russia's efforts "to destabilize these democracies," adding that Brussels works to unveil propaganda "to the benefit



of a whole region."

"It is possible for us to stand up with the truth and with transparency and with very clear messaging. So here we are really countering a hybrid attack that Russia is leading against democracies," she said at a news conference in the capital, Pristina.

Von der Leyen came to Kosovo from neighboring Serbia, which has close ties

to Russia and has refused to join international sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

She did not mention the 13-year-old EU-led dialogue to normalize ties between Serbia and its former province, Kosovo, instead focusing on EU efforts to develop the region's economy.

Kosovo-Serbia ties remain tense, even 25 years after NATO's 78-day bombing campaign in 1999 that ended a war between Serbian government forces and ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo, which left about 13,000 people dead, mainly ethnic Albanians.

Elon Musk says the real threat to democracy is the people who accuse Trump of endangering it

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LANCASTER, 27 OCTOBER

Tech mogul Elon Musk, speaking at a town hall Saturday night in Pennsylvania to support Republican Donald Trump, played down the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and exhorted supporters to cast votes early in the presidential swing state while describing mail ballots as a "recipe for fraud."

The freewheeling session inside a ballroom at a hotel in downtown Lancaster touched on a dizzying range of topics, from space exploration and the Tesla cybertruck to immigration and the efficacy of psychiatric



drugs. The town hall was part of Musk's efforts through his super PAC to help boost Trump in swing states ahead of the Nov. 5 presidential election against Democrat Kamala Harris.

Musk, whom Trump has vowed to give a role in his administration if he wins next month, spent nearly

two hours taking questions from town hall participants. While most were laudatory and covered a variety of topics, one was particularly pointed: A man wanted to know what Musk would say to concerns from voters that Trump's election could lead to democracy backsliding in the U.S. considering his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

While calling it a fair question, Musk also said that the Jan. 6 attack by Trump's supporters has been called "some sort of violent insurrection, which is simply not the case" — a response that drew applause from the crowd.

'Take our lives seriously,' Michelle Obama pleads as she rallies for Kamala Harris in Michigan



ASSOCIATED PRESS
KALAMAZOO, 27 OCTOBER

Michelle Obama challenged men to support Kamala Harris' bid to be America's first female president, warning at a rally in Michigan on Saturday that women's lives

would be at risk if Donald Trump returned to the White House.

The former first lady described the assault on abortion rights as the harbinger of dangerous limitations on healthcare for women. Some men may be tempted to vote

for Trump because of their anger at the slow pace of progress, Obama said, but "your rage does not exist in a vacuum."

"If we don't get this election right, your wife, your daughter, your mother, we as women will become collateral damage to your rage," Obama said. "So are you as men prepared to look into the eyes of the women and children you love and tell them you supported this assault on our safety?"

The rally in Kalamazoo was Obama's first appearance on the campaign trail since she spoke at the Democratic

National Convention over the summer, and her remarks were searing and passionate in their support of Harris.

"By every measure, she has demonstrated that she's ready," the former first lady said. "The real question is, as a country, are we ready for this moment?" Obama added, "Do not buy into the lies that we do not know who Kamala is or what she stands for. This is somebody who understands you, all of you."

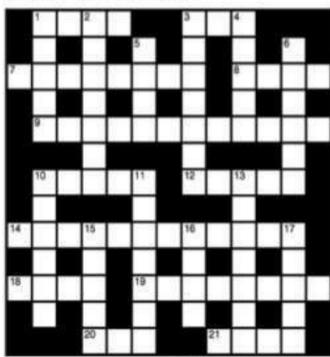
Although Obama has been a reluctant campaigner over the years, she showed no hesitation on Saturday as her speech stretched from

the political to the personal. Obama said she fears for the country and struggles to understand why the presidential race remains close.

"I lay awake at night wondering, 'What in the world is going on?'" she said. Her voice vibrating with emotion, Obama talked about the struggle for women to understand and care for their own bodies, whether it's their menstrual cycles or menopause. And she spoke about the dangers of childbirth, when a split-second decision can mean the difference between life and death for a mother and her baby.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Swindle (Slang) (4)
3 Small vegetable (3)
7 Occur at the same time (8)
8 Disastrous (4)
9 Short of money (4-8)
10 Section of a recording (5)
12 Vestige (5)
14 Unyielding (12)
18 Manage (4)
19 Fated (8)
20 Arithmetical problem (3)
21 Norse god of thunder (4)

DOWN
1 Uncomplaining (5)
2 Loss of memory (7)
3 White-faced clown (7)
4 Make sense (Informal) (8)
(3,2)
5 Partiality (4)
6 Change to ice (6)
10 Minor earthquake (6)
11 Realm (7)
13 Do away with (7)
15 Tartan trousers (5)
16 Thrown (4)
17 Bullock (5)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD
ACROSS
1 Sir, 12 Distinguished, 13 Slab, 14 Supplement, 15 Reliant, 16 Lack, 17 Toucan, 18 Eye, 19 Uliana, 20 Stay, 21 Eir, 22 Auk.
DOWN
1 Sir, 2 Reliant, 3 Challenge, 4 Eye, 5 Uliana, 6 Teonagor, 7 Auk, 8 Able seaman, 9 Able seaman, 10 Able seaman, 11 Able seaman, 12 Able seaman, 13 Able seaman, 14 Able seaman, 15 Able seaman, 16 Able seaman, 17 Able seaman, 18 Able seaman, 19 Able seaman, 20 Able seaman, 21 Able seaman, 22 Able seaman.

BEEBLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalski



NEED TO KNOW

Ambulance
FD Block Association (Amb) 9830452536, 9830181286
Happy Calcuttans 24400160
City Point Nurses Centre 2567-4113, 9831142623
People's Relief Committee 2290-4943/9444

24 hrs Medical Oxygen Delivery
BOC India Ltd. 9831277777

Blood Banks
Ashok Laboratory 24720333
Central Blood Bank 23510619

Life Care 2284-6940
Peoples Blood Bank 2455-5164/5557
RK Mission Seva Pratishthan 2475-3636/39

Police/Fire
Lalbasar (Police Control Room) 22143230
S.P. (North 24-Pgns) 25423005
S.P. (South 24-Pgns) 2479-3333/1311
Bhawani Bhawan 24791761/9, 24791933
Fire Service Station Salt Lake: 2357-5293;

Howrah 2666-8111; Behala 2497-6285

Civic Services
Kolkata Municipal Corporation: 2386-1000
Water: 2543-1602

Calcutta Telephones
Changed Number Announcement 1951.1952.1953

Taxi Refusal
SMS 575756: Complaint and registration

Police Toll Free No. 1073
Transport Deptt. No. 6451-6718

CESC Fault Reporting
1912 and 4403-1912

Trains
Howrah Station Old Complex 1331/1332 (Auto Telephone Numbers), 1310, 2638-7412/3542/2581 (manual).
Sealdah: 2350-3535/3537
Shalimar Station: 2668-1121, Eastern Railway and South-Eastern Railway: 139.

SCRABBLE BRAND G R I A M S

PAR SCORE 110-120
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE®
PENTURNY RACK 1 = 21
IMPOSER RACK 2 = 33
FRAGS RACK 3 = 77
PAR SCORE 100-110
JACKIE'S TOTAL 153

Instructions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each rack. Add points of each letter using scoring directions at right. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All A's are in the Official Scrabble Dictionary and OSW Word (Chambers). A's solution is in the Official Scrabble Dictionary and OSW Word (Chambers). A's solution is in the Official Scrabble Dictionary and OSW Word (Chambers). A's solution is in the Official Scrabble Dictionary and OSW Word (Chambers).

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

9	7	5						
			6	2	7	9	4	
								3
		8						1
		5				8	6	3
	7	4	1			8	5	9
8	4		7		2			5
2							1	7
	3	6						

Difficulty Level ★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

6	3	7	4	2	9	1		
8	7	1	2	4	6	3		
4	2	5	9	8	6	7		
9	8	2	1	7	6	5		
1	7	4	6	8	9	3		
3	2	9	5	7	1	4		
7	5	1	6	4	3	2		
5	9	8	7	2	1	4		
2	8	4	3	1	5	6		

Tropical storm 'Trami' leaves at least 126 dead or missing in Philippines

Dozens of police, firefighters and other emergency personnel, backed by three backhoes and sniffer dogs, dug up one of the last two missing villagers in the lakeside town of Talisay in Batangas province

ASSOCIATED PRESS TALISAY, 27 OCTOBER

The number of dead and missing in massive flooding and landslides wrought by Tropical Storm Trami in the Philippines has reached nearly 130 and the president said Saturday that many areas remained isolated with people in need of rescue.

Trami blew away from the northwestern Philippines on Friday, leaving at least 85 people dead and 41 others missing in one of the Southeast Asian archipelago's deadliest and most destructive storms so far this year, the government's disaster-response agency said. The death toll was expected to rise as reports come in from previously isolated areas.

Dozens of police, firefighters and other emergency personnel, backed by three backhoes and sniffer dogs, dug up one of the last two missing villagers in the lakeside town of Talisay in Batangas



province Saturday. A father, who was waiting for word on his missing 14-year-old daughter, wept as rescuers placed the remains in a black body bag. Distraught, he followed police officers, who carried the body bag down a mud-strewn village alley to a police van when one weeping resident approaching him to express her sympathies.

The man said he was sure it was his daughter, but authorities needed to do checks to confirm the identity of the villager dug up in the

that saw one to two months' worth of rainfall in just 24 hours—overwhelmed flood controls in provinces lashed by Trami.

"The water was just too much," Marcos told reporters. "We're not done yet with our rescue work," he said. "Our problem here, there are still many areas that remained flooded and could not be accessed even big trucks."

His administration, Marcos said, would plan to start work on a major flood control project that can meet the unprecedented threats posed by climate change.

More than 5 million people were in the path of the storm, including nearly half a million who mostly fled to more than 6,300 emergency shelters in several provinces, the government agency said.

In an emergency Cabinet meeting, Marcos raised concerns over reports by government forecasters that the storm—the 11th to hit the Philippines this year—could

make a U-turn next week as it is pushed back by high-pressure winds in the South China Sea.

The storm was forecast to batter Vietnam over the weekend if it would not veer off course.

The Philippine government shut down schools and government offices for the third day on Friday to keep millions of people safe on the main northern island of Luzon. Inter-island ferry services were also suspended, stranding thousands.

Weather has cleared in many areas on Saturday, allowing cleanup work in most areas.

Each year, about 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines, a Southeast Asian archipelago which lies between the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing and flattened entire villages.

Japan's ruling party braces for a blow to its comfortable majority in the lower house in elections

ASSOCIATED PRESS TOKYO, 27 OCTOBER

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's conservative ruling party braced for a blow to its comfortable majority in the lower house of parliament in Sunday's elections amid public rage over the party's financial scandals and discontent over stagnant economy. The results could weaken Ishiba's grip on power, possibly leading Japan into political uncertainty, though a change of government was not expected.

Ishiba took office on Oct. 1, replacing his predecessor Fumio Kishida who resigned after failing to pacify the public over widespread slush fund practices among Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers. Ishiba immediately ordered a snap election in hopes of shoring up support by using his outspoken, reformist image.

Voting began Sunday morning across Japan, where 1,344 candidates, including a record 314 women, are running for office. Polls close



at 8 p.m., with early results expected within hours.

Ishiba has set a goal of retaining 233 seats for the ruling coalition between the LDP and its Buddhist-backed junior partner Komeito, a majority in the 465-member lower house, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament.

Ishiba, in his final speeches Saturday in Tokyo, apologized over his party's mishandling of funds and pledged "to restart as an equal, fair, humble and honest party." He said only the LDP's ruling coalition can responsibly run Japan with its experience and dependable policies.

Once a popular politician

known for his criticism of even his own party's policies, Ishiba has also seen support for his weeks-old Cabinet plunge.

The biggest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, is led by centrist leader Yoshihiko Noda who briefly served as prime minister during the LDP's 2009-2012 descent from power. Noda's party is expected to make significant gains. Noda says Sunday's election is a rare chance for a change of government, which will be the most effective political reform, though his party has trouble finding other opposition groups with which to cooperate.

Lithuanians vote in the final round of parliamentary elections



ASSOCIATED PRESS VILNIUS, 27 OCTOBER

Lithuanians headed to the ballots Sunday in the second and final round of parliamentary elections, with the conservative governing party still in contention despite first-round gains for the left-leaning opposition.

Strict COVID-19 measures during the pandemic, political scandals involving several key members of the Cabinet and an influx of migrants from neighboring Belarus have hurt the popularity of Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte's government, which took office in 2020.

The vote in Lithuania, which borders Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to the west and Belarus to the east, comes at a time when Russia's war in Ukraine is fueling greater fears about Moscow's intentions, particularly in the strategically important Baltic region.

It will set the political tone for the next four years, but

despite a possible shift to the left analysts say there won't be any significant change in Lithuania's foreign policy. The European Union and NATO member is a staunch supporter of Ukraine.

Voters in dozens of electoral districts will choose between the two leading candidates from the first round to complete the new 141-seat parliament, known as the Seimas. The opposition Social Democrats, led by Vilija Blinkeviciute, came out of the first round with an edge two weeks ago, taking 20 of the first 70 seats to be decided. That put them two seats ahead of Simonyte's Homeland Union party.

Commonwealth nations adopt their first ocean declaration

ASSOCIATED PRESS APIA, 27 OCTOBER

Commonwealth countries adopted Saturday their first ocean declaration during their summit held for the first time in the Pacific island nation of Samoa as calls from some of Britain's former colonies for reparatory justice for the trans-Atlantic slave trade grew louder.

The Apia Ocean Declaration was announced during the closing session of the 27th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, or CHOGM, and calls on all 56 Commonwealth nations to protect the ocean in the face of severe climate, pollution and overexploitation. More than half the Com-

monwealth members are small countries like Samoa, many face significant, some even existential, threats from rising seas.

While the environmental threat was foreshadowed as a predominant theme going into the summit, the transatlantic slave trade from Britain's colonial history dominated the discourse through the opening days.

The Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration for One Resilient Common focuses on recognizing maritime boundaries amid sea-level rise, protecting 30% of oceans and restoring degraded marine ecosystems by 2030, and urgently finalizing the Global Plastics Treaty. It also calls for ratifying the high-seas



biodiversity treaty, developing coastal climate adaptation plans, and strengthening support for sustainable blue economies.

Samoa Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa said in a statement released by her office that it was fitting for "our first ocean declaration" to be adopted "in the Blue Pacific continent given climate

change has been recognised as the single greatest threat to the security and well-being of our people."

The Commonwealth represents a third of the world's population, and 49 of its 56 countries have a coastline. The organization says 25 of its members are increasingly impacted by climate change, rising sea levels, growing tem-

peratures and increasing ocean acidity — impacting sea life, ecosystems and the communities that depend upon them.

Mata'afa said the declaration must become "a line in the sand" for the world to collectively transform "ocean exploitation into protection and sustainable stewardship."

Outgoing Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland said in a statement they were "immensely proud of this achievement" which "sets the standard for forthcoming international meetings, generating momentum for ocean protection as we head towards COP29 in Azerbaijan in November, and next year's UN Ocean Conference."

Foreign threats to the US election are on the rise, and officials are moving faster to expose them

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON, 27 OCTOBER

A presidential candidate's phone is hacked. A fake video falsely shows ballots burned in Pennsylvania. National security officials warn that U.S. adversaries may incite violent protests after Election Day.

These developments — all revealed in the past week — show how Russia, China and Iran have increased the pace of efforts to meddle in American politics ahead of next month's election, just as intelligence officials and security analysts had predicted.

At the same time, officials, tech companies and private researchers have adopted a



more aggressive defense by swiftly exposing foreign election threats, highlighting the lessons learned from past election cycles that revealed America's vulnerability to disinformation and cyberespionage.

Officials say the U.S. election system is so secure that no foreign nation could alter the results at a scale necessary to

change the outcome. Nevertheless, authoritarian adversaries have leveraged disinformation and cyberespionage to target campaigns and voters while stoking distrust and discord.

Russia is the most active and sophisticated nation working to manipulate the U.S. election, using fake websites, state-controlled media and unwitting Americans to spread misleading and polarizing content aimed at undermining confidence in elections.

The Kremlin's disinformation apparatus seizes on contentious issues like immigration, crime, the economy or disaster relief. The goal is to weaken the U.S., erode support for Ukraine as it fights off Russian invaders and

reduce America's ability to counter Russia's growing ties to China, North Korea and Iran, officials have said.

Intelligence officials and private security analysts have determined that Russia supports former President Donald Trump, and is using disinformation — sometimes AI-generated — to smear his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump has praised Russian President Vladimir Putin, suggested cutting funds to Ukraine and repeatedly criticized the NATO military alliance.

In one particularly audacious campaign, Russia staged a video that falsely accused Harris of paralyzing a woman in a car crash years ago. Another video made fictitious

allegations against Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

On Friday, the FBI confirmed Moscow's role in creating a third video supposedly showing the destruction of mail ballots in Pennsylvania. Local election officials quickly debunked the video as false. Russia also has tried to pay American influencers who spread the Kremlin's preferred narratives. Last month, U.S. authorities accused two Russian state media employees of funneling \$10 million to a Tennessee company to create pro-Russian content. The company then paid several popular right-wing influencers, who have said they had no idea their work was being supported by Russia.

Supporters of far-right British figure rally as anti-racism demonstrators mount counter-protest

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON, 27 OCTOBER

Thousands of supporters of jailed far-right activist Tommy Robinson marched through London on Saturday as anti-racism demonstrators mounted a nearby counter-protest.

The so-called Unite the Kingdom march — planned by Robinson and supposed to feature him as speaker — led to calls for his freedom after his arrest Friday on a warrant for contempt of court.

"We want Tommy out," the crowd of mostly white men chanted. The sea of marchers toted Union and England flags and some waved "Make America Great" banners as they gathered near a fenced-off statue of former Prime Minister Win-



ston Churchill in the square opposite the Houses of Parliament.

The march was countered by thousands of people organized by the group Stand Up to Racism who held signs saying "Refugees welcome" and "Oppose Tommy Robinson."

Robinson, 41, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, is the founder of the nationalist and anti-Islamist English Defense

League and remains one of the most influential far-right figures in Britain.

He has been blamed for stirring up protests that turned into a week of violent disorder across England and Belfast, Northern Ireland this summer after social media users falsely identified the suspect in a stabbing rampage that killed three young girls in the seaside community of Southport as an immigrant and a Muslim.

Robinson supporters railed against the jailing of hundreds of rioters who assaulted police officers, set cars ablaze, screamed racist epithets and attacked hotels housing asylum seekers. Some participants wore "I am Peter Lynch" badges and one man held a fishing pole with a sign reading "Peter Lynch RIP patriot."

Gang coalition in Haiti spreads violence to Port-au-Prince neighbourhood, setting fire to homes



ASSOCIATED PRESS PORT-AU-PRINCE, 27 OCTOBER

A gang coalition on Saturday reinforced its attacks on one of the few communities in the Haitian capital not under the control of criminal groups, seeking to take it over.

After a week of clashes with the police in the Solino neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, members of the gang coalition, Viv Ansanm, attacked once again, setting fire to several homes, as the national police union warned that the area was almost

under total control of the gunmen.

As morning broke on Saturday, images from social media showed the neighborhood engulfed in smoke and flames. Many people were seen leaving the area with whatever they could carry. Security forces and armed individuals exchanged fire not far from Solino's police base.

"Solino and Nazon almost lost!" said SPNH-17, a national police union, on X Saturday morning. It also demanded the resignation of authorities. Nazon, another neighborhood right by Solino, also came under attack.

Viv Ansanm, which means "Living Together," formed in September 2023 as a coalition of two gang federations that were previously enemies. It was responsible for several attacks on critical government infrastructure in February which eventually led to the resignation of Prime Minister

Ariel Henry.

On Thursday, the gangs also opened fire and hit a U.N. helicopter, forcing it to make an emergency landing in Port-au-Prince, with one U.S. airline Friday temporarily cancelling flights to the capital. Since last week, residents in Solino have been calling radio stations pleading for help as they fled their homes.

In Solino, Garry Jean-Joseph, 33, blamed the police for the ongoing violence. "I left with nothing," he said. "The people of Solino do not understand last night, the conspiracy of the policemen and the Live Together (Viv Ansanm) soldiers."

The resident described how at 2 a.m., a policeman in an armored car told residents to go home and that they would secure the neighborhood. However, shortly afterward residents could hear gangs invading. "The police delivered Solino," he added.

Pope Francis' Catholic church reform process ends without giving more equity to women

ASSOCIATED PRESS VATICAN CITY, 27 OCTOBER

Pope Francis' yearslong process to reform the Catholic Church closed Saturday with recommendations that fell short of giving women more equity as hoped, but reflected the pope's aims for a church that at least listens more to its followers.

In a significant move, the pope said he would not issue a teaching document from the recommendations, which called for women to be allowed all opportunities that Church law already provides while leaving open the contentious question of permitting women to be ordained as deacons.

As a result, it remains unclear what if any authority or impact the synod's final recommendations will have, given the purpose of the exercise was to provide the pope



with specific proposals on reform.

"In this time of war, we must be witnesses to peace" and give an example of living with differences, the pope said in explaining his decision.

Francis said he would continue to listen to the bishops' counsel, adding "this is not a classic way of endlessly delaying decisions."

Deacons perform many of the same functions as priests, such as presiding over baptisms, weddings and funerals, but they cannot celebrate Mass. Advocates say allowing women to be deacons would help offset the shortage of priests. Opponents say it would signal the start of a slippery slope toward ordaining women to the all-male priesthood that Francis

has repeatedly reaffirmed.

Earlier this week, the Vatican's top doctrinal officer, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, told the extraordinary assembly of 368 bishops and laypeople—including women—that Francis had said the moment "is not ripe" for allowing ordination of women as deacons. He did not respond directly to a request to define what would determine "ripeness" for a greater role for women.

The multi-year synod process had sparked great hopes for change, especially for women, who have long complained that they are treated as second-class citizens in the church. Women are barred from the church's highest ministerial positions, yet do the lion's share of the work running Catholic hospitals and schools and passing the faith onto future generations.

Speaking to the synod on Thursday, Fernandez explained that a special working group would continue beyond the closing of the meeting, but that its focus would be on discussing the role of women in the church—not in the diaconate, or the office of deacon. He added that while working with women in previous pastoral roles, "most did not ask for or want the diaconate, which would be cumbersome for their lay work."

The meeting asked for "full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain under-explored." It leaves open "the question of women's access to diaconal ministry."

THUMBNAILS

State Bank of India named 'Best Bank in India' for 2024 by Global Finance Magazine: The State Bank of India (SBI), was recognised as the 'Best Bank in India' for the year 2024 by Global Finance Magazine at its 31st Annual Best Bank Awards event which took place during the side-lines of International Monetary Fund (IMF)/ World Bank (WB) Annual Meetings 2024 at Washington DC, United States. Mr. C.S. Setty, Chairman of SBI, received the award in recognition of the Bank's unwavering commitment to provide exceptional services and promoting financial inclusion nationwide by winning the trust of its customers.

FPI selling in equity crosses Rs 1 lakh crore, Indian market remains resilient

Last week, FPIs pulled out Rs 20,024 crore from Indian equities as main indices, Nifty and Sensex, declined by 2.7 per cent and 2.2 per cent

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 27 OCTOBER

The cumulative foreign portfolio investor (FPI) selling in equity through the Indian stock exchanges stood at Rs 102,931 crore (till October 24), as the market remained resilient.

Last week, FPIs pulled out Rs 20,024 crore from Indian equities as main indices, Nifty and Sensex, declined by 2.7 per cent and 2.2 per cent, respectively.

However, FPI were buyers

in the primary market, and bought shares for Rs 17,145 crore during this period.

Some large IPOs enabled this big primary market investment. Net of the primary market purchase the total FPI sell figure stands at Rs 85,790 crore during this period, according to market experts.

Sustained FPI selling has impacted market sentiments, pulling the Nifty down by 8 per cent from the peak.

According to market experts, FPIs are likely to continue their selling in the near-term since the market



sentiment has turned weak due to the escalation of tensions in the Middle East and the uncertainty regarding the

outcome of the US presidential elections.

FPIs have been sellers on all days in October in the

cash market. The current wave of FPI selling was triggered by the Chinese stimulus measures and the cheap val-

A moderation in valuation, a pickup in earnings in H2 FY25, and an expectation of an RBI rate cut in 2025 will provide support to the market.

uations of Chinese stocks. The elevated valuations in India made India the top choice of FPIs to sell.

Going forward, domestic macros are largely favouring the market with the unveiling of strong Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data and strong economic growth forecast by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for FY25.

The resilience of recent

manufacturing data suggests the plausibility of an economic recovery in H2 FY25, which should encourage investors to accumulate quality stocks, said experts.

According to market watchers, a moderation in valuation, a pickup in earnings in H2 FY25, and an expectation of an RBI rate cut in 2025 will provide support to the market.

9 of top 10 most valued firms lose over ₹2 lakh crore in week

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Last week, nine of the top 10 most valued firms together lost a whopping Rs 2,09,952.26 crore from market valuation. Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries Limited took the biggest hit.

From the top 10 pack, HDFC Bank emerged as the only winner.

Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and LIC.

State Bank of India's market valuation plummeted by Rs 35,117.72 crore to Rs 6,96,655.84 crore, and that of ICICI Bank went lower by Rs 5,280.11 crore to Rs 8,84,911.27 crore.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever eroded by Rs 44,195.81 crore to Rs



5,93,870.94 crore. Reliance Industries' valuation tumbled Rs 41,994.54 crore to Rs 17,96,726.60 crore.

ITC's mcap fell by Rs 5,690.96 crore to Rs 6,02,991.33 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel tanked by Rs 24,108.72 crore to Rs 9,47,598.89 crore.

The mcap of HDFC Bank

jumped Rs 46,891.13 crore to Rs 13,29,739.43 crore.

On Friday, the market faced a significant selloff with Sensex and Nifty dropping nearly 1 per cent.

Sensex was down 662.87 points or 0.83 per cent at 79,402.29, and the Nifty was down 218.60 points or 0.90

per cent at 24,180.80.

The market's fall wiped out nearly Rs 9 lakh crore in market capitalisation in a single day, with the total market value of BSE-listed firms plunging to about Rs 435 lakh crore from Rs 444 lakh crore in the previous session.

RBI Governor receives award for A+ grade in Central Bank Report Cards 2024

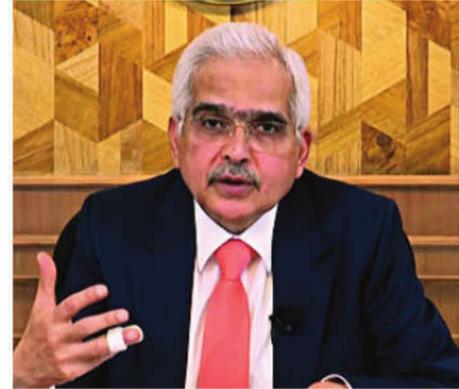
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das received an award for A+ grade in Central Bank Report Cards 2024, for the second consecutive year.

The award, presented by Global Finance in Washington DC, USA, recognised RBI Governor's excellent performance and effective leadership in steering India's apex bank through complex economic challenges.

"Governor @DasShaktikanta received the award for A+ grade in Central Bank Report Cards 2024, for the second consecutive year. Presented by Global Finance at an event held today in Washington DC, USA," RBI said in a social media post on X.

On his visit to Washington DC, the Governor also addressed the Macro Week 2024 organised by the Peterson



Institute for International Economics (PIIE).

He said the global economic dynamics is shifting rapidly, driven by forces such as technological transformation, geo-economic realignments, environmental challenges, and the ongoing global

geopolitical disruptions.

"In this rapidly changing context, it is incumbent upon the G20 and international monetary institutions to adapt swiftly and act decisively to foster global stability and sustainable growth," he added.

He further said the global

co-operation and the integration of global markets, in particular, were instrumental in driving decades of world growth. For many low-income countries and emerging markets, this integration into the global economy was a crucial contributor to their development.

The Central Bank Report Cards, published annually by Global Finance since 1994, grade the central bank governors of nearly 100 key countries, territories, and districts, as well as the European Union, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Bank of Central African States and the Central Bank of West African States.

Grades are based on an "A+" to "F" scale for success in areas such as inflation control, economic growth goals, currency stability and interest rate management.

"A" represents an excellent performance, down through "F" for outright failure.

OMCs' operating profit to drop by 30 per cent in FY25 amid diesel spread softening: Crisil reports

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Oil marketing companies (OMCs) are expected to see a drop in operating profit to USD 12-14 per barrel in fiscal 2025 from USD 20 per barrel last fiscal, Crisil Ratings reported.

The decline is primarily due to discounts on Russian crude oil, a softening of diesel spreads, and inventory losses, according to the market intelligence firm.

The report notes that stable retail fuel prices amid volatile oil prices will help support overall returns for the industry.

Despite the decrease, the operating profit will still be higher than the USD 9-11 per barrel average over the past decade through fiscal 2024. This will partially support OMCs' substantial capital expenditure (capex) requirements.

An analysis of public sector OMCs rated by CRISIL Ratings, covering 90 per cent of the sector, confirms this trend.

OMCs earn through two main channels: refining and marketing. In refining, they earn a gross refining margin (GRM) -- the difference

between the value of refined products at the refinery gate (benchmarked to international prices) and the cost of crude oil used in production. In marketing, they earn a margin on petrol, diesel, and other petroleum products sold.

While oil prices declined by 11 per cent year-on-year to an average of USD 83 per barrel in fiscal 2024, inventory value fluctuations had a marginal impact on overall GRM, reported at USD 12 per barrel. Core margins remained robust due to high diesel spreads, sustained by geopolitical uncertainties that disrupted global energy supply chains, keeping international prices elevated.

Furthermore, stable retail fuel rates contributed to healthy marketing margins (net of operating expenses) of Rs 4 per litre or USD 8 per barrel, resulting in an overall profit of USD 20 per barrel for the year.

Aditya Jhaver, Director at CRISIL Ratings, commented, "GRMs are experiencing a sharp correction this fiscal and are likely to average USD 3-5 per barrel, with diesel spreads stabilising as refineries globally have ramped up production while consumption

has slowed. Additionally, discounts on Russian crude have reduced, and oil prices are projected to average USD 75 per barrel in the second half of the fiscal, down from USD 82 per barrel in the first half, leading to inventory losses. However, marketing margins (net of operating expenses) are expected to remain stable at Rs 4.5 per litre (or USD 9 per barrel), assuming no reduction in retail fuel prices."

The resulting cumulative cash accrual, estimated at Rs 52,000-54,000 crore, will partly support the planned Rs 90,000 crore capex by OMCs.

OMCs continue to invest in capex, primarily for brown-field capacity expansion. Around 80 per cent of the budgeted capex is allocated for meeting domestic demand for petroleum and petrochemical products, with the remainder directed towards product pipelines, marketing infrastructure, and green energy initiatives.

Joanne Gonsalves, Associate Director at CRISIL Ratings, noted, "While profits may moderate year-on-year, the industry is likely to maintain its capex, partly funded by debt.

Market outlook: Q2 results, global cues and FIIs outflows key triggers for next week

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 27 OCTOBER

Market outlook for next week will depend upon the next set of July-September quarter results for fiscal 2024-25 (Q2FY25), the scheduled monthly derivatives expiry, FII activities, geopolitical tensions, US Presidential election polls and global and domestic macro-economic data, as per experts.

Last week, the benchmark indices fell as sharp selling across all the sectors. Profit booking was seen by the foreign investors and retail investors, coupled with muted earnings, tepid demand environment, margin pressure and softer guidance by many companies, contributing to this week's fall.

Nifty 50 ended the week with 2.71 per cent decline at 24,180 and Sensex was down 2.24 per cent at 79,402. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have recorded significant outflows of around Rs 1 lakh crore so far in October, while domestic institutional investors

(DIIs) have bought equities worth approximately Rs 97,000 crore.

Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart said: "The NSE benchmark has broken down from a major head-and-shoulders pattern, increasing the likelihood of a test at its 200-day moving average (DMA) level which is around 23,400. Now the support is at 24,000-23,900, while 24,600-24,700 remains a resistance zone, with 25,000 as a significant hurdle on the upside."

Palka Arora Chopra, Director of Master Capital Services said: "Bank Nifty has experienced a decline of over 7.5 per cent from its all-time highs and fell by 2.51 per cent this week, closing below the 51,100 mark and the 21-week EMA, signalling increased selling pressure. This selling pressure follows disappointing September quarter results from Kotak Bank, AU Bank and IndusInd Bank. For Bank Nifty, immediate support is positioned at 50,200; breaking this level could extend the decline to 49,600."

India's focus on expanding manufacturing sector key to create more formal, quality jobs

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

India will need more formal and quality jobs to ensure better income distribution as it becomes a \$5 trillion economy in the medium term and advances toward its long-term goal of embodying Viskit Bharat or a fully developed nation by 2047, according to a new report.

The government's focus on expanding the manufacturing sector is critical, as transitioning workers into this sector increases the likelihood of securing formal employment, given that 51.4 per cent of manufacturing jobs are salaried ones, according to a Deloitte report.

This shift will significantly enhance income stability for those currently lacking regular wages or social security, particularly in rural areas.

Moreover, the growth of the services sector will aid job formalisation, encouraging workers to pursue formal education and enhance their skills.

The rise in emerging industries such as semiconductors and electronics will further create opportunities that require advanced education



and specialized skills, driving the creation of more high-quality jobs.

"Additionally, India's push toward clean-energy alternatives is set to generate green jobs across various sectors, including energy, agriculture, tourism, and transport," the report mentioned.

One of India's greatest strengths is its young, aspiring population. Researchers have a consensus that the ability to learn decreases with age, suggesting that younger people are more likely to learn new skills relatively quickly.

One study found that younger minds and brains are intrinsically more flexible and exploratory. This positions India to gain rapid and substantial returns from investing

in skill development.

Recognising the potential of youth, the government recently announced initiatives to drive paid internship programs and provide education loans for higher education.

"These will go a long way in improving the employability and skills of the Indian youth. Encouragingly, many states also strive to become significant players in the growing Indian economy, and they are actively investing in formal job creation and skill development," according to the report.

While there may be a lag before the labour market data fully reflects these efforts, the benefits will undoubtedly begin to surface in future surveys.

Centre to launch online portal for grievance redressal of rice millers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi reiterated that the target of 185 LMT fixed for Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2024-25 in Punjab will be fully procured and not a single grain of paddy will be left unprepared.

He also announced that an online portal for grievance redressal of rice millers will be launched shortly so that any difficulties faced by the stakeholders can be addressed promptly.

The Minister was addressing a press conference on the measures taken by the Union Government to ensure seamless paddy and Custom

The Minister told that a study has been assigned to IIT Kharagpur for reviewing the present OTR and Driage incidentals of Paddy and the work is in progress

Milled Rice (CMR) procurement in Punjab State.

Despite a late start, the states are on track now to achieve its target of procuring 185 LMT of paddy by November 2024.

All measures are in place to ensure smooth procurement operations in Punjab for KMS 2024-25. As on 26th



Oct 2024, out of 54.5 LMT arrival in mandis, 50 LMT of paddy had been procured, the minister told.

During KMS 2023-24, out of 65.8 LMT arrival, 61.5 LMT paddy had been procured by 26th Oct 2023. MSP for

Paddy (Common) has seen a substantial rise from Rs 1310 /Qtl in 2013-14 to Rs 2300/Qtl in 2024-25.

A total of 3800 millers have applied for registration out of which 3250 millers have already been allotted the work by the Punjab government. More millers are expected to register and be allotted the work in the next 7 days.

To ensure that adequate storage arrangements are in place for the CMR, several high level meetings have been conducted with the Punjab State Government and follow-up actions are being taken up on priority.

Out of the All-India Movement plan of 34.75 LMT for

the month of October, around 40 per cent, i.e. 13.76 LMT is allocated to Punjab state. At present around 15 LMT storage space is vacant in Punjab.

There has also been demand from the millers for reduction of the existing 67 per cent OTR (Out Turn Ratio from paddy to rice) set by FCI, citing that the paddy variety PR - 126 has been giving 4-5 per cent lesser OTR than usual.

The Minister told that a study has been assigned to IIT Kharagpur for reviewing the present OTR and Driage incidentals of Paddy and the work is in progress. For this purpose, tests are being conducted in different rice procuring states including Punjab.

Silver set to outshine gold with Rs 1.25 lakh target in 12-15 months: MOFSL

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The performance of silver could either match or outperform gold in the medium to long term, as silver prices is expected to reach Rs 1,25,000 per kilogram on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) and USD 40 per ounce on the COMEX within the next 12 to 15 months, the Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL) said.

Silver has shown impressive growth in 2024, recording gains of over 40 per cent year-to-date and surpassing the

Rs 100,000 mark domestically, driven by safe-haven demand and robust industrial usage. The financial services firm further anticipated that the gold prices will reach Rs 81,000 per 10 grams in the medium term and Rs 86,000 in the long term.

On the COMEX, gold is expected to hit USD 2,830 in the medium term and USD 3,000 in the long term, it added. Gold has consistently been one of the best-performing assets in recent years - barring 2021, as the yellow metal has closed in the green on the domestic front since 2016.

When Asomiyas cry against the burden of migrants

NAVA THAKURIA

It was apprehended that the Supreme Court of India would pronounce the verdict in favour of 1971 as the cut-off year to detect and deport all illegal migrants from Assam, as the signatories of Asom Chukti endorsed the same, even though the larger indigenous population expected the judgement in support of the base year, applicable to the whole nation. Accordingly, the apex court on 17 October 2024 ruled in favour of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act 1955, bringing a great relief to All Assam Students' Union (a signatory of the Assam Accord along with the now dismantled Asom Gana Sangram Parishad), Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad, Asom Gana Parishad, Asom Sahitya Sabha, as well as the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), not to speak of the Muslim minority-centric organisations and political parties.

The five-judge Constitution Bench comprising CJI DY Chandrachud, Justices Surya Kant, MM Sundresh, Manoj Misra, and JB Pardiwala upheld the validity of the said section with a 4:1 majority and thus recognised the accord, signed in 1985 to culminate the historic Asom Andolan started in 1979 to detect and deport all illegal migrants from the state. Even though the agitation was initiated with the demand for deporting the illegal migrants with the base year of 1951 and no less than 855 Assamese youths were martyred (also a full academic year was lost by a generation during the movement), the accord agreed to accept all migrants (read East Pakistani nationals) who entered Assam on or before 24 March 1971 as Indians, even though its adjacent north-eastern States have a different cut-off year (same with the national one) to identify the illegal foreigners.

Asom Sammilita Mahasangh, which remained critical to everyone who supported a different cut-off year for Assam, putting the native population in grave danger, challenged the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act in the apex court and expressed complete dissatisfaction over the SC

verdict. Now swimming against the tide, the umbrella organisation of a number of indigenous civil society groups has decided to appeal again before a nine-judge Constitution Bench. Recently, over 100 ethnic bodies came together to term the SC verdict as partisan and brutal to the original inhabitants of Assam. The indigenous leaders also authorised Matiur Rahman of Mahasangh to proceed with the resumed legal battle.

In a recent press meet, organised in Tinsukia of eastern Assam recently, the representatives from All Assam Ahom Sabha, Asom Moran Sabha, All Assam Matak Sanmilan, All Chutia Jati Sanmilan, All Kosh Rajbongshi Sanmilani, Matak Yuva Chatra Sanmilan, Sonowal Kachari Students' Union, Moran Students' Union, and other community leaders expressed frustration over the SC verdict and raised a straight question, if the central government and country's highest court think Assam 'a colony of India' rather than a recognised state. Criticising the government for its irresponsible approach to resolving the appalling issue, the representatives asserted that Assam cannot take the burden of foreigners who came after 19 July 1948.

They also unanimously appreciated Justice Pardiwala for his dissenting judgement holding Section 6A of the Citizenship Act as unconstitutional (acknowledging the magnitude of illegal migrants' menace in Assam). It was reflected in his opinion that different cut-off dates were arbitrary and lacked a rational link in initiatives to protect the state's demographic balance. The unequal treatment can be termed discriminatory against the indigenous people (comprising various communities like Ahom, Moran, Matak, Chutia, Sonowal Kachari, Tiwa, Deori, Kosh Rajbongshi, etc.), which may derive their due political rights.

Though the national BJP leadership expressed satisfaction over the verdict, many local saffron leaders came out with their views as 'unfortunate'. Even Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma did not prefer to term the SC

verdict as historic, and the outspoken politician admitted that a large number of Assamese people wanted 1951 to be the base year to detect the illegal foreigners in Assam too. Meanwhile, urging President Droupadi Murmu for her personal intervention over the matter to address the growing concern of Asomiya people, a senior journalist has sent a letter terming the SC verdict as discriminatory in nature.

Guwahati-based nationalist media person Biswajit Nath put three pertinent questions through the letter dated 24th October- How Assam can have a different cut-off year from the national one, why

the state has been compelled to take the burden of millions of illegal migrants alone, and when the indigenous people of northeast India can expect a concrete initiative from the central government to shift a large volume of those foreigners (now recognised as Indians) to other parts of the country.

Earlier, the Patriotic People's Front Assam (PPFA), while accepting the SC verdict with trepidation, did not rule out the possibility of its revision under existing laws of the land. The forum of nationalist citizens argued that a dissenting judgement (by Justice Pardiwala) may provide lawful space to go for a revision,

as the majority of Asomiyas felt disheartened by the verdict. It also appealed to the BJP leadership to rethink the stand in favour of illegal migrants, putting the Assamese community in an increasingly troubled ambience. With the simple logic of allotting a different cutoff year to Assam (to detect the illegal migrants), the PPFA apprehended that the anti-Bharat elements may find an opportunity to regain their space in the disturbed region.

The forum acknowledged that the deportation of illegal migrants becomes too difficult now-a-days because of various international complications,

but that must not be an official stand. The BJP-led government in New Delhi may also think of shifting a sizable portion of those East Pakistanis to other parts of the country after their due detection. The initiative, though seems to be tricky at first glance, should be adopted meticulously with the support from all Assam-centric organisations so that the future of Assamese people in their own land would not dwindle because of massive demographic changes taking place in the state, it asserted.

The writer is a Guwahati-based special representative of The Statesman



Guwahati: Increasing pollution, waste and flooding

NINGLUN HANGHAL

Guwahati, north-east India's biggest city and a sort of "regional capital" for the seven (now eight with Sikkim added) states, is reported to be the second most polluted city in Central and South Asia. According to the 2023 World Air Quality report by IQAir, Guwahati city records 105.4 micrograms per cubic metre, which is 20 times more than the WHO recommended level of 5 ug/m3. Moreover, the report ranked India as the third-most polluted country in the world after Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The data is said to be exaggerated, though it is obvious that there is a rising concern in the city. Environment experts like Amaryoti Kashyap of ENVIRON, an organisation for environment management, dismiss the IQAir report, saying that it is totally false. While not denying that the city is



not free of pollution, if it remains unchecked and unmonitored, there is certainly a risk and threat.

Meanwhile, the Assam State Pollution Control Board data for Guwahati city for the three years 2020-2022-2023 records 100-139 AQI values with an AQI status recorded as "moderate." It recorded poor quality in 2021 post-Diwali with an AQI value above 200.

The 2024 Pollution Control Board's data shows that from the beginning of the year in January to February, the AQI status is "poor," with a value of 263 and 234 (an index value above 200 is poor). The AQI comes down to "moderate" levels in the months during monsoon seasons.

Arup Kumar Misra, the Chairman of the Pollution Control Board, says that air quality generally drops in winter due to a lack of rainfall and the consequent generation of dust particles from the sand bars along the Brahmaputra River. According to the Pollution Control Board Chairman, the air condition usu-

ally improves from the month of March onwards.

Guwahati, being the largest city in the entire north-eastern region, with a huge influx of economic migrants, is also the main economic hub and is subjected to infrastructural development and urban pressure.

"The ongoing construction and demolition activities, the increase in the number of vehicles, the road dust resulting from vehicular movement, and the weathering of road surfaces have contributed to the rise in PM levels in Guwahati," said Misra.

Another concern arising is waterlogging and flooding in the city after just an hour or more of rain. The whole city gets clogged and jammed during the rainy season.

Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Secretary General and CEO of Aaranyak, a biodiversity conservation organisation, says, "Waterlogging in Guwahati city has increased in recent years and spread to newer areas within the city."

The crux of the problem, according to Talukdar, is the unabated cutting down of the hills

in and around Guwahati, leading to silt filling up the drainage and therefore leading to waterlogging. Moreover, another concern is the conversion of wetlands and filling up of low-lying areas in Guwahati.

The wetlands and low-lying areas hold a sizeable amount of water, preventing waterlogging or flood-like situations. "This is now severely disturbed," says Talukdar. "Although drainage has been made, there are huge gaps."

Talukdar says that to address the Guwahati flood and water logging issue, the existing wetlands and forests in and around the city have to be preserved.

"A sound drainage system plan with the help of a hydrologist is a must," said Talukdar. "The hydrological connectivity of Deepor Beel and other wetlands in Guwahati has to be restored," he emphasised.

Guwahati is a fast-growing city. It generates 550 TPD (approx.) of solid waste, as per Guwahati Municipal Corporation records. Activist and founder member of The Midway Journey, an environment conservation organisation,

Shirshendu Sekhar Das puts it at 643 tonnes of waste per day. Das says, "This creates a huge amount of pollution." Das further mentioned that the garbage dumping site is close to Deepor Beel, a wetland, and a Ramsar site, which he says is not an ideal site at all.

Five years ago, Das and a group of concerned and committed people began cleaning up waste from river banks. All the Guwahati city drains flow into the bank of the Brahmaputra River. "This further adds up to the littering on the riverside," said Das.

Piles of waste lying on the river banks are a common sight, not only in Guwahati but in other towns and cities as well.

Das says, "But the littering in the bank is not as high as the waste that the drains bring down from the city and flow to the river." Garbage and waste get stuck in the banks and other corners of the city. The Guwahati city drainage system empties out into the Brahmaputra River.

Just cleaning the river bank did not help. The problem of collecting a huge pile of garbage causes more problems. The question of what to do with the waste and how to manage the waste arises. And this is an urgent and growing issue in a city like Guwahati with a current population of approximately 1,199,455.

Beginning with 3 households that have reached 1,200 households now, Das and the team collect dry waste that is segregated from the source (that is, the household). Das said that this is further segregated into each category and sent to recycling industries.

Convincing and sensitising the general public is not an easy move. "A lot of work needs to be done to sensitise the general public," said Das. Waste management requires proactive public participation and support.

NGOs are engaged by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation for waste collection in the city. There are 31 wards in the municipality. A total of 450 workers are employed. The NGOs also collect fees from households and commercial establishments.

Though waste is collected on a regular basis—two to three times a week—another problem is that it is

not segregated. Though the general public began segregating in their homes, the waste collectors toss all the garbage bags in a vehicle and dump them all together at the same site. There is a general act of dismissing the activity of segregation by the public, as it does not make any sense.

Generally, household waste is not given much of a priority while commercial centres, like shopping malls, are more focused.

There is the revenue factor as well. Municipal and NGO workers collect Rs 50 from households in a month. This is a small sum. Beside the payment for the workers, there is expenditure involved in terms of transportation and vehicle maintenance. While small amounts are paid by households, the commercial centre pays a higher amount. "Perhaps that is why household waste is not given priority," observed Das. "Municipalities and NGOs earn more from the commercial centres, so households are ignored."

Moreover, according to Das, the municipal workforce is low. He said, "It is difficult to handle the 10-12 lakh population of the city." Guwahati has also had numerous incidents of fire in the dumpsite. Early this year, the dumpsite at Belortol in Paschim Boragaon, near Deepor Beel, was on fire and emitted hazardous smoke for more than a month. Residents are reported to have had a difficult time. Not only the residents of the area are at risk, but the dumpsite is posing a grave threat to the ecology of the Deepor Beel, a wildlife sanctuary and a wetland, Assam's only Ramsar site.

It is not that Guwahati city has no policy or city planning. Beside several others, the Guwahati City Action Plan includes reducing vehicular pollution by introducing CNGs and e-vehicles and controlling dust by creating green buffers. Monitor industrial emissions and open burning.

Several rules and regulations have been laid down in the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The issue, though, is whether these policies and plans are being implemented and monitored proactively with zeal and commitment.

The writer is an independent contributor. All photographs are sourced from The Midway Journey (an environment conservation organisation)



ENGLAND COACH BACKS BEN STOKES

England cricket team head coach Brendon McCullum has backed national team captain Ben Stokes following their 1-2 series loss against Pakistan in the three-match Test series. On Saturday, the Three Lions lost the series decider by nine wickets at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. "That injury was quite significant. He had to work incredibly hard to get back. Being the driven athlete he is, he's all in when he does something. He put in a lot of graft, and subconsciously, it can... not cloud things, but maybe you're not as locked in as you could be in terms of decision-making," McCullum said.

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THUMBNAILS

Shami very likely to make Ranji Trophy return: Though Mohammed Shami was a notable omission from India's squad for the all-important Border-Gavaskar Trophy due to his ongoing ankle injury recovery, there is a likelihood of him joining the team midway after making a return to competitive cricket through last two rounds of the ongoing Ranji Trophy. Shami, who's taken 229 wickets in 64 Tests, made a return to bowling at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru and even bowled at the Indian team nets after they lost the Test series opener to New Zealand by eight wickets, where skipper Rohit Sharma had revealed the pacer had a setback in returning to action due to swelling on his knee.

Sanjay Manjrekar urges Rohit Sharma to come out of "T20 thinking": Former Indian cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar urged Indian skipper Rohit Sharma to come out of "T20 thinking" during Test matches, as shown by usage of left-hand, and right-hand combinations during the loss to New Zealand in the second Test at Pune. Indian batters got the taste of their own medicine as the Kiwi spin attack led by Mitchell Santner, who took 13 wickets in the match, trapped the hosts in their own spin trap and defeated India by 113 runs to secure the series 2-0 with a game to go. During the match, India's use of left-hand and right hand combinations was pretty evident.

La Liga: Barcelona thrash Real Madrid 4-0

With 10 wins and a loss in 11 games and 30 points, Barcelona sits at the top

AGENCIES
MADRID, 27 OCTOBER

A brace from Robert Lewandowski and fine performances from young sensation Lamine Yamal and Raphinha helped Barcelona secure a 4-0 win over Real Madrid in the highly-anticipated 'El Clasico' clash at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday night to extend their lead over arch-rivals in the La Liga points tally.

Kylian Mbappe, playing his first-ever El Clasico match, had his attempts at scoring in each half ruled out for offside in an absolute shocker of a match for Real Madrid at their home venue.

Lewandowski opened the goal tally for himself and Barcelona in the 54th minute thanks to a fine pass from Marc Casado. A fine header just three minutes later stunned the home crowd



into absolute silence. These took his goal tally to 17 this season. However, he missed a chance to score a hat-trick.

After the Polish star, it was 17-year-old Yamal who rifled a shot from an angle over goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, hitting the roof of the net in

the 77th minute to triple the lead. He scored his first-ever El Clasico goal.

Mbappe and Jude Bellingham missed chances to bring Real Madrid into the game. Raphinha finally delivered the fourth and final blow in the 84th minute to end an

embarrassing night for the hosts. With 10 wins and a loss in 11 games and 30 points, Barcelona sits at the top. On the other hand, Real Madrid is at number two with 24 points, after winning seven, drawing three and losing one in 11 matches.

It's a fantastic job, I'm very happy, says Hansi Flick after 4-0 El Clasico victory

AGENCIES
MADRID, 27 OCTOBER

Barcelona's manager, Hansi Flick, expressed his delight following his team's impressive 4-0 victory over Real Madrid in the La Liga El Clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday.

Robert Lewandowski led the charge, scoring twice within two minutes--first in the 54th and then in the 56th--putting Barcelona up 2-0. Seventeen-year-old Lamine Yamal added a third in the 77th minute, with Raphinha sealing the 4-0 win in the 84th.

This victory comes on the heels of Barcelona's 4-1 Champions League win over Bayern Munich earlier in the week.

"I'm delighted to be work-



leave spaces when playing Real Madrid because they have incredible players," he added.

"I think we are doing well. We are sticking to our ideas, and right now, we are fluid, and we want to keep moving forward," Flick noted.

Kylian Mbappe, making his first El Clasico appearance, had scoring attempts in each half ruled offside in a frustrating match for Real Madrid at their home ground.

Both Mbappe and Jude Bellingham missed opportunities to bring Real Madrid back into the game.

With 10 wins and one loss from 11 games, Barcelona leads the table with 30 points. Real Madrid sits in second place with 24 points, following seven wins, three draws, and one loss from 11 matches.

Lewis' ton guides West Indies to eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in 3rd ODI

AGENCIES
PALLEKELE, 27 OCTOBER

An explosive century from comeback man Evin Lewis helped West Indies secure a eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the third and final ODI, earning their first win on Sri Lankan soil after 2005. Sri Lanka still won the

series by 2-1. West Indies won the toss and opted to bowl first in this 23-overs-per side match due to rain.

Openers Pathum Nissanka and Avishka Fernando gave the Lankan Lions a fine start as they were dealing in boundaries against West Indies bowling attack. However, all-rounder Roston Chase put

an end to their partnership at 81 runs, catching and bowling Fernando for 34 in 50 balls, with four boundaries and a six. Another half-century followed between Nissanka and Kusal Mendis, with Nissanka bringing up his fifty in 58 balls, with seven fours and a six. A run-out by Alzarri Joseph put an end to Nis-

sanka's knock of 56 in 62 balls, with eight fours and a six. Sri Lanka was 138/2 in 21.3 overs. Mendis reached his half-century in just 19 balls, with nine fours and a six.

Sri Lanka ended their innings at 156/3 in their 23 overs, with Kusal (56 in 22 balls, with nine fours and a

six) and Charith Asalanka (6 in three balls, with a six). Chase and Sherfane Rutherford took a wicket each for the Windies.

West Indies got a revised target of 195 runs in their 23 overs and openers Brandon King and Evin Lewis. Asitha Fernando got the wicket of Brandon early for 16, with Kamindu Mendis taking a

catch. WI was 36/1 in 5.4 overs. West Indies reached the 50-run mark in 6.4 overs.

Skipper Shai Hope and Lewis put on a 72-run partnership, with WI reaching the 100-run mark in 13.5 overs. Lewis reached his half-century in 34 balls, with five fours and a six. However, Shai was dismissed for 22

runs in WI reached the 150-run mark in 18.3 overs. Lewis reached his fifth ODI hundred in just 61 balls, with nine fours and four sixes. He sealed a memorable win for the Windies alongside Sherfane Rutherford, who scored his third successive half-century in just 26 balls, with four boundaries and three sixes.

Sukant Kadam bags gold and silver at Japan Para Badminton International

AGENCIES
TOKYO, 27 OCTOBER

India's premier para-badminton athlete, Sukant Kadam, delivered an outstanding performance at the Japan Para Badminton International 2024, winning a gold medal in men's singles (SL4) and a silver medal in men's doubles (SL3-SL4) alongside his partner Dinesh Rajaiah.

In a thrilling singles final, Sukant faced off against fellow Indian shuttler Tarun, dominating the match with a powerful 21-12, 21-10 victory. From the onset, Sukant showcased his strong game, maintaining momentum and precision throughout the contest, leaving Tarun with limited opportunities to challenge his gameplay.

In the doubles category, Sukant and Dinesh displayed

grit and determination against India's Umesh Vikram Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav. The duo fought valiantly, recovering from a challenging first set to claim the second 22-20. In a closely contested third set, Sukant and Dinesh ultimately secured the silver, with the final score reading 5-21, 22-20, 16-21.

"Winning gold in singles and silver in doubles at the Japan Para Badminton International 2024 is an incredibly special achievement. Competing with such talented players and representing India on this platform is an honor. My thanks go to my coaches, support team, and the entire para-badminton community for their unwavering support. This victory fuels my motivation to keep pushing the boundaries and striving for excellence in every match," Sukant said.

Rizwan becomes Pak's new white-ball captain

AGENCIES
LAHORE, 27 OCTOBER

Star wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan on Sunday replaced Babar Azam to become Pakistan's new white-ball skipper.

Ahead of Pakistan's limited-overs tours of Australia and Zimbabwe next month, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced Mohammad Rizwan as their new skipper with Salman Ali Agha as vice-captain.

Earlier this month, Babar announced that he would step down as the white-ball captain of the Pakistan cricket team to "prioritise" his performance.

Pakistan has not won a major tournament during Babar's tenure as captain, which began in 2019. Last year, under his leadership, Pakistan was eliminated from the Asia Cup in the Super 4 stage after a two-wicket defeat by Sri Lanka in Colombo. A



few months later, Pakistan's struggles continued as they failed to reach the knockout stage of the ODI World Cup in India.

In a statement on his official X account on October 2, Babar expressed that it had been an honour to lead the Pakistan men's cricket team. He stated that stepping down from the captaincy would give him clarity and allow him to focus on his personal growth and performance.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan announced a 15-member squads for white-ball series tours to Australia and Zimbabwe starting from Novem-

ber 4 onwards, with star batter Babar Azam being rested from the Zimbabwe tour.

Mohammad Rizwan will be available for both Australia matches and the Zimbabwe ODIs but will not participate in the T20Is.

Pakistan will also have three debutants in their midst - Kamran Ghulam, Omair Bin Yousuf and Sufyan Moqim, while Aamir Jamal, Arafat Minhas, Faisal Akram, Haseebullah, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Omair Bin Yousuf, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim, Usman Khan.

ODI squad for Zimbabwe: Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (WK), Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Rizwan (WK), Muhammad Irfan Khan, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shahnawaz Dahani and Tayyab Tahir.

PCL: Noida Eagles claim first win; Sahgal Delhi Demons suffer defeat

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The Pro Cricket League (PCL) delivered a thrilling encounter as the Noida Eagles squared off against the Faridabad Sledgehammers Knights. The Sledgehammers won the toss and elected to field first, a choice quickly challenged by the Eagles' powerful batting line-up.

The Eagles struggled initially, losing both openers within the powerplay. However, Ankit Narwal rose to the occasion with a breath-taking, unbeaten 136 off just 62 balls, featuring 13 fours and 10 sixes. Captain Kuldeep Hudda offered strong support, scoring a brisk 37 off 21 deliveries. The Eagles set a formidable total of 217/6.

In reply, the Sledgehammers faced a daunting task from the outset. Despite high hopes for the in-form Pawan Negi, he was dismissed for a duck, leaving Deepansh Kumar to attempt a



rescue with a valiant 73 off 43 balls. However, the Eagles' Narwal continued his remarkable form, claiming five wickets and stifling the Sledgehammers' chase. The Sledgehammers eventually fell 28 runs short, and Narwal was deservedly named Man of the Match for his all-round excellence.

In the second match of the day, the Sahgal Delhi Demons faltered against the Gurugram Patriots, unable to maintain their winning streak. After the Patriots won the toss and chose to bowl, the Demons' openers set the pace with an explosive 80-

run stand. Abhijeet Sharma led with a blistering 57 off 21 balls, while Mohammad Sultan Ansari added a steady 38 off 31. Vishu Khatri was the highlight, scoring a dynamic 62 off 38 balls, helping the Demons to a formidable 206/3 in their 20 overs.

The Patriots' chase started poorly, slumping to 54/4 by the eighth over. However, captain Harpreet Singh Sunny reignited their hopes with a powerful unbeaten 73 off just 32 balls, ably supported by Sami Shinwari and Prashant Gurjar, who both scored around 40 runs.

Yomif Kejelcha breaks world half marathon record in Valencia



AGENCIES
ZURICH, 27 OCTOBER

Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha broke the world half marathon record at the 2024 Valencia Half Marathon on Sunday, clocking 57:30 at the World Athletics Gold Label road race.

In his sixth appearance over the distance, the 27-year-old world indoor mile record holder set off behind the pacemakers before taking command of the race just before the third kilometre. From then on, he started running at 2:43/km pace in pursuit of the world record.

The two-time world indoor

champion went through 5 km in 13:38, 10 km in 27:12 and 15 km in 40:56. It was at that point when he made a break from Kenyans Daniel Mateiko and Isaia Kipkoeh Lasoi to secure the win, taking one second off the world record set by Jacob Kiplimo in Lisbon three years ago. The world record looked to be under threat for most of the women's race with Agnes Ngetich passing through 10 km in 29:18. But the Kenyan's pace dropped slightly in the second half and she eventually crossed the line in 1:03:03 -- the second-fastest performance in history -- on what was her debut at the distance.

Delhi Kabaddi League unveils official Logo and Trophy

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 OCTOBER

The Delhi Kabaddi League (DKL) on Sunday unveiled its official logo and trophy at a grand ceremony held in New Delhi in the presence of the president of the Delhi State Kabaddi Association Ramesh Bidhuri.

The unveiling ceremony also featured former Indian Kabaddi player and brand ambassador of the Delhi Kabaddi League, Manjeet Chhillar, whose passion for the sport has inspired players and fans alike. This event marks an exciting milestone as DKL brings the spirit of Kabaddi to the forefront of the national capital. The League is slated to get underway in March 2025.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ramesh Bidhuri said that the trophy represents a significant step in the journey to bring Kabaddi to new heights.

"Unveiling of the Delhi



Kabaddi League logo and trophy represents a significant step in our journey to bring Kabaddi to new heights. We are proud to present this league to the people of Delhi and look forward to seeing the enthusiasm it generates," Bidhuri was quoted in a release from DKL as saying.

During the unveiling ceremony, the Delhi State Kabaddi Association also revealed the franchises for the Delhi Kabaddi

League (DKL). Ghazipur Maharajas, Karol Bagh Tusker, Tughlakabad Kings, Royal Chandani Chowk, Shahdara Sardars, Rohini Titans, Chhatarpur Spartans and Najafgarh Warriors are the 8 teams which will feature in the inaugural season.

Commenting on the Delhi Kabaddi League, Manjeet Chhillar said, "As someone who has dedicated my life to Kabaddi, being part of the Delhi Kabaddi League's journey is an honor. I am thrilled to see the sport gain such momentum in Delhi, and I am committed to supporting its growth."

Delhi State Kabaddi Association (DSKA) general secretary Ramesh Singh, DSKA former senior vice president M S Tyagi, League commissioner Niranjan Singh, current vice president Sunil Kumar and United States Premier League (USPL) founder Jaideep Singh also graced the occasion.