

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024



**NATION | 3**  
Rajnath meets Japan & Philippines counterparts on last day of Laos visit



**WORLD | 6**  
Russia says hypersonic missile strike on Ukraine was a warning to West



**DELHI AGE | 10**  
Angelina Jolie says nothing else matters except motherhood

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India's captain Jasprit Bumrah celebrates the wicket on the first day of the first Test against Australia in Perth on Friday. At the close the hosts were in disarray on 67-7. — PTI

## 10 Naxals killed in gunfight with forces in Sukma

**Sukma:** Ten Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Friday. Chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed security forces and said the era of peace and progress has returned to the Bastar region, which includes Sukma. The gunfight broke out in the morning in a forest within the jurisdiction of the Bheji police station when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, said inspector general of police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P. Bodies of 10 Naxalites have been recovered from the spot so far, he said. **Full report on Page 4**

## SC Gyanvapi notice over survey by ASI

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought the response from the Gyanvapi mosque committee in Varanasi on a plea filed by the Hindu side for conducting an ASI survey of the sealed area of the mosque where a "shivling" was purportedly found in May, 2022. — PTI

## Bomb scare alert at London's Gatwick

**London:** The passenger terminal at London's Gatwick Airport was evacuated on Friday after a suspected prohibited item was discovered in a passenger's luggage prompting the dispatch of a bomb disposal team. "The security alert has now been resolved," the airport said. **Full report on Page 6**

## COUNTERPOINT



First, I want a loan to bribe some officials in order to secure a big project!

## WEATHER

Max: 27°C  
Min: 14°C  
RH: 50%  
Rain: NIL  
Forecast: Sunny

## ASTROGUIDE

**Krodhi:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Karthika Bahula Ashtami till 8 pm  
**Star:** Makha till 7.29 pm  
**Variyam:** Sesa Variyam till 8.07 am; 4.25 am to 6.13 am (Mon)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 6.29 am to 7.58 am  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.24 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.51 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.36 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 1.05 PM**

## Cong raises pitch, seeks Adani arrest, to seek JPC

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The Congress Party has upped the ante in demanding the arrest of businessman Gautam Adani after he was indicted by US government prosecutors in a federal court in New York. The party has asked all its state units to do press conferences in their respective state capitals on the issue.

The party has set the agenda for the coming Winter Session of Parliament by demanding a JPC on the Adani issue. Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said Friday: "This corruption is very dangerous as Adani has been funding Modi Ji and Modi Ji has been giving national assets to Adani. Both are protecting each other and the real sufferers are the common people of this country." He also used the hashtag #BJPwithAdani, implying that the BJP was protecting Mr Gautam Adani.

On Thursday, the US prosecutors charged Mr Adani, his nephew and other associates for allegedly paying \$250 million in bribes to Indian officials. The Congress leader said it was now quite clear and established in the US that the businessman had broken both Indian and American laws.

Meanwhile, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge urged the Centre to take action against Mr Adani. He said the Congress will raise the issue during the coming Parliament session and demand an inquiry. "We will raise the issue in Parliament. As he (Adani) is in India, action should be taken against him, he should be arrested. The government knows everything, so they should quickly take action against him in corruption cases," Mr Kharge told reporters.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being served a meal by Guyana President Irfaan Ali at his residence. "Served on a water lily leaf, this meal holds immense cultural significance in Guyana, highlighting the deep and enduring connection between our two nations," the Prime Minister tweeted. — PTI

## No evidence linking Modi to Nijjar's murder, says Canada

'PM, EAM, NSA criminal link report speculative'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Canada on Friday stated that it is not aware of any evidence linking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar or national security adviser Ajit Doval to any criminal activity on its soil, just days after a Canadian media report cited sources to claim that Mr Modi knew beforehand of the plot to kill pro-Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India had earlier this week described the media report as "ludicrous". Nijjar was gunned down in Canada in June last year.

"The government of Canada has not stated, nor is it aware of evidence, linking Mr Modi, Mr Jaishankar or Mr Doval to the serious criminal activity within Canada," a statement from the national security and intelligence adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister Nathalie G. Drouin was quoted by media reports as saying, who said, "Any suggestion to the contrary is both speculative and inaccurate."

India had late on Wednesday night said: "We do not normally comment on media reports. However, such ludicrous statements made to a newspaper purportedly by a Canadian government source should be dismissed with the contempt they deserve. Smear campaigns like this only further damage our already strained ties."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had alleged in September last year that India was involved in the killing of Nijjar, an allegation which New Delhi dismissed as "absurd".

## Culture, cuisine, cricket bind India, Guyana: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Building on the strong cultural ties with Guyana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that "people in India remember that the holy water and shilas (building blocks) from Guyana were also sent for the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, adding that "our countries are showing how cultural diversity is our strength".

Addressing members of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean nation in the early hours of Friday, the PM said three things — culture, cuisine and cricket — connect India and Guyana deeply.

Mr Modi recounted his address in the Guyanese Parliament. "We have a shared history that binds us together. Common struggle against colonial rule, love for democratic values and respect for diversity... We have a shared future that we want to create..."

Last month, Canada had said that it had expelled six Indian diplomats, including the Indian high commissioner, while New Delhi had swiftly retaliated by expelling the same number of Canadian diplomats, including the Canadian acting high commissioner and deputy high commissioner. New Delhi had said it had first recalled its six "targeted" diplomats soon after it received a communication from the Canadian government that

## UBT, Cong to guard MLAs to foil poaching

## Fissures in Mahayuti & MVA over CM post

## D-Day in Maha, J'khand: NDA, INDIA both upbeat

VINEETA PANDEY and SONU SHRIVASTAVA with bureau inputs NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, NOV. 22

There is guarded optimism in the BJP-led NDA and the INDIA bloc as they await the outcome of the Jharkhand and Maharashtra Assembly polls on Saturday. While the NDA parties are hoping that the exit polls predicting their win come true, the Opposition camp is also confident, but in Maharashtra, the Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT), in their bid to keep the flock together, have planned to bring all the MLAs to Mumbai after the announcement of the results.

The counting of postal ballots starts at 8 am on Saturday. Early trends will start coming from 9-9.15 am. Results of bypolls in 48 Assembly constituencies and two parliamentary seats — Wayanad and Nanded — too will be declared on Saturday.

In Maharashtra, on Friday, ahead of the counting of votes, posters of NCP chief Ajit Pawar were put up by his party leader Santosh Nangare in Pune. Though it was soon taken down, the act reflected the mood of the Mahayuti partners, who are wishing to take control of one of the biggest states in the country. The tussle may soon begin for the CM's post in case the Mahayuti is in a position to form the government.

Even the Shiv Sena group is hoping to retain the top post. While the BJP keeps the cards close to its chest, the saffron party cadre has made it clear that it will want to see Devendra Fadnis as the chief minister. Though confident of a win in Maharashtra, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituents, meanwhile, are busy keeping flock together to prevent poaching in case

## Nadda paves way for BJP state unit polls, to pick new prez next

Reviews membership drive Workshops for leaders

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

A day before the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls verdict is out, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Friday cleared the deck for the party's organisational polls. The BJP chief held a preparatory meeting with the party's state unit leaders and also reviewed the membership drive in each state.

The "Sangathan Parv 2024" meeting saw the party leaders, including state unit chiefs, organisational secretaries and in-charges of membership drives in states, among others, participating in the workshop on the organisational elections exercise and how to connect with new members and include them in the BJP's several exercises.

Other than Mr Nadda, national general secretaries, including Arun Singh, Tarun Chugh, Dushtyant Gautam, Vinod Tawde, and general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh also attended the meeting, which also finalised the schedule of organisational polls from the mandal to the state level. After this exercise is completed, the election of the next BJP president will be held.

Sources said the BJP leadership has asked its state units to hold workshops for its leaders from the mandal to the state level before every election. One such workshop will be held on December 30 before the state units get their new presidents.

## Atishi is '1,000 times better' than Kejriwal, says Delhi L-G

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

In a rare accolade for Delhi chief minister Atishi, lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena on Friday said she is "a thousand times better" than her predecessor Arvind Kejriwal.

Addressing the convocation of the Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women, Mr Saxena said: "I am happy today that Delhi's CM is a woman, and I can confidently say that she is a thousand times better than her predecessor." While saying this, Mr Saxena also glanced at Atishi who was present at the convocation and addressed the students. The praise for Atishi comes amidst political friction between the AAP government and the L-G on many issues. An AAP leader claimed this was an attempt by the BJP to create a rift in the party ahead of Assembly polls which will prove futile.

## Hearing Monday to review GRAP-4 curbs easing

## SC pulls up Centre: Why allow trucks into Delhi?

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Questioning the Delhi government over the entry of trucks in the national capital, gripped by the spell of severe air pollution, the Supreme Court on Friday directed the Centre to depute police personnel at all 113 points to check the entry of such vehicles in Delhi and said it would consider on Monday whether to relax or continue with the GRAP-4 restrictions in view of the drop in air quality index levels.

A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Augustine George Masih expressed displeasure over the poor implementation of GRAP-4 restrictions, especially restricting the entry of trucks carrying non-essential goods into Delhi. The apex court appointed 13 Supreme Court lawyers as court commissioners to visit various entry points in Delhi to ascertain whether the curbs on entry of trucks were implemented or not. Additional solicitor-general Aishwarya Bhati told the bench that the pollution level had dropped in the last two days and the AQI level was now under the GRAP-2 stage. On Friday, the overall AQI in Delhi remained in the "severe" category, being recorded at 407. On November 18, the apex court directed all Delhi-NCR states to immediately set up teams to strictly enforce anti-pollution GRAP-4 restrictions, making it clear the curbs would continue till further orders. During the hearing on Friday, the bench was informed that the enforced GRAP-4 restrictions also had an adverse impact. "The consequences of GRAP-4 are drastic and it will have adverse effects on several sections of society," the bench observed. The top court will decide on November 25 whether to ease the curbs imposed under GRAP-4. It also dealt with the issue of pollution emanating from trucks entering the national capital and questioned the Delhi government for the lack of

## After brief respite, Delhi AQI falls to 'severe' 407

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The air quality in Delhi plunged into the "severe" category, with the AQI reaching 407 at 8 pm on Friday.

Out of the 39 monitoring stations across the national capital, 19 have already reported AQI levels in the severe category. Jahangirpuri recorded the highest AQI at 445. The air quality, which

was in the severe and "severe plus" category for nearly a week, had witnessed a slight improvement on Friday morning, with air quality in the "very poor" category. The people in Delhi woke up to a hazy morning with a minimum temperature of 11.3 degrees Celsius as the air quality slipped from the "very poor" category to the severe category. ■ More on Page 2



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi meets locals to listen to their concerns about the hazardous air pollution at India Gate in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

## Trump picks Florida's Pam Bondi for A-G as Matt Gaetz withdraws

Washington, Nov. 22: US President-elect Donald Trump tapped Pam Bondi, a staunch ally who helped defend the ex-leader against impeachment, as US attorney-general on Thursday following firebrand Matt Gaetz's withdrawal from the running. Mr Gaetz's retreat amid sexual misconduct allegations signalled limits to Mr Trump's power, even as the President-elect prepares to retake the White House with his Republican Party also in control of both chambers of Congress. The nomination of Ms Bondi, a former Florida attorney-general who served as a surrogate during the 2024 campaign and pushed to de-legitimise vote counting in swing state Pennsylvania in 2020, could be seen as a useful tool for Mr Trump in his attempt to settle personal grievances.



Pam Bondi

"For too long, the partisan Department of Justice has been weaponised against me and other Republicans — Not anymore," Mr Trump wrote on his Truth Social network in announcing Bondi's nomination. Ms Bondi, 59, was a member of Trump's legal team during his first Senate impeachment trial, in which he was alleged to have pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, using aid as leverage, to hand over political dirt on Joe Biden. — AFP ■ More on Page 6

SHORT TAKES

Man stabs wife to death, injures son

New Delhi: A man allegedly stabbed his 35 year old wife to death and injured his teenage son in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri area and later attempted to commit suicide. According to police on Friday, the incident occurred on November 19, when the man returned home in an inebriated state and demanded money from his wife, Geeta, to buy more alcohol. The police said that the accused was identified as Sanju, a resident of the Khichripur area. Deputy commissioner of police (east) Apoorva Gupta said, "When she refused, he stabbed her in a fit of rage. Raj, his 14-year-old son, tried to intervene but was also attacked. He received stab wounds on his chest." The victims were rushed to the Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, where Geeta, who suffered a deep abdominal injury, was operated upon and put on ventilator support. She later succumbed to her injuries.

Plaint filed against cleric over 'fatwa'

New Delhi: A BJP leader has got a police complaint filed in Delhi against Islamic cleric Maulana Sajjad Nomani, alleging that he has issued a "fatwa" calling for social boycott of the Muslims supporting BJP government at the Centre. BJP's minority morcha president Jamal Siddiqui got the complaint filed at the Tughlak Road police station. According to the complaint, Mr Nomani, who resides in Lucknow and enjoys significant influence within the Muslim community, issued the controversial "fatwa" (decree) during the Maharashtra Assembly polls. Mr Siddiqui has told police that in a widely-circulated video, Mr Nomani reportedly said that the Muslims who support the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) should be shunned, denied greetings and subjected to a complete social boycott.

SC transfers Remo's case to city court

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday transferred the trial related to a cheating case involving Bollywood director and choreographer Remo D'Souza to Karkardooma courts in Delhi. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said no serious prejudice would be caused to the prosecution if the case was shifted from Ghaziabad to a court in the national capital. The apex court said the chief metropolitan magistrate at Karkardooma courts was free to assign the case to the judge concerned. On November 15, the top court issued notices to the UP government and Ghaziabad-based businessman Satyendra Tyagi who lodged the cheating case in 2016 against D'Souza. The FIR alleged that Mr D'Souza persuaded Mr Tyagi to invest ₹5 crore in his upcoming film "Amar Must Die".

CONGRESS FLAGS OFF 3RD PHASE OF NYAY YATRA

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

A day after the AAP took a lead in releasing its first list of 11 candidates for the forthcoming Assembly elections in Delhi, the local unit of the Congress on Friday started its third phase of "Delhi Nyay Yatra" from Balmiki temple in the Palam constituency. The yatra led by the party's Delhi unit chief Devender Yadav is seen as an attempt by the grand old party to regain its lost ground in the city. Mr Yadav, while interacting with the farmers of the area said, "Farmers seek suitable compensation for land acquisition by government as the AAP and the BJP cheated them. The farmers of 365 villages pledge their support to Congress's nyay yatra and want the party back in the power." The third phase of the yatra which resumed on Friday on its 14th day covered the Palam, Brijwasan and Mehrauli Assemblies before concluding at Andheria Mode, Mehrauli. The DPCC chief interacted with representatives of 365 villages who have pledged their support to the Congress as AAP and BJP had done nothing to solve their many problems over the past 10 years.

Kejriwal's 'Revdi Par Charcha' raises political heat in Delhi

BJP will stop free services: AAP ■ 'AAP treating public welfare as charity'

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

With an eye on the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party launched its 'Revdi Par Charcha' campaign on Friday, promising several key guarantees to the citizens of the national capital.

Launching the campaign, former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said his government is providing free electricity, water, healthcare, education, bus rides for women, and pilgrimage for the elderly. "Another 'revdi' — a monthly ₹1,000 assistance for women in Delhi — will be started soon," he added. The AAP's latest drive appears to be a direct response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's criticism of the so-called "revdi culture", referring to the distribution of doles by Opposition parties. Besides the revdi campaign, the AAP is also seeking to exploit the faultlines in the



AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal with party leaders Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, Gopal Rai and Satyendra Jain in New Delhi on Friday. — G.N. JHA

Purvanchali community by harking on their "neglect" by the BJP. Mr Kejriwal warned that if the BJP comes to power, the benefits provided by his party would be stopped. He said AAP workers will hold 65,000 meetings across the city to make people understand what these free facilities mean and how only his party can provide such schemes. The campaign, "Revdi Par Charcha", will run

from November 25 to December 10, where AAP workers will go among public and communicate with them about the government's work in Delhi. "If BJP comes to power, the six free services that we are providing to the people of Delhi with their money (taxes) will be discontinued. Among the 20 BJP-ruled states, not a single one offers any of these benefits which we are offering in Delhi," Mr Kejriwal asserted. "Before

pressing the BJP button, remember that you are voting for power cuts to return. If you want these benefits to continue, press the 'jihad' button," he said.

He also slammed the BJP for its "false promise" during the 2020 assembly elections to regularise the unauthorized colonies. "Five years have passed, but not one registration has been done. They betrayed the Purvanchali community, who mainly reside in these colonies," he said. Shortly after the launch of the campaign, Delhi BJP slammed the "revdi" politics, stating that the former Delhi chief minister was making welfare schemes look like Kejriwal was "distributing charity". "It is the duty of every government to ensure that welfare schemes reach every citizen but Kejriwal's language makes it seem like he is distributing 'charity'," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said.

Shah reviews capital's law & order, presses for safe Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday held a meeting with top Delhi police officers to review the law and order situation in the national capital.

Mr Shah underscored the importance of making every Delhi resident feel safe, stressing that it is the personal responsibility of every police officer to ensure public confidence in the city's security. The meeting was attended by the home secretary, the director of the Intelligence Bureau, the Delhi police commissioner, and other senior officials. The home minister highlighted that protecting children, women, and senior citizens must remain a top priority for the Delhi police. He reiterated the need for the force to act deci-



Union home minister Amit Shah holds a meeting in New Delhi on Friday to review law and order situation in the national capital. — PTI

sively, ensuring a secure environment that reflects the government's commitment to public safety in the capital. During the meeting, Mr Shah emphasised the government's "zero tolerance" policy towards crime, stating that no lapses in maintaining law and order in the national capital would be tolerated.

He directed the police to develop special action plans targeting key areas related to public safety and to launch focused campaigns. He further stressed that the police force must work to instil a sense of security among citizens while creating fear among criminals.

'Delhi facing one crisis or other' HC says civic admin collapsed, politicians busy selling slogans

New Delhi, Nov. 22: The Delhi high court on Friday came down heavily on authorities for their failure to upgrade the city infrastructure according to people's needs underlining the civic administration had collapsed and the political class was busy "selling slogans".

A bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P.S. Arora remarked that politicians were neither collecting nor spending any money for the city's development, and were only spending on freebies which won't build any infrastructure. The bench further pointed out that the national capital was going through one crisis or the other and during the year, the city had faced drought, floods and severe pollution levels. "Look at what we have gone through this year. First we had a situation of drought and people were going on fast saying there is no water, then there was flooding and people lost their lives. Then look at this pollution and AQI level," the bench remarked. "Just look at what the city is going through. It is going from one crisis to another and it requires very serious management," it added. The court went on to say the political establishment was not hearing the affected parties but only listening to those creating the problem.

"We as the citizens have to take a call whether the city can accommodate 3.3 crore people or not. Do we have the infrastructure for 3.3 crore people or not? That's the fundamental issue which needs to be decided. We cannot be at 3.3 crore population and still grow without the expenditure or infrastructure. We need a huge outlay on expenditure. We don't have it," the bench lamented. The court went ahead to underscore that politicians were neither collecting money nor spending it. "They are only spending it on freebies. Freebies will not make your infrastructure; they will only ensure that you remain where you are. Today the only thing the political class is doing is selling slogans and we are buying it," it remarked. The court was hearing a plea by the residents of J.J. cluster Madras Camp at Jangpura against the eviction notice while seeking rehabilitation. The court told the counsel for the petitioners that the area they had occupied was not "according to science", and it would be in their interest to vacate the place and seek rehabilitation. The matter will be heard on November 29. Expressing displeasure, the court said the city administration was not performing its duties and the entire burden had fallen on the judiciary. — PTI

SC will hear Sisodia's plea to ease bail conditions

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia's pleas seeking relaxation of bail conditions that require the AAP leader to report to the investigating officer on every Monday and Thursday and money laundering cases related to Delhi excise policy.

A bench of Justices B.R. Gawai and K.V. Viswanathan issued notices to the CBI and the ED seeking their responses on Mr Sisodia's applications. On August 9, the top court had granted the AAP leader bail in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, saying the long incarceration for 17 months without trial had deprived him of his right to speedy trial. The top court had imposed conditions, including that he shall report to the investigating officer on every Monday and Thursday between 10-11 am. On Friday, Mr Sisodia's counsel Abhishek Singhvi said the AAP leader had appeared before the investigating officers 60 times. "I (Sisodia) am a respectable person," the senior advocate said. The top court bench said, "On the next date, we will clarify it... Issue notice, returnable two weeks."

City records max temp at 27.2°C ■ 'Shallow fog likely today' Delhi air slips to 'severe' category

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The air quality in national capital plunged to "severe category" with the AQI reaching 407 at 8 pm on Friday. Out of the 39 monitoring stations across the city, 19 have already reported AQI levels in the "severe" category. Jahangirpuri recorded the highest AQI at 445.

Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai directed the officers to ensure strict implementation of Grap guidelines and actively engage with different associations and trade bodies to spread awareness in reducing pollution in the city.

Mr Rai on Friday asked chief secretary Dharmendra to ensure strict enforcement and

coordinated implementation of restrictions under the fourth stage of Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) among all departments.

In his letter, Mr Rai stressed that while there has been a slight improvement in AQI levels in recent days, the situation demands urgent and sustained action from all concerned departments.

The air quality, which was in the severe and severe plus category for nearly a week, had witnessed a slight improvement on Friday morning. The AQI with the reading of 371 was in "very poor" category.

The people in Delhi woke up to a hazy morning with a minimum temperature of 11.3 degrees Celsius, as the air quality slipped

from the "very poor" category to severe category.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data indicated that PM2.5 and PM10 were the primary pollutants, with PM2.5 levels at 194 µg/m and PM10 at 325 µg/m.

These fine particles, particularly PM2.5, pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

The Centre's decision support system (DSS) for air quality management attributed 15.16 per cent of Delhi's pollution on Friday to vehicular emissions, while stubble burning, another major contributor, accounted for 17.9 per cent of PM2.5 levels on Thursday. Amid Delhi's escalating

pollution crisis, the CPCB has highlighted limited feasibility of cloud seeding as an emergency measure during winters in northern India.

Meanwhile, the city saw a maximum temperature of 27.2 degrees Celsius, a notch above the normal on Friday.

The humidity levels fluctuated between 94 per cent and 71 per cent during the day, according to the weather department.

The night time temperature recorded on Friday 11 degrees Celsius, 0.3 notch below the normal, according to the weather department. The IMD has forecast shallow fog for Saturday, with the maximum and minimum temperatures expected to settle at 28 degrees Celsius and 10 degrees Celsius.

Govt opposes proposal of SC panel to curb pollution

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The Centre on Friday opposed in the Supreme Court a proposal to constitute a committee of former apex court judges to oversee the implementation of measures to curb stubble burning, a key contributor to Delhi-NCR's air pollution.

While hearing a case related to the rising pollution in Delhi-NCR by senior advocate and amicus curiae Aparajita Singh, a bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Augustine George Masih put forward the suggestion for the

panel of former judges.

The amicus curiae sought to leverage the expertise of judges as part of the proposed fact-finding committee. She asserted that the judges had previously dealt with air pollution and stubble-burning issues.

A bench headed by former Supreme Court Justice Madan B. Lokur had heard pleas related to pollution and the role of stubble burning as a contributing factor in the past.

In 2020, a bench headed by then Chief Justice of India Justice S.A. Bobde

set up a panel headed by Justice Lokur to deal with the issues relating to stubble burning.

The order was later recalled. On Friday, the amicus curiae proposed that a committee of these judges could monitor and hear all stakeholders, including farmers and government authorities, for a comprehensive approach to address the crisis. "A committee of experienced judges familiar with these issues could efficiently oversee the situation and hear individual grievances," Ms Singh said.

'Over 49K challans for city improper parking this year'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Delhi traffic police has issued more than 49,000 challans for improper parking in city's 14 markets this year as of October 31, an official data showed.

The data showed a rise in challans of 26.2 per cent as compared to the same period last year. The markets include

Karol Bagh, Sadar Bazar, Chandni Chowk, Kamla Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Vikas Marg, Sarojini Nagar, Green Park, Lajpat Nagar, Yusuf Sarai, Mahipalpur, Rajouri Garden, Tilak Nagar, and Sector-10 Dwarka.

The traffic cops issued 39,100 challans till October 31 in 2023, which rose to 49,348 this year.

L-G distributes job letters to 702 new staff

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Delhi Lieutenant governor V.K. Saxena on Friday distributed appointment letters to 702 newly appointed government employees in various Delhi government departments and civic bodies at an event held at Vigyan Bhawan.

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

S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	04245038	ANTI WEAR HYDRAULIC OIL (HLP68N TYPE)	69720 LTR	18-12-24
02	08241529	PROCUREMENT OF STEEL WIRE ROPE	152000 MTR	18-12-24
03	07240029	SILENT BLOCK FOR ANCHOR LINK	10492 NOS	23-12-24

NOTE -1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.  
 Tender Notice NO. 74/2024-2025 Dated : 22.11.2024 3594/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**OPEN TENDER NOTICE**  
 The Sr. Divisional Engineer/C, Northern Railway, DRM Office, Delhi Division, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055, for and on behalf of the President of India invites sealed open electronic-tenders for under noted work :-

S. No.	Name of work	Approximate cost of work	Earnest money to be deposited	Completion period	Date of opening
1	Supply, installation, commissioning and operation (for 5 years) of track based gauge face rail lubricator on group 'A' Routes over DLI Division. (NIT-23-WC-24-25)	Rs. 5,66,31,182.40	Rs. 4,33,200.00	60 Months	17.12.2024
2	Supply, installation, commissioning and operation (for 5 years) of track based gauge face rail lubricator (group 'B' Routes) in the jurisdiction of various SSE/P Way over DLI Division. (NIT-25-WC-24-25)	Rs. 6,96,99,916.80	Rs. 4,98,500.00	60 Months	17.12.2024

The e-tender is to be submitted through railway website 'http://www.ireps.gov.in'. The tenders can be submitted on website up to 15:00 hrs. on 17.12.2024 and shall be opened there after.  
 No. 128-W/Sr.DEN-C/NIT-23&25/2024-25 Date: 22.11.2024 3603/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

SC defers hearing on Stalin son's plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday deferred the hearing on a plea by Tamil Nadu minister Udhayanidhi Stalin seeking clubbing of multiple FIRs lodged against him over his purported "eradicate Sanatan Dharma" remark. A bench of Chief Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice Sanjay Kumar posted the hearing in February 2025. The apex court said the interim order granting the politician exemption from appearing physically before trial courts would continue till further orders. Mr Stalin counsel Abhishek Singhvi and other counsel pointed out that several respondents (complainants) had not filed their replies on the plea. On March 4, the top court rebuked Mr Stalin over his remarks, asking why he had moved the court with a plea to club the FIRs against him after abusing his right to freedom of speech and expression.

Defaced notes: SC's last chance on reply

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday granted a last opportunity to the Centre to file its response on a PIL seeking a CBI probe into the RBI exchanging defaced currency notes worth ₹30 crores allegedly belonging to a Kashmiri separatist group. While noting enough time had been given to the Centre to file its reply, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan granted four more weeks "in the interest of justice." The plea said, "The act of the Jammu branch of Reserve Bank of India to exchange the defaced/imperfect Indian currency notes worth ₹30 crores — that too done by a separatist group of Kashmir with the main aim of destabilising peace and harmony in the J&K region and to create an environment of tension — is illegal and worth the interference of this court."

Tawde sends notice to Rahul and Kharage

New Delhi: BJP general secretary and one of the "star campaigners" of the Maharashtra Assembly polls Vinod Tawde has sent a defamation notice to Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharage and Rahul Gandhi for making "false and baseless" allegations against him in the Nallasopara cash-for-votes incident. Mr Tawde has demanded an apology from the Congress leaders, saying that they were aware that they were pushing a "totally false story fabricated" by them. The notice, also sent to party spokesperson Supriya Shrinete, states that if the Congress leaders failed to tender an apology within 24 hours in newspapers and through their social media accounts, a civil action of ₹100 crores will be filed. A day before the polling in Maharashtra, Mr Tawde was accused by a regional party, of distributing ₹5 crores to influence voters.

DISQUALIFICATION OF PARL SECYS IN HP STAYED BY SC

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the disqualification process of six chief parliamentary secretaries of Himachal Pradesh who were appointed by the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led state government. The apex court stayed the direction of the Himachal Pradesh high court declaring the power to appoint chief parliamentary secretaries and parliamentary secretaries in the state as unconstitutional. A bench of Chief Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice Sanjay Kumar said there will be no further proceedings pursuant to the Himachal Pradesh high court order quashing the appointment of six MLAs as chief parliamentary secretaries. The top court, however, made it clear that no more appointments will be made by the state government, saying it will be contrary to law. The bench also issued notice to BJP leader Kalpana Devi, who moved the high court against the appointment of chief parliamentary secretaries. It also sought her response within two weeks and posted the matter after four weeks. It tagged the matter with the pending petitions in the apex court.

India, Japan resolve to boost tech & defence ties

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

India and Japan on Friday discussed on a reciprocal provision of supply and services agreement for greater interoperability between the militaries of the two strategic partners amid common concerns over China's military muscle-flexing in strategic waters. Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday met Japanese minister Gen. Nakatani and secretary of the National Defence (defence minister) of the Philippines Gilberto Teodoro on the final day of his three-day visit to Vientiane, Laos.

During the meeting with the Japanese defence minister, the two sides reiterated the importance of defence industry and technology cooperation between the two countries. Recalling the milestone event of signing of memorandum of implementation of Unicorn mast in Japan last week, both sides agreed for enhanced cooperation in co-production and co-development in the defence manufacturing sector.

"To further improve interoperability between the Indian and Japanese forces, reciprocal provision of supply and services agreement between the two countries and participation of militaries in various bilateral and multilateral exercises were discussed by both the ministers," the defence ministry said.

They also agreed to explore new areas of cooperation in the air domain. Mr Singh welcomed the Philippines as country coordinator for India in Asean and Asean defence ministers' meeting forum for the next cycle. Both sides agreed to expand and deepen cooperation in exchange of subject matter experts, defence industry, counter-terrorism, space and maritime domain.

Sena-UBT, Cong to keep its MLA in Mumbai hotel after results

MVA moves to keep flock together

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, NOV. 22

The Shiv Sena(UBT) and the Congress of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have initiated measures to keep their flock together ahead through their social media accounts, a civil action of ₹100 crores will be filed. A day before the polling in Maharashtra, Mr Tawde was accused by a regional party, of distributing ₹5 crores to influence voters.

Culture, cuisine, cricket connect India, Guyana: Modi to diaspora

Addresses Guyanese Parliament 'We have a shared future that we want to create'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Building on the strong cultural ties with Guyana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said "people in India remember that the holy water and 'shilas' (building blocks) from Guyana were also sent to build the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. "Our countries are showing how cultural diversity is our strength," Mr Modi said.

Addressing members of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean nation in the early hours of Friday, he said, "Three things, in particular, connect India and Guyana deeply: culture, cuisine and cricket!" "This morning, I had the honour of addressing the Guyanese Parliament. Coming from the Mother



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by members of the Indian community during his visit to the Arya Samaj monument in Georgetown, Guyana on Thursday. — PTI

of Democracy, I felt the spiritual connect with one of the most vibrant democracies in the Caribbean region. We have a shared history that binds us together. Common struggle against colonial rule, love for democratic values, and respect for diversity," the PM recounted. "We have a shared future that we want to create. Aspirations for growth and development. Commitment towards economy and ecology,

Modi gifts traditional items from across India to leaders

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

During his just-concluded visit to Nigeria, Brazil and Guyana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi carried unique gifts representing the best of Indian artistry and craftsmanship from all corners of the country. These included eight gifts from Maharashtra, five from Jammu and Kashmir, three each from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, two from Jharkhand and one each from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Ladakh, officials said.

"The gifts from Maharashtra included a silofar panchamrit kalash, a stunning example of traditional craftsmanship from Kolhapur, given to the President of Nigeria and Warli paintings — a tribal art form originating from the Warli tribe primarily located in the Dahanu, Talasari and

J&K, represented through gifts of a pair of papier-mâché gold work vases, was given to the UK PM. The gifts from Rajasthan include a silver photo frame with floral work showcasing the state's rich heritage of detailed metalwork and traditional motifs, given to the President of Argentina and marble inlay work, also known as "Pietra Dura" with base marble sourced from Makrana in Rajasthan, for the PM of Norway," officials said.

The gifts from Andhra Pradesh include a silver clutch purse studded with semi-precious stones handcrafted with intricate floral motif designs, given to the spouse of the President of Brazil and Araku Coffee, which is grown by indigenous communities in the Araku Valley in Andhra, in customised gift hamper given to leaders of CARICOM countries.

A natural rough amethyst with a silver camel head on top from Pune was given to the Australian Prime Minister. The Portuguese PM was gifted a hand-carved silver chess set with a traditional design. "The vibrant culture of

SC junks Punjab plea on PM security lapse

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The Supreme Court on Friday turned down the Punjab government's plea seeking statements of witnesses who have deposed before former apex court judge Indu Malhotra to probe the security breach during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state in January 2022.

A bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan asked the state government to independently conduct the inquiry against delinquent officers without the aid of the statements said to have been made by the witnesses before the enquiry committee," the bench said.

The SC-appointed committee to probe the security breach during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Punjab had found that the Ferozepur SSP failed to discharge his duty even though sufficient force was available.

Centre the and state government. It was directed that the report shall be kept in a sealed cover in the safe custody of secretary general of this court. It seems the Punjab government has now sent a letter seeking statements of witnesses to conduct further proceedings against delinquent officers," the top court said.

"We see no ground to entertain the request made by the Punjab government. The state may conduct its enquiry against delinquent officers without the aid of the statements said to have been made by the witnesses before the enquiry committee," the bench said.

The SC-appointed committee to probe the security breach during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Punjab had found that the Ferozepur SSP failed to discharge his duty even though sufficient force was available.



Commuters amid low-visibility due to fog in Patna on Friday. According to the Patna meteorological department, the cold will gradually increase in the state after the next 4 to 5 days. — PTI

Telangana govt caste survey covers over 1cr households

Hyderabad, Nov. 22: The

Telangana government's caste survey has reached 87 per cent of the households, covering over 1.01 crore out of the state's total 1.16 crore households, official sources said on Friday. Two districts — Jangaon and Mulugu — have achieved 100 per cent coverage, while the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area lags with only 65 per cent completion.

CM A. Revanth Reddy earlier described the initiative as a "revolutionary journey", asserting it fulfills Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's promise of ensuring social justice for weaker sections in Telangana. He also reiterated the party's commitment to pressuring the Centre to include a caste census in the next national census to enable provisions such as enhanced political, educational, and employment reservations by surpassing the 50 per cent cap on quotas. In February, within two months of assuming office, the Congress government approved the "comprehensive door-to-door household socio, educational, economic, employment, political, and caste survey." — PTI

TMC set to discuss org rejig, chalk out Parl strategy Mon.

Kolkata, Nov. 22: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has convened a meeting of the TMC's national executive committee at her residence on Monday to discuss organisational changes, strategies for the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament and other key issues like the contentious Waqf Bill, party sources said.

TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, party leader in the Lok Sabha Sudip Bandyopadhyay, Sougata Roy, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, state president Subrata Bakshi, Kolkata mayor Firdah Hakim and other senior leaders expected to attend the meeting.

The national executive committee, originally a 21-member body, now consists of around 16 members following the arrest of several senior leaders by the Central agencies in various cases and the resignation of others citing health concerns. "In the meeting, our strategy for the winter session and other organisational issues will be discussed," a senior member of the TMC's national executive committee said. Party insiders believe that long-pending organi-

THE NATIONAL executive committee, originally a 21-member body, now consists of around 16 members following the arrest of several senior leaders in various cases and the resignation of others citing health concerns. National reshuffles will be finalised during this meeting.

Abhishek Banerjee, the party's de facto number two, has submitted a proposal for organisational changes at various levels, which will be reviewed and possibly ratified by Mamata Banerjee. The meeting coincides with the commencement of the Winter Sessions of both the West Bengal Assembly and the Lok Sabha.

TMC sources suggest that the party's stance on the contentious Waqf Amendment Bill will also be discussed. The Waqf Bill, introduced by the Centre, has stirred debates nationwide. Opposition members in Parliament have demanded further deliberations, while TMC is considering its approach to this issue both in the Lok Sabha and the state Assembly. — PTI

Adani bribery 'scam' would have affected polls: Uddhav

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, NOV. 22

Shiv Sena(UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Friday indicated that had the alleged bribery scam against industrialist Gautam Adani come out in public a few days before the voting day, it would have benefited the Opposition MVA in the Maharashtra Assembly polls. The alleged scam has rocked the entire nation and the Centre must answer what action it will take against "these corrupt people", he said. "Everyone is eagerly awaiting the results of the Maharashtra polls. The bomb (of the Adani scam) has rocked the entire nation. Had that bomb exploded a few days earlier, the explosion would have been much bigger," Mr Thackeray said. "How can a scam take place on such a large scale? The Centre should be asked what action will be taken," he added. Mr Thackeray's remarks indicated that had the alleged bribery scam broken out before the voting, it would have adversely affected the chances of

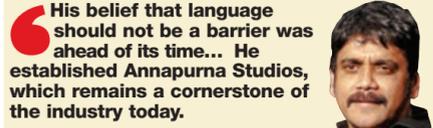


Everyone is eagerly awaiting the results of the Maha polls. The bomb (of the Adani scam) has rocked the entire nation. Had that bomb exploded a few days earlier, the explosion would have been much bigger. — Uddhav Thackeray, Shiv Sena(UBT) chief

'His vision was to make Telugu cinema a force to be reckoned with' Iffi pays rich tribute to Telegu legend ANR

SHASHI BHUSHAN with agency inputs PANJIM, NOV. 22

Superstar and veteran actor Nagarjuna Akkineni on Friday said that his father Akkineni Nageswara Rao's vision made Telugu cinema a force to be reckoned with. The 55th edition of the International Film Festival of India (Iffi) paid rich tribute to Akkineni Nageswara Rao widely known as ANR, through a special session titled "Centenary Special ANR: Celebrating the Life and Works of Akkineni Nageswara Rao". At an in-conversation session with actress Khushbu Sundar, Nagarjuna said his father's goal was clear: to make Telugu cinema a force to be reckoned with.



His belief that language should not be a barrier was ahead of its time... He established Annapurna Studios, which remains a cornerstone of the industry today. — Nagarjuna Akkineni, Veteran actor

Vibhushan in 2011, also worked hard to make his "feeble" voice rougher. "Somebody told him your voice becomes rougher if you smoke cigars. He didn't smoke earlier. He also used to go to the beach early in the morning and scream at the ocean for 5-10 minutes to make his voice more hoarse," he added. When asked about a biopic on Akkineni Nageswara Rao, the Telegu star said, "A documentary would better capture the essence of his life and vision." On Thursday, Nagarjuna launched the season two of the animation series *Krish, Trish and Baltiboy: Bharat Hain Hum* at the Iffi. The film gala will come to a close on November 28.

**SHORT TAKES**  
**SC issues notice to Guj on Asaram's plea**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought response from the Gujarat government on a plea filed by jailed self-styled godman Asaram seeking suspension of the life sentence imposed on him by a trial court in a 2013 rape case. A bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Arvind Kumar told Asaram's counsel that it would examine the issue only if there are medical grounds. "We will issue notice, but we will consider only on medical conditions," the bench said while posting the matter for hearing on December 13. The Gujarat high court on August 29 had rejected Asaram's plea for the suspension of life imprisonment in the case by a Gandhinagar court in 2023. Refusing to suspend the sentence and grant him bail, the high court had observed that no case for relief was made out. The sessions court in January 2023 convicted Asaram in the 2013 rape case, filed by a woman who was living in his ashram during the crime.

**Odisha govt steps up action on liquor**

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government has intensified its crackdown on the illegal liquor trade, with excise minister Prithviraj Harichandan announcing the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy against such activities. In a statement on Friday, Harichandan emphasised the government's commitment to eradicating the illicit sale and production of alcohol in the state. "The department will take concrete steps to identify and eliminate areas where illicit liquor sales are taking place, along with illegal distilleries. These activities will be completely crushed. We are also brainstorming on introducing radical changes in the excise norms to strengthen enforcement," said the minister. The minister disclosed that deliberations are underway to bring about significant reforms in the state's excise policy.

**Trouble for BJD strongman Das**

**Bhubaneswar:** A controversy has erupted involving Bhabha Prakash Das, the brother of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) heavy-weight and organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das. A vegetable vendor filed a FIR against Bhabha and his associates at the Jajpur police station on Friday, accusing them of assault, threats, and robbery. The complainant, identified as Nagan Nayak, alleged that Bhabha, along with his cousin Balabhadra Das and about 50 others, attacked him at a local market (hat) and confiscated ₹1,200. Nagan further claimed that his vegetable stock, valued at ₹10,000, was damaged in the altercation. As per reports, the conflict arose when the Jajpur district administration attempted to relocate the market to its previous site. This decision sparked protests from local residents, who blocked roads in opposition.

**Manipur: Bodies of nine victims handed over to family members**

**Silchar (Assam), Nov. 22:** The bodies of nine people from Manipur, including those of six abducted and killed in Jiribam, have been handed over to their family members at the Silchar Medical College Hospital (SMCH) in Assam, officials said. Postmortem examinations of the bodies were conducted at SMCH in Silchar district bordering Jiribam district of Manipur.

The next of kin of the victims, all belonging to the Meitei community, had initially refused to accept the bodies till they got justice. They, however, later agreed to accept the bodies as the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is inquiring into the incidents of violence.

The family members were also demanding that those 10 slain Kukis be declared as militants as they had come from Churachandpur to Jiribam with arms and could not be members of an ordinary village defence party.

Officials said that both Assam and Manipur police personnel are escorting the convoy of nine bodies being taken to Jiribam, around 55 km away.

The convoy was stopped at several places along the way as representatives of various Meitei groups offered floral tributes to the deceased.

The bodies include six women and children, who were allegedly abducted from a relief camp on November 11 by Kuki-Zo militants from Jiribam's Borobekra area. —PTI



Students perform "giddha", a popular Punjabi folk dance, during an event at Khalsa College in Amritsar on Friday. —PTI

**Suspects who looted houses of netas identified: Manipur CM**

**Imphal, Nov. 22:** Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh on Friday said that suspects involved in looting the properties of ministers and MLAs during protests on November 16 were identified and legal actions initiated.

He condemned incidents like torching the photograph of a minister's late father in his house, looting the residence of an MLA and firing inside a car showroom, and wondered whether these could be part of any agitation.

"In the name of democratic movement, some gangs have looted and burnt the residences of ministers and MLAs. Suspects have been identified through CCTV and appropriate legal actions have been initiated. I feel ashamed to publicly say that such things are happening in Manipur," Mr Singh told reporters.

Urging people not to get involved in any activities that led to suspension of internet, the chief minister said, "Do not blame the government only. We need to correct ourselves as well." He said he has no objections against anyone who genuinely protested against the killing of children and women in Jiribam district. "But those politically motivated gangs who took advantage of the situation, we will take legal action (against them),"



Security personnel during a search operation in the fringe and vulnerable areas of hill and valley districts of Manipur. —PTI

Mr Singh said, "Had not CRPF gunned down 10 or 11 militants in Jiribam, some 100 civilians would have been killed on November 11 since the attackers wanted to over run a relief camp in Borobekra and a police station, the CM claimed. So, the steps taken by the central forces should be appreciated, Mr Singh said. —PTI

**Pump owner, son shot at over petrol bill in UP**

**Kaushambi (UP), Nov. 22:** A customer on Friday shot and wounded a petrol pump owner and his son in a fight over money, police said. It happened around 11 am when a youth from Sevda village came on a motorcycle to the Indian Oil petrol pump in Dulhapur village and asked for a refill worth ₹100, SP Brijesh Kumar Srivastava said.

After the refill, Deependra, a son of petrol pump owner Nanki Devi, asked the customer to pay ₹50 more since he had filled extra petrol. But when he refused, a fight broke out. After the fight, the customer called up people from his village, beat the staff, and shot Deependra in the stomach and pump owner Nanki Devi in his hand, SP said. —PTI

**Language & cyber experts to lead Indian Army's new line of defence**

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

In a strategic bid to bolster national security, the Indian Army is set to recruit language interpreters and cyber experts, with a focus on specialists in the Chinese language.

This initiative aims to bridge the communication gap between Indian and Chinese troops, promoting peaceful resolution of border issues.

The recruitment of Chinese language interpreters will facilitate effective communication during border personnel meetings (BPM), enabling the Indian Army to negotiate and resolve issues more efficiently.

The Deputy Chief of Indian Army (information systems & coordination)

Lt. Gen. Rakesh Kapoor on Friday said that the Army will start induction of these domain specialists by the middle of the next year and advertisements are expected to come out next month.

"They will be employed only in those roles," he said. However, they will have a chance to progress in those roles.

The Army is restructuring its recruitment process to bring in experts in various fields. "We understand the growing need for specialised expertise," Lt. Gen. Kapoor said.

"We have recently restructured the Army Educational Corps, allowing us to recruit domain experts in cyber, IW, linguistics, and more, in both officer and soldier ranks."

Currently, specialists in linguistics and cyber are recruited through the Territorial Army (TA). The Army plans to continue this practice but will now also open up direct recruitment for specialists.

Lt. Gen. Kapoor pointed out that the character of warfare is constantly changing.

"We are absorbing these new technologies. We are creating within our structures as to how we re-orient ourselves so that we can operate and man these technologies so that we can operationally deploy them," he said.

To further prepare the next generation of experts, the Army has introduced intern ship programmes for students.

**Forces kill 10 Naxals in C'garh encounter**

*Peace, progress has returned to Bastar, says CM Sai*

**Sukma, Nov. 22:** Ten Naxalites, three of them women, were gunned down in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Friday, a senior police official said.

Chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed the security forces and said the era of peace and progress has returned to the Bastar region.

The gunfight broke out in the morning in a forest near Bhandarpadar village in the jurisdiction of the Bheji police station, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, said Sundarraj P, inspector general of police (Bastar range).

He said personnel of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) launched the operation based on inputs about the presence of Maoists from the Kanta and Kistaram area committees on forested hills of

Korajguda, Dantespuram, Nagaram and Bhandarpadar villages.

"Bodies of 10 Naxalites, including three women, clad in 'uniform', have been recovered from the spot", he said. Besides, 12 weapons, including an INSAS rifle, an AK-47 rifle, a self-loading rifle (SLR) and Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGLs), were also seized, he said.

Two of the deceased have been identified as Madkam Masa (42), a divisional committee member and military in-charge of the south Bastar division of Maoists, and Lakhma Madvi, an area committee member, the IG said, adding that they were carrying a bounty of Rs 8 lakh and ₹5 lakh respectively.

The other deceased included Masa's wife Dudhi Huni (35), his guard Kowasi Kesa, Madkam Jitu and Madkam Kosi, he said, adding that the four were members of the PLGA platoon no. 4 and

carried a bounty of ₹2 lakh each.

The official said the identity of the remaining four deceased cadres was yet to be ascertained.

After returning from the operation, the security personnel were seen celebrating and dancing to regional songs at their camp. Videos of their celebration have surfaced on social media.

Chief minister Sai praised security forces and asserted that his government's priority is to establish peace, facilitate development and ensure the safety of citizens in the Bastar region.

Mr Sai, in a statement, said the state government has been working on the policy of zero tolerance towards Naxalism.

"Ensuring development, peace and safety of citizens in Bastar is the top priority of the state government. The era of peace, development and progress has returned to Bastar," he said. —PTI

**Key accused & 4 others in CBI's 5th Neet chargesheet**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

The CBI filed its fifth supplementary chargesheet in the Neet-UG examination paper leak case on Friday against five persons, including key gang member Amit Kumar Singh of Bokaro who allegedly orchestrated and executed the leak.

The chargesheet which was filed before the special CBI court in Patna, alleged that Singh was the key planner of the gang and was aided by one Sudip and Yuvraj of Bokaro, Abhimanyu Patel of Nalanda and Amit Kumar of Patna in the distribution of the leaked papers to aspirants, the officials said.

"The total chargesheet accused in this case stands at 45, and all are still in judicial custody," a CBI spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also said the chargesheet has been filed under various Sections of the IPC such as 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 109 (abatement), 409 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating), 380 (theft), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) and 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property) and under section 13(2) read with section 13(1)(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018).

**'India-US ties have strong foundation'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

Ties between India and the United States stand "on an extremely strong foundation," the White House said on Friday in response to charges of bribery levelled by American prosecutors against the Indian private sector Adani group, adding that it would continue to "navigate" this issue with India. The Biden Administration will meet office after two months when US President-elect Donald Trump assumes office following his electoral victory over the Democrats in the US Presidential polls earlier this month.

At her daily news conference in Washington, White House press secretary

Karine Jean-Pierre was quoted by media reports as saying, "Obviously we're aware of these allegations, and I would have to refer you to the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) and DOJ (Department of Justice) about the specifics of those allegations against the Adani Group. What I will say is on the US and India relationship, we believe that it stands on an extremely strong foundation anchored in ties between our people and cooperation across a full range of global issues."

She added, "What we believe and we're confident about is that we'll continue to navigate this issue as we have with other issues that may have come up as you just stated."

**2 fishermen missing after Navy submarine collides with vessel**

**New Delhi, Nov. 22:** A fishing vessel collided with a submarine of the Indian Navy about 70 nautical miles off Goa coast and a massive rescue operation is underway to trace two missing crew members of the vessel, officials said on Friday.

The incident happened on Thursday evening. The fishing vessel, Marthoma, had 13 crew members and 11 of them

were rescued in the search operation, the Navy said.

The Navy deployed six ships and an unknown number of surveillance aircraft in the rescue mission.

"An Indian fishing vessel Marthoma with a crew of 13 reportedly collided with an Indian Naval unit on November 21 about 70 nm North West of Goa," an Indian Navy spokesperson said. —PTI

**D-Day in Maha, J'khand: NDA, INDIA both upbeat**

Continued from Page 1  
of a hung Assembly scenario. The MVA has decided to house all its newly-elected MLAs together at a five-star hotel in Mumbai after the announcement of the Maharashtra election results.

Shiv Sena(UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said the MVA leaders, including himself, his party colleague Anil Desai, NCP(SP) state president Jayant Patil and Congress leaders Satej Patil and Balasaheb Thorat, met on Thursday and carried out an assessment of all 288 Assembly seats in Maharashtra.

"We have decided to bring all newly-elected MLAs to Mumbai. New MLAs have no provision to stay in Mumbai. So we have decided to make their residential arrangements together," Mr Raut said, expressing confidence that the MVA will win 160 seats in the elections. He added that some Independents, who have strong chances of victory, have expressed their desire to support the Opposition bloc.

Mr Raut also alleged that Mr Fadnavis and Mr Shinde have started to offer "₹50-100 crores" to Independents. "It means that the MVA is going to win in the Assembly election," he said.

"There is no formula for the CM's post. Everyone will choose the leader of the government," Mr Raut said. He added senior Congress leaders have to come to Mumbai with a mandate on the CM's post as NCP(SP) president Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena(UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray are in Mumbai. Maharashtra Congress in-

charge Ramesh Chennithala also asserted that the MVA will get a clear majority and form the next government. Meanwhile, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has appointed its observers Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel and G. Parameshwara to oversee the post-election scenario.

Mr Chennithala held a meeting with Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, state Congress working president Arif Naseem Khan and Vijay Wadetiwar at the party's war room in Mumbai. A senior leader, who attended the meeting, told this newspaper that it has been decided to bring all newly elected members of the party to Mumbai by Saturday evening.

"Considering the BJP's reputation for breaking Opposition parties, we have decided to bring all victorious candidates to Mumbai by evening. Further course of action will be decided on the circumstances of whether the newly elected members need to be shifted out of Maharashtra or not," the senior Congress leader said. Just like the ruling Mahayuti, fissures have, however, emerged within the Opposition MVA as well on who will head the next government, with constituents in both camps laying claim over the chief minister's post. While state Congress chief Nana Patole asserted that a MVA government will be formed in Maharashtra under the leadership of his party, Mr Raut insisted the CM face will be decided by all alliance partners jointly. Congress general secretary

Sachin Pilot said that the CM post will not be an issue among alliance constituents after getting a majority, and the MVA will not take more than a day to "figure out who will get what position".

"We have been mature about this (CM post) because people's interests are far more important than individual interests. But what is more surprising is that the sitting CM has not been projected...because Mr Pawar and Mr Fadnavis both are uncomfortable with the current CM and that was openly on display during the campaign," Mr Pilot claimed. "Everyone is seasoned in the MVA. Sharad Pawar is a multiple-time CM. Mr Thackeray too has been CM before and the Congress had a historically strong presence in Maharashtra. So three mature parties are fighting unitedly, who gets what position is not going to be an issue at all, it will be resolved earliest once we get a majority," Mr Pilot said.

In Jharkhand, which witnessed a fierce electoral battle between the ruling JMM-led INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA, both sides are gearing up to form the government. While some exit polls predict that the BJP-led NDA is likely to oust the ruling JMM-led coalition, others forecast the return of the INDIA bloc in Jharkhand. Here the BJP-led alliance is hoping to repeat its Haryana feat and the JMM-led INDIA bloc is confident of retaining power.

All eyes will be on key seats that will decide the electoral fates of prominent politicians.

Chief minister Hemant Soren contested from Barhait, his wife Kalpana Soren from Gandey and Leader of the Opposition Amar Kumar Bauri (BJP) contested from Chandankiyari. Other prominent leaders included Deepika Pandey Singh of the Congress from Mahagama, Sita Soren (sister-in-law of Mr Soren) from Jamtara, AJSU party chief Sudesh Mahto from Silli and former CM Champai Soren from Seraikela.

Here the BJP tossed up slogans like "ek rahenge to safe range" (if we remain united, we will be safe), with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi mocking that it translated into the "unity" between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah and billionaires.

Ahead of counting, Congress general secretary and Jharkhand in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir exuded confidence that the ruling alliance will return to power in Jharkhand with better numbers compared to the 2019 elections.

In fact, contrary to others, AXIS My India exit polls have indicated a return of the Hemant Soren government in the state. BJP in-charge in the state Shivraj Singh Chouhan has, however, dismissed this exit poll, saying, "Who can be a bigger surveyor in Jharkhand than us? We have been in Jharkhand for the last 3 months. We have seen how people wished for change. I am sure that the people have voted for BJP-NDA. We are going to form the government with a huge mandate."

**Nadda paves way for BJP state unit polls**

Continued from Page 1

While the Bharatiya Janata Party president held a meeting with state leaders, a separate meeting of the party's core group leaders from Bihar was held at Union minister Giriraj Singh's residence over the Assembly polls in the state scheduled for next year.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has set up a committee under the leadership of former Bihar unit chief Nandkishore Yadav to coordinate with the party's allies in the state for the polls. Those who attended the meeting included state in-charge and national general secretary Vinod Tawde, state president Dilip Jaiswal, Union minister Nityanand Rai, deputy chief ministers Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Sinha.

**'No evidence linking Modi to Nijjar's murder'**

Continued from Page 1  
"suggested that the Indian high commissioner in Ottawa and other diplomats are 'persons of interest' in a matter related to an investigation in that country", a reference to the matter of the probe into Nijjar's killing. Canada's deputy foreign affairs minister David Morrison was quoted by media and news agency reports last month as telling Canadian Parliament members of the national security committee that Mr Shah had ordered a campaign of violence,

**Why allow trucks?: SC**

Continued from Page 1

implementation of the GRAP-4 measures. "It is very difficult for us to assume that entry of trucks in Delhi has been stopped," the bench said, and directed the Centre and the Delhi police to ensure setting up checkpoints at all 113 entry points. The bench was hearing the matter related to air pollution in the Delhi-National Capital Region.

First implemented in 2017, the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) was a set of anti-air pollution measures followed in the capital and its vicinity according to the severity of the situation. It classifies air quality in the Delhi-NCR under four different stages - Stage 1 "poor" (AQI 201-300), Stage 2 "very poor" (AQI 301-400), Stage 3 "severe" (AQI 401-450) and Stage 4 "severe plus" (AQI above 450).

**JLF set to return Jan. 30 next year**

**New Delhi, Nov. 22:** International Booker Prize winner Jenny Erpenbeck, American literary historian Stephen Greenblatt, bestselling Italian American author Andr  Aciman and royal biographer Tina Brown are among the 300 speakers participating in the upcoming 18th edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), the organisers have announced.

Dubbed as the "greatest literary show on Earth", the festival, scheduled from January 30 to February 3, 2025, will be held at Hotel Clarks Amer in Jaipur. The five-day literary extravaganza promises to be a "unique blend of cultural wealth, literary masterpieces." —PTI



## THE ASIAN AGE

23 NOVEMBER 2024

### Adani issue must be probed in India too

**G**autam Adani, one of India's most prominent businessmen, has been indicted by US prosecutors for bribing Indians and hiding that from American investors thus misleading them while taking their money. Broadly, it is also an indictment of how business is projected to be conducted in India with kickbacks suspected to have been paid to various parties inside the government and outside, as alleged.

As an oil to ports and airports conglomerate that globally handles very large infrastructure projects, Adani's enterprises must subject themselves to regulatory mechanisms of many countries. With the group's businesses going global, the companies must abide by universal norms rather than expect to be subject only to India's slothful regulatory mechanisms.

As the justice department of the US government as well as its securities regulator are involved in making grave criminal charges, the matter is far more serious than the time when the same business group was attacked by a speculative stock market short seller who charged it with round tripping money to boost stock prices and such other sharp practices with the use of money flow from tax havens.

In the interests of transparency and to convince ourselves that the Indian system is not tainted by the handing out of large bribes in excess of ₹2,000 crores to personalities in charge of government — whether "officials" are netas or bureaucrats — India must also set up a probe into this matter and be prepared to go by the evidence presented to the US regulators and courts to determine if there has been wrongdoing on our soil.

A few governments have been named whose "officials", presumably including netas and babus, were said to have been the beneficiaries of kickbacks. It would be incumbent upon the government that such charges be probed by Indian regulatory and investigative agencies to determine the truth. The Indian public needs to be convinced that this is not just some foreign hand involved in putting down Indian commercial interests.

It is a fact that very large infrastructure projects are funded by governments far more than the private corporate sector. And, given the scale of investments and the risks involved for investors in getting a fair return for their capital, there is plenty of room for suspicion over the paying of bribes for favourable action aiding commensurate returns.

The suspicions are probably even weightier than the facts revealed so far. It is also true that most action under the US securities regulator has been in the form of fines and naming of companies and individuals who may then be left struggling to raise funds or indulge in speculative activity using money from the United States where the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act aims to provide a fair and level playing field for all businesses.

What may happen when the Trump regime is in place can only be speculated upon now. It is the right of the Adams to expect to go through the process of inquiry along with their legal defence teams and establish the innocence they have been projecting. But, until then, they cannot expect not to be probed in India. Because their greasing of palms is said to have taken place in India, they must expect to face probes in their home country too.

### End to Google-Android monopoly?

**W**ealth creation initially began to hedge against bad times. But as society got complex, wealth creation has become an end in itself for people. Free markets and technology enhanced the ability of businesses to make money by several thousand times, bringing in the need for regulation to keep capitalism in sync with the larger welfare of the society.

In one of such actions, the US department of justice plans to force Alphabet, the holding company of search giant Google and mobile operating system Android, to sell its popular web browser Chrome. It also plans to order Alphabet to sell the Android software that runs most smartphones or stop making Google services mandatory for running Android software.

The proposals are most appropriate and would go a long way in democratising technology and economy. It augurs well for the US economy as well as the global economy.

In the past, America had invoked these provisions to break the stranglehold of companies that have almost become monopolies in their market. In 1911, the US government broke Standard Oil, an oil monopoly in the US which produced its first billionaire John Davison Rockefeller Sr. into 36 new entities. In 1999, it ordered the splitting of Microsoft to break its hold on browser Internet Explorer. Though Microsoft escaped the split, it stopped making Internet Explorer the default web browser in the Windows operating system. This later on resulted in Google Chrome displacing Internet Explorer and offering cloud-based programmes.

It is generally believed that as an organisation grows it becomes bureaucratic and status quoist. If such an organisation is allowed to acquire a monopoly on business, it will not only stop the emergence of new companies, but also hinder the growth of new ideas and entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, companies question the fairness in antitrust action against companies which spend millions of dollars and years of efforts to create a successful product. However, the overall welfare of a society will have precedence over the interests of an organisation. Therefore, no company can be allowed to milk its invention in perpetuity.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



## Dirty air could be blow to India's \$5 trillion dreams



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 30

**I**ndia aspires to become a \$5 trillion economy, the third largest in the world, in the next five years. But that dream, constantly referenced by the country's political leadership, depends on many "ifs" and "buts". One key issue is the health of its people. Dirty air, currently a top headline-grabber in Delhi and across the National Capital Region (NCR), can potentially dent India's aspirations.

The health impacts of toxic air are quite widely known. But that is only part of the story. Linked to it is the high economic cost. Exposure to air pollution is linked to one in eight deaths worldwide, according to "The State of the Global Air 2024". Air pollution now ranks as the second leading risk factor for death, accounting for 8.1 million deaths globally. According to estimates by the World Health Organisation, in 2019, some 68 per cent of outdoor air pollution related premature deaths were due to ischaemic heart disease and stroke, 14 per cent were due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, 14 per cent were due to acute lower respiratory infections, and four per cent of deaths were due to lung cancers.

Some argue that poor air quality is the price India must pay for rapid economic growth. There is mounting evidence to the contrary.

"Conventional wisdom", says a 2021 report, "considers air-pollution an unavoidable by-product of economic growth, thus limiting the intensity of response to it. In existing literature and publications, GDP per capita and growth rate are often linked to emissions levels, one predicting the other. This has framed an understanding, with many businesses, that growth and good air-quality are always in conflict, which has led to an entrenched perception of environmental regulations as being a cost

that holds back companies". But "air pollution costs Indian businesses ₹7 lakh crores (\$95 billion) every year — 40 per cent of the cost of tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. This is equivalent to three per cent of India's GDP. While this cost may have gone unnoticed thus far, it is high and persistent," says the report commissioned by the Clean Air Fund and developed in partnership with Dalberg Advisors, Blue Sky Analytics and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

The cost of air pollution manifests in six ways: lower labour productivity, lower consumer footfall, premature mortality, lower asset productivity, increased health expenses and welfare losses, the report notes. Out of these, employee productivity, consumer footfall and premature mortality impact businesses directly. Air pollution resulted in 1.3 billion working days lost, costing \$6 billion in India in 2019 due to absenteeism.

As air pollution soars, employees can get sick or opt to stay at home to take care of their children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to air pollution: 98 per cent of this cost is borne by India's northern and eastern part, where AQI levels cross 300-plus frequently, says the report. An Indian IT firm in Delhi loses 33 per cent of its competitive advantage over a Filipino company due to air pollution.

In South Delhi's Govindpuri, a top cloth store owner told me the number of customers had nosedived in the past week. "Not too many people want to step out of home unless absolutely necessary," he said.

Work-from-home, stay-at-home, and air purifiers, however, are temporary solutions for the relatively privileged. The vast majority of Indians work don't have the luxury of staying confined to air-purified settings. With

Beijing's example teaches us that no city can clean up its air alone. We need a cluster-based approach bringing together officials from cities and regions connected to each other through common contexts and challenges.

The Indian population's median age rising, its susceptibility to air pollution will increase, raising the question of a sub-optimal workforce.

Delhi grabs headlines, but this isn't Delhi's problem alone. Several towns in northern India are suffering from dirty air. In recent days, Bahadurgarh in Haryana had the worst air quality.

Air pollution is also not confined to just the cold season. It is a year-long problem in Delhi, due to multiple reasons. About 40 per cent of Delhi's air pollution is due to vehicular emissions, diesel vehicles being a key contributor. Industries around Delhi, especially in Ghaziabad, Noida, and Faridabad, are also part of the problem: they release pollutants like sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). Pollution control measures remain poor. Burning of rice stubble in neighbouring states like Haryana and Punjab simply makes things worse.

Add to that another critical factor: public apathy. How else do you explain people voluntarily adding more toxicity to an already toxic air by burning firecrackers every other night? The police do precious little despite the Supreme Court directives. Clean air is still not a top electoral issue. India's political class is unwilling to take tough measures against special interest groups which contribute to dirty air because it knows it will get away.

A decade ago, Delhi and Beijing competed in the toxic air stakes. Both grappled with devastating health and economic impacts. Now, Delhi's rival is Lahore, when it comes to polluted air. Beijing has cleaned up its act significantly. One key factor

which led to Beijing's transformation is its transport policy. Highly polluting cars are off the roads; the focus is on sustainable public transport. Experts note Beijing tightened emissions standards for vehicles and power plants, and actively coordinated air pollution control measures with surrounding areas, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. Collaborative planning, unified standards, joint emergency responses and information sharing significantly improved the air quality in this broader region.

India must promote mass transport as well as walking and cycling. It will not happen overnight. It requires hard infrastructure like more buses, better pavements as well as safety. Women should be able to walk back from the bus stop or Metro station without fear. Alongside, we need clean fuels, strict enforcement of a ban on open waste burning; strict compliance with emission norms for all industries; management of road dust and more equitably spread green spaces to improve the city's air quality and "breathability".

Beijing's example also teaches us that no city can clean up its air alone. We need a cluster-based approach bringing together officials from cities and regions connected to each other through common contexts and challenges. We need more cooperation across inter-state and inter-country borders between researchers, scientists, public health advocates and top political leaders. What is needed is a regional approach to air quality management. What will not help — framing Delhi-NCR's ongoing health and environmental crisis as a boxing match between the ruling BJP and the Opposition. We need collaboration, not perilous polarisation. Air pollution is a killer. India must treat it as a top priority, above partisan politics. Or else India's aspirations will go up in smoke.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

### LETTERS UNETHICAL BIZ?

The latest indictment of Gautam Adani and his associates by US prosecutors raises key issues about corporate ethics in the Adani Group. The charges of a \$265 million bribery plan to gain solar energy contracts indicate possible fraud and call for an open probe. As their stock plummets, officials must take swift action to recoup investor trust and address such serious allegations, ahead of dismissing them as doings of a foreign hand. The effects on the national economy are significant, requiring due diligence and openness in these matters.

Anshu Bharti  
Begusarai, Bihar

### CAP PILGRIMS

**WE, INDIANS**, are great at littering wherever we go. Therefore, it should not be too big a surprise that 47 lakh devotees at Badrinath generated 180 tonnes waste in just six months this year which was left to be cleaned by others. The paryavaran mitras deserve thanks and respect from the rest of us for doing the job of trying to clean up before winter settles. Decomposition is slow in cold regions and, therefore, it has become imperative to limit the number of pilgrims and see that minimum waste is generated by them. Devotion is not compatible with dirtying up any holy place. Even if one cannot eliminate organic waste, it should be treated in a way it does not accumulate. Surely, we must be able to do it if we have to maintain the sanctity of our holy places.

Anthony Henriques  
Mumbai

### 62-YR-OLD WORKERS

**ENHANCING** the retirement age to 62 years is on anvil with the Union Cabinet giving its nod. When the retirement age was raised from 55 years to 58 years and 58 years to 60 years, there was much hue and cry that it would aggravate the unemployment problem. But the government can at the same time tap the benefit of experience if the retirement age is raised. Increasing the retirement age to 62 years can also alleviate the problem of pension funding.

K.V. Seetharamiah  
Bengaluru

Farruk Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



"O Bachchoo, astrologers will tell you Mars Will open closed doors on your next day Though we know that all the planets and stars Are rocks and gases, burning away We all crave patterns in our lives That stars predict, or the lines on palms Will tell who prospers, fails or survives True as the gospel, true as the psalms..."

— From *Cynicology*, by Bachchoo

## Chump returns! Democracy sets off nightmares across the globe

**O** Democracy, what have you done??? Breeding nightmares across the globe. Yes, 2024 has been the super year for global elections. People in 70 countries, half the world's population, went to the polls. If you discount the populations of Russia, China and North Korea, whose "democracies" have infinite quotation marks around them, then the voting nations exceed that 50 per cent.

The trumping of Donald Trump and his MAGA (Make America Gaga Again) campaign is only the latest example of the overthrow of incumbent governments. Forty out of 54 voting nations kicked their incumbents out. Very many surveys and analysts attribute Chump's victory (and this applies to other triumphant Oppositions) to his constant refrain during the campaign asking voters if they had more money in their pockets when he was POTUS or when Joe Biden and Vice-POTUS Kamala Harris had their term.

Certainly, the scare stories of immigrants mak-

ing nations poorer, spreading crime and eating pets, and consequently the promise to deport millions of illegal immigrants from the United States, was a determining factor in the devastating reversal.

Analysis of the other elections attribute this tendency to dismiss incumbent governments and parties to precisely the same two factors — the rise in inflation and prices caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the fuel crisis after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the fear of an immigrant "invasion".

But is that the whole picture? Certainly, the UK voted in Keir Starmer's Labour Party with a huge majority, humiliating Hedgie Sunak and the Tories by presenting them with their greatest electoral defeat since 1832 in their long and nasty history.

Keir Starmer's Labour is very centre-left with more crowd-and-capitalist-pleasing-centre than left. His government's chancellor of the exchequer, Rachel Reeves, presented her first Budget in October. The theme of the Budget was economic restraint. She said Labour was not raising taxes on working people, but only on employers. Economic commentary concludes that the rise in National Insurance she imposed on employers will be passed on, in one way or another, to employees and consumers. In the wake of the Budget after Rachel Reeves' pronouncements and Keir Starmer's follow-up support for the Budget, they were asked to define whom they meant by

the word "worker". Answer came there none. At the Labour Party conference, as Ms Reeves was speaking, a heckler interrupted saying that Labour was continuing to sell arms to Israel and contributing to the genocide in Palestine. He was promptly dragged out of the hall. Ms Reeves responded by telling the audience that Labour was not any more a party of "protest" but one that sided with the working class. Not much of answer or even excuse for the continued support to the billionaires of the British arms industry?

Across the Channel, in France and Germany (tragically "isolated" now, through Brexit), the voters didn't quite overthrow the governments but gave a very favourable vote to extreme right-wing parties. Italy voted in a party formerly associated with fascism. Hungary and Turkey (though the latter has not yet been admitted into the European Union but is in Nato) have elected right-wing governments, apologists for Russia's invasion and bombing of civilians in Ukraine.

Democracy, with its traceable origins in Athens — though undoubtedly there must have been other societies which pioneered government through majority franchise of allowed personnel which didn't have a recorded influence on subsequent history — was supposed to reflect the material concerns of the classes that voted.

If one believes the analysts who say that the Covid crisis and the wars which the West expends funds on are responsible for high prices, welfare cuts, etc, then yes, the majority who feel a pinch

in their pockets voted in the hope that the opposing right-wing parties would loosen the pinching fingers.

But then, there are the other elements that distort the democratic ideal of classes voting for their material and social benefit. They vote for religious prejudice, they vote to keep foreigners out of their country, they vote out of fear that some current ideology is distorting their culture...

Gentle reader, I confess I voted for the losing side in the Brexit vote. Some of my left-wing friends voted for Britain to leave the EU on the grounds that Polish plumbers, for instance, were coming to the UK and undercutting the wages of British plumbers. I am using "plumbers" here as one category of craftsman, though of course it applies to a myriad other trades.

Yes, Brexit kept the Polish plumbers out. British plumbers could now charge what they wanted to. Millions of working-class families who needed some plumbing in their homes had to pay their price. British plumbers and their unions were served and happy. The working-class families who needed their drains unclogged or taps refitted were not.

This "best of all worst systems", as Winston Churchill said, is not free from the distorting influence of irrational nationalism, religious loyalty or bigotry, racism, xenophobia, conspiracy theories, plausible deceit, the lure of demagoguery and even superstition.

These, as we now witness, make for democracy.



## SHORT TAKES

### Satwik-Chirag in China semifinals

**Shenzhen, China:** Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty produced a solid show to outwit second seeds Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen of Denmark to progress to the semifinals of the China Masters Super 750 badminton tournament here on Friday. Playing their first tournament since the Paris Olympics, Satwik and Chirag, who had reached the finals in the last edition, registered a 21-16, 21-19 win over the World No. 2 pair in 47 minutes. In the opening game, the Indians looked in good touch as they were up 11-8 at the break, which they extended to 16-10 with a flurry of fast-paced angled returns which dominated the rallies. Satwik and Chirag kept a firm grip on the rallies to maintain the lead, grabbing six game points. A massive smash from Rasmussen and a net error from Chirag delayed the inevitable before the former sprayed one wide. — PTI

### CA set to honour Late Hughes

**Perth:** Cricket Australia has planned a series of initiatives to mark the 10th anniversary of the tragic death of Phillip Hughes including a tribute before the start of the second Test between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval scheduled from December 6 to 10. CA will also honour the late Australian cricketer during the upcoming three Sheffield Shield games, as players will wear black armbands and flags will fly at half-mast. A promising left-hander who played 26 Tests, Hughes lost his life just days before his 26th birthday in 2014 after being struck by a bouncer during a domestic match. Representing South Australia, Hughes was hit on an unprotected area below his left ear while attempting a hook shot against Sean Abbott at the SCG. Despite wearing a helmet, the impact proved fatal. "We understand this will be a time of reflection for the many people who knew and admired Phillip Hughes. We wanted to ensure that the Hughes family, particularly, were comfortable with any commemorations and that we celebrate Phillip's life and achievements appropriately," Cricket Australia (CA) CEO Nick Hockley said on Friday. — PTI

### India colts up to defend Asia Cup

**Bengaluru:** Fresh from winning the bronze medal in the Sultan of Johor Cup, P. R. Sreejesh-coached Indian colts on Friday departed for Muscat to defend the Junior Asia Cup title. India, who defeated arch-rivals Pakistan 2-1 to lift the title last year for a record fourth time, will open their campaign against Thailand on November 27 in their Pool 'A' fixture. They will next face Japan on November 28 and Chinese Taipei on November 30. Their last group stage match is against Korea on December 1. India need a top-two finish to secure a semifinal berth. Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Oman, and China constitute Pool 'B'. Confident of a positive start, captain Amir Ali said they have prepared well and are determined to reach the final. "We have been preparing rigorously and are ready to face the challenges ahead. We all understand the importance of this tournament," Ali stated in a Hockey India release. — PTI

### Punjab, NE in attacking clash

**New Delhi:** The Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 action returns from international break with an exciting contest between two teams whose charts are on the upward trajectory with Punjab FC and NorthEast United FC locking horns here on Saturday. Both these teams had narrowly missed out on qualifying for the playoffs last year, with the Highlanders finishing seventh and Punjab FC trailing them at eighth. However, they have turned a new chapter this time around starting the season on a strong footing, with NorthEast United FC positioned third with 12 points thanks to three wins and as many draws from eight games. — PTI

# Boomshakalaka!

## Bumrah goes bang-bang as India fire right back at Oz

**Perth, Nov. 22:** Skipper Jasprit Bumrah made amends for his debatable toss call to bat first with a mesmerising opening spell that left Australia scurrying for cover at 67 for 7 and helped India make an emphatic comeback after a flop show with the willow on the opening day of the first Test here.

The match, which was billed as a battle between two out of form batting units, lived up to the prediction at least on the first day. As many as 17 wickets fell, which is the first time in seven decades for a Test match on Australian soil.

The stand-in India skipper, much to everyone's surprise, opted to bat on a track with a liberal grass cover which generated appreciable seam movement and midriff high bounce.

But neither the youngsters nor the seasoned ones in the Indian line-up were up to the task.

It was debutant Nitish Reddy's gutsy 41 and Rishabh Pant's 37, including an unbelievable sixer, that got India to 150 in 49.4 overs with Josh Hazlewood (4/29), Mitchell Starc (2/14 in 11 overs), Pat Cummins (2/67 in 15.4 overs) and Mitchell Marsh (2/12 in 5 overs) sharing the spoils.

In the driver's seat when they came out to reply, Australia had no answer to Bumrah's (4/17 in 10 overs) quality pace that was on display. Defending a low first innings total cannot be a one-man show and Mohammed Siraj (2/17 in 9 overs) and debutant Harshit Rana (1/33 in 8 overs) stepped up to support their skipper.

The lengths they hit were immaculate, around five metres from the stumps and on the off-stump channel. The live grass did the rest whenever the ball landed on the seam.

Debutant Nathan McSweeney (10) got a nip-backer and DRS ruled him leg before.

Usman Khawaja (8) just froze in his crease once Bumrah decided to square him up by coming round the wicket. Virat Kohli, who had earlier dropped Marnus Labuschagne (2 off 52 balls), didn't make any mistake on this one. But it was out of form



Indian captain Jasprit Bumrah appeals successfully for the wicket of Australia's Steve Smith on the first day of the first Test in Perth on Friday.

● In the driver's seat when they came out to reply to India's lowly first innings total of 150, Australia had no answer to Indian captain Jasprit Bumrah's quality pace that fetched him fantastic figures of 4/17 in 10 overs.

Steven Smith (0), who got a very difficult first delivery that zoomed in and dipped catching him plumb in front.

Once Bumrah set the tone, debutant Harshit, with a bustling action, got Travis Head (11) out. Australia were reeling at 31 for 4.

Labuschagne took 24 balls to get off the mark and also found himself at the receiving end of some heated words from an agitated Siraj.

The Indian then pitched one up to Mitchell Marsh

and the resultant edge was brilliantly snapped by K. L. Rahul before ending Labuschagne's 52-ball agony with an in-cutter.

Bumrah then came for his final spell of the day to remove the rival skipper as India took control of the proceedings.

But this resurrection was preceded by a horror show with the bat earlier in the day.

Reddy's grit and Pant's brief daredevilry were the only saving grace against a disciplined Australia.

— PTI

## SCORECARD

**India 1st Innings:** Yashasvi Jaiswal c McSweeney b Starc 0, K. L. Rahul c Carey b Starc 26, Devdutt Padikkal c Carey b Hazlewood 0, Virat Kohli c Khawaja b Hazlewood 5, Rishabh Pant c Smith b Cummins 37, Dhruv Jurel c Labuschagne b Marsh 11, Washington Sundar c Carey b Marsh 4, Nitish Kumar Reddy c Khawaja b Cummins 41, Harshit Rana c Labuschagne b Hazlewood 7, Jasprit Bumrah c Carey b Hazlewood 8, Mohammed Siraj not out 0, Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-4, w-2) 11. **Total (all out in 49.4 overs) 150.** **Fall of wickets:** 1-5, 2-14, 3-32, 4-47, 5-59, 6-73, 7-121, 8-128, 9-144. **Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 11-3-14-2, Josh Hazlewood 13-5-

## A REGULATION WICKET, SAYS OZ STARC ON KL DISMISSAL

**Perth, Nov. 22:** Australia's senior pacer Mitchell Starc on Friday played down the chatter around India batter K. L. Rahul's contentious caught behind dismissal on the first day of the opening Test here, saying it was a "regulation wicket".

Rahul's dismissal kicked up a controversy with former players from both the countries questioning the third umpire's decision to overturn the on-field official's not out call.

After on-field umpire Richard Kettleborough ruled in Rahul's favour following Australia's appeal, the home team used DRS to challenge the decision.

Third umpire Richard Illingworth, however, overturned the call despite not having the benefit of a live-screen view which would have given him a clearer picture of whether the Starc delivery actually grazed the bat or the snick responded to a hit on the pads.

"It got overturned obviously, but I thought it was regulation, the sound it made, the timing of it, I thought it was just a regulation wicket," Starc said at a press conference.

"I think there was a fair bit of good bowling today. Obviously there was enough in the wicket and it probably felt like it was a hardball wicket," Starc told reporters at the presser.

— PTI

## Nervous Nitish nails it like a pro

**Perth, Nov. 22:** Nitish Kumar Reddy on Friday conceded that the reputation of Perth being a fast bowler's paradise made him a tad nervous ahead of his Test debut against Australia but the jitters vanished when he recalled head coach Gautam Gambhir's advice — face the bouncers as if "you are taking a bullet for the country".

"I heard a lot about the Perth wicket. There was a bit of nervousness. It was in the back of my mind that everyone was talking about the bounce on Perth wicket. But then I remem-

bered the chat I had with Gautam sir after our last practice session," Nitish told reporters during the post-day press meet.

"He was mentioning that when you get a bouncer, take it on your shoulder. It was like taking a bullet for your country". That just boosted me. When he said that I felt that I needed to take the bullet for the country. That's the best thing I have heard from Gautam sir," he added.

The 21-year-old revealed that he was told about the impending debut a day ahead of the first Test, but gathered himself with a quiet dinner and an evening round of cycling. "We got to know (him and pacer Harshit Rana) about our debut just one day ago, and we were excited. We were having dinner and we were keeping calm as last week. We did not want to take too much pressure. We had a

cycle ride as well last evening, so that was good," he said.

Nitish was delightfully surprised when star batter and his idol, Virat Kohli, handed him the Test cap in the morning. "It was a great feeling (getting a cap from Kohli). I have always dreamed about playing for India and it was a fantastic moment. Virat bhai is my idol when I started playing cricket. So getting a cap from him was a happy moment for me," the cricketer from Andhra gushed.

— PTI

## 2025 | SEASON

## IPL ball on from March to May

**New Delhi, Nov 22:** Next year's Indian Premier League will be held from March 14 to May 25, the BCCI has told the IPL franchises while also setting aside similar widows for the event's 2026 and 2027 editions in an uncharacteristically elaborate plan.

The BCCI has also decided to include injury-prone England pacer Jofra Archer, Indian-born American pacer Saurabh Netravalkar and uncapped Mumbai-wicketkeeper-batter Hardik Tamore in the two-day mega players' auction to be held in Jeddah from Sunday.

In its communication to the franchises, the Board has stated that the dates for the next three seasons are being shared at once to "assist the franchises in planning for the players' auction."

The 2026 edition of the tournament will start on March 15 and the grand finale has been scheduled for May 31.

The 2027 edition will once again start on March 14 with the final on May 30. All three finals will be held on Sundays.

The BCCI had plans to increase the number of matches in the IPL to ensure that it runs for 10 and half weeks and looking at the windows set aside, it looks imminent that the league's game count will increase.

Archer did not feature in the IPL this year and his run in the 2023 edition

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was cut short by an elbow injury.

Netravalkar was one of the breakout stars of the T20 World Cup in the USA earlier this year with impressive performances that were crucial to his side advancing to the Super 8s. The former India Under-19 player, who also turned up for Mumbai in Ranji Trophy, migrated to the USA to pursue computer engineering and is currently employed with Oracle.

His omission from the pruned auction list at the expense of another India-turned-US player Unmukt Chand had raised eyebrows as the latter was not a part of the American team in the T20 World Cup.

— PTI

## Domestic T20 on, auction on minds

**New Delhi, Nov. 22:** Presence of a few front-line stars like Hardik Pandya, Mohammed Shami and its co-existence with the IPL mega auction has given the latest edition of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, beginning across venues from Saturday, a meaty context.

But interestingly, the players are not sewn by a common auction thread in the country's premier domestic T20 tournament.

Pandya need not to worry about impressing the IPL scouts after finding a place in Mumbai Indians' retention list ahead of the auction on November 23 and 24 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The all-rounder's appearance in Baroda's jersey is more in line with the BCCI's policy of leading cricketers mandatorily appearing in domestic tournaments.

So, his aim will be to keep in touch with the game and possibly help Baroda to a rare title victory.

But Shami's outing for Bengal is multi-dimensional. The veteran pacer will be eager to come up with a fine show to further underline his fitness after recently taking seven wickets for his state in a Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh.

Similarly, Shreyas Iyer (Mumbai), who had led Kolkata Knight Riders to title in IPL 2024, and Yuzvendra Chahal (Haryana) will be looking to boost their already impressive IPL CV with fine efforts in the tournament.

— PTI

## Amorim is all set for Man U bow

**Manchester (England), Nov. 22:** Ruben Amorim takes charge of Manchester United for the first time in Sunday's trip to Ipswich, while Manchester City are aiming to snap a historic losing streak for Pep Guardiola against Tottenham.

Fourth takes on fifth in another of Saturday's eye-catching fixtures when Arsenal hope to kickstart their faltering title challenge at home to Nottingham Forest.

Some of the key talking points ahead of this weekend's action:

Manchester United fans have been made to wait three weeks for Ruben Amorim's arrival since he was confirmed as the successor to Erik ten Hag.

The Portuguese does not face a baptism of fire, but Ipswich are on a high ahead of the visit of the Red Devils after securing their first Premier League win for 22 years before the international break with a shock 2-1 victory at Tottenham.

Amorim has plenty of problems to solve at Old Trafford, but begins with United only four points adrift of the top four despite sitting down in 13th.

Ten Hag managed just one win from seven away games in all competitions this season and Amorim must find a quick tonic to that travel sickness if he is to make a positive first impression with the United fans.

— AFP