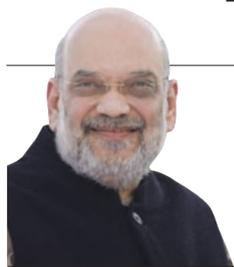


THE ASIAN AGE

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Sikandar lyricist arrested for demanding ₹5cr from Salman in Lawrence Bishnoi's name



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WINDOWS



Five-time world chess champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway plays against Indian Grandmaster Nihal Sarin in Kolkata on Wednesday. — PTI

Delhi's air worst in country, hits 'severe' for 1st time in season

New Delhi: Delhi recorded the country's worst air quality on Wednesday as it turned 'severe' for the first time this season, with the AQI soaring to 418. Of Delhi's 36 monitoring stations, 30 reported air quality in the 'severe' category, the CPCB said. The city also saw its first dense fog and lowest daytime temperature of the season so far. The maximum temperature was recorded at 27.8°C. "Due to lower visibility throughout the day and very dense fog in the morning, the maximum temperature in Delhi (Safdarjung) dropped from 32.8°C on Tuesday to 27.8°C on Wednesday," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. In comparison, the national capital's 24-hour average AQI — recorded at 4 pm every day — stood at 334 on Tuesday. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450 'severe plus'.

Full report on Page 2

Doc stabbed multiple times by patient's son

Chennai: A medical oncologist at the Kalaignar Centenary Super Speciality Hospital here was stabbed multiple times on Wednesday by the son of a patient, over grievances regarding the treatment of his mother at the facility. — PTI

Full report on Page 3

Samantha Harvey wins Booker for space novel

London: British author Samantha Harvey has won the 2024 Booker Prize for her ambitious and beautiful 'Orbital', which becomes the first novel set in space to win the 50,000-pound literary prize selected from a historic shortlist that was dominated by women this year. — PTI

Full report on Page 6

COUNTERPOINT



He is promising golden bowls to all the beggars in his constituency!

SC lays down stiff guidelines to control 'bulldozer justice'

RAKESH K. SINGH
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Likening "bulldozer justice" to a lawless state of affairs where might is right, the Supreme Court on Wednesday laid down strict pan-India guidelines, saying that no property should be demolished without a prior show-cause notice and that those affected must be given 15 days to respond. The apex court termed such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and said that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law". "Our constitutional ethos and values would not permit any such abuse of power and such misadventures cannot be tolerated by the court of law," it said.

The top court said the executive can't assume judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process as it violates the constitutional principle of "separation of powers". Underscoring the importance of home, the top court quoted a Hindi couplet by famous poet "Pradeep" which reads: Apna ghar ho, apna angan ho, Is khwab mein har koi jeeta hai! Insaan ke dil ki yeh chahat hai, ki ek ghar ka sapna kabhi na toote! (It is a dream of every person, every family to have a shelter above their heads. A house is an embodiment of the collective hopes of a family or individuals' stability and security).

THE SC said the executive can't assume judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process as it violates the constitutional principle of 'separation of powers'. The top court also referred to the observation of Lord Denning in the case of Southam vs Smout: "The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail — its roof may shake — the wind may blow through it — the storm may enter — the rain may enter — but the King of England cannot enter... all his force dares not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement." So be it — unless he has justification by law. A bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan termed as "chilling" the sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building, rendering women, children and aged persons homeless overnight, and said: "The chilling sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building, when authorities have failed to follow the basic principles of natural justice and have acted without adhering to the principle of due process, reminds one of a lawless state of affairs, where 'might was right'."

In its 95-page judgment, the top court said: "If the executive acts as a judge... Turn to Page 4"

Modi: Nitish transformed Bihar, ended its 'jungle raj'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/PATNA,
NOV. 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for his role in transforming the state, pulling it out of what he called "jungle raj".

Speaking at a function in Darbhanga after laying the foundation stone for an AIIMS and inaugurating projects worth more than ₹12,000 crores, Mr Modi made a veiled attack on the Congress-RJD combine, without mentioning it by name. The Prime Minister referred to Mr Nitish Kumar, whose JD(U) played a crucial role in enabling the NDA's return to power at the Centre earlier this year, as "lokpriya mukhyamantri" (popular chief minister).

Mr Modi said: "Nitish Babu has set up a model of sushasan (good governance). No praise is too high for him (jitni saraahna ki jaae kam hai) for his contribution in pulling Bihar out of the era of jungle raj. Now, under the NDA's double engine government, the state is making rapid, all-round progress."

He also attacked earlier governments in the state, ruled by the Congress-RJD combine for 15 years before the... Turn to Page 4

Cong plot to end SC-ST-OBC quotas, says PM in J'khand

Modi warns tribals: JMM-Cong trying to help infiltrators
AMRESH SRIVASTAVA
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/RANCHI,
NOV. 13

In a high-energy campaign for the second phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attacked the Congress, a constituent of Jharkhand's ruling coalition, accusing its "shehzada" of conspiring to scrap reservations for people belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities in an attempt to "weaken" them. Addressing two major BJP rallies for second phase of the Assembly election, Mr Modi also alleged that the ruling JMM-led coalition "helped infiltrators become permanent citizens" of the state.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar during the inauguration of developmental projects in Darbhanga on Wednesday. State governor Rajendra Arlekar is also seen. — PTI

Trucks on way to Manipur set ablaze

Were loaded with food, other essentials ■ Centre rushes more forces

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, NOV. 13

A group of armed miscreants on Wednesday set ablaze two trucks on National Highway 37 in Tamenglong district of Manipur. The trucks, loaded with essential items, were set on fire at about 4 am in between Lhangnom and Old Kaiphundi, two Kuki villages under the jurisdiction of Tousem police station. The police said eight trucks carrying essential

commodities, including rice, onions, and potatoes, were heading towards Noney when unknown armed miscreants stopped the vehicles and set two trucks on fire. The remaining six trucks managed to escape the scene. The police said the identity of those responsible for the crime was yet to be ascertained. Meanwhile, the Rongmei Naga Students' Organisation Manipur (RNSOM) issued a statement, alleging that the

two trucks were first fired at with automatic rifles before being set ablaze. The Rongmei Naga Students' Organisation Manipur (RNSOM) has also announced a boycott of all supplies to Kukis in the two districts, blaming the incident on militants from the community. The organisation said that the boycott was a direct result of the Kukis' "irresponsible and violent" actions that have jeopardised the peaceful atmosphere in the Naga areas. It added this was



Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena and others during the "Dilli Deepotsav 2024" at Vasudev Ghat in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

After Uddhav, EC inspects bags of top Maha leaders

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday inspected the bags of several political leaders, including Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde and his deputy Ajit Pawar, in response to severe criticism of the poll body by Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray. "I have only clothes in my bag, no urine pot," Mr Shinde said in an apparent jibe at Mr Thackeray after his helicopter landed in Palghar. The state BJP unit also posted footage on X showing deputy CM Devendra Fadnis' bags being checked by security personnel at Kolhapur airport on November 5. Similarly, Union minister Ramdas Athawale and state Congress president Nana Patole posted videos of EC officials checking their bags. — More on Page 3

66.5% voting in J'khand, 64.72% in Wayanad LS

Second phase in tribal state Nov. 20
AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

With war cries echoing for tribal rights versus infiltrators and development versus corruption, Jharkhand's Assembly elections kicked off on Wednesday, registering a voter turnout of around 66.5% across 43 seats out of 81 in the first phase. Alongside, voting also took place for byelections in 31 Assembly seats across 10 states and the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in Kerala from where Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi is a candidate. Voting for the rest of the seats will go to polls on November 20. With Jharkhand kicking off its polls, leaders across the political spectrum urged people to vote in large numbers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Union home minister Amit Shah and Jharkhand chief minister Hemant

NARENDRA MODI, Rahul Gandhi, Amit Shah and Hemant Soren urged people to come out in big numbers and exercise their franchise with 'full enthusiasm'. Soren urged people to come out in big numbers and exercise their franchise with "full enthusiasm". "Today is the first round of voting in the Jharkhand Assembly elections. I urge all voters to vote with full enthusiasm in this festival of democracy. On this occasion, my heartfelt congratulations to all my young friends who are going to vote for the first time! Remember — 'pehle matdan, phir jalpaan!'" Mr Modi said in a post on X. "Brothers and sisters of Jharkhand, today the first phase of voting is taking place in your state. I appeal to all the voters to cast your vote to... Turn to Page 4

EAM discusses trade, West Asia crisis with Saudi FM

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

India supports an early ceasefire in Gaza and it has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar said on Wednesday. In his opening remarks at a meeting with Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Mr Jaishankar said the situation in West Asia is a

matter of "deep concern", particularly the conflict in Gaza. The external affairs minister described Saudi Arabia as an important force for stability in the region. Mr Jaishankar and Al Saud co-chaired the second meeting of the Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation (PSSC) held under the framework of the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC). — More on Page 3

Trump puts Elon Musk, Vivek Ramaswamy in charge of govt efficiency; sets 2026 deadline

Washington, Nov. 13: US President-elect Donald Trump has announced that Tesla owner Elon Musk and Indian American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy will lead the department of government efficiency, or Doge, aimed at improving governance and curbing wasteful expenditures. Mr Trump has also given them a deadline of July 4, 2026, the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. "I am pleased to announce that the Great Elon Musk, working in

ELON MUSK and Vivek Ramaswamy will lead the department of government efficiency, or Doge, aimed at improving governance and curbing wasteful expenditures. Mr Trump announced late on Tuesday. Mr Ramaswamy, 37, is the first Indian American to have been tapped by Mr Trump into his adminis-

tration beginning January 20 next year. His parents migrated to the US from Kerala and worked at a General Electric plant in Ohio. "I look forward to Elon and Vivek making changes to the federal bureaucracy with an eye on efficiency and, at the same time, making life better for all Americans. Importantly, we will drive out the massive waste and fraud which exists throughout our annual \$6.5 trillion of government spending," said the President-elect. — PTI

Don picks Fox News anchor as DefSecy
Florida: Donald Trump said that he is nominating Fox News host and Army veteran Pete Hegseth to serve as his defense secretary. — AP
John Ratcliffe named as new CIA director
Washington: US President-elect Donald Trump announced that former director of national intelligence John Ratcliffe will head the CIA. — PTI



US President Joe Biden with President-elect Donald Trump at the Oval Office of the White House in Washington DC on Wednesday. — AP

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SHORT TAKES

Gangster held after gunfire with cops

New Delhi: The Delhi police on Wednesday arrested a shooter allegedly involved in the November 4 firing incidents in Nangloi and Alipur areas, the police said. Ramniwas alias Mowgli was held near the Shahbad Dairy area following a brief exchange of fire in which he sustained a gunshot injury on his leg. He is among the three people who opened fire outside a showroom and an office in Nangloi and Alipur as part of an extortion bid. "He (Ramniwas) is undergoing treatment at a hospital," a police officer said, adding, a motorcycle that he was riding and two firearms had been seized from him. Acting on a tip-off, a trap was laid near Khera Canal. As Ramniwas approached on a motorcycle, the police team tried to stop him. "He opened fire at the police and the police team retaliated. One of the bullets hit him in his left leg. He was overpowered and taken to hospital," the police said.

'Women helpline no. 1091 active 24hrs'

New Delhi: The Delhi police on Wednesday said, the women helpline no. "1091" is a round the clock free, emergency helpline service for women in distress. The helpline as well as the WhatsApp No. "7835075012" is operational round the clock to provide immediate assistance and safety net to women in distress. Publicity of the helpline and WhatsApp No. is done on regular basis during self defence training programmes which are conducted by the team of SPUWAC in schools, colleges, jhuggi cluster areas of Delhi. The aim of this helpline is to provide physical, mental, psychological assistance to women in distress and to increase accessibility of the Delhi police to women.

VOLTAS FINED ₹10K FOR SERVICE DEFICIENCY

New Delhi: The Delhi state consumer disputes redressal commission has directed Voltas Ltd to pay ₹10,000 to a consumer for failing to repair an air conditioner (AC) unit, observing that it caused him mental agony and physical distress during the summer months. The commission was hearing the appeal of the consumer seeking enhancement of the ₹2,000 compensation awarded by a district forum for failing to repair or service a defective AC unit. The commission comprising its president Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal and member Pinki noted the evidence before it and said, "We have no hesitation in observing that the deficiency in service from the respondent (Voltas) is limited to the failure of servicing and repairing the AC during the extended warranty period." The order passed on November 6 said expenses for the repairs cannot be paid by the consumer. "We modify the judgment dated January 9, 2020, (of the district forum) to the extent that the respondent is hereby directed to pay compensation of ₹10,000 to the appellant (consumer) for the mental agony and physical distress caused during the hot weather," the commission said. It said Voltas also had to reimburse the consumer for the cost of repairs.

Season's 1st dense fog hits city ■ Visibility zero, 10 flights diverted

Delhi is most polluted in country, air turns severe

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Delhi recorded the worst air quality in the country on Wednesday, with the AQI recorded in the "severe" category for the first time this season, even as the central pollution watchdog attributed the deterioration to an "unprecedentedly dense" fog. The city's 24-hour Air Quality Index (AQI), recorded at 418, up from 334 the previous day, and it may trigger stringent restrictions under the third stage of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to mitigate hazardous conditions.

The commission for air quality management (CAQM), however, said owing to stronger winds, the pollutant concentration is expected to start showing a declining trend Thursday onwards and the AQI is likely to move back to the "very poor" category.

The national capital witnessed its first dense fog and lowest daytime temperature of the season with the visibility dropping to zero at the Delhi Airport. The maximum temperature was recorded at 27.8°C.

Of the 36 monitoring stations in Delhi, 30 reported air quality in the 'severe' category.

Delhi's annual average PM10 and PM2.5 levels were higher by 5 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, between January 1 and November 12 against the year-ago period, the latest CPCB data showed.

Between January 1 and November 12, the national capital recorded 116 days with the air quality index (AQI) in the 'poor,' 'very



Vehicle moves slowly amid a thick layer of smog in New Delhi on Wednesday. — G.N.JHA

L-G nod to deployment of CDVs till Feb 28 next year

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Delhi lieutenant-governor VK. Saxena has approved the redeployment of civil defence volunteers for a period of four months from November 1 to February 28 next year.

Approving the proposal of the AAP government, delayed by about 12 days after he initially passed directions to this effect, Mr Saxena has once again urged the state administration to take concrete

steps on formulating a scheme for bus marshals separately, as he outlined in a letter to the chief minister Atishi on October 24, 2024, and reiterated on November 2, 2024, said a statement from Raj Niwas.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Cabinet, in a unanimous decision, has formally recommended that the L-G immediately reinstate the bus marshal system to maintain women's safety across the city's public transportation network.

Winter Plan: Govt to set up 200-250 tents for homeless

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

The Delhi government has rolled out a Winter Action Plan for the homeless as part of which 200-250 pagoda tents with a capacity to accommodate around 2,000 people will be set up and 16 rescue teams will be formed.

The Delhi urban shelter improvement board (DUSIB) currently operates 197 shelters for the homeless across the city with a total capacity of 7,092 people, according to officials.

An official said the government has allocated ₹3 crore for the implementation of the plan from November 15 this year to March 15, 2025, to provide shelter to the homeless and ensure their comfort.

Sixteen rescue teams will be formed in collaboration with social mobilisation agencies and NGOs.

These teams will operate between 10.00 pm and 4.00 am every day, rescuing homeless individuals found sleeping in open spaces or on roadsides, the plan stated.

Each team will be equipped with a vehicle, a driver, and two attendants. They will transport

recorded at the Indira Gandhi International airport at 8.30 am with the runway visual range varying between 125 and 500 metres at different locations.

As many as 10 flights were diverted and many were delayed at the Delhi Airport on Wednesday morning as low visibility conditions impacted operations, according to officials.

One of the officials said nine flights were diverted to Jaipur and one to Lucknow since 7.00 am due to bad weather on Wednesday.

Many flights were delayed due to low visibility conditions and the situation improved later, another official said.

"Due to lower visibility throughout the day and very dense fog in the morning, the maximum temperature in Delhi (Safdarjung) dropped from 32.8°C on Tuesday to 27.8°C on Wednesday," IMD said.

Winter Plan: Govt to set up 200-250 tents for homeless



Workers walk beside a railway track in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

the rescued individuals to nearby shelters or hospitals if needed, it stated.

According to the plan, a monitoring system will oversee the implementation at multiple levels.

The joint apex Advisory committee (JAAC) led by the DUSIB CEO will coordinate efforts among various departments, including the health department, municipal corporations, and the police.

People can also inform authorities about homeless individuals by uploading photographs on the 'Rain Basera' mobile app which will help track their location via GPS for immediate assistance.

Awareness campaigns will also be launched to inform the public about the available shelters and rescue services. Repair and maintenance of shelters have been prioritised to ensure that the facilities are in good condition for the winter season, the plan stated.

The DUSIB has collaborated with various civic agencies to ensure the availability of basic amenities such as drinking water, electricity and sanitation facilities at all shelters, it said. The shelters will also have facilities like television, hot water, blankets and lockers to store personal belongings, it said.

Najafgarh vendors asked to display names on their carts

Local BJP councillor says move to stop migrants from selling

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Street vendors at a vegetable market in Delhi's Najafgarh will have to display their names on carts in a move the local councillor and the market association claimed was aimed at preventing "illegal" Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants from selling produce there. The market association has also directed the vendors to display their phone numbers on nameplates on the carts, which will have a unique "thela number" issued by it.

The decision to implement this plan was made in a meeting of the market association with the local councillor earlier this month following complaints of unidentified sellers, suspected to be illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar, selling produce.

Local BJP councillor Amit Kharkhari said the move was not meant to discriminate against any-

one or any particular community but for security.

Nazafgarh Vyapar Mandal president Santosh Rajput said, "We have asked all street vendors in the area to submit identity documents such as Aadhaar for verification."

This record will be maintained by the market association and submitted to the local police as well as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) for security purposes, he added.

The association said there were around 300 street vendors who sold farm produce in the market area.

There are plans to complete the verification process by November 20, Mr Rajput said.

"With this move, we aim

to improve the system in the vegetable market. If the names and phone numbers of vendors are displayed on their carts, any buyer with a grievance can report it to us. This will also help us identify illegal migrants selling goods. We will forward their details to the MCD and the police," he said.

Anyone who does not have a nameplate will not be allowed to sell their produce in the market, he added.

Mr Kharkhari said the decision to implement the action was taken unanimously by the market association and locals during a meeting at his office.

"This is not being done to discriminate against anyone or any particular community. This is just for security. We have received several complaints about unauthorised persons operating in the market. Keeping this in mind, the decision was made and is being implemented," he said.

L-G appeals to CM to hike EWS limit to ₹5 lakhs

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Lieutenant-governor VK. Saxena has strongly recommended to the AAP government in Delhi to raise the income limit for EWS category admissions in private schools from 1 lakh to ₹5 lakh in view of vacant seats and higher minimum wages.

Ideally, the income limit should be ₹8 lakh since the students benefitting from the primary and secondary levels are the ones who go on to avail themselves of higher education, Mr Saxena noted in a file related to a Delhi high court matter concerning the income limit.

Mr Saxena said his view was that the threshold limit for admissions to EWS seats in private schools should be in line with the threshold limit of ₹8 lakh applicable in case of EWS admissions in higher education institutions or at least ₹5 lakh as indicated by the high court.

Under the Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009, 25 per cent seats in

private unaided schools are reserved for the students belonging to the economically weaker section (EWS).

The L-G noted that as per the minimum wages notified by the Delhi government, the annual income of skilled workers (₹21,917X12 = ₹2.63 lakh) is more than the proposed threshold limit of ₹2.5 lakh. He cited that as per available data, on average around 11 per cent of the reserved seats for EWS category in the private schools have remained vacant in Delhi in the last three academic sessions.

"These unfilled seats clearly indicate policy failure on the part of the Delhi government by keeping the threshold limit of annual income unrealistic and with restricted coverage," he said.

Because the threshold limit of ₹1 lakh annual income for "child belonging to weaker section" defined by the Delhi government does not precisely reflect the economic hardship faced by the families, he said.

11-yr-old house help rescued after 2 years, couple booked

Noida (UP), Nov. 13: A couple here has been booked for allegedly beating up an 11-year-old girl they employed as a house helper, the police said on Wednesday.

A case has also been registered against the victim's mother, maternal uncle, and aunt for sending the girl to Delhi from Jhar-khand's Bokaro, it said.

The matter came to the fore when neighbours found the girl roaming in the society in a lost state after Shahjahan and his

wife Rukhsana, residents of the Logix Blossom County Society in Sector 137, beat her up over some issue, child helpline supervisor Yuvraj Kumar said.

The neighbours then informed the police about the issue. Following this, sub-inspector Chanchal, posted at the Sector 142 police station, filed a complaint against the couple, he said.

The girl was sent to Delhi to work for the couple, who also hailed from Jharkhand, for a month-

ly salary of ₹5,000.

Mr Kumar further said that when the girl's parents were questioned, they explained that they were very poor and her two brothers lived in Bokaro with their families.

After being medically examined, the girl was presented before a child welfare committee, which later informed the police that the couple used to beat the minor and force her to do household chores.

— PTI

Cong plot to end SC-ST-OBC quotas: PM in J'khand

Continued from Page 1 government in Jharkhand and he would come to attend the oath ceremony.

"The Congress has dangerous intentions. The Congress 'shehzada' is conspiring to scrap reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs. The prince's father had declared reservation as slavery, bonded labour but he was later defeated in elections. His father had issued advertisements to remove reservations... We will thwart any such conspiracy," Mr Modi said, referring to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his father and former PM Rajiv Gandhi without naming them.

He alleged that Congress has been wiped out from states with high SC, ST, OBC population and is now pitting sub-castes of SC/STs and OBCs against one another and appealed to people to remain

united saying "Ek hain toh safe hain (we are united if we are safe)". He also claimed that infiltration was a major concern in Jharkhand due to which the "tribal population in Santal Pargana has reduced to half and if the trend remains unchecked, it will change the identity of the state".

"The JMM-led coalition government in Jharkhand allowed infiltrators to become permanent citizens here... It is playing with the security of Jharkhand's 'beti, maati, roti' (daughter, mother, bread)," he alleged.

Expressing confidence that the BJP's victory would be spectacular in the Assembly elections, the Prime Minister said that those making permutations and combinations sitting in air-conditioned rooms should see the massive crowd that has been attending rallies and promised that he

would attend the oath ceremony of the BJP-led NDA government here.

Addressing another rally at Godda, he alleged that infiltration has assumed an alarming proportion in Jharkhand and hit out at the ruling JMM-led coalition for "patronising" infiltrators. He also termed the ruling government "Abua Awas" housing scheme in place of PM Awas Yojana as a "farzi (fake)" scheme for "cut money and commission".

"The JMM-led coalition is patronising infiltrators. It is facilitating infiltrators to occupy land, forest and water of tribals, making their population decline," the Mr Modi alleged.

He also charged that the ruling alliance not only indulged in "mafia raj and question paper leak" but also stalled development and forced people to migrate, remain unem-

ployed and suffer because they were devoid of connectivity.

"I promise you that I will bring out the culprits who played with your children's future even if they are hiding in 'paatal'," Mr Modi asserted.

The JMM-led coalition applied salt to your wound by giving tickets to the wife of the jailed leader, Mr Modi said without naming Alamgir Alam who is behind bars in a multi-crore money laundering case.

The Congress has given ticket to Alam's wife Nishat Alam from Pakur, a constituency represented by him. Alam, the former Parliamentary Affairs Minister was taken to custody by the ED on May 15 in an alleged money laundering case and is under investigation for alleged irregularities and bribery in the state rural development department.

'RWA using Lodhi-era tomb as office'

SC slams ASI, RWA for its inaction in protecting 700-yr-old structure

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

The Supreme Court has pulled up the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for failing to protect a Lodhi-era monument at Defence Colony in the national capital with the CBI flagging that a resident welfare association was using the 15th-century structure as its office.

Irked over the inaction on the part of the ASI for allowing the RWA to occupy the structure since the 1960s, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said, "What kind of authority are you (ASI)? What is your mandate? You have gone back from

your mandate of protecting the ancient structures. We are perturbed by your inaction."

It also pulled up the neighbourhood RWA, which had occupied the 700-year-old Lodhi-era tomb, "Gumti of Shaikh Ali," in the 1960s and for justifying its occupation by saying that if it had not occupied it the anti-social elements could have damaged it.

"How dare you enter into this structure? What kind of arguments are you making?" the bench told the RWA while making it clear that the occupation cannot be allowed under any circumstances.

Justice Dhulia told the counsel for the RWA that the court will direct for

THE PROBE agency told the court that there were several alterations made in the structure by the RWA, including a false ceiling inside the structure

evicting the structure in which according to the report of the CBI several alterations have been made by the association.

The top court was hearing on Tuesday a petition filed by one Rajiv Suri, a resident of Defence Colony, seeking directions from the court for declaring the structure as a protected monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958.

He has challenged the Delhi high court order of 2019 by which it has refused to pass the directions.

The top court had earlier this year asked the CBI to probe into the circumstances under which the structure came to be occupied by the RWA as its office and submit its report.

The probe agency told the court that there were several alterations made in the structure by the RWA, including a false ceiling inside the structure.

The top court was also informed that in 2004, they started the process of declaring the tomb as a protected monument but dragged its feet upon objection from the residents' body.

SHORT TAKES

Ex-Odisha sarpanch found 'murdered'

Bhubaneswar: The body of a former sarpanch and BJD leader, Chitta Ranjan Rout, was found soaked in blood near a canal in Bhadrak district, with murder strongly suspected. Rout, who also served as president of the Ambaroli Cooperative Society, was allegedly attacked on his way home after attending an "Astama Prahari" programme at Bandhagan village on Wednesday. Rout had left to attend the religious gathering on Tuesday evening but did not return that night. By Wednesday morning, his body was discovered near the canal, bearing numerous wounds to his head and body. The unsettling sight prompted local residents to suspect foul play. Upon being alerted, the police arrived at the scene and commenced an investigation. A scientific team is expected to assist with further forensic analysis.

Kerala CM unveils logo for pilgrims

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday unveiled the logo of the AI assistant "Swami Chatbot" designed to enhance the experience of the pilgrimage to the Sabarimala temple. Accessible through a smartphone interface, the Swami Chatbot, introduced by the Pathanamthitta district administration, offers comprehensive services in six languages — English, Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada. The chatbot provides information on temple activities such as security, puja timings, and details regarding airports and railway stations, an official release said here. It also ensures efficient services from essential departments like the police and forest services, offering pilgrims a safe and precise pilgrimage experience. — PTI

2 B'deshi among 3 held by ED in Bengal

New Delhi: The ED has arrested three people, including two Bangladeshi nationals, during searches connected to a money laundering case related to illegal Bangladeshi infiltration into Jharkhand, the official sources said on Wednesday. The two arrested men — Rony Mondal and Sameer Chowdhary — are Bangladeshi nationals, while Pintu Halder is an Indian. The three, suspected to be touts, were arrested on Tuesday night from West Bengal in the Bangladeshi infiltration case for facilitating illegal human trafficking in India, the sources said. The three have been taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. The ED had launched searches at 17 sites in poll-bound Jharkhand apart from West Bengal in the money laundering case on Tuesday.

TMC NETA SHOT DEAD IN BENGAL DIST, PROBE ON

Kolkata, Nov. 13: A Trinamul Congress leader of Jagatdal area in North 24 Parganas district was shot dead by unidentified miscreants on Wednesday, police said. The deceased was identified as Ashok Shaw, a former TMC president of Jagatdal Ward No 12. Shaw was shot multiple times by miscreants who also hurled bombs when he was standing in front of a tea stall, only a few hundred metres away from Jagatdal police station, they said. Shaw was rushed to the nearby Bhatpara State General Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries, a senior police officer said, adding that an investigation has been started. A few others, who were also injured in the attack, were undergoing treatment in hospital, he said. Police commissioner of Barrackpore police commissionerate Alok Rajoria has rushed to the spot with a huge police force. "We have started an investigation. Interrogation of the suspects is already on. We haven't found any political connection in this killing", Mr Rajoria told reporters. The murder sparked a protest with locals staging a demonstration outside the Jagatdal police station. — PTI

'MVA Aurangzeb fan club': Shah hits out at Thackeray

'Uddhav forgot Balasaheb's principles'

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday described the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance as "Aurangzeb fan club".

Addressing a rally in Maharashtra's Dhule, the BJP stalwart claimed that Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray has forgotten the principles of his father, Bal Thackeray.

Mr Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda are holding multiple rallies across the state. While Mr Shah is also set to address rallies in Chalisgaon and Jintur, Mr Nadda is campaigning in Mumbai South, Shirdi and Ahmednagar.

Addressing a public rally in support of Jaykumar Rawal in Sindkheda constituency of Dhule district, Mr Shah said that Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray was in an alliance with parties which had opposed the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

"Uddhavji has forgotten all the principles of Balasaheb Thackeray for getting power. Uddhav Babu, you are sitting with those who objected to the renaming of Auranagabad as Sambhaji Nagar. You are sitting with those who had opposed the construction of the Ram temple, triple talaq and abrogation of the Article 370. The MVA alliance is the Aurangzeb fan club, while

'Even if Indira back from heaven, 370 won't be restored'

Parbhani/Jalgaon/Dhule, Nov. 13: Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday asserted that Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, will not be restored even if Congress stalwart and late PM Indira Gandhi comes down from heaven. The BJP's star campaigner sought to corner the Congress over Muslim reservation and accused the main Opposition party of deliberately stalling construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya for years.

With just a week left for the high-stakes assembly polls in Maharashtra, Mr Shah stepped up his campaigning for the ruling Mahayuti front, of which the BJP is a member, and addressed three rallies in a day where he attacked the Congress and its Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) ally Shiv Sena (UBT). — PTI

the Mahayuti alliance is following the path of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Veer Savarkar," the Union home minister said. The Senior BJP leader said that the credibility of the MVA's promises has fallen below the abyss, whereas the people of Maharashtra have faith in the promises of Mahayuti alliance.

■ Back two-state solution: EAM ■ Discusses trade, ties with Saudi minister 'West Asia crisis matter of concern'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

During talks in the Capital on Wednesday on bilateral ties and also on important global conflicts like the Israel-Gaza war, under the aegis of the second meeting of the committee on political, security, social and cultural cooperation (PSSC) under the India-Saudi strategic partnership council (SPC), external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar told his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud that while India "condemns acts of terrorism and taking hostage, it is

equally pained over the continuing death of innocent civilians" and that "any response must take into account the international humanitarian law".

The obvious reference was to the attack on Israel by Palestinian militant group Hamas in October last year, following which Israel launched its campaign against Hamas in the Gaza strip that has led to the death of thousands of civilians - including women and children.

Citing the strong bilateral ties between India and Saudi Arabia, during the talks with Saudi Arabian foreign minister, the EAM



External affairs minister S. Jaishankar and minister of foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud during a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

said, "Our defence partnership has witnessed several 'firsts' over the past few years — including the first-ever land forces joint

exercise 2024, and the two editions of our joint Naval exercises — and that "we had regular exchanges on training and capacity

building, and our cooperation has now expanded in the field of defence industry & exports as well".

"Our security cooperation has also grown steadily (and that) we are collaborating in counter-terrorism, combating extremism, terror financing, and drug trafficking," he added.

The EAM said, "Saudi Arabia, we recognize, is an important force for stability in the region. The situation in West Asia is a matter of deep concern, particularly the conflict in Gaza. India's position in this regard has been principled and consistent.

'No urine pot in it': Shinde takes a dig at Uddhav after bag-check

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

The bag-checking saga continued in Maharashtra after Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's bags were checked by the Election Commission officials, as bags of Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde were also inspected by the poll authorities. In addition to this, several political leaders including Devendra Fadnis, Ajit Pawar, Ramdas Athawale and state Congress president Nana Patole also posted videos of EC officials checking their bags.

CM Shinde's bags were checked by Election Commission officials in Palghar on Wednesday, after his helicopter landed at the Palghar police ground helipad. "I have

only clothes in my bag, no urine pot," said Mr Shinde in an apparent taunt at Mr Thackeray.

The state BJP unit posted a footage on its social media handle X, showing Mr Fadnis' bags being checked by security personnel at Kolhapur airport on November 5. The ruling party in the post with the video said, "Let it be, some leaders just have a habit of creating drama."

The BJP said the deputy CM's bag was checked in Yavatmal district on November 7, but he neither recorded any video nor made a fuss about it. Earlier, on November 5 also, Mr Fadnis' bags were checked at the Kolhapur airport, it said referring to the video.

"Simply holding the Constitution for show is

not enough; one must also follow constitutional systems. We only request that everyone respects the Constitution," the BJP said in the post.

Mr Fadnis said that Mr Thackeray was trying to divert the attention by needlessly protesting against the checking of his bags by poll officials, and was "seeking votes by whining." "What is wrong with checking bags? We had our bags checked during campaigning and there was no need for this level of frustration," the deputy CM said, adding election officials followed the same procedures with his campaign team too.

Earlier this week, Shiv Sena (UBT) shared videos online over the last two days of Thackeray's bags having been checked by poll authorities.

Sena camps clash over 'distribution' of money

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

As the election fever in Maharashtra reached its peak, supporters of the two rival Shiv Sena groups clashed late Tuesday night in Mumbai's Jogeshwari over the allegations of distribution of money.

While the Shiv Sena (UBT) alleged that the Matoshree Club on Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road, controlled by Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena MP Ravindra Waikar, was being used to distribute money, Mr Waikar refuted the allegations, saying that his women supporters were assaulted by intoxicated Sena (UBT) workers, who also indulged in stone-pelting and abusing.

Mr Waikar, who was considered to be close to

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, had joined the Shinde-led camp before the Lok Sabha elections this year and was later also elected from the Mumbai North-West constituency as an MP. His wife Manisha is contesting from Jogeshwari East as a Shinde Sena candidate, while the Shiv Sena (UBT) has fielded Anant Nar.

Incidents of both groups clashing at Jogeshwari went viral on social media on Wednesday. According to sources, as rumours spread in Jogeshwari about Mr Waikar's activists distributing money at Matoshri Club, Thackeray group activists, led by Mr Nar, went there to protest. The activists of both groups clashed with each other, which led to a tense situation in the area.

Rahul: Vote to strengthen Constitution, protect rights

New Delhi, Nov. 13: Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday urged the voters of Jharkhand to vote for strengthening the Constitution and democracy, and said that every vote for the INDIA bloc will bring prosperity in their life through seven guarantees.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge urged people to vote to strengthen democracy, and said they must think about forming a government that ensures the participation of all, and not the one that "divides, misleads and polarises".

Their remarks came as polling began for 43 Assembly seats in Jharkhand, Wayanad Lok Sabha byelection and bypolls in 31 Assembly constituencies in 10 states. "Brothers and sisters of Jharkhand, today the first phase of voting is taking place in your state. I appeal to all the voters to cast your vote to protect your rights and strengthen the constitution and democracy," Mr Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Your every vote for INDIA will bring prosperity in your life through 7 guarantees, will protect 'jal-jungle-zameen' (water, forest and land) and will strengthen social justice," the former Congress president said in his X post. — PTI



Civil services aspirants stage a protest in Prayagraj on Wednesday against Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's decision to conduct the review officer and assistant review officer and provincial civil service preliminary examinations on different dates. — PTI

Try to stand on your feet, don't use Sharad pic: SC to Ajit camp

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

The Supreme Court on Wednesday advised the Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar-led NCP faction to try standing on its own legs and asked it not to use the picture of Sharad Pawar in poll campaigning with whom the party has "ideological differences".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan also asked both factions of the Nationalist Congress Party led by Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar to focus on the battlefield (Maharashtra Assembly elections) instead of doing rounds of the courts.

"Tell your party func-

▶ THE BENCH asked both factions of the NCP led by Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar to focus on Maharashtra polls instead of doing rounds of the courts

tionaries that they will not use old or new video clips or use the photographs of Sharad Pawar with whom your party has ideological differences. You try to stand on your legs," the bench told senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for the Ajit Pawar-led faction.

The top court asked the Ajit faction to circulate an online circular among its leaders, party workers and representatives associated with the Assembly elections that they will not use Sharad

Pawar's picture or video/audio clip, whether old or new.

"People of India are very intelligent and have a fair idea about who Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar are. They cannot be fooled so easily," the bench told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Sharad camp after he complained that an MLC from Ajit Pawar faction had circulated a video clip of Sharad Pawar to showcase his support.

The top court said though people are intelligent enough to differentiate between the Ajit faction and the Sharad faction, they may be confused for a short while in this era of artificial intelligence, where voices and pictures of leaders can be misused.

Omar calls on V-P, may meet Prez, FM

'Pak treaty barriers curb J&K hydel power'

New Delhi, Nov. 13: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah, who is on an official visit to Delhi, on Wednesday called on vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar. A picture of Mr Abdullah and Mr Dhankhar exchanging greetings was posted on the official X handle of the vice-president's office.

"Shri Omar Abdullah ji, hon'ble chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, called on hon'ble vice-president Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar at vice-president's enclave today," it said in the caption. Mr Abdullah, who arrived in the national capital on Monday evening, is likely to call on President Droupadi Murmu and also meet Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman soon, the officials said.

On Tuesday, Mr Abdullah attended a conference of power ministers of states and Union territories during which he had said the



Omar Abdullah

Indus Water Treaty was restricting J&K's ability to harness its huge hydel power potential, primarily due to storage constraints. India and Pakistan signed the treaty in 1960 after nine years of negotiations, with the World Bank being a signatory to the pact that set out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides on the use of waters of a number of cross-border rivers in Jammu and Kashmir. "As a fallout of the treaty barriers, Jammu and Kashmir pays a heavy price in the peak winter months when power generation hits a low, creating hardships for its people," the J&K chief minister had said at the conference. — PTI

Flight issues: US officials cancel 2-day India visit

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

Two key officials of the Biden administration — deputy secretary of state Kurt Campbell and principal deputy national security adviser Jon Finer — have cancelled their visit to India citing "flight issues".

During the two-day visit, scheduled to begin on Wednesday, the officials were to participate in the inaugural US-India "Indian Ocean Dialogue". The US officials will now "have virtual meetings with the Indian officials".

This comes just a week after the victory of Republican contender Donald Trump in the presidential polls. The visit of the two US officials to India was announced just hours before its cancellation on Wednesday (IST). The two US officials will discuss measures to promote security.

Surya: Voting for Cong injurious to state & country

Mumbai, Nov. 13: Bharatiya Yuva Morcha chief and Bangalore MP Tejasvi Surya on Wednesday drew parallels between the Congress and tobacco consumption, cautioning people that voting for the grand old party can hamper the nation's growth.

The BJP MP claimed that the Congress-ruled Karnataka is facing severe financial instability, and accused the party of resorting to Muslim appeasement.

"Like a statutory warning on a cigarette packet that 'consumption of tobacco products is harmful to health', voting for the Congress party is injurious to the social and economic health of a state and the country," Mr Surya said.

Mr Surya claimed that the Karnataka government under chief minister K. Siddaramaiah is pushing for a 4 per cent quota for Muslims in government contracts.

"More than 20 MLAs from Karnataka have written making such demands," the BJP MP claimed. — PTI

Odisha Cabinet nod to law to curb paper leaks & malpractices

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 13

The Odisha Cabinet, chaired by chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi, has approved a proposal to introduce the Odisha Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024. The new legislation is aimed at preventing cheating and other unfair practices in state government examinations and establishes strict penalties for offenders, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to ₹10 lakh.

According to the new law, individuals found guilty of engaging in cheating, impersonation, information leaks, unauthorised entry into exam halls, or other exam-related disruptions can face jail terms ranging from three to five years along with financial penalties.

The law also holds service providers accountable, imposing fines of up to ₹1 crore on organisations found facilitating unfair practices, with the cost of examination recovery

included. "The law applies to public exams conducted by key state agencies, including the Odisha Public Service Commission, Odisha Staff Selection Commission, Odisha Subordinate Staff Selection Commission, Odisha Police Selection Board, and the Odisha Joint Entrance Examination.

Other government recruitment and selection processes also fall under its purview, ensuring comprehensive coverage of exams governed by state agencies and recruitment bodies.

"All offences under this act are designated as cognisable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable," the Cabinet stated in a press note. "Any person engaging in unfair means or other offenses will face imprisonment of three to five years and a fine of up to ₹10 lakh. Service providers found complicit will be fined up to ₹1 crore, with recovery of examination costs from such providers. In case fines remain unpaid, additional imprisonment may be imposed," the note added.

SHORT TAKES

Badal fractures foot on Akal Takht visit

Amritsar: Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday suffered a minor hairline fracture after he visited the Akal Takht to meet the Jathedar here. Immediately after the incident, his security staff shifted him to Guru Ramdas Institute of Medical Sciences where the fracture was detected. "Sukhbir S. Badal suffered a minor hairline fracture of a small bone of right foot in Amritsar today. Nothing to worry about. With the blessings of Guru Sahib he is absolutely fine and started for his next destination immediately after treatment at a local hospital," said party leader Daljit Singh Cheema in a post on X. Mr Badal had gone to the Akal Takht secretariat to request Jathedar, Akal Takht for early hearing in his case in which he had been declared "tankhaiya" (guilty of religious punishment) by the Akal Takht. However, the Jathedar was not present in the city. — PTI

Man get 10-year jail in dowry death case

Kaushambi, UP: A court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment in a 2020 dowry death case. Additional district government advocate (Criminal) Anirudh Kumar Mishra said on July 16, 2020, Shivmohan, a resident of village Devkh-arpur, filed a complaint at Saini Police Station that his son-in-law Uday Chandra was demanding a motorcycle in dowry. He alleged that Chandra used to beat his daughter Shobha Devi every day and on July 15 that year he strangled her to death, Mishra said. On Wednesday, additional district Judge Vishnu Dev Singh convicted Chandra and imposed a fine of ₹14,000 on him. — PTI

Trucks on way to Manipur set ablaze

Continued From Page 1
loaded and unloaded, to travel freely along NH 37 round the clock between Jiribam, Tamenglong, and Noney districts, a request that has been complied with and appreciated, even in the absence of security escorts. The Union home ministry has, meanwhile, deployed an additional 20 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) companies, totalling around 2,000 personnel, to Manipur to contain the escalating violence in the state. Security sources said the MHA issued orders on late Tuesday night to airlift these units for immediate deployment. On Monday, at least 12 suspected insurgents were killed in a confrontation with the CRPF after armed attackers in camouflage fired on the Borobekra police station and a nearby CRPF camp in Jakuradhor, Jiribam district. A large cache of advanced weaponry was recovered following the clash.

SC's verdict will help curb organised crime: UP govt

Lucknow, Nov. 13: The Uttar Pradesh government, which has been receiving flak from various quarters over "bulldozer action", Wednesday hailed the SC's verdict on the matter and said it will help curb organised crime and instil a fear of legal consequences among criminals. The opposition parties hoped that with this verdict, the "bulldozer terror" and "jungle raj" in the state would end. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court laid down pan-India guidelines over the demolition issue and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond. It equated 'bulldozer justice' with a lawless state of affairs where might is right. Clarifying that the Uttar Pradesh government was not involved in the case, a state government spokesperson, in a state-

CLARIFYING THAT the Uttar Pradesh government was not involved in the case, a state government spokesperson, in a statement, said the verdict was part of the case "Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind vs. North Delhi Municipal Corporation and others."

ment, said the verdict was part of the case "Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind vs. North Delhi Municipal Corporation and others." Welcoming the Supreme Court's verdict as a significant step forward, a UP government spokesperson said, "The first requirement of good governance is the rule of law." "This ruling will increase criminals' fear of the law, making it easier to control mafia elements and organised professional criminals," the spokesperson said, adding, "The rule of law applies to everyone." Uttar Pradesh Cabinet

minister Om Prakash Rajbhar also welcomed the court's order and said, "The government never demolishes anyone's personal property. Bulldozer is run on illegal occupation of public properties. It was the high court's decision, we do not do it on our own." Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati took to X to welcome the judgment and said, "After today's decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court regarding demolitions and the related strict guidelines, it should be expected that UP and other state governments will manage public interest and welfare properly and the terror of bulldozer will definitely end now." The Congress' Uttar Pradesh chief Ajay Rai said the verdict would end the "jungle raj" in the state while the Samajwadi Party said that "bulldozer action" was "totally unjust, unfair, unconstitutional and illegal". — PTI

SC parked bulldozer in garage forever: Akhilesh targets Yogi

Demolitions main reason behind defeat in LS polls in Ayodhya: SP chief

Kanpur (UP) Nov. 13: The Supreme Court has parked the bulldozer in the garage forever, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said here on Wednesday in a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government over the top court's demolition verdict. The Uttar Pradesh government, which has been receiving flak from various quarters over "bulldozer action", hailed the Supreme Court's verdict on the matter while clarifying that it was not involved in the case. The verdict was part of the case "Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind vs. North Delhi Municipal Corporation and others", the state government said while asserting that the SC's decision will help curb organised crime and instil a fear of legal consequences among criminals. Addressing a gathering



A file picture shows a bulldozer being used to demolish the illegal construction belonging to person accused of a knife attack on RSS members in Jaipur. — PTI

here ahead of the November 20 bypolls in the state, Yadav claimed that the houses of the poor were being demolished in the name of bulldozer action. He claimed that the manner in which bulldozers were used in Ayodhya was the reason behind the

defeat in the Lok Sabha election. "The date for the by-election to the Milkipur assembly seat in Ayodhya was not announced by the Election Commission which has declared the date for bypolls to nine other Assembly seats in the state.

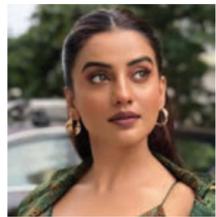
At the election rally here in support of Samajwadi Party's candidate Nasim Solanki, the party supreme said, "The Supreme Court has issued a big order. This will stop bulldozer action." Equating "bulldozer justice" with a lawless state of affairs where might is right, the Supreme Court laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond. The executive cannot assume judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process, the apex court said while terming such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and ruling that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law." — PTI

70% decline in terror incidents in J&K, MHA tells Parl panel

New Delhi, Nov. 13: Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed an over 70 per cent decline in terror-related incidents under the Narendra Modi government since 2019, according to a Union home ministry presentation to a parliamentary panel. Official sources said that while making the presentation, Union home secretary Govind Mohan told the Parliamentary standing committee on home affairs that despite a decline in terror-related cases in the past five years, threats from militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad continued to loom large. Mohan's presentation bears significance as the Centre abrogated Article 370, which granted special powers to Jammu and Kashmir, and reorganised the erstwhile state into two Union territories on August 5, 2019. Law and order in the two UTs is now the direct responsibility of the Centre. Civilian safety has been the prime concern for the Modi government and security agencies are putting maximum emphasis on that, Mohan and his team of officials told the panel. Giving a comparative data, the home ministry officials said that as many as 50 civilians were killed in terror related-incidents in 2019. — PTI

Bhojpuri star Akshara gets death threat, ₹50L demand

Patna, Nov. 13: Bhojpuri actress Akshara Singh has received a death threat call with the caller reportedly demanding ₹50 lakh from her, police said. The actress lodged a written complaint with the Danapur police station on Wednesday. Talking to reporters, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Danapur-1, Bhanu Pratap Singh, said, "A written complaint has been received from Akshara Singh that she received threat calls from two different numbers on Monday. The caller also demanded money from her." The matter is under investigation, he said. Meanwhile, the station house officer of Danapur police station, Prashant



Akshara Singh

Bhardwaj, said the actress in the complaint claimed the caller demanded Rs 50 lakh. Bipin Singh, the actress' father said, "Yes, she received a call from two unidentified numbers. The caller abused her, demanded ₹50 lakh, and threatened to kill her if she did not pay the money within two days. We immediately brought the

matter to the notice of the local police station." "A team from Danapur police station visited our house on Wednesday, and Akshara submitted a written complaint to the police personnel regarding the matter," her father said. She is one of the highest-paid actresses of Bhojpuri cinema. Singh made her acting debut opposite Ravi Kishan in the 2010 action drama "Satyamev Jayate". She subsequently appeared in the 2011 film "Pran Jaye Par Vachan Na Jaye." She also appeared in the 2016 romantic drama "A Balma Bihar Wala" opposite Khesari Lal Yadav and the 2017 action drama "Satya, Tabadda, Maa Tuije Salaam." — PTI

Cops to attend Agra weddings to check thefts

Agra (UP), Nov. 13: Invited or not, Agra Police personnel will now attend every wedding in the district. With an aim to curb incidents of theft at wedding venues, the Agra police has formed a special team of personnel to keep an eye on suspicious visitors, including children who are often used by gangs to steal valuables, officials said Wednesday. DCP of Agra City Suraj Rai said members of the force would be deployed at wedding venues in simple clothes and they would attend the functions like family members. "Initiative has been taken keeping in mind past incidents. Gangs target parents of the bride and groom, and steal their belonging," he told reporters. — PTI

Pan-India coastal naval drill Nov. 20

Aims to prevent 26/11-like attacks
AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13
To prevent a 26/11 Mumbai like terrorist attack from the sea route, Indian Navy is set to conduct "Pan-India" Coastal Defence Exercise "Sea Vigil-24" on 20 and 21 November. The fourth edition of exercise Sea Vigil will span an unprecedented scale, both in terms of geographical reach and the magnitude of participation, with involvement of six ministries and 21 organisations/ agencies. The Coastal Defence and Security Readiness Evaluation (CDSRE) phase of the exercise is being conducted by Naval Officer-in-Charges of all coastal states and Union territories (incl Lakshadweep and A&N Island) since end October, where in thorough audit of complete coastal defence and security infrastructure is being carried out. This year, National Security Council Secretariat officials will also be part of Indian Navy led CDSRE teams for the first time, along with personnel from state Marine Police, Coast Guard, Customs, and Fisheries among others. The exercise will focus on strengthening the security of coastal assets like ports, oil rigs, single point moorings, cable landing points and critical coastal infrastructure including the coastal population.

District admin orders magisterial inquiry, removes top official UPSC aspirant dies due to 'negligence' in UP

Bahraich (UP), Nov. 13: A 21-year-old civil services aspirant died with his family alleging negligence of medical staff of a community health centre here, prompting the district administration to order a magisterial inquiry and direct removal of the CHC superintendent. Priyanshu alias Ankit Jaiswal, a resident of Payagpur in Bahraich, had recently cleared the Civil Services (Prelim) Exam conducted by the UPSC, officials said Wednesday. "The incident took place

on November 2 when Priyanshu was taken to the Payagpur CHC after falling ill at home," additional superintendent of police Vijay Shankar Mishra said. Priyanshu's family has alleged medical negligence at the CHC, which led to his death. The family claimed that Priyanshu's health deteriorated due to an alleged mistreatment at the CHC. He was later referred to a medical college, and died on the way, the family said. Following complaints,

Bahraich district magistrate Monika Rani ordered a magisterial inquiry and suspended CHC superintendent Dr Thanedaar, attaching him to the district headquarters. City magistrate Shalini Prabhakar is leading a three-member team to investigate the matter, the officials said. Chief medical officer Dr Sanjay Kumar said, "The family alleges that Priyanshu was sent to the emergency ward, where a female attendant advised them to have an IV drip

administered at home." The person who allegedly came to administer the drip at home "mishandled" it, after which Priyanshu's condition worsened, he said. Dr Kumar noted, "Contradictory statements have emerged. The CHC authorities have claimed that no patients are sent for home treatment from the centre. Additionally, the family has not been able to identify the alleged female attendant or the person who administered the drip." — PTI

Joint exercise by forces near LAC to enhance op readiness

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 13
The Indian Army is conducting a high-intensity tri-services exercise, Poorvi Prahar, from November 10 to 18 in the forward areas of Arunachal Pradesh along the LAC. This large-scale joint exercise aims to hone the combat effectiveness of the Army, Navy and Air Force in executing integrated joint operations in the challenging mountainous terrain of the region, thereby enhancing inter-service coordination and operational readiness. "The exercise underscores India's determination to maintain a robust and adaptable defence posture along its eastern frontier, especially in light of evolving regional dynamics. By conducting Poorvi Prahar, the armed forces are enhancing their ability to execute seamless and multi-domain operations," said senior officials.

SC norms to curb 'bulldozer justice'

Continued From Page 1
and inflicts penalty of demolition on a citizen on the ground that he is an accused, it violates the principle of 'separation of powers.' The bench said such high-handed and arbitrary actions have no place in the Constitution, which rests on the foundation of the rule of law. Taking recourse to its extraordinary powers under Article 142, the bench also passed a slew orders to allay the apprehension of citizens. The top court, however, made it clear that this will not be applicable if there is an unauthorised structure in a public place such as road, street, footpath, abutting railway line or any river or water bodies and also in cases where there is an order for demolition made by a court of law. "No demolition should be carried out without a prior showcause notice returnable either in accordance with the time provided by the local municipal laws or within 15 days time from the date of service of such notice, whichever is later," the bench said. Observing that the constitutional ethos and values would not permit any such abuse of power and such misadventures cannot be tolerated by the court of law, the top court

said: "The executive cannot become a judge and decide that a person accused is guilty and, therefore, punish him by demolishing his residential/commercial property/properties. Such an act of the executive would be transgressing its limits." In order to allay the fears in the minds of citizens with regard to arbitrary exercise of power by the officials of the State, the top court finds it necessary to issue certain directions in exercise of power under Article 142 of the Constitution, it said. Article 142 empowers the apex court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing complete justice in any case or matter pending before it. Even after orders of demolition are passed, the affected party needs to be given some time to challenge the order before an appropriate forum, the bench said, adding that even in cases of persons who do not wish to contest the demolition order, sufficient time needs to be given to them to vacate and arrange their affairs, the apex court said. "The heavens would not fall on the authorities if they hold their hands for some period," the bench said. It directed that notice shall be served upon the owner/occupier by a registered post. Additionally,

the notice shall also be affixed conspicuously on the outer portion of the structure in question. "The time of 15 days, stated herein above, shall start from the date of receipt of the said notice," it said. To prevent any allegation of backdating, the bench directed that as soon as the showcause notice is served, intimation shall be sent to the office of the concerned collector or district magistrate digitally by e-mail. "Needless to state that the authorities hereinafter shall strictly comply with the aforesaid directions issued by us. It will also be informed that violation of any of the directions would lead to initiation of contempt proceedings in addition to the prosecution," the bench said. The top court said: "The officials should also be informed that if the demolition is found to be in violation of the orders of this court, the officer/officers concerned will be held responsible for restitution of the demolished property at his/her personal cost in addition to payment of damages.... Before demolition, a detailed inspection report shall be prepared by the concerned authority signed by two panchas", the top court noted in its verdict.

66.5% voting in J'khand, 64.72% in Wayanad

Continued From Page 1
protect your rights and strengthen the constitution and democracy. Your every vote for INDIA will bring prosperity in your life through 7 guarantees, will protect 'jungle-zameen (water, forest and land) and will strengthen social justice," Mr Gandhi said in a post on X. In a post on X, Mr Soren said, "If you like our work, please support us. I promise that I will do 10 years of work in the next 5 years so that no one can stop our pace of progress." In this first phase, 683 candidates, including former chief minister Champai Soren and ex-MP Geeta Korra, are in the fray. Key battles include Champai Soren, who is contesting on a BJP ticket from Seraikela against JMM's Ganesh Mahli, and Geeta Korra, wife of former CM Madhu Koda, is pitted against Congress' Sonu Ram Sinku in Jagannathpur. Veteran Congress leader Rameshwar Oraon is facing AJSU's Shanti Bhagat in Lohardaga, while JD(U)'s Saryu Roy challenges Congress' Banna Gupta in Jamshepur (West). Despite threats from Naxals, voters came out in large numbers to vote. The Naxalites had put up posters and tried obstructing the way of voters but security forces successfully removed the posters and obstacles. By 11 am, 60% voting turnout was recorded at polling booth number 25 in Sonapi, Jagannathpur AC, West Singhbhum, Jharkhand. The polling in all elections

remained largely peaceful though an incident was reported in Rajasthan's Deoli-Uniara in Tonk where an independent candidate slapped an area magistrate. The incident occurred when independent candidate Naresh Meena, a Congress rebel, allegedly confronted subdivisional officer Amit Chaudhary for making efforts for voting as the locals had boycotted polling in support of their demand. Bypolls took place for seven Assembly seats in Rajasthan on Wednesday. Voter turnout in the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat was 62.5 per cent and in the Chelakkara Assembly bypoll was 69.4 per cent. Across the states, polling was largely peaceful, with only minor electronic voting machine (EVM) glitches in Wayanad and Chelakkara, which officials promptly addressed. Emotional scenes were witnessed at polling stations in Wayanad as survivors of the devastating July landslides came to cast their votes in the Lok Sabha bypoll. For many, it was the first time reuniting with neighbours and close friends since the tragedy. To support the survivors, authorities arranged free transport from their temporary residences to the polling stations, allowing them to participate in the election despite ongoing disruptions in their lives. A bypoll was necessitated in the hill constituency after Cong leader Rahul Gandhi vacated it after he also won

from the Rae Bareli constituency. In Bihar, byelections took place for Tarari, Imanganj, Belaganj and Ramgarh Assembly seats while in Assam it was held in five Assembly seats. In West Bengal by-polls in six assembly seats — Sitai, Madarihat, Naihati, Haroa, Medinipur and Taldangra assembly constituencies — took place amid tight security arrangements. Sporadic incidents of violence, including a shootout-cum-crude bomb attack in Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas district that killed a local TMC worker, marred the Bengal byelections, while the voter turnout across six constituencies stood at 69.29 per cent till 5 pm. The killing of former TMC ward president Ashok Shaw, which took place adjacent to the Naihati assembly constituency where the electorate exercised their franchise on Wednesday, sparked political accusations of voter intimidation during the ongoing bypolls, prompting the Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office to seek a report on the incident. In Chattisgarh, where a bypoll was held in Raipur City South, about 46.43 per cent was recorded till 5.

In Gujarat's Vav bypoll 67.5% polling took place, Meghalaya's Gambegre saw 81% polling. Bypoll in Karnataka's three seats, and two seats in Madhya Pradesh were reported to be peaceful.

'Nitish transformed Bihar'

Continued From Page 1
NDA assumed power in 2005, for hoodwinking the people with "false (jhoote) promises". Earlier, Mr Kumar thanked the PM for AIIMS, Darbhanga, even as he recalled having first made a request for the super speciality hospital in the north Bihar town with late BJP leader Arun Jaitley. The PM began his speech with a reference to the Assembly polls underway in Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar two-and-a-half decades ago, and hoped that people in the tribal state would come out to vote in large numbers. He also highlighted his government's efforts to increase the number of doctors by allowing pursuit of courses in medicine in Hindi and other vernacular languages, besides "adding 75,000 new seats" in medical colleges across the country. The PM also touched upon the problem of floods that ravage the Kosi-Mithila region every year, saying his government was making "honest" efforts to solve the problem by holding necessary discussions with Nepal, besides drawing a detailed plan involving ₹11,000 crores to tackle the calamity. Known for his penchant for connecting with the people by peppering his speeches with local flavour, the PM referred to the inclusion of Maithili, spoken in large parts of north Bihar, in the Eighth Schedules of the Constitution. The PM also paid tributes to folk singer Sharda Sinha, who hailed from Supaul district in Mithila, and died last week.

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THE ASIAN AGE

14 NOVEMBER 2024

Maharashtra poll tussle gets close and personal

With only seven days left to the campaign deadline, the outcome of the fight for the Maharashtra Assembly remains unpredictable. The main contest in Maharashtra is between the two alliances — the Mahayuti comprising the BJP, Shinde Sena and the Ajit Pawar faction of NCP vs the Maha Vikas Aghadi of the Congress, the Uddhav Sena and Sharad Pawar's NCP.

Voting for the 288-member Assembly will take place in a single phase on November 20 and the results will be announced on November 23. In the Lok Sabha election held earlier this year, the MVA got the lead in 156 out of 288 Assembly segments while the Mahayuti led in 126 seats. If the trend continues in the Assembly election, the MVA should form the next government. However, the electoral dynamics in the state are now different from those during the Lok Sabha polls.

The MVA plank of "Constitution under threat" helped the alliance consolidate its minority and dalit votes during the Lok Sabha polls. The same is no more the big issue after the BJP failed to get two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. Besides, there is a three-way fight on many seats because of the entry of smaller parties and Independents, who were not a factor in the Lok Sabha election.

The tussle among the MVA alliance partners over the chief minister's post has created internal distrust, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union minister Amit Shah are highlighting this in their campaign speeches. They are going to town about how Uddhav Thackeray is eager to get the post and his alliance partners are busy frustrating him.

On its part, the BJP leaders are banking on slogans such as "batenge toh katenge" and "ek hai toh safe hai" in a hope to consolidate their Hindu votes. In every campaign speech, Mr Modi is urging voters particularly from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes categories not to get divided on caste. The Mahayuti is also banking on its populist schemes like "CM-My Beloved Sister".

While the MVA claimed that the populist schemes announced by the Eknath Shinde government have emptied state coffers, it has promised even bigger perks to voters in its manifesto.

As the close contest in Maharashtra gets intense, intemperate language and incendiary speeches from both sides have marred an otherwise exciting election. Leaders from across the political spectrum have used derogatory language against each other. Shiv Sena MP Arvind Sawant's "imported maal" remark against Shiv Sena candidate Shaina N.C. evoked sharp reactions. BJP MP Dhananjay Mahadik had to apologise for his comment that was seen as an insult to all women. BJP supporter MLC Sadabhau Khot's personal attack on Sharad Pawar was condemned by all parties including the BJP.

The Election Commission of India received more than 4,000 complaints of violation of the model code of conduct between October 15 and November 11. The election body has so far seized unaccounted cash, liquor, precious metals and drugs worth ₹493 crores. These statistics indicate rampant use of illegal means to tamper the election process.

The "dance of democracy" is no longer completely free and fair. However, no matter how imperfect the elections are, it is important that we have at least the semblance of democracy. The people are wise to understand it and their votes will answer everything and everyone on November 23.

Sex abuse: All must act in time

Justin Welby, the head of the Church of England who also presided over the death of Queen Elizabeth II as well as the coronation of her son King Charles III in Britain, had to go. He resigned after an investigation found that he failed to inform police about serial physical and sexual abuse by a volunteer at Christian summer camps as soon as he became aware of it a decade ago.

It is for an act of omission that the spiritual leader of 85 million Anglicans including in India has been forced to call it a day as criticism over his inaction built up. What it does to the reputation of the Church of England is the worrying aspect of the scandal as the edifice is already suffering from difficulties in holding together a community that has been increasingly skipping church with attendance markedly down in the last five years or so.

The crimes committed in sexual exploitation of hundreds of youths in the UK and in its former colonies like Zimbabwe and Uganda decades ago by a lawyer do not constitute an unknown phenomenon even if it took a long time for whispered complaints to surface. How formal religion acts to save the faithful from such sexual predators has often defined how serious it is about safe churches and places of worship.

The Roman Catholic Church had to intervene often in the last decade to catch predators and save its reputation in diverse countries, ranging from the US to Australia even as priestly heads rolled. The cause is often the dreadfully permissive atmosphere that religion may have allowed to build up through some of its priests and volunteers who have exploited the psychologically and physically vulnerable who come under their spiritual spell because of which they may be unable to complain or seek help.

Formal religion, which has had to grapple lately with serious issues like same-sex marriage, may not by itself be the one to blame for the sex abuse. But it is the silence of good men like the Most Reverend Welby that makes it considerably worse. It would serve the best interests of all if a fail-safe system is built by which the ill-treated can seek to complain of sex-abuse at once and seek action.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Global win for foreign office as biofuels HQ shifts to India

India's signing of the host country agreement (HCA) with the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) marks a significant win for the ministry of external affairs (MEA). This move brings the GBA's secretariat to India, marking an exciting milestone for the renewable energy sector. Officials from MEA and the ministry of petroleum and natural gas sealed the deal, giving the GBA a base with legal standing and immunity under Indian law.

The MEA is visibly thrilled to add another global institution to India's portfolio — it's more jobs for the boys and more toys to play with. There's a buzz that the UN sees these new headquarters in the South as signs of a global power shift, and the MEA is already celebrating this as a win for India on the world stage implying that India is now a destination for serious international players.

For the GBA, it's about advancing biofuel use worldwide by solving challenges around feedstock and supply chains, attracting investments, and creating common standards. Since its start during India's G20 presidency in 2023, the alliance has grown to 27 countries and 12 international organisations — a pretty solid show of global interest in biofuel solutions.

Bringing the GBA secretariat to India isn't just a diplomatic flex; it's opening up real opportunities

on the ground. Indian biofuel experts are likely to find new job openings, and the private sector gets a platform to showcase its tech and innovations. It all sweetly ties back to the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" vision — empowering local capabilities while contributing to global sustainability.

BABUS CAN NOW GIVE TAXPAYERS A BREAK
The income tax department has taken a step to ease the burden on taxpayers by allowing its officials to waive or reduce interest on unpaid taxes under certain conditions. According to Section 220(2A) of the Income Tax Act, if taxpayers delay paying the amount specified in a demand notice, they incur a one per cent monthly interest. Now, however, officials can provide relief based on specific guidelines.

A recent circular from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) outlines how much interest can be waived or reduced. Senior tax officers such as principal chief commissioners (PRCCIT) or chief commissioners (CCIT) now have authority over substantial amounts. A PRCCIT can decide on interest waivers exceeding ₹1.5 crores, while a CCIT can manage waivers for amounts between ₹50 lakhs and ₹1.5 crores. For amounts below ₹50 lakhs, the decision falls to a principal commissioner or commissioner.

Great exemptions and more flexibility for officers could, of course, cut either way. Perhaps because the notions of tax compliance and the severity of tax crackdowns have allowed finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to make these changes by empowering the new cadre of officers that this government has placed more reliance on. For taxpayers, this change could be a welcome sign of responsiveness, but only if officials apply it transparently.

Tax experts are optimistic and hopeful that these provisions should speed up the relief process for taxpayers. The move is likely to promote transparency and efficiency, but ultimately, this reform represents a chance to support taxpayers in a meaningful way.

FROM CONTROVERSY TO CHIPS: UP'S BOLD MOVE IN SEMICONDUCTORS

In a curious twist of priorities, the same week the Uttar Pradesh government introduced a controversial diktat restricting women's freedom to visit male hair stylists and tailors, local bureaucrats have pushed forward an initiative aimed at securing a place for the state in the high-tech future.

Announcing semiconductor manufacturing projects worth ₹30,700 crores, they are trying to carve

a space for Uttar Pradesh in the global tech race. Noida is set to become a key semiconductor manufacturing hub with the approval of two major projects by the Uttar Pradesh state cabinet. The first, a ₹27,000-crore facility by Tarq Semiconductors (Hiranandani Group) will focus on producing microchips vital for devices like smartphones and cars. The second, a ₹3,700-crore plant by Vama Sundari Investments (HCL Group), will produce driver ICs and display driver circuits. Both facilities will be located near the Noida International Airport, further supporting the region's growing tech ecosystem. The projects align with India's push to strengthen its semiconductor manufacturing capabilities, supported by Central government incentives. The state's initiative also includes a partnership with the US to produce chips for national security.

While social conservatism seems to be gaining traction, the government's ambitious push in the semiconductor sector signals an attempt to balance tradition with modernity, even if the latter feels at odds with the former.

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



Don't fall for China ploys; take lessons from Trump



Abhijit Bhattacharya

The vociferous campaign waged by America's incoming President Donald Trump to keep illegal foreigners out of the United States, which contributed to his decisive victory in the presidential election earlier this month, should find a lot of resonance in India, which has been having trouble in keeping its land and sovereign territory free from being overrun by outsiders.

The agreement reached last month between New Delhi and Beijing, which led to a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia's Kazan, and the subsequent disengagement between troops of both countries in Ladakh's Demchok and Depsang Plains, had one remarkable aspect. Soldiers of Indian Army were "kindly permitted" by the Chinese side to patrol their own territory that was forcibly occupied by People's Liberation Army (PLA) for over four and a half years, ever since the clashes in Galwan and elsewhere in Ladakh May-June 2020. The PLA, which is an arm of the Communist Party of China (CPC), had simply walked in and asserted control over India's sovereign land and territory while Indian Army personnel were not physically present, and then prevented their entry for over four years.

Under last month's agreement, however, this has now become "shared territory", which implies divided sovereignty. But sovereignty being indivisible and not divided, how could New Delhi agree to any right to patrol India's land by both Indian and Chinese soldiers? Do Indian soldiers also get the right to patrol Chinese territory "jointly" with the PLA? Historically, the political rulers of geographical India invariably had a poor track record in border

management or protection of territory due to their ignorance, negligence or supreme arrogance, that alienated their own people. Therefore, invasion and aggression have been recurring means by which foreigners have overrun the indigenous rulers of Bharat, and the tradition goes on. Independent India too hasn't been immune to foreign aggression and violation of its sovereignty in the past 77 years. Successive rulers, with the honourable exception of Indira Gandhi, haven't succeeded in dealing with hostile and intruding foreigners who dented, damaged and are still violating India's sovereignty.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar claimed late last month that even after the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai, there was no effective response by the Indian government. But was 26/11 the only such tragedy in India's history? Weren't there bigger, if not more serious incidents in India before and after, to be seen in the broader perspective of collective failure of successive rulers of Hindustan?

From the 986-987 AD invasion of Sabuktigin, fast forward over a thousand years to Kargil 1999 and Galwan 2020, there have been more than 100 major invasions/wars on Indian soil, all by foreigners from Central Asia, the Middle East, Arabia, Turkey to the French, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch and British, followed by Pakistanis and the Han Chinese, under a Communist dictator. How many times have India's rulers succeeded in protecting their borders from outsiders, or even their internal space? How many times have Pakistan and China brazenly encroached upon India's land and succeeded in mauling India's sovereignty?

Strangely, except for Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839), no other major Indian ruler could ever

The Dragon's charm offensive through a Han-created hallucinatory LAC agreement is to weaken India as if an epoch-making treaty has been signed between the two nations

stop or check the conquest of foreign powers. Except Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, no Indian also dared "invade" India to liberate it from the clutches of a foreign power, that too the mighty British, who then ruled a vast empire across Asia and Africa in the 1940s.

Today, however, some Indians are celebrating because our Army has been able to resume patrolling in Depsang Plains and Demchok after 2020. The India-Tibet border, however, spans 3,500 km and there are live issues in other sectors even today owing to the endless mischief of non-Tibetans from Hwang Ho valley. So why the jumping and dancing with joy? Is it the prospect of trade, commerce, business and profit for a few at the expense of vast majority of Indians?

After being relentlessly humbled by Beijing's CPC for over seven decades, can't Indians read the Chinese mind even now?

Today, however, it is Beijing that is on the defensive to protect its own interests. The agreement reached on the Brics summit sidelines in October has more to do with the Chinese being on the back-foot in their commercial and financial dealings with the United States, European Union and the West in general. Donald Trump's return to the White House will only make things worse, not better. The entire West is now aggressive and determined to curtail Chinese exports, investments and its Belt and Road juggernaut. High tariffs and trade barriers loom large to make things difficult for China's over-production and dumping of cheap goods across Europe, the Americas, India and Australia.

What is China's way out?

The large Indian market is a magnet for Beijing's rulers, with the help of India's profiteering traders, gullible consumers and monopolistic industry bosses who can't live without cheap Chinese goods. No wonder that as soon as the Line of Actual Control disengagement was announced, China's ambassador to India Xu Feihong, speaking at a "business" event in Kolkata, tried to nudge New Delhi to "lift trade curbs on the export of Chinese goods, relax visa norms for Chinese nationals and resume direct flights between India and China". The ambassador's plea resembles 17th century pleas by servants of the East India Company to the Mughal emperor in Delhi to allow foreign traders to have unrestricted access to the Indian market to make money, even if at the expense of India's vast populace. While making no real commitments, he promises more Chinese market access to Indians and tries to lure Indian businessmen by saying 130 million Chinese are likely to travel abroad in 2024 and India shouldn't miss the tourism bus. All these are just to further Chinese economic interests, and will only increase the widening trade deficit, where India is already at an unbridgeable disadvantage.

It's time, therefore, for India to take a lesson or two from Mr Trump's utterances on China as successive Indian rulers since 1999 have failed to make any headway to reverse the adverse India-China bilateral trade, and the prospect looks dimmer now. The Dragon's charm offensive through a Han-created hallucinatory LAC agreement is to weaken India as if some epoch-making treaty has been signed between the two nations. The Chinese dictator will devise myriad tricks to deceive India, as his predecessors did to the United States since the days of Henry Kissinger. New Delhi must not allow its sovereign interests to be overrun to further Beijing's agenda.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College, New Delhi. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS MAHA CONFUSION

There was a time when money was given clandestinely to voters in order to influence them to vote for a particular party and candidate. Now it is being done openly in the form of the various schemes which is nothing more than a bribe to vote for a particular party. However with two Shiv Senas, two NCPs, rebels from both sides and candidates jumping from one party to another, it has become difficult to keep track of who is the candidate for which party. To make matters worse, no one can say for sure which elected candidates will change parties or coalition partners change sides!

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

ACT NOW IN UP

WHEN I READ the news report that the Vankhadeshwar temple in Kanpur was washed with 1,000 litres of Ganga water on November 2 to "purify" the temple because a Muslim woman had entered and prayed at the temple, the words of B R Ambedkar came to my mind, "Untouchability has ruined the untouchables, the Hindus and ultimately the nation as well." Untouchability morally kills victims and spiritually destroys perpetrators. It is akin to suicide bombing. The public display of untouchability is silent terrorism. Such an act is against the Constitution of India in general and Article 17 in particular. Prompt legal action must be taken.

Sujit De
Kolkata

REVIVE BHARALU

THE Bharalu river, which gulps tonnes of waste materials from Guwahati city, is now among the country's most polluted rivers. Such distinctions are not desirable. Mainland India deems the Northeast as a land of pristine rivers and blue hills that are species-rich, and we have to live up to visitors' expectations. Duckweed is a wonder plant that can thrive in the most polluted of environments and can absorb all the pollutants of the water thus helping restore water quality. This method can help Bharalu get this undesirable tag removed from its back.

Noopur Baruah
Tezpur, Assam

SHORT TAKES

COURT ACQUITS IMRAN, AIDES IN SEC. 144 CASE

Islamabad, Nov. 13: In a relief to Imran Khan, a Pakistani court on Wednesday acquitted the former prime minister and his close aides in a case involving Section 144 violations. A district and sessions court in Islamabad dismissed the charges, acquitting Khan, Sheikh Rashid, Asad Qaiser, Saifullah Niazi, Sadaqat Abbasi, Faisal Javed, and Ali Nawaz.

The charges, which also included breaches of the Amplifier Act and other regulations, were dismissed by Judicial Magistrate Yasir Mahmood.

15 YEARS' JAIL FOR PENTAGON SECRETS LEAKER

Boston, Nov. 13: A federal judge on Tuesday sentenced a Massachusetts Air National Guard member to 15 years in prison after he pleaded guilty to leaking highly classified military documents about the war in Ukraine.

Jack Teixeira pleaded guilty earlier this year to six counts of willful retention and transmission of national defence information under the Espionage Act following his arrest in the most consequential national security case in years. He was brought into court in an orange jumpsuit and showed no visible reaction.

LANKA SET FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION TODAY

Colombo, Nov. 13: Sri Lanka is set to hold on Thursday its snap parliamentary election — first after the 2022 economic crisis — amid deployment of nearly 90,000 security personnel across the country.

Voting will take place at over 13,314 polling stations across the country, from 7 am to 4 pm local time with over 17 million voters from the island's 21 million population eligible to vote for the 225 member Parliament for a five-year term.

Nearly 90,000 security personnel from the police and the military would be deployed to provide security.

FLIGHTS OFF HAITI AFTER 2 PLANES SHOT BY GANGS

Port-Au-Prince, Nov. 13: The Federal Aviation Administration announced that it will prohibit US airlines from flying to Haiti for 30 days after gangs shot two planes and the United Nations will temporarily suspend flights to Port-au-Prince, limiting humanitarian aid coming into the country.

Bullets hit the Spirit Airlines plane when it was about to land in the country's capital, injuring a flight attendant and forcing the airport to shut down. Photos and videos obtained by The Associated Press show bullet holes dotting the interior of a plane.

VOLCANO ERUPTS, GROUNDS FLIGHTS ON BALI ISLAND

Denpasar, Nov. 13: Several international airlines cancelled flights to and from Indonesia's tourist island of Bali on Wednesday as an ongoing volcanic eruption left travellers stranded at airports.

Tourists told AP that they have been stuck at Bali's airport after their flights were suddenly cancelled. "The airline did not provide accommodation, leaving us stranded at this airport," said Charlie Austin from Perth, who was on vacation. Another Australian tourist, Issabella Butler, opted to find another airline that could fly her home.

NEW WILDFIRES BURN IN U.S. NORTHEAST

New York, Nov. 13: New wildfires burned across the Northeast, adding to a series of blazes that have come amid very dry weather and killed at least one person, while much larger fires raged in California and other western states.

Heavy smoke led to poor air quality and health advisories for parts of New Jersey and New York, including New York City. Firefighters in Massachusetts worked to contain dozens of fires amid strong winds and drought conditions. The National Weather Service issued a red flag warning.

Musk, Ramaswamy to head US dept of govt efficiency

Huckabee to be envoy to Israel, Witkoff Special Envoy to Middle East

Washington, Nov. 13: US President-elect Donald Trump has announced that Tesla owner Elon Musk and Indian American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy will lead the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, aimed at improving governance and curbing wasteful expenditures.

Trump has also given them a deadline of July 4, 2026, the 250th anniversary of The Declaration of Independence. "I am pleased to announce that the Great Elon Musk, working in conjunction with American patriot Vivek Ramaswamy, will lead the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)," he announced on Tuesday.

Trump announced the appointment of successful real estate investor and philanthropist Steven C. Witkoff as his Special Envoy to the Middle East, giving him the mandate to restore peace in the region. He also appointed his former White House Cabinet secretary Bill McGinley as the White House Counsel in his second term beginning January 20 next year. "Bill is a smart and tenacious lawyer who will help me advance our America First agenda while fighting for election integrity and against the weaponisation of law enforcement."

Ramaswamy, 37, is the first Indian American to have been tapped by Trump into his administration on beginning January 20 next year. His parents migrated to the US from Kerala and worked at a General Electric plant in Ohio. "I look forward to Elon and Vivek making changes to the federal bureaucracy with an eye on efficiency and, at the same time, making life better for all Americans. Importantly, we will drive out the massive waste and fraud which exists throughout our annual \$6.5 trillion of government spending," said the President-elect.

"Together, these two wonderful Americans will pave the way for my administration to dismantle government bureaucracy, slash excess regulations, cut wasteful expenditures, and restructure federal agencies — essential to the 'Save America' movement," he said.

He said this will become, potentially, 'The Manhattan Project' of the current time. —PTI



US President-elect Donald Trump (L) returned to the White House on Wednesday for the first time since winning last week's election and sat down for talks in the Oval Office of the White House with longtime political rival President Joe Biden, with both promising a smooth transfer of power in January, in Washington. — AP

IRAN PLANS TO SUSTAIN OIL OUTPUT

DEMOCRAT GEORGE WHITESIDES WINS ELECTION TO U.S. HOUSE, BEATING INCUMBENT MIKE GARCIA

Democrat George Whitesides, a former NASA chief of staff who had the support of national Democrats, has won a tough race to unseat Republican incumbent Rep. Mike Garcia in California's 27 Congressional District.

IRAN READY FOR POSSIBLE OIL EXPORT CURBS AFTER TRUMP ELECTION

Iran has made plans to sustain its oil production and export and is ready for possible oil restrictions from a Trump administration in the US, oil minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Wednesday, according to the oil ministry's news website Shana.

IN AFRICA, MEAGRE EXPECTATIONS AND SOME HOPES FOR SECOND TRUMP PRESIDENCY

African leaders may have been quick to congratulate Donald Trump on his election, professing a desire for mutually beneficial partnerships, but there are meagre expectations that his presidency will change things for this continent of over 1.4 billion people. Observers say African countries — once described by Trump as "shithole countries" — are definitely not going to be high on his to-do list.

TRUMP 2.0 LOOMS AS WORLD LEADERS HEAD TO SOUTH AMERICA FOR SUMMITS

WORLD LEADERS are heading to South America for twin summits this month, with one major theme dominating: Donald Trump 2.0. Peru is the first stop, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum on Nov. 13-15, followed by a Group of 20 (G20) leading economies meeting in Brazil on Nov. 18-19.

Ratcliffe to head CIA, Hegseth Pentagon

Washington, Nov. 13: US President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday announced that former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe will head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) under his administration. He also picked former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee as his ambassador to Israel.

Pete Hegseth, a Fox News co-host, author and US military veteran, has been nominated to lead the world's most powerful military as secretary of defence. "With Pete at the helm, America's enemies are on notice — Our Military will be Great Again, and America will Never Back Down."

The President-elect also highlighted Hegseth's success as an author, saying his book "The War on Warriors" was a best-seller and that it "reveals the leftwing betrayal of our Warriors, and how we must return our Military to meritocracy, lethality, accountability, and excellence." Speaking highly of Ratcliffe, Trump said, "From exposing fake Russian collusion to be a Clinton campaign operation, to catching the FBI's abuse of Civil Liberties at the FISA Court, John Ratcliffe has always been a warrior for Truth and Honesty with the American Public."

"When 51 intelligence officials were lying about Hunter Biden's lap-

top, there was one, John Ratcliffe, telling the truth to the American People," he added. "For these and many other reasons, it was my great honour in 2020 to award John the National Security Medal, the nation's highest honour for distinguished achievement in the field of Intelligence and National Security," he said.

Ratcliffe previously served as the sixth director of National Intelligence (DNI). In this role, he served as the leader of the US intelligence community and principal intelligence advisor to President Trump in his first term. — Agencies

Leaders split on climate goals

Baku, Nov. 13: Global leaders offered competing views on how to tackle climate change at the United Nations-led talks on Wednesday as a new report warned the world must reach carbon neutrality much sooner than planned.

Planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from oil, gas and coal rose to a new record high this year, according to preliminary research from an international network of scientists at the Global Carbon Project. The report came as leaders gathered in Azerbaijan for COP29 climate talks aimed at reaching a deal on boosting funding to help poorer nations adapt to climate shocks and transition to cleaner energy.

The research found that to keep the Paris agreement's ambitious goal of limiting warming to 1.5° Celsius in sight, the world would now need to reach net-zero CO₂ emissions by the late 2030s — instead of 2050. The warning also follows concerns about the

future of the fight against climate change following Donald Trump's victory. Trump, who has vowed to again pull the US out of the Paris agreement, named his head of the

Environmental Protection Agency Tuesday with a mandate to slash pollution regulations. Some leaders in Baku defended fossil fuels during two days of speeches. —AFP

SOME WEALTHY COUNTRIES SAY TRILLIONS NEEDED TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE, RICH NATIONS MUST LEAD

A group of developed countries, including Germany and France, and the European Commission, on Wednesday acknowledged that trillions of dollars were urgently needed to address climate change and wealthy nations should continue to lead in providing climate finance.

HEAVY RAINS LASH SPAIN AFTER DEADLY FLOODS

Spain closed schools and evacuated residents as heavy rains lashed the country on Wednesday, two weeks after its worst floods in a generation killed more than 200 people. National weather office AEMET placed the southern province of Malaga and the northeastern Catalonia region on red alert.

FOSSIL FUEL EMISSIONS TO HIT NEW RECORD IN 2024, OPINE RESEARCHERS

Planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from oil, gas and coal rose to a new record high this year, according to preliminary research Wednesday that found no sign the world was moving away from fossil fuels.



Rescue workers put out a fire in a building which was destroyed by a Russian strike in Brovary, outside Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday. — AP

Missiles rain on Kyiv as NK men fight in Kursk

Kyiv, Nov. 13: Russia attacked the Ukrainian capital Kyiv with a sophisticated combination of missiles and drones for the first time in 73 days on Wednesday, authorities reported, as the Pentagon said most of the North Korean troops sent to help Moscow's war effort are fighting to drive Ukraine's army off Russian soil in the Kursk border region.

Air raid warnings blared for hours as Russia targeted eight regions of Ukraine, firing six ballistic and cruise missiles and 90 drones, the Ukrainian air force said. Air defences downed four missiles and 37 drones, and another 47 drones were stopped by electronic jamming, the statement said.

The damage was being assessed. The air assault came as most of the more than 10,000 North Korean troops sent by Pyongyang to help Moscow in the war are engaged in combat in Russia's Kursk border region, according to the Pentagon.

An Ukrainian army incursion into Kursk three months ago has succeeded in holding a broad area of land and has embarrassed the Kremlin. Russia's military has trained the North Korean soldiers in artillery, drone skills and basic infantry operations, including trench clearing, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel told a briefing. The cooperation faces challenges, according to the Pentagon, including how to achieve military interoperability and overcoming the language barrier. Kyiv officials say Russia has deployed around 50,000 troops to Kursk in a bid to dislodge the Ukrainians. — AP

46 killed in Gaza, 33 in Lebanon

Deir Al-Balah, Nov. 13: Israeli airstrikes killed at least 46 people in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours, including 11 at a makeshift cafeteria in an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone, medics said.

In Lebanon, warplanes struck Beirut's southern suburbs and killed 33 people elsewhere. In Lebanon, large explosions shook Beirut's southern suburbs — an area known as Dahiyeh, where Hezbollah has a significant presence — soon after the Israeli military issued evacuation warnings for 11 houses there.

There was no immediate word on casualties. The Israeli military said it targeted Hezbollah infrastructure, including command centres and weapons production sites, without providing evidence. Another Israeli strike on an apartment building east of Beirut killed at least six people. Wael Murtada said the destroyed home belonged to his uncle and that those inside had fled from the Dahiyeh

last month. He said three children were among the dead and other people were missing. An Israeli airstrike on a residential building in central Lebanon killed 15 people, including eight women and four children, and wounded at least 12 others, Lebanon's health ministry said. The strike came without warning, and state media said the building was sheltering displaced families.

Israel has been carrying out intensified bombardment of Lebanon since late September, vowing to cripple Hezbollah and put a stop to more than a year of cross-border fire by the Lebanese militant group. A rocket exploded in a storage building in the northern Israeli town of Nahariya, killing two people. Another two people were wounded by shrapnel in a separate impact outside the town.

A Hezbollah drone smashed into a nursery school near Haifa, but the children were inside a bomb shelter. — AP

'Orbital' reflects on the individual and collective value of every human life

UK author Samantha Harvey wins Booker Prize

London, Nov. 13: British author Samantha Harvey has won the 2024 Booker Prize for her "ambitious and beautiful" 'Orbital', which becomes the first novel set in space to win the £50,000 literary prize selected from a historic shortlist that was dominated by women this year. 'Orbital', the biggest-selling book on the shortlist in the UK, takes place over a single day in the life of six astronauts and cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station who

observe 16 sunrises and sunsets on Earth spinning past continents and cycling past seasons. It was named the winner at a ceremony at Old Billingsgate in the City of London on Tuesday evening after the judges described it as a compact yet beautifully expansive novel which invites readers to observe Earth's splendour whilst reflecting on the individual and collective value of every human life. "I originally thought, 'Why on earth would any-

body want to hear from a woman at her desk in Wilshire writing about space, imagining what it's like being in space when people have actually been there'," said Harvey, who dedicated her award to everybody who "speaks for and not against the Earth". "I thought of it as space pastoral — a kind of nature writing about the beauty of space," she said. At just 136 pages long, the winning title is the second-shortest book to win the prize and covers



Samantha Harvey poses with the trophy after winning the Booker Prize award 2024, in London, on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	77,690.95	-1.25
Nifty 50	23,559.05	-1.36
S&P 500*	5,981.65	-0.04
Dollar (₹)	84.38	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	107.60	0.57
Euro (₹)	89.69	-0.004
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	75,089,188	0.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.81	-1.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.803	0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.42	-0.013

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Pokarna to invest ₹440 cr for new facility in TG

Pokarna Engineered Stone Limited (PEL) on Wednesday announced a strategic investment of ₹440 crore to enhance its advanced manufacturing capabilities at its state-of-the-art facility at Mekaguda in Telangana. The firm said the expansion will introduce PEL's third Bretonstone production line from Breton S.p.A. of Italy, setting a new benchmark in both capacity and sustainable manufacturing.



NTPC Green Energy's ₹10K-cr IPO from Nov. 19

NTPC Green Energy, a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC has set a price band of ₹102 to ₹108 per equity share of ₹10 face value for ₹10,000 crore initial public offering. The IPO will open for public bidding on November 19 and close on November 22, 2024. NTPC Green Energy is the largest renewable energy public sector enterprise (excluding hydro) in terms of operating capacity as of September 30, 2024.

Prosus looks to list Indian firm PayU in 2025

Dutch technology investor Prosus PRX.AS hopes to list Indian digital payments and lending firm PayU next year, its chief investment officer said on Wednesday, after clocking a \$2 billion gain on its investment in another local firm Swiggy. While Prosus hoped to list PayU by the end of 2024, it's currently "not on that path", Ervin Tu, Prosus's chief investment officer, said on a media call.



Arvind Singh Sahney to be Indian Oil chief

Arvind Singh Sahney will be the new chairman of Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil firm, according to an order issued by the petroleum ministry on Wednesday. Sahney, 54, is currently Executive Director (Business Development-Petrochemicals), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC). He was in August made the company's director for business development but now was made the chairman.

Car, two-wheeler sales hit new high in Oct, says Siam

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, NOV. 13

Both passenger vehicles and two-wheelers wholesales hit a new high in October, driven by strong festive season demand, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) data on Wednesday revealed.

While passenger vehicle sales stood at 3,93,238 units, up 0.9 per cent from 3,89,714 units, the best ever in the month, SIAM said. Also, two-wheeler sales which grew a stronger 14.2 per cent from 18,95,799 units to 21,64,276 units, were also the best ever for the month, it noted.

"October 2024 saw two major festivals Dasara and Diwali, both occurring in the same month, which traditionally drive higher consumer demand providing a significant boost to Auto industry's performance. Passenger vehicles posted its highest ever sales of October in 2024 of 3.93 lakh units, with a growth of 0.9 per cent, albeit on a high base of last October. The two-wheeler segment also posted the highest ever

INDIA LIKELY TO SEEK CHANGES IN FTA WITH ASEAN

FC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 13

India may seek flexibility in the existing tariff concessions in sectors, which are impacted by significant increase in imports, under the free trade agreement (FTA) review with the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an official said.

The ASEAN official team is visiting India for the next round of review negotiations, which will be from November 19 to 22, here. The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) was signed in 2009. ASEAN members include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. "We may seek some flexibility in the tariff (or customs duty) concessions that have been given in the agreement. Some of the concessions can be taken back and can be given somewhere else because in some sectors we feel our domestic industry is badly getting hurt. We have domestic injuries in some sectors. We would like to do that in a minimum possible way," the official said.

The domestic steel industry has time and again flagged concerns over a significant increase in imports from countries like China and misuse of FTA with ASEAN. India may also seek flexibility in scheduling the agreement. "We are expecting substantial progress during this round of talks," he said. The third round of the negotiations was held in Jakarta, Indonesia.



GRAND | START

Swiggy follows up market debut in style

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

Swiggy made smart recovery after a tepid debut on bourses as shares closed with a gain of 16.91 per cent at ₹455.95 over the public issue price of ₹390. Bengaluru based online food and grocery ordering company's market capitalisation hit ₹1 lakh crore and stood at over ₹1.02 lakh crore at market close on BSE.

Swiggy's competitor

RECORD SALES

SCOOTER dispatches to dealers also soared by 22% YoY at 7,21,200 units last month.

HOWEVER, moped sales saw a slight decline in October 2024, falling to 52,380 units, compared to 53,162 units.



October 2024 saw two major festivals Dasara and Diwali, both occurring in the same month, which traditionally drive higher consumer demand providing a significant boost to the auto industry's performance. — RAJESH MENON, director general at SIAM

sales of October in 2024 with 21.64 lakh units, with a good growth of 14.2 per cent, compared to October 2023." Rajesh Menon, director general at SIAM pointed out.

This high growth, he said, was also reflected in the Vahan vehicle registration data, wherein more than 30 per cent

Passenger vehicle sales stood at 3,93,238 units, up 0.9% from 3,89,714 units, the best ever in October.



TWO-WHEELER SALES which grew a stronger 14.2 per cent from 18,95,799 units to 21,64,276 units. This was also the best ever for the month.

growth in registration was witnessed for both passenger vehicles and two-wheelers in October 2024, compared to October 2023. Similarly, scooter dispatches to dealers also soared 22 per cent YoY at 7,21,200 units last month. Motorcycle sales grew by 11 per cent, reaching 1,390,696 units.

e-sellers accused of predatory prices

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, NOV. 13

The fast-growing quick-commerce players have raised over ₹54,000 crore as FDI and they are using a major share of the money to offer discounts and predatory pricing, which in turn is affecting the business of kirana shops, alleges an industry body. Meanwhile, Datum Intelligence finds that quick-commerce accounts for just 1 per cent of the grocery market, but is estimated to grow six-fold in sales value by 2030.

"Leading Quick Commerce platforms like Blinkit, Instamart, and Zepto are driving small retailers, particularly Kirana stores, out of business. Instead of using Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to build assets, they are funding deep discounts and covering operating losses. This predatory pricing pulls customers away from Kirana shops, crippling their ability to compete," a white paper by the Confederation of All India Traders representing the kirana stores said. The quick-commerce players have raised more than ₹54,000 crore, of which only ₹1,300 crores or 2.5 per cent has been used to create real assets/infrastructure. It is estimated that over 50 per

cent of the FDI may have been spent covering operating losses incurred due to practice of predatory pricing, and large part of the remainder used to provide subsidised warehouses, logistics, inventory, and delivery systems to their preferred sellers, CAIT alleged.

"Their misuse of FDI to finance operational losses due to their predatory practices, deep discounting not only breaches FEMA guidelines but also causes appreciable adverse effect to competition and is causing irreparable loss to the small traders," it said.

Meanwhile, a report by Datum Intelligence, found that Kirana stores account for 92.2 per cent of estimated ₹177 billion grocery market in India in 2024. Quick commerce accounts for 1 per cent, e-commerce 1.3 per cent and organised brick and mortar stores 5.5 per cent.

Quick-commerce is expected to grow to \$40 billion by 2030.

Higher fibre prices worry apparel traders

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, NOV. 13

Apparels and home textiles are hopeful about robust demand in the international market, especially the US. However, the industry is worried about its competitiveness as cotton and man-made fibre are priced higher than international rates and further correction is unlikely due to the

import duty and minimum support price.

The global demand scenario for apparels and home textiles is looking up. In September the exports of ready-made garments rose 17.3 per cent to \$1.1 billion. According to Chandrima Chatterjee, secretary general of Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, the



exports in October too are strong as the demand in markets like the US and EU is promising.

"Further, we have increased our market share in these countries," she said. Similarly, home textiles segment is set to grow by 6-8 per cent this fiscal, riding on resilient demand from the US and expansion in the domestic market, finds Crisil. Home

Sensex plunges 984 pts, closes at 4-month low

Sharp surge in domestic inflation impacts investor sentiment

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

Persisting weakness in the market continued for the fifth consecutive session with Sensex and Nifty-50 down by more than 1.25 per cent each on weak high inflation print for October, weak global cues, foreign investors profit taking and weak second quarter earnings.

Market benchmarks are now down by close to 10 per cent from all time highs of 85,978.25 hit on September 27, 2024 for the Sensex and 26,277.35 for the Nifty-50.

"Relentless selling by FIIs amid weak corporate earnings and a sharp surge in domestic inflation to a 14-month high have further impacted investor sentiment, dashing hopes for a near-term rate cut by the RBI," said Vinod Nair, head-Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Rate sensitive sectors were hit the hardest as hopes of early relief from high interest rate were dashed with BSE Realty index down by 3.23 per cent, others included Bankex (-1.94 per cent), auto (-2.26 per cent), capital goods (-2.72 per cent)

BEAR'S RAID

RATE SENSITIVE sectors hit the hardest as hopes of early relief from the high interest rate were dashed with BSE Realty index down by 3.23 %

BSE MID-CAP INDEX FELL 2.56 PER CENT WHILE BSE SMALL-CAP INDEX FELL 3.08 %

Others affected were Bankex (-1.94 per cent), auto (-2.26 per cent), capital goods (-2.72 per cent) and consumer durables (-0.87 per cent).



and consumer durables (-0.87 per cent) as all sectoral indices closed in the red. Overnight US market fell for the first time after Donald Trump was elected President with the Dow Jones Industrial Average down by 0.9 per cent after hitting an all time high

everyday after the electoral verdict.

Asian markets were also weak with Japan's Nikkei index down by 1.66 per cent, Hong Kong's Hang Seng by 0.12 per cent and South Korea's Kospi by 2.64 per cent.

Much bigger corrections

ASIAN MARKETS were also weak with Japan's Nikkei index down by 1.66 per cent, Hong Kong's Hang Seng by 0.12 per cent and South Korea's Kospi by 2.64%.

MUCH BIGGER corrections in the broader market made it worse for market investors as they made a notional loss of over ₹7.78 lakh cr

FOLLOWING the bearish momentum from Tuesday's close, Nifty opened on a negative note and saw no respite for the bulls as the day progressed. The session seemed to signal a complete surrender by the bulls, leading to a broad-based sell-off and a notable correction of over 10 per cent from its all-time highs." — RAJESH BHOSALE, Technical analyst, Angel One

India at forefront of digital revolution, says RBI dy gov

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

India is at the forefront of the digital revolution and financial technology is speeding up digital payments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said on Wednesday.

Patra in his inaugural address at the DEPR Conference on 'Digital Technology, Productivity and Economic Growth in India' said that the country is uniquely positioned to unlock new growth avenues and optimise existing ones with its digital public infrastructure (DPI), a vibrant information technology (IT) sector and a burgeoning youth population, including one of the largest AI talent bases he said. It is estimated that the digital economy currently accounts for a tenth of India's GDP, he said, adding that going by growth rates observed over the past decade, it is poised to constitute a fifth of GDP by 2026. Generative AI is expected to contribute \$359-438 billion to India's GDP by 2029-30.

DIGITAL THRUST

IT is estimated the digital economy currently accounts for a tenth of India's GDP.

GENERATIVE AI is expected to contribute \$359 billion to India's GDP by 2029-30.

If the same growth rate continues, the digital economy will constitute a fifth of the GDP by 2026.

HDFC, ICICI, SBI in RBI's important list

FC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced that State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank remain designated as domestic systemically important banks (D-SIBs). These banks, also known as "too-big-to-fail" institutions, must adhere to specific capital requirements that aim to safeguard the financial system.

Inclusion in the list requires the lenders to

maintain higher Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) in addition to the capital conservation buffer as per the bucket under which it has been classified.

SBI continues to be in bucket 4, which will require the country's largest lender to keep an additional CET1 of 0.80 per cent, as per the list.

HDFC Bank, the largest private sector lender, continues to be bracketed in bucket 2, under which it will have to maintain a higher CET1 by 0.40 per cent. ICICI Bank is classified in bucket 1.



OCT. INFLATION WIPES OFF RATE CUT EXPECTATIONS

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, NOV. 13

With India's October inflation registering the fastest pace of rise in over a year, a rate cut in the December 2024 policy review appears ruled out despite a slowing economy, said economists. The central bank is also likely to upwardly revise its official FY25 inflation projection at the upcoming review. The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will meet between December 4-6.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA Ltd said, "With the CPI inflation breaching the 6 per cent mark in October 2024 and expected to exceed the MPC's estimate for Q3 FY2025 by at least 60-70 bps, a rate cut in the December 2024 policy review appears ruled out, in spite of our projection of a sub-7 per cent GDP growth print for Q2 FY2025. We anticipate that a shallow rate cut cycle of 50 basis points may commence in February 2025 or later."

SBI UNIT TO RAISE \$237 MN FOR CLIMATE

New Delhi, Nov. 13: A unit of India's largest lender State Bank of India is planning to raise as much as 20 billion rupees (\$237 million) through its third climate fund, according to people familiar with the matter.

SBI Ventures Ltd. plans to raise the money from multilateral institutions after approval from the company's board, said people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private. The fund will invest in small and mid-sized companies that are focused on recycling waste and curbing emissions among other initiatives, and obtain equity partnership, the people said. State Bank of India and SBI Ventures didn't immediately comment. Green finance — that funds environment projects — is gaining momentum. — Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

Parthiv joins GT support staff

New Delhi: Gujarat Titans have entrusted former India keeper-batter Parthiv Patel with the dual responsibility of serving as their assistant and batting coach in the support staff led by head coach Ashish Nehra. "The Gujarat Titans are pleased to announce the appointment of Parthiv Patel as their new assistant and batting coach. With a distinguished 17-year career as a former Indian wicket-keeper-batter, Parthiv brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the team," the franchise said in a statement. "As the Titans prepare for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, Parthiv's insights into batting techniques and strategies will play a crucial role in enhancing the players' skills."

"Parthiv, who is known for his sharp cricketing acumen and ability to mentor young talent, will strengthen the coaching staff and contribute to player development and performance," GT added in the statement. This is the first coaching role in the IPL for Parthiv, who retired in 2020. — PTI

India, Pak girls grouped together

Colombo: Arch-rivals India and Pakistan have been drawn together for the inaugural Women's Under 19 Asia Cup, the Asian Cricket Council announced on Wednesday. The six-team tournament will take place in Malaysia, consisting of two groups of three teams each.

Group 'A' comprises India, Pakistan and Nepal, while Group 'B' includes Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and hosts Malaysia. All matches would be held at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur. The tournament will begin on December 15, with hosts Malaysia taking on Sri Lanka in the opening game, followed by the India-Pakistan clash later in the day. The top two teams from the Super Four make it to the final on December 22. — PTI

Gold for Sanjeeta and Aishwary

New Delhi: Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeeta Das combined to give India a gold medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team event as the hosts claimed their third top-podium finish at the World University Shooting Championship here on Wednesday. Aishwary, following the disappointment of finishing fifth in men's 10m air rifle and having to settle for silver in 50m rifle 3-positions, finally came up with a gold-winning effort, combining with Sanjeeta, to overcome a strong challenge from the South Korean pair of Kim Hyobeen and Lee Junhwan 17-15. The Polish team of Julia Piotrowska and Maciej Kowalewicz defeated the Indian duo of Manini Kaushik and Umamahesh Maddineni 16-0 in the bronze-medal clash. Sanjeeta (316.8) and Aishwary (316.2) had earlier aggregated 633.0 to top the qualification round and move into the final, where they faced Korea who were second with an aggregate of 631.7.

The top two teams in the event fight for the gold, while the third and fourth-placed pair compete for the bronze. — PTI

Narayanan and Carlsen joint 2nd

Kolkata: Uzbekistan's young grandmaster Abdusattorov Nodirbek emerged sole leader in the open section of the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid tournament here on Wednesday. Abdusattorov scored 2.5 points out of a possible three, securing victories over talented German Vincent Keymer in round two and India's R. Praggnanandhaa in round three, while drawing his opening game with Daniil Dubov. Magnus Carlsen, the World No. 1, had a solid start, drawing his first two games against India's Praggnanandhaa and Nihal Sarin before finishing the day with a win over Vidit Gujrathi, placing him in joint second position with two points. Carlsen shares this slot with India's S.L. Narayanan, who also logged 2 points with a win against Keymer in round one and two draws against Wesley So and Arjun Erigaisi. In the women's section, India's Vantika Agrawal stood out, sharing the lead with Aleksandra Goryachkina and Kateryna Lagno, each scoring two points from three rounds. — PTI

TILAK TEES OFF

Varma's maiden ton powers India to big total in 3rd T20

Centurion, Nov. 13: Tilak Varma (107 not out) produced a batting masterclass while slamming his maiden international hundred as India posted a massive 219 for 6 against South Africa in the third T20I, here on Wednesday.

Tilak got ample backing from Abhishek Sharma who made a brisk 50 after SA skipper Aiden Markram invited the visitors to bat first. The 22-year-old Tilak tore into the South African pacers as he hammered seven sixes and eight fours during his innings off a mere 57 balls, powering India to their second highest score against the Proteas in this format.

On his part, Abhishek banished a poor run with the bat with a stroke-laden half-century, scoring 50 off only 25 balls laced with five sixes and three fours as the two southpaws dazzled with the bat.

With his rich arsenal of strokes in all directions, Tilak dominated the bowling with complete authority and also helped India stay on course through the blips.

First, he forged a 107-run stand with Abhishek for the second wicket to build a strong platform after the early dismissal of Sanju Samson (0).

As India stuttered in the middle overs with Keshav Maharaj (2/36) applying the brakes, Tilak ensured his team did not squander the advantage with a late charge — his last 52 runs came off only 22 balls in the last six overs.

Tilak's charge also masked the failure for skipper Suryakumar Yadav (1), Hardik Pandya (18) and Rinku Singh (8).

At the start, Samson was beaten by low bounce on the second ball from Marco Jansen as the Indian opener, who made a hundred in the first match, fell to his second successive duck in this series. But unlike the last game, India made a strong recovery as Tilak and Abhishek made merry on the track which had true bounce and carry.

Abhishek provided a huge relief to the Indian camp with his fifty as hitting through the line after making room served him well. The 24-year-old also ended his eight-match barren run with this knock. — PTI

SCORECARD

India: Sanju Samson b Jansen 0, Abhishek Sharma st Klaasen b Maharaj 50, Tilak Varma not out 107, Suryakumar Yadav c Jansen b Simelane 1, Hardik Pandya lbw b Maharaj 18, Rinku Singh b Simelane 8, Ramandeep Singh run out 15, Axar Patel not out 1. Extras (lb-6, nb-3, w-10) 19. Total (for 6 wickets in 20 overs) 219.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-107, 3-110, 4-132, 5-190, 6-218.

Bowling: Marco Jansen 4-0-28-1, Gerald Coetzee 3-0-51-0, Lutho Sipamla 4-0-45-0, Andile Simelane 3-0-34-2, Aiden Markram 2-0-19-0, Keshav Maharaj 4-0-36-2.



India's Tilak Varma plays a shot against South Africa during their third T20 match between at Centurion Park in Centurion, South Africa, on Wednesday. — AP

FINCH FEELS PANT, CAREY COULD BE KEY IN BG TROPHY

Sydney, Nov. 13: Former captain Aaron Finch believes Rishabh Pant and Alex Carey will be crucial in determining the outcome of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, while retired wicket-keeper Brad Haddin predicts that Indian batters will struggle against the Australian pacers.

Finch feels the two wicket-keepers have the ability to shift the momentum in their team's favour in the event of a top-order collapse.

"I think the key could be Alex Carey and Rishabh Pant. The two wicket-keepers are going to be so important," Finch said on *Willow Talk Podcast* when asked where this series is going to be won or lost.

"A time or other in series the top order will get knocked over as both fast bowling attacks are so good and they will get on a roll. For me, it is that really crucial role of Alex at number seven and Rishabh at number six likely."

Haddin reckons the fast-bowling trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood would trouble the Indian batters on bouncy pitches. "I don't think that the Indian batters are going to stand up to our quicks," Haddin said. — PTI

India have official session at WACA

Perth, Nov. 13: The entire Indian contingent on Wednesday came for an afternoon net session at the WACA and were also joined by some India 'A' team members here on Wednesday.

Virat Kohli batted for a considerable period of time at the nets along with other main batters.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, waiting for the birth of his second child, has not joined the squad yet, although coach Gautam Gambhir remained hopeful that he could link up with the team before the first Test. A confirmation is awaited, though.

Meanwhile, the Indian team management has decided to allow the public to watch their centre-wicket training sessions from Friday to Sunday when they would do match simulation and play a warm-up game against India 'A' at the WACA ground.

This is in contrary to an Australian media report claiming that the visiting team's practice sessions are closed to the public.

On Wednesday, *The Australian* claimed in a report that a team of construction workers, which is currently refurbishing the WACA, has been mailed by its company CEO to not watch, click pictures, or fly drones during the India net sessions. "The extent to which India is keeping their practice guarded is laid bare in a leaked email issued to workers involved in the WACA refurbishment, due to be completed next year. Not only has the



India's Jasprit Bumrah at a training session at the WACA Ground in Perth on Wednesday. — BCCI

public been barred from watching India train, even those working in the precinct are under strict instructions not to take a peek, according to an email sent by Adam Sauzier of ADCO Constructions, who is building the new facility," the newspaper reported. Quoting the e-mail, the

newspaper wrote: "This week India and India 'A' are training at the WACA Ground from Tuesday 12 November until Sunday 17 November, as part of India's preparation for the Test Match at Perth Stadium the following week." "During all training sessions, please do not take

any photos or videos or fly any drones, of the training sessions and please do not sit and watch the sessions," the report further said. However, when people in the BCCI were asked they categorically denied having sent such official communication. — PTI

ASIAN CHAMPIONS | TROPHY HOCKEY

India ready for Thai challenge

Rajgir (Bihar), Nov. 13: Buoyed by back-to-back victories in as many games, hosts India will look to work on the finer points of the game with an aim to thrash minnows Thailand in the women's Asian Champions Trophy here on Thursday.

Both India and reigning Olympic silver medalist China are unbeaten so far from two matches but the hosts have an inferior goal difference.

China are atop the points table with a goal difference of 20, while India have a goal difference of five and a handsome victory on Thursday will only help their cause ahead of final two round robin matches against China and Japan.

Japan are placed third in the points table ahead of Korea. The top four sides from the round robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team continental tournament.

In both the matches India created plenty of scoring chances but failed to score the amount of goals they would have liked. While India defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their

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tournament opener, they scored a late goal to eke out a narrow 3-2 win over South Korea.

The Indian players were guilty of rushing and faltered in choices once inside the opposition circle, a fact which chief coach Harendra Singh admitted.

"...we could have scored more goals. We were guilty of rushing and did not look for the right choices," Harendra said after Tuesday's match.

"We will watch clipings of the match and analyse where we went wrong and work on the finer points," he added.

Another factor which would be a cause of concern for Harendra is the team's poor penalty corner conversion rate. — PTI



Bengal's Mohammed Shami reacts after bowling a delivery on the first day of their Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh at the Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore on Wednesday. — PTI

Shami makes quiet comeback in Ranji

Indore, Nov. 13: India pacer Mohammed Shami returned wicket-less from his 10 overs in a subdued comeback to competitive cricket after 360 days as Bengal struggled in their Ranji Trophy Group 'C' game against Madhya Pradesh here on Wednesday.

Electing to field first, MP were 103/1 at stumps after bowling out Bengal for 228 in their first innings. The visitors need an outright win to keep their slim quarterfinal hopes alive.

Bengal's attack is depleted by injuries to Ishan Porel and Rishav Vivek, while Mukesh Kumar and Akash Deep are on national duty. All eyes are now on Shami to not only prove his fitness but also rejuvenate his state team's campaign.

Bowling on the Holkar Stadium green-top, the 34-year-old Shami, who was sidelined with an Achilles tendon injury on his left leg for which he under-

went a surgery, returned figures of 10-1-34-0.

Shami, who was last seen in action in India's ODI World Cup final against Australia in Ahmedabad on November 19 last year, bowled four overs in the first spell, giving away 16 runs. He conceded three fours and bowled 17 dot balls in that spell.

His second spell was slightly better with figures of 6-1-18-0. Shami's fitness will be closely monitored by the BCCI think-tank, with hopes that a strong performance would secure him a spot in the Indian squad for the high-profile Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, starting in Perth on November 22.

Shami was also seen for the first time playing with his younger brother Mohammed Kaif, who took the only wicket to fall in the MP innings, trapping opener Himanshu Mantri for 13. — PTI

RANJI TROPHY BRIEF SCORES

- In **Indore:** Bengal 228 in 51.2 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 92, Anustup Majumdar 44, Aryan Pandey 4/47, Kulwant Khejriya 4/84) vs Madhya Pradesh 103/1 in 30 overs.
- In **Lucknow:** Uttar Pradesh 89 in 40.3 overs (Sameer Rizvi 25, Vasuki Kaushik 5/20) vs Karnataka 127/5 in 31 overs (Krishnan Shrijith 68 batting, Shreyas Gopal 14 batting).
- In **Hyderabad:** Hyderabad 244/5 in 90 overs (Tanmay Agarwal 124, Tripurana Vijay 3/85) vs Andhra.
- In **Delhi:** Jharkhand 136/3 in 55 overs (Sharandeep Singh 64 batting, Simerjeet Singh 1/16) vs Delhi.
- In **Ahmedabad:** Railways 229 in 80.2 overs (Mohd Saif 60, Ajith Ram 4/44) vs Tamil Nadu.
- In **Chandigarh:** Saurashtra 299/2 in 79 overs (Harvik Desai 99, Chirag Jani 153) vs Chandigarh.
- In **Rajpur:** Assam 264/6 in 87 overs (Denish Das 104, Parvez Musaraf 42) vs Chattisgarh.
- In **Vadodra:** Meghalaya 103 in 36.5 overs (Akash Choudhary 40, Mahesh Pithiya 6/25) vs Baroda 308/6 in 52.4 overs (Jyotsnail Singh 121, Shashwat Rawat 90 batting, Bijon Dey 2/79).
- In **Cuttack:** Maharashtra 162 in 54 overs (Ramakrishna Ghosh 80; Sumit Sharma 4/39) vs Odisha 99/1 in 34 overs (Swastik Samal 56 batting, Ramakrishna Ghosh 1/23).