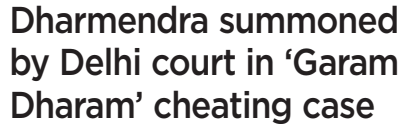
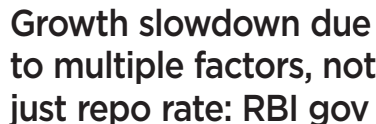


NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2024

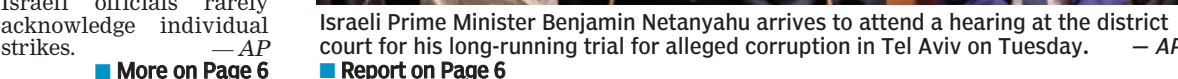


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Damascus, Dec. 10: Israel carried out a wave of heavy airstrikes across Syria as its troops advanced deeper into the country, drawing to within 25 km of the capital, a Syrian opposition war monitor said Tuesday. Israel denied its forces were advancing toward Damascus.

The media reported in Damascus heard heavy airstrikes overnight and into Tuesday on the city and its suburbs. Photographs circulating



■ **More on Page 4**

The Left-leaning Mr. Dissanayake swept the presidential polls a few months ago after which his National People's Power (NPP) also swept the parliamentary polls.

More on Page 4

SHORT TAKES

L-G: Power to name CDVs lies with CM

New Delhi: Days after chief minister Atishi wrote to lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena requesting him the re-appointment of marshals on the city's buses, Mr Saxena on Tuesday said the engagement of civil defence volunteers through a considered scheme lies solely on the council of ministers headed by the chief minister. In a note to Ms Atishi, the L-G said, "It is an unacceptable proposition to suggest that a scheme for engaging bus marshals should be formulated by the constitutional head of government". He continued, "By that absurd logic, I should also start exercising the powers of council of ministers on a whole range of transferred subjects". The Delhi L-G further said that as far as the deployment of home guards in buses for security purposes is concerned, the process has already been initiated by the department and principal secretary (finance).

Nurse dies as 2 cars collide in Rohini

New Delhi: A 47-year-old nurse died and a dentist was injured after their car collided head-on with an SUV in Begampur area of Delhi's Rohini, the police said on Tuesday. The accident, which claimed the life of Lady Hardinge Medical College and Hospital's staff nurse Jyoti, happened at around 11 am on Monday, they said. The police said they found two damaged cars — a Santro and a Scorpio — on the spot. Bawana residents Jyoti and Vijayant (47), a dentist at a private hospital, were travelling in the Santro when the collision happened, they said, adding that the Scorpio driver is absconding. The two injured were rushed to Baba Sahab Ambedkar Hospital where Jyoti was declared dead, a police officer said.

Man killed over 'illicit relationship'

New Delhi: A man allegedly stabbed his former neighbour to death in east Delhi after suspecting him of having an illicit relationship with his wife, the police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred in the New Ashok Nagar area on Monday night, during which Ram (33), a native of Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, lost his life. Ram's relative, Amit, told the police that he was attacked by his former neighbour with a knife and declared dead by doctors at the LBS Hospital. The victim sustained multiple stab wounds near his private parts, a police officer said. "It is alleged that the accused suspected Ram of having an affair with his wife. On Monday night, under the influence of alcohol, the accused attacked Ram with a knife," the officer added.

ALLEN ONLINE PARTNERS WITH CRICKETER DHONI

New Delhi: To ensure quality education reaches every student, ALLEN, an institute for foundational and supplemental learning, has partnered with cricket icon Mahendra Singh Dhoni. This collaboration highlights the pivotal role that expert guidance plays in achieving success, whether in academics or sports. ALLEN Online partners with Mr Dhoni to inspire students through his journey of success, the cricket legend lends his voice to ALLEN's mission. "Success is possible, from anywhere!" Known for his remarkable journey from Ranchi to the international cricket stage, Mr Dhoni's association with ALLEN reflects the institute's belief that no dream is beyond reach when one has the right preparation. ALLEN has guided over 500,000 students to realise their dreams of becoming doctors and engineers. Now, it is extending its mission to reach even the most remote parts of India, ensuring every student can access its world-class resources. Through its vast network of campuses and ALLEN Online courses, the institute ensures no student is left behind in the pursuit of success. It harnesses the po-wer of technology and personalisation to bring the institute's 36+ years of expertise directly to students' homes.

■ We gave time, but there has been no reply from govt: Pandher
101 farmers to resume foot march to city December 14AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Punjab farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher on Tuesday said that protesting farmers will resume their foot march to Delhi on December 14 as there has been no message so far from the government side for holding talks.

The decision on the march was taken in a meeting of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters at the Shambhu border protest site, Mr Pandher said, "We did not want farmers to be blamed for not wanting to hold talks to find a way out. We gave time...but there has been no message from the government (Centre) side for talks."

"Now, the decision taken by both the forums is that our next jatha (group) of 101 farmers will leave on December 14 for Delhi (from the Shambhu border)," he said.

On Monday, Mr Pandher had accused the Centre of being confused about how the protesters should proceed to the national capital. He had also said they will decide their next course of action in a meeting on Tuesday.

Agitating farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi from the Shambhu border on Sunday after some of them sustained injuries in teargas shelling by Haryana security personnel who

SC refers Hindu Succession Act case to larger bench for ruling

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Flagging inconsistencies and the conflicting interpretations between Sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which deals with the rights of Hindu women in inheritance, the Supreme Court has referred the matter for consideration to a larger bench for authoritative ruling on the issue.

A bench comprising Justice P.S. Narasimha and Justice Sandeep Mehta on Monday dealt with the inconsistencies in the judicial precedents, which advance conflicting positions on women inheritance rights.

While one of the precedents advances the cause of the Hindu women, recognising her absolute right to ownership over the property received by her in recognition of her pre-existing right in the property under Section 14(1) of the act and another pronouncement relies on Section 14(2) of statute, denying her absolute ownership over such assets.

Stressing that an authoritative ruling is required to provide clarity and certainty in the interpretation of Section 14 of the act, the bench directed the Registry to place the SC's order along with the appeal paper book before the CJI for constituting an appropriate larger bench.

Delhi's AQI is 'poor', likely to remain same for 2 days

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

A day after recording 'moderate' AQI, Delhi's air quality slipped into the 'poor' category on Tuesday, with the forecast suggesting it will remain the same for the next couple of days. The 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) of the city was recorded at 234 at 4 pm on Tuesday, marking a drop from Monday's 'moderate' reading of 186.

The Central pollution control board (CPCB) classifies AQI between 0 and 50 as 'good', between 51 and 100 as 'satisfactory', between 101 and 200 as



Union minister for agriculture and farmers welfare Shwvraj Singh Chouhan during a meeting with representatives of farmer organisations from Chhattisgarh and Haryana in New Delhi on Tuesday.

thwarted yet another attempt by the protesters to cross the Punjab-Haryana border.

Meanwhile, farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast unto death entered its 15th day on Tuesday.

Another farmer leader, Abhimanyu Kohar, told reporters at the Khanauri border protest site that during the past 15 days, Mr Dallewal has grown weak and needs support to walk.

"Doctors are monitoring his vital signs. His weight has fallen by more than 11 kg and his blood sugar levels are fluctuating. Doctors are worried that at any time an emergency situation can arise pertaining to his health," Mr Kohar said.

No meal was cooked on Tuesday by farmers at Khanauri in solidarity with Mr Dallewal, he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Pandher appealed to farmers to reach the two protest sites in numbers on December

13, which marks the 10 months of their protest at the Shambhu and Khanauri points.

Mr Pandher had on Monday claimed that the BJP-led Centre was "confused" after farmers decided to march on foot to the national capital.

Farmer leaders protesting at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders have claimed that earlier the Central ministers and BJP leaders had raised an objection to farmers heading to the national capital along with their tractors and trolleys and asked what was the objection now when they wanted to march on foot.

A 'jatha' (group) of 101 farmers under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had made two attempts to go to Delhi on foot on December 6 and 8 but were not allowed to move ahead by the Haryana security personnel.

Chouhan meets farmers from Haryana and Chhattisgarh

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Agriculture minister Shwvraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday met representatives of farmers' organisations from Haryana and Chhattisgarh and discussed various issues facing the farm sector. Farmers representing Chhattisgarh Yuva Pragatisheel Kisan Sangh, Naugama Khap Kisan Sangathan Jind, Satrol Khap Seva Samiti Hisar, and Nandal Khap Rohtak participated in the discussions.

During the meeting, the farmers appreciated the work being done by the Central government in the field of agriculture and farmers' welfare and gave some important suggestions.

"The welfare of farmers is the top priority of the Central government. Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, the government is committed to the development of agriculture and farmers," Mr Chouhan said on social media X after the meeting.

The meeting was part of the minister's series of dialogues with farmers and farmers' organisations.



AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal with his wife Sunita visits the residence of an autorickshaw driver at New Kondli in east Delhi.

insurance of up to ₹10 lakh, accident insurance of up to ₹5 lakh, ₹1 lakh assistance for the wedding of a daughter, ₹2,500 uniform allowance twice a year on Holi and Diwali, and free coaching for children to prepare for competitive exams.

Additionally, the government will restart the 'Poochho' app," said Mr Kejriwal.

The former chief minister said the city's auto

Kejriwal promises ₹10L insurance for auto drivers

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

In a bid to bolster grassroots support ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced five guarantees for the city's auto drivers, including a ₹10 lakh life insurance scheme.

He made the announcement after breaking bread with the family members of auto driver Navneet in the Kondli constituency.

Emphasising the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) commitment to the welfare of auto-rickshaw drivers, he unveiled five guarantees that would be implemented if the party is re-elected.

"I am announcing five guarantees for all auto-rickshaw drivers — life

L-G orders 2-month drive to act against illegal immigrants

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

The Delhi L-G Secretariat on Tuesday directed the chief secretary and the police commissioner of Delhi to launch a two-month special drive to identify and take strict action against illegal Bangladeshi immigrants residing in the national capital. The move comes after a delegation of ulemas (clerics) and Muslim leaders from Hazrat Nizamuddin met L-G V.K. Saxena on Saturday and expressed concern over the treatment of

minority communities in Bangladesh and urged stringent action against infiltrators in the city, the L-G office said in a note.

"The delegation highlighted that illegal immigrants should not be allowed to rent houses or secure employment and called for the immediate cancellation of government documents such as Aadhaar and voter IDs acquired fraudulently," the note said.

They also demanded the removal of encroachments by illegal immigrants on public spaces,

including roads, footpaths, parks, and government land, the note read.

The delegation also urged the madrassas and mosques to evict illegal immigrants if they were providing shelter, it added.

The L-G Secretariat directed the chief secretary to provide a time-bound response with weekly progress reports to be submitted.

This directive has come amid heightened political tensions as the issue of illegal immigration gains traction in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections.

From 2025, CUET to return to computer-based format

New Delhi, Dec. 10: CUET-UG will return to the computer-based format from 2025 and students will be allowed to appear for any subject irrespective of the subjects studied in Class 12, according to UGC chairman Jagadeesh Kumar.

In an interview with a news agency, Mr Kumar said an expert panel set up by the University Grants Commission (UGC) conducted a review of the exam and proposed several changes.

The panel examined various aspects of the test, such as its structure, number of papers, duration of test papers, syllabus alignment, and operational logistics. The changes recommended by it were approved by the commission in a recent meeting.

"The exam will be conducted only in CBT (com-

puter-based test) mode from 2025. We conducted the exam in hybrid mode last year but we will move to CBT mode because it is much more reliable and secure as compared to other modes of examination," the UGC chief said.

"Candidates will also be allowed to opt for subjects in CUET-UG which they haven't studied in Class 12 to allow the students to cross over the rigid disciplinary boundaries in higher education," he said.

"We have also reduced the number of papers from 63 to 37 and admissions for the dropped subjects will be conducted on the basis of scores of the general aptitude test (GAT)," he added.

Instead of separate tests for 33 languages, tests will be offered for only 13 languages — Assamese, Bengali, English,

Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Odia, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

The domain-specific subjects have been reduced from 29 to 23.

Explaining the changes in the 2025 edition of the exam, Mr Kumar said students will be able to appear for CUET-UG in a maximum of five subjects as against six previously.

"Similarly, the exam duration, which varied from 45 minutes to 60 minutes depending upon the subject, has now been standardised at 60 minutes. The concept of optional questions in the exam has also been done away with and all questions will be compulsory now," Mr Kumar said.

The duration of CUET-PG has also been reduced from 105 minutes to 90 minutes.

— PTI

NCB makes 5th arrest in cocaine case, seizes ₹4cr

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

The NCB on Tuesday said it made a fresh arrest and found more than ₹4 crore in cash following raids in an ongoing probe into a more than 80-kilogramme cocaine haul made last month, one of the biggest seizures of this party drug in Delhi. The federal anti-narcotics agency conducted fresh searches at three locations in the busy market area of Chandni Chowk on Monday and recovered ₹4,64,55,710 (₹ 4.64 crore) in cash and seized digital

devices, documents and arrested one person.

The cash was handed over to the income-tax department for investigation at its end, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said.

The names of some hawala operators have emerged in the transfer of money connected to the "trafficking" of cocaine by a group of people based abroad, the agency said.

On November 14, the NCB seized 82.53 kilogrammes of "high-grade" cocaine following searches in Janakpuri and Nangloi areas.

We'll provide govt house to Kejriwal soon, says Khattar

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Union housing and urban affairs minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday said that a government accommodation will soon be allotted to AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, which he is entitled to as the chief of a national party.

Responding to a question at a press conference, Mr Khattar said that as the president of a national party, Mr Kejriwal is entitled to a Type VII bungalow. However, all Type VII bungalows are currently occupied, he added.



Members of the civil society of Delhi and other social and cultural organisations take part in a protest march outside the Bangladesh embassy at the Chanakyapuri police station in New Delhi on Tuesday over the attacks on Hindus and alleged human rights violations in the country.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

■ IISc in world's top 50 universities for environment education
IIT-D tops India in QS sustainability rankingsAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, is at the top among universities in India for sustainability, jumping 255 places to reach 171 globally, according to QS Rankings announced on Tuesday.

A total of 78 Indian universities have featured in the 2025 QS Sustainability Rankings, with nine of the top 10 institutions in the country improving their ranking this year and 21 new institutions making an entry.

IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur have been ranked among the world's top 100 for environmental impact. The Indian Institute of

Science (IISc), Bengaluru, has been ranked among the world's top 50 for environmental education.

"Of the 78 Indian universities that feature in the 2025 QS Sustainability Rankings, 34 have improved on last year's placing and eight have maintained their positions. This is an excellent achievement for the Indian higher education ecosystem and shows that Indian universities are forging ahead with their sustainability initiatives," said Ben Sowter, the vice president of London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

"Within the social impact category, Indian universities can look to

▶ **A TOTAL** of 78 Indian universities featured in 2025 QS Sustainability Rankings

▶ **IIT-Delhi** and **IIT-Kanpur** ranked among the world's top 100 for environmental impact

improve their indicator scores in the health and wellbeing, impact of education, and equality lenses, where no institutions from the country feature in the top 350. Universities from India scored better in the knowledge exchange and employability and outcomes lenses," Mr Sowter added.

The 2025 rankings show-

case over 1,740 universities from 107 countries and territories.

The University of Toronto is the top-ranked university this year, ahead of ETH Zurich which got second place and Lund University in Sweden and the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), in joint third.

Citing the latest QS International Students Survey, Jessica Turner, CEO of QS, said, "Sustainability is a top priority for today's students, with nine in 10 identifying it as important and 40 per cent actively researching universities' sustainability strategies during the application process."



International GITA Mahotsav

28 November-15 December
Kurukshetra, Haryana



सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥
भगवद्गीता 18.66

सम्पूर्ण कर्तव्य कर्मों का आश्रय छोड़कर तू केवल मेरी शरण में आ जा ।
मैं तुझे सभी पापों से मुक्त कर दूंगा, शोक मत कर ।
Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter.
Be not grieved, for I shall release you from all evils.



Margsheers Shukla Mokshada Ekadashi - Gita Jayanti Samaroh

11 December, 2024 | Venue : Kurukshetra

Chief Guests

Sh. Manohar Lal

Union Minister, Housing &
Urban Affairs and Power

Sh. Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Union Minister, Agriculture &
Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development

Sh. Suryabanshi Suraj

Minister of Odia Language, Literature & Culture

Ms. Pindi Hazara Channa

Minister, Tanzania

Presided over by

Sh. Nayab Singh Saini

Chief Minister, Haryana

Main Programmes

9:00 am	Jyotisar-The Birthplace of Gita and Sannihit Sarovar	Complete recitation of Srimad Bhagavadgita and Gita Yajna
10:00 am	Theme Park, Kurukshetra	Global Gita Chanting by 18000 students
11:00 am	Purushottampura Baag, Kurukshetra	Cultural Programmes in Odisha Pavilion
02:00 pm	Srimad Bhagavadgita Sadan, Kurukshetra University	48 Kos Tirtha Sammelan
03:00 pm	In front of the Kurukshetra Development Board Office	Departure of Gita Shobha Yatra
03:00 pm to 04:30 pm	Senate Hall, Kurukshetra	The Resonance of Dialogue: Panchjanya 'Haryana's Transformation' Deepotsav
05:30 pm	Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar & Jyotisar	
05:30 pm	48 Kos Kurukshetra region	Deepotsav at Tirthas
06:00 pm	Purushottampura Baag, Brahma Sarovar	Gita Maha Aarti and Deep Daan



“ सभी देशवासियों को गीता जयंती की अनंत शुभकामनाएं।
श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता सदियों से मानवता का मार्गदर्शन करती आई है।
अध्यात्म और जीवन-दर्शन से जुड़ा यह महान ग्रंथ हर युग
में पथ प्रदर्शक बना रहेगा।”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी

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to join
Global Gita Chanting



Scan QR Code
to join
48 Kos Tirtha
Sammelan



SHORT TAKES

Covid jabs saved lives: Centre in SC

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday asserted in the Supreme Court that the Covid-19 pandemic was “a disaster like no other” and vaccination saved people’s lives. The submission was made before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and P.B. Varale that was hearing a plea over the alleged vaccine-induced deaths of two women. When additional solicitor-general Aishwarya Bhati said Covid was a disaster like no other, senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the women’s parents, responded, “We are not contesting that. We do not dispute.”

Agniveer candidate dies during test

Raipur: An applicant for the Agniveer enrollment died after completing a 1.6 km run, a part of physical fitness test, in Raigad in Chhattisgarh, a government spokesman said here on Tuesday. The process for the Agniveer enrollment was going on in the Boiridar stadium in district headquarters of Raigad on December nine when one of the aspirants for the job, Manoj Kumar Sahu (20), suddenly collapsed on the ground after completing the 1.6 km run, the spokesman of the Chhattisgarh government said. The medical team present in the stadium examined him. His oxygen level in the blood was falling down very fast.

Congress ‘stars’ to fight AAP in Delhi

■ **Continued from Page 1**
on chief minister Atishi in the Kalkaji seat if the latter is fielded by the AAP.
Also, speculation is rife that Mumtaz Patel, daughter of former senior Congress leader late Ahmed Patel, will also be fielded to contest the Delhi Assembly polls.
Other probables include former MLA Anil Bharadwaj from Sadar, Rohit Choudhary from Nangloi, Mangesh Tyagi from Burari, Lokender Singh from Timarpur, Asif Muhammad Khan or his daughter Ariba from Okhla, Parveen Jain from Shalimar Bagh and Mudit Aggarwal from Chandni Chowk.
The Congress Delhi unit had recently held its first screening committee meeting in which 7-10 names were short-listed, sources claims, adding that the shortlisted names will be further sent to the Congress Working Committee (CWC) for the final nod.
The party recently concluded a month-long Nyay Yatra led by Mr Yadav. The yatra covered all the 70 Assembly seats and is being seen as an attempt to regain the Congress’ lost ground in the city-state. Buoyed by the success of the yatra, the Congress is in no mood to give a cakewalk to the AAP unlike the last elections.
Any vote share gain for the Congress could mean loss to the ruling AAP, or so say the political pundits.

HC judge at VHP event stirs storm, top court seeks details

■ **Continued from Page 1**
provocative issues, including “the law working according to the majority”, were circulated widely on social media, prompting strong reactions from several quarters, including the Opposition leaders who questioned his reported statements, labelling it as hate speech.
Mr Sibal said Justice Yadav has violated his oath of office by making a “hate speech” and asserted that he, along with other Opposition MPs, will submit a notice to bring a motion to impeach the judge. The Opposition MPs are likely to submit the notice in the next few days, sources said.
“Any judge who makes such a statement is violating his oath of office. If he is violating the oath of office, he has no right to sit in that chair,” Mr Sibal said at a press conference on Tuesday.
The SCBA president said: “If a high court judge can make a speech like this, then the question arises -- how do such people get appointed in the first place? The question also arises -- how do they get the courage to make such remarks? The question also arises why these things are happening in the last 10 years.”
Mr Sibal said the Supreme Court has the power to stop such people from sitting in that chair and till then it should be ensured that no case comes before Justice Yadav.
“I have spoken to some fellow leaders Divgijaya Singh (Congress), Vivek Tankha (Congress), Manoj Jha (RJD), Javed Ali (SP) and John Brittas (CPI(M)). We will soon meet and we will bring an impeachment motion against

■ Civil society groups demand repealing of ‘draconian’ act ‘Don’t obliterate Manipur’: Huge stir against AFSPA rocks Imphal

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, DEC. 10

Leading civil society groups of Manipur on Tuesday organised a mass protest against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) and called for justice and repeal of the “draconian” law at Thau Ground in Imphal.

The protest that coincided with International Human Rights Day was jointly organised by prominent civil society organizations (CSOs) including All Manipur United Clubs’ Organisation (Amuco), Poirei Leimarol Meira Paibi Apunba Manipur (Poirei Leimarol), Manipuri Students’ Federation (MSF), Centre for Human Rights (COHR), and All Manipur Women Voluntary



People take part in a protest march in Imphal on Tuesday against the recent violence in Manipur and reimposition of AFSPA in parts of the state.

— PTI

Association (AMWOVA).

The mass protest, which was attended by hundreds of people, was also participated by students and individuals from different communities. They voiced their anger against

AFSPA for what they termed as a “draconian act” that violates fundamental human rights.

Protesters carried placards and banners, demanding the complete withdrawal of AFSPA

from Manipur and other northeastern states, accusing the act of fostering impunity and perpetuating human rights abuses in the region.

The gathering reverberated with slogans such as “Repeal AFSPA,” “Self-Determination is Our Right,” “Don’t Obliterate Manipur,” and “Stop Killing Innocent People by Kuki Terrorists.”

In November, the Centre reimposed the AFSPA, under which an area is declared as “disturbed” for the convenience of security forces to operate, in Manipur’s six police station areas, including the violence-hit Jiribam.

In a notification, the ministry of home affairs said the decision was taken in the wake of continuous volatile situation in Manipur.



People take part in a protest in Nagpur on Tuesday against the atrocities on religious minorities in Bangladesh.

— PTI

■ Number of trees dips to just half to 17K-25K Campaign afoot to preserve and expand Kashmir’s iconic Chinar

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, DEC. 10

The Kashmir Valley witnessed a surge in tourist footfall during the autumn (October-November) and most of the visitors turned up to behold the magical hues of the season called Harud by the locals.

The falling of golden leaves of trees, particularly mighty Chinars on the ground, lured tourists to the Valley. However, many of the ecologists in Kashmir and tree lovers rue the large-scale cutting down of the Chinars — often illegally — across the Valley, including that for government-sponsored infrastructure activities.

According to the officials of Jammu and Kashmir’s forest department, there were more than forty thousand Chinars in the Valley and its neighbourhood until a

few decades ago but the number has decreased by just half. “No credible data is available on the present status; however, estimates range from 17,000 to 25,000,” said one of the officials.

Alarmed at disappearing or decaying of Chinars — the icon of the Valley — in their neighbourhood, conscience groups of Kashmiri people with local conservationists and dendrophiles are actively involved in a campaign to ensure the majestic tree does not suffer further damage at the hands of unscrupulous elements or owing to official apathy.

Apart from reporting the police and concerned department the illegal felling or inflicting damage to the tree and staging sit-ins whenever and wherever Chinar is threatened, they are using social media platforms to

educate the people on the importance of Chinar.

Also, various NGOs, awakened to the ruin, have over the past few years have spearheaded a campaign to preserve the tree and make conscious efforts to undertake plantation of it not only in the Valley but in other states as well. The tree has been successfully planted in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Dehradun and Meerut. But the size and girth attained in these places are not parallel to those of ones in the Valley.

Zarief Ahmed Zarief, a Kashmiri poet, social activist and dendrophile, moves from place to place to tell people about Chinar as a symbol of Kashmiri cultural, religious, and natural heritage. “I try to make the people understand that Chinar is our shooab (grace) and we must not allow it to be harmed,” he said.

BJP & Cong clash over Soros, Adani issues

■ **Continued from Page 1**
in the afternoon, parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju accused the Congress and its leadership of colluding with Mr Soros and anti-India forces, plunging the Lok Sabha into chaos and leading to its adjournment for the day.
Mr Rijiju also hit out at Congress leaders for attacking the dignity of Parliament by coming to the House wearing masks and jackets with caricatures.
Opposition members trooped into the Well as Mr Rijiju made the remarks. Earlier, the BJP member Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, allowed Mr Sonowal to introduce the Merchant Shipping Bill after responding to the objections raised by Congress member Manish Tewari and Trinamul Congress member Saugata Ray. As the Lok Sabha plunged into chaos soon after, prompting Mr Saikia to adjourn the House for the day.
Noisy protests also erupted in the Rajya Sabha as the Treasury and the Opposition benches traded charges and raised slogans over Congress-George Soros “links” and Adani issues, leading to the adjournment of the House in the afternoon.

As soon as the House met at 12 noon after the first adjournment, Leader of the

House J.P. Nadda raised the issue of alleged links between the Congress leadership and Mr Soros, claiming that they were conniving to destabilise the country. This triggered an uproar in the House, with the Opposition members raising slogans against the BJP and the Treasury benches demanding answers from the Congress.

The Congress’ deputy Leader of the House Pramod Tiwari rejected Mr Nadda’s allegations and raised the Adani issue. As stated by a US attorney, the Adani Group paid ₹23,000 crores as bribes, he said.
Mr Nadda alleged that the media portal Organised Crime Corruption and Reporting Project (OCCRP) is an international body that works viciously to destabilise the governments in several countries and hurt their sovereignty.

“We all know that the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha has raised (in the House) whatever the OCCRP has reported and (thereby) became a tool of the external forces to cause instability here,” Mr Nadda charged.
Similarly, the Forum of Democratic Leader of Asia Pacific (FDL-AP), which is co-chaired by the senior-most leadership of the Congress, not only raises questions over the sover-

eignty of the country but also considers Jammu and Kashmir as a separate state, he said.

Without naming Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, who was present in the House, Mr Nadda questioned her role as the “co-chair of an organisation funded by Mr Soros” in destabilising the country.
“To be associated with such organisations...co-chaired by the Congress leadership shows that it is a big threat for the internal and external security of the nation,” he said, adding, “Mr Soros is funding these organisations.”

“I want to know what the relationship is between the Congress party and Mr Soros and the bodies funded by him,” he said.

After this, Mr Tiwari rejected Mr Nadda’s allegations and raised the Adani issue. “Whatever they are saying has no basis and we have. A (US) court has taken cognisance of ₹23,000 crores bribes (that were paid by the Adani Group)...,” he said, demanding a discussion on the issue.

Amid the sloganeering from both sides, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar allowed DMK member Tiruchi Siva to speak. Mr Siva said Rule 238 (2) restrains a member from making a personal charge against another

member and demanded that Mr Nadda’s remarks against LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi be expunged.

“Leader of the House is a senior leader and seasoned and experienced. He mentioned the Leader of the Opposition of the other House here. That cannot be done as per the rules,” he said.

Replying to Mr Siva, Mr Nadda said, “I have mentioned the name of the office and not that of any particular person.” Soon after, sloganeering from both sides grew louder and the Chairman adjourned the House for the day amid the din.

Several Opposition MPs on Tuesday also demonstrated over the Adani issue in Parliament premises, carrying black “jholas” (bags) with caricatures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and billionaire Gautam Adani printed on them and “Modi Adani Bhai Bhai” written on them.

Mr Gandhi and Ms Vadra, along with MPs from the Congress, the DMK, the JMM, the Left parties, protested in front of the Makar Dwar steps of the Parliament complex. They raised slogans against alleged collusion between Mr Modi and Mr Adani and demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the matter.

Lanka Prez set to hold talks with Modi during India visit

Will also meet Murmu during 2-day tour from Dec. 15

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will make his first overseas visit as head of state to India from December 15 to 17, the Sri Lankan government announced on Tuesday.

Mr Dissanayake will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also meet President Droupadi Murmu during his visit.

Announcing the visit, Sri Lankan information minister and Cabinet spokesperson Nalinda Jayatissa said that foreign minister Vijitha Herath will also accompany the President, who is expected to visit China next month.

The Left-leaning Mr Dissanayake swept the presidential polls a few



A.K. Dissanayake

months ago after which his National People’s Power (NPP) also swept the parliamentary polls, further consolidating his power.

Mr Dissanayake had campaigned on an anti-corruption plank that found favour with the island nation’s voters.

The invitation to visit New Delhi was extended by the external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, who visited Colombo less than a fortnight after Mr Dissanayake’s victory.

Mr Jaishankar was the first foreign dignitary to visit Sri Lanka since the Dissanayake-led NPP government came to power on September 23.

The Sri Lankan economy had collapsed two years ago after which India had stepped in and given assistance to the tune of over \$4 billion to stabilise the economy, which is now back on the path of recovery. Even before that, India had been funding several development assistance programmes in the island nation.

In addition, the two nations also share a strong cultural bond. Sri Lanka is a Buddhist-majority nation and the religion reached the island during the rule of Emperor Ashoka in India more than 2,300 years ago.

SC asks govt, Karnataka to resolve fund release issue

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the Centre and the Karnataka government should resolve the issue of release of financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund to the state for drought management.

On attorney-general R. Venkataramani’s submission that he needed some time to file an affidavit in the matter, a bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan said, “You should resolve it.”

The SC was hearing a plea filed by the Karnataka government seeking a direction to the Centre to release financial assistance from the NDRF to the state for drought management.

The bench asked Karnataka’s counsel, “How much amount is released so far?”

The counsel said the state requested for ₹18,171 crores and has been granted ₹3,819 crores.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing in January.

On April 29, the Centre told the SC that around ₹3,400 crores has been released to the Karnataka government for drought management in the state.

The petition has sought to declare that the Centre’s decision to not release the full financial assistance is “ex-facie violative”.

Opp. notice to oust Dhankhar

■ **Continued from Page 1**
members of the Treasury benches to raise the Congress-US billionaire George Soros “link” issue in the Upper House.
The INDIA bloc parties in August this year also had considered moving a no-confidence motion against Mr Dhankhar.

According to Article 67(b) of the Constitution, a vice-president of India can be removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the members of the Rajya Sabha and agreed to by the Lok Sabha. A minimum of 50 MPs is required to initiate such a motion, along with a 14-day notice period before the resolution is tabled.

Condemning the no-confidence motion brought by the INDIA Bloc against Rajya Sabha Chairman, the Union parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju accused the Opposition of disrespecting the dignity of the Chair of both the RS and the LS.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Rijiju said that the majority of the members of the Rajya Sabha have “full faith” in Mr Dhankhar.

“The Opposition disrespects the dignity of the Chair, be it in the Rajya Sabha or the Lok Sabha... The Congress and their alliance continuously behaved wrongly by not following the direction of the Chair,” he said.



SHORT TAKES

Ex-NCW head set to enter RS unopposed

New Delhi: The BJP top leadership from Haryana, including chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, accompanied former National Commission for Women (NCW) chief and party nominee Rekha Sharma when she filed her nomination for the Rajya Sabha bypoll from the state on Tuesday. Meanwhile, BJP ally TDP also announced B. Mastan Rao and S. Satish as candidates from Andhra Pradesh for the Rajya Sabha bypolls. The BJP nominee for the Haryana bypolls is set to get elected unopposed as she is the lone candidate in the fray. Other than the CM, state BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli and minister Krishan Lal Panwar also accompanied Ms Sharma when she submitted her nomination papers. Ms Sharma said, "I want to thank PM Narendra Modiji, Amit Shahji, J.P. Naddaji, Manohar Lal Khattar and Nayab Singh Sainiji for giving me an opportunity once again to serve the nation."

JMM's Mahato is J'khand Speaker

Ranchi: JMM legislator Rabindra Nath Mahato was on Tuesday elected unopposed as the Speaker of the sixth Jharkhand Assembly. Chief minister Hemant Soren proposed Mr Mahato's name for the post and the proposal was seconded by JMM MLA Mathura Prasad Mahato during the second day of the Assembly session. Rabindra Nath Mahato was also the Speaker in the previous fifth Jharkhand Assembly. He was elected unopposed as the opposition decided not to put up a candidate. Mr Soren congratulated Rabindra Nath Mahato on behalf of the ruling alliance for being elected as the Speaker for the second consecutive term. "We had completed the tenure of the fifth Jharkhand Assembly under your leadership," Mr Soren said.

'INDIA' leadership is open question: Raut

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Tuesday indicated that his party was open to discuss if someone outside the Congress should lead the Opposition's INDIA bloc. All constituents of the alliance are willing to have a discussion on the issue, he said. Mr Raut was reacting to Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad's comment that West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee should be allowed to lead the INDIA bloc. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is at present the chairman of the Opposition grouping, formed before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Talking to reporters in Delhi, Mr Raut, a Rajya Sabha member, said his party's ties with the Congress leadership, including Mr Kharge and Rahul Gandhi were excellent. — PTI

NO VVPAT-EVM MISMATCH IN MAHA POLL: EC

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, DEC. 10

In a blow to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Election Commission on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's claims of VVPAT counting and votes polled in Maharashtra Assembly elections. The EC clarified that paper slips from 1,445 VVPAT units were counted across all 288 Assembly seats on November 23, with no discrepancies found between the VVPAT slips and the corresponding EVM numbers. According to the Supreme Court rules and the EC, it is mandatory to count the VVPAT slips of five randomly selected polling stations per Assembly constituency and to match them against the numbers in EVMs. The chief election officer of Maharashtra issued a statement saying all five VVPAT slips at each Assembly segment were to be counted to match them with the numbers in the EVM. In all the 288 Assembly segments, a total number of 1,445 VVPAT slips were counted on the same day of counting (November 23). "As per that, slip count of 1,440 VVPAT units from 288 Assembly constituencies of Maharashtra state has been tallied with respective control unit data.

■ 'Friendship higher than highest mountain' ■ Also meets Russian defence minister

Rajnath, Putin hold talks at Kremlin

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Defence minister Rajnath Singh met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Tuesday to discuss bilateral issues. And the two leaders noted that the India-Russia partnership holds immense potential and combined efforts will pave the way for "remarkable outcomes". Mr Singh told Mr Putin that India has always stood by its Russian friends and will continue to do so in future. "Friendship between our

countries is higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest ocean," Mr Singh said. Mr Singh is in Russia to attend the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC). "Mr Singh discussed various issues of bilateral defence cooperation. Both leaders expressed that partnership between both countries holds immense potential and combined efforts will pave way for remarkable outcomes," said the defence ministry. He also conveyed warm

▶ **DEFENCE MINISTER** Rajnath Singh reiterated India's commitment towardss special and privileged strategic partnership with Russia

greetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Mr Putin. Earlier, Mr Singh and his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov co-chaired the 21st session of the India-Russia IRIGC-M&MTC in Moscow. Mr Singh reiterated India's commitment towardss special and privileged strategic partner-

ship with Russia. Mr Singh emphasised that the India-Russia relationship is very strong, and has lived up to the responsibilities of a special and privileged strategic partnership. He added that the ties have further strengthened with the recent exchanges, including two visits of Mr Modi to Russia during 2024. He voiced the government of India's determination to extend the capabilities of its domestic defence industry across domains and industrial collaboration. He stressed on new opportunities for enhancing participation of Russian industries in the "Make in India" projects. Russian defence minister emphasised on deepening relationship between both the countries which is based on mutual trust. He congratulated Mr Singh on the commissioning of *INS Tushil*. He further stated that the operationalisation of Military Technical Cooperation agreement for 2021-31 will give necessary impetus to "Make in India". Mr Singh invited Mr Belousov to visit India to co-chair the 22nd session of IRIGC-M&MTC in 2025.



Police personnel stop protesters who tried to barge into Suvarna Vikasa Soudha during their protest demanding quota for the Panchamasali Lingayat community in Belagavi, Karnataka, on Tuesday.

— PTI

■ Passenger arrested by Raipur police ■ He was doing his job: Lawyer

'Flier who raised hoax bomb alert an IB officer'

RABINDRA NATH CHAUDHURY
RAIPUR, DEC. 10

A passenger of the November 14 Nagpur-Kolkata flight who raised a false alarm about a bomb in the plane, leading to its emergency landing at Raipur airport, is an officer of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the police said on Tuesday. The police said that the passenger on the flight, Animesh Mandal (44), was interrogated before his

arrest, and it was found from his interrogation that he is an IB officer. Mandal, one of the 193 passengers on board the plane, had alerted the crew about a bomb on the flight, leading to its emergency landing at Raipur airport. Later, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the bomb detection and disposal squad and Chhattisgarh police entered the plane and evacuated the passengers. They later searched the

▶ **MANDAL'S LAWYER** argued that his client is innocent. 'He simply did his duty. He received information about an explosive being planted on the plane and alerted crew,' the lawyer said.

plane for the bomb. However, no bomb was found on the plane, proving the alarm by Mandal false. Mandal, a resident of Nagpur, was arrested under section 351(4) (crim-

inal intimidation by an anonymous communication, or having taken precaution to conceal the name or abode of the person from whom the threat comes) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the provisions of the Suppression of the Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Civil Aviation Act, 1982. He was subsequently sent to judicial custody. Mandal is an IB officer, senior superintendent of police, Raipur district,

Santosh Singh told this newspaper. "Mandal was interrogated by a joint team of the police and the IB officials before his arrest. He cooked up the bomb story", the police officer said. Mandal's lawyer Faisal Rizvi argued that his client is innocent. "He simply did his duty. He received information about an explosive being planted on the plane and he alerted the crew," Mr Rizvi said.

Rift in Cong-RJD? Lalu backs Mamata as INDIA bloc leader

Patna, Dec. 10: With less than a year left for the Assembly polls in Bihar, a rift appeared in the Congress-RJD alliance on Tuesday when Lalu Prasad Yadav threw his weight behind West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, saying she should lead the INDIA bloc.

Mr Yadav, a staunch Congress ally, caused a flutter when he replied in the affirmative to journalists' question about what he thought of the recent averment by Banerjee, the Trinamul Congress chief, who had expressed the wish to lead the Opposition alliance. "Yes, she should lead," said the RJD supremo,



who added, "The Congress' reservations amount to nothing. Mamata should be given the leadership role (*Mamata ko do*)". Notably, the brusqueness displayed by Mr Yadav towards the Congress comes a day after AICC secretary Shahnawaz Alam, who is a co-incharge of Bihar, had hinted that the party was no longer willing to

play the role of "little brother" in the Mahagathbandhan, the state's prototype of the INDIA bloc. Addressing a Congress function in Khagaria district, Mr Alam had said, "In politics, nobody is a big brother or a little brother. In the assembly polls, the number of seats each party would contest must be decided on the basis of several factors, including the respective strike rates in the Lok Sabha elections". The allusion was, apparently, to the dismal performance of the RJD which had contested 23, out of the state's 40 Lok Sabha seats, winning only four. — PTI



The Indian Navy and the Isro carry out "well-deck" recovery trials of crew module for the *Gaganyaan* mission. The trials were carried out at Eastern Naval Command in Vishakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— PTI

■ Modi, leaders pay tribute ■ 3-day mourning in Karnataka

Former CM S.M. Krishna dies at 92

Bengaluru, Dec. 10: Former Karnataka chief minister and ex-external affairs minister S.M. Krishna died early on Tuesday, leaving behind a rich legacy of statesmanship and public service that saw the 92-year-old leader scale heights of political achievements. Suave, sophisticated and a man with enviable academic credentials,

Somanahalli Mallaiiah Krishna started off his political innings as an Independent MLA from Maddur in 1962, stunning a then Congress veteran in the elections. In his later years, he went on to become the state's CM and also the country's external affairs minister. Tributes poured in for the former Maharashtra governor, who breathed his last at 2.45 am on Tuesday. Krishna had been ailing for quite some time. The Karnataka government announced a 3-day state mourning as a mark of respect to the



Karnataka deputy chief minister D.K. Shivakumar pays respect to the mortal remains of former Union minister and CM S.M. Krishna in Bengaluru on Tuesday. — PTI

veteran leader. His last rites will be performed with full state honours at his native in Mandya district on Wednesday. The state mourning is from December 10 to 12, an official notification said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Cabinet colleagues S. Jaishankar and Nirmala Sitharaman and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and other leaders paid rich

tributes to Krishna. "Shri SM Krishna Ji was a remarkable leader, admired by people from all walks of life. He always worked tirelessly to improve the lives of others," Mr Modi said in a post on X. "He is fondly remembered for his tenure as Karnataka's chief minister, particularly for his focus on infrastructural development. Shri SM Krishna Ji was also a prolific reader and

thinker," the PM said. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Krishna has left behind a rich legacy of statesmanship and public service. Mr Kharge hailed the former CM as a true champion of development who made significant contributions to the state and the nation. "His vision, dedication and exceptional public service played a pivotal role in Karnataka's progress, while his approach to balance welfare with development placed a global stamp on Bengaluru's transformative paradigm. My deepest condolences to his family, friends and followers," he posted on X. The Karnataka Assembly, which is in session in Belagavi, paid tributes to him. Leaders cutting across party lines described him as a "gentleman politician" and "statesman", and lauded his contribution in making Bengaluru an IT hub. — PTI

J&K Cong calls for intl laws on Rohingya crisis

■ You can't let them 'starve, die': Abdullah ■ BJP smells conspiracy, seeks CBI probe

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, DEC. 10

The Congress Party on Tuesday called for dealing with the Rohingya refugees in Jammu in accordance with the international conventions and law and said that curtailing basic amenities to them is tantamount to a criminal act. JKPC president Tariq Hameed Karra, while speaking to reporters here, said, "There are clear-cut international conventions about the refugee issues that must be followed as far as the Rohingyas residing in Jammu are concerned. The basic amenities for them should not be curtailed, as such a step amounts to a criminal act." Last week, the concerned authorities had disconnected the water and power connections of many properties housing the Rohingyas in Jammu. They asked the inmates to vacate these properties within a month. Subsequently, the local administration issued formal orders to snap the

facility to 409 Rohingya families in the Channi Himmat, Sunjuwan and Narwal areas of Jammu. However, the J&K government soon issued directions to the authorities to restore the water and electricity supplies to the immigrants. Chief minister Omar Abdullah said, "It is for the Central government to decide what to do with them. If they need to be sent back, then send them back. If you can send them, do so. But if you can't, then you cannot let them starve here or let them die of cold. The Centre must clarify its policy towards them." The BJP has termed the presence of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis in Jammu a major "political conspiracy" and demanded a CBI probe to identify those involved in facilitating it. It has criticised the NC government over its asking for providing water and power connections to them, saying it was done to protect them as they belong to a particular (Muslim) community.

Nepalese Army Chief on 4-day visit to India to bolster def ties

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Nepalese Army Chief Gen. Ashok Raj Sigdel is on a four-day visit to India during which he will be conferred with the honorary rank of General of the Indian Army by President Droupadi Murmu. The practice follows a seven-decade-old tradition of conferring Army Chiefs of each other's country with the honorary title. Gen. Sigdel will also visit Ayodhya, wherein he will pay obeisance at the Ram Mandir. "Gen. Ashok Raj Sigdel, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) of the Nepali Army, commenced a significant official visit to India today, marking a key step in further strengthening the defence relations between Nepal and India. The visit, from December 11 to 14, aims to enhance bilateral military cooperation and explore new avenues for defence collaboration," the Indian Army said on Tuesday. On Wednesday, Gen. Sigdel will lay a wreath at the National War Memorial and will be given a guard of honour at the South Block lawns, followed by an interaction with Indian Army Chief Gen. Upendra Dwivedi.

Toll in Mumbai bus mishap at 7, 42 hurt

Mumbai: The death toll in the BEST bus accident in Mumbai has risen to seven. The shocking accident took place on Monday night after the driver lost control of the bus and damaged several vehicles in a congested market near Kurla railway stations. So far, 42 people have been reported to be injured in the accident.

Delhi Tourism

Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation Ltd.
(A Government Undertaking)
J5-A, DDA, SCO Complex, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110024

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E-tender are invited for Award of Contract for renting out of Plot 'B' at CEO Shuhdara Grounds, Karkindoorna Delhi for Socio Cultural Functions (like Marriages, Receptions, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Festivals, Parties etc.) initially for 2 years (further extendable subject to RfC).

Tender ID No. 2024 DTTDC 266108 1

Pre bid meeting -- 17.12.2024 at 11:00 AM at above mentioned address

Last Date of bid Submission by 01.01.2025 by 3:00 PM.

The tender document containing detailed terms & conditions can be downloaded from website www.govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in and www.delhitourism.gov.in

General Manager

DIPS/Shadabdt/Cclassified/031/024-25

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement systems

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	02241013	V DEEP GROOVE AXLE PULLEYS COMPLETE SET	613 NOS	03-01-25
02	09242331	CABLE ASSEMBLY HAND BRAKE FOR BMBS	2069 NOS	20-01-25

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. 60/2024-2025 Dated:- 10.12.2024 3768/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



SHORT TAKES

EMERGENCY SURGERY: LULA NOW STABLE

Sao Paulo, Dec. 10: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was in "stable" condition after emergency surgery for an "intracranial hemorrhage" and should leave hospital next week, his doctors said.

Lula, 79, was transported overnight to Brazil's Hospital Sirio-Libanês in Sao Paulo, after experiencing headaches that medics found was related to a fall he suffered in October.

The leader of South America's largest country was conscious after his operation and eating, the doctors told a news conference.

GERMANY NABS LIKELY ISLAMISTS FOR ATTACK PLOT

Berlin, Dec. 10: Three suspected Islamist extremists have been arrested in Germany on suspicion of preparing a "serious act of violence", with an assault rifle and knives also seized, authorities said.

Police swooped Sunday on the homes of two German-Lebanese brothers aged 15 and 20 in the city of Mannheim, and a 22-year-old German-Turkish man from the Hochtaunus district of Hesse state.

The act that they were planning could have "endangered the state", local prosecutors and police said in a statement on Tuesday.

GUNMEN KIDNAP AT LEAST 50 IN NIGERIAN STATE

Maiduguri, Dec. 10: A gang of gunmen kidnapped more than 50 women and children in a raid on Kakin Dawa village in Nigeria's northwest Zamfara state, police and residents said on Tuesday.

Kidnapping for ransom by gunmen, known by locals as bandits, is rife in northwest Nigeria due to high levels of poverty, unemployment and the proliferation of illegal firearms.

Zamfara police said the incident took place on Sunday and that additional security forces were being deployed to the affected area.

REBELS CLAIM CAPTURE OF KEY MYANMAR TOWN

Bangkok, Dec. 10: One of the most powerful ethnic minority armed groups battling Myanmar's army has claimed the capture of the last army outpost in the strategic western town of Maungdaw, gaining full control of the 271-km-long border with Bangladesh.

The capture by the Arakan Army makes the group's control of the northern part of Rakhine state complete. Rakhine has become a focal point for Myanmar's civil war, in which pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic minority armed forces seeking autonomy battle the country's military rulers.

MACRON TO HOST PARTY LEADERS FOR NEW GOVT

Paris, Dec. 10: French party leaders will gather at President Emmanuel Macron's Elysee Palace office on Tuesday in a bid to chart a route towards a new government, days after Prime Minister Michel Barnier was toppled in a trust vote.

Shutting out the far-right National Rally (RN) and hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), the effort to find a way forward comes as caretaker ministers scramble to clarify France's 2025 finances, after the previous administration fell over its cost-cutting budget plans. "The aim is to move forward with a deal about a method".

SK PROSECUTORS SEEK TO ARREST EX-DEFENCE MIN.

Seoul, Dec. 10: South Korean prosecutors are seeking to formally arrest the former defence minister alleged to have colluded with President Yoon Suk Yeol in imposing martial law last week, as both men are being investigated on rebellion and other charges.

Martial law lasted only about six hours in the country but was the first of its kind in more than 40 years and has caused a domestic firestorm and large street protests.

Yoon and his associates face criminal investigations and impeachment attempts.

Israel pounds Syrian army bases, no deeper incursion

Mohammed al-Bashir heads transitional govt; Qataris in contact with HTS

Damascus, Doha, Dec. 10: Israel pounded Syrian army bases on Tuesday in strikes it says aim to keep weapons from falling into hostile hands, but denied its forces had advanced into Syria beyond a buffer zone at the border.

A war monitor said on Tuesday that Israel had conducted 300 strikes on Syria since the fall of president Bashar al-Assad, adding that the raids had "destroyed the most important military sites" in the country.

The Syrian rebels now in power in Damascus appointed Mohammad al-Bashir as head of a transitional government that will be in place until March 1, state media said Tuesday.

On Sunday, the rebels led by Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized the capital Damascus in a lightning offensive, toppling President al-Assad who fled the country.

Qatari officials are in contact with the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which spearheaded the ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as other groups in Syria.

In Damascus, banks reopened for the first time since the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad, in a major step towards restoring normal life. Shops were reopening, traffic returned to the roads, construction workers were back fixing a roundabout in the city centre and street cleaners were out sweeping the streets.

In a sign foreign countries are ready to work with the former al-Qaeda affiliate that led the anti-Assad revolt, the UN envoy to Syria played down the group's designation as a terrorist organisation.

Since Assad's flight on Sunday after his ouster, Israeli troops moved into a demilitarised zone inside Syria. — Reuters



Syrian women pose for a photograph as they stand next to opposition fighters in Damascus, on Tuesday. — AP

Thousands scour horrific jail but find no sign of loved ones

Damascus, Beirut, Dec. 10: They came from all over Syria, tens of thousands. The first place they rushed to after the fall of their longtime tormentor, former president Bashar Assad, was here: Saydnaya Prison, a place so notorious for its horrors it was long known as "the slaughterhouse."

Rebel fighters told AFP they found around 40 bodies bearing signs of torture inside a hospital morgue near Damascus on Monday, stuffed into body bags with numbers and sometimes names written on them.

"I opened the door of the morgue with my own hands, it was a horrific sight: about 40 bodies were piled up showing signs of gruesome torture," Mohammed al-Hajj, a fighter with rebel factions from the country's south told AFP

I opened the door of the morgue with my own hands, it was a horrific sight: about 40 bodies were piled up showing signs of gruesome torture."

—MOHAMMED AL-HAJJ
A rebel fighter

from Damascus.

For the past two days, all have been looking for signs of loved ones who disappeared years or even decades ago into the secretive, sprawling prison just outside Damascus.

But hope gave way to despair on Monday. People opened the heavy iron doors lining the hallways to find cells inside empty.

With sledgehammers, shovels and drills, men pounded holes in floors and

walls, looking for what they believed were secret dungeons, or chasing sounds they thought they heard from underground. They found nothing.

Insurgents freed dozens of people from the Saydnaya military prison on Sunday when Damascus fell. Since then, almost no one has been found.

"Where is everyone? Where are everyone's children? Where are they?" said Ghada Assad, breaking down in tears.

She had rushed from her Damascus home to the prison on the capital's outskirts, hoping to find her brother.

He was detained in 2011, the year that protests first erupted against the former president's rule — before they turned into a long, gruelling civil war. She didn't know why he was arrested. — Agencies

Pak's ex-spymaster indicted

Islamabad, Dec. 10: Pakistan's former spy chief and ex-army general Faiz Hamid has been indicted on a series of charges, the military said on Tuesday, a rare move by the powerful army, which plays an outsized role in the country's politics.

The indictment includes engaging in political activities and violating the Official Secrets Act. Hamid also faces an investigation into the attacks ag-

ainst military installations on May 9, 2023, the military said in a statement.

Thousands of supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan rampaged through scores of military installations and offices to protest against his arrest.

Khan and dozens of his

LONDON-BORN FIRST LADY NOT WELCOME IN UK

London, Dec. 10: Once celebrated as an advocate of women's rights in the Middle East, Syria's British-born former first lady Asma al-Assad has fled into exile with her husband, with UK officials saying she is not welcome to return to London.

A Jordanian man has returned to his home country after spending 38 years in Syrian jails, an official said on Tuesday, after the fall of president Bashar al-Assad ended an agonising wait for his family. The man, named as Osama Bashir Hassan al-Bataynah, was found in Syria "unconscious and suffering from memory loss", Jordanian foreign ministry's Soufian al-Kodat told AFP.

Asma al-Assad, 49, her husband and three children have sought refuge in Moscow after rebels ousted Bashar al-Assad from power, according to Russian state news agencies, although the Kremlin has not confirmed the reports.

Asma al-Assad was born in London in 1975 and has spent half her life in the UK, with her parents still living in the capital city.

She retains British citizenship, but foreign minister David Lammy said Monday that she was no longer welcome in the country. — AFP



Asma al-Assad



Palestinian children play in the rubble of a building destroyed in Israeli bombardment, in Khan Yunis in the south Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — AFP

Bibi testifies in corruption trial

Tel Aviv, Cairo, Dec. 10: Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu took the witness stand for the first time on Tuesday in his long-running corruption trial, saying he was being hounded for his hawkish security policies.

Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 34 Palestinians overnight and on Tuesday, medics said, as Israeli tanks pushed into areas in central and southern parts of the enclave.

An Israeli airstrike killed at least 25 people in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza, where Israeli forces have operated since October, and injured dozens of others in a multi-floored building, medics said.

Netanyahu, 75, is Israel's first sitting prime minister to be charged with a crime. He is testifying at the same time Israel is engaged in a war in Gaza and facing possible new threats posed by regional turmoil, including in Syria.

Last week judges ruled

that Netanyahu, indicted in 2019, must testify three times a week, forcing the longtime Israeli leader to juggle between the courtroom and the war room at Israel's defence ministry, minutes away from the courthouse.

He took the stand for about four hours and will resume testifying on Wednesday. Twice his military secretary handed him written messages, the first time requiring a recess and underscoring his having to do double duty as Prime Minister.

The leader of the right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu assailed the Israeli media for what he called its leftist stance and accused journalists of having hounded him for years because his policies did not align with a push for a Palestinian state.

"I have been waiting for eight years for this moment to tell the truth," Netanyahu told the three-judge court.

"But I am also a prime minister ... I am leading the country." — Reuters

Xi rebuffs tariff threat by Trump

Beijing, Dec. 10: Gearing up for Trump 2.0 era, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday cautioned there will be no winner in a tariff or tech wars between China and the US and vowed that Beijing would firmly safeguard its interests.

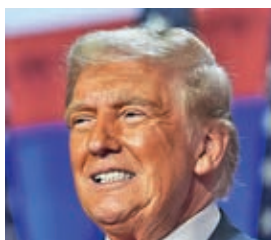
"Tariff wars, trade wars and technology wars run counter to historical trends and economic laws, and there will be no winners," Xi said while meeting the heads of 10 major international organisations, including the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) here.

During the meeting, Xi stressed on China's principles for engaging with the US.

China will always insist on focusing on its own affairs and resolutely safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests. Meanwhile, China's determination to promote high-level opening up will not change, he said, according to the official media reports here.

Xi's comments came in the backdrop of US President-elect Donald Trump's remarks in an NBC interview that he got along very well with Chinese President Xi Jinping and that the two leaders had communication as recently as this week.

China did not confirm the conversations between Xi and Trump, who is set to take over power on January 20. During his poll campaign, Trump had threatened to impose 60 per cent on Chinese exports to the US. — PTI



Donald Trump

TRUMP SON TO BE WALL BETWEEN FAMILY FIRM, GOVT

Abu Dhabi, Dec. 10: The Trump Organisation, Donald Trump's family business, will have a "very large wall" to separate its business activity from the US government, said Eric Trump. The bulk of the company's business is in the US. — Reuters

DHILLON NAMED ASST AG OF U.S.

Washington, Dec. 10: US President-elect Donald Trump has nominated Indian-American Harmmeet K. Dhillon as assistant attorney general for civil rights at the department of justice.

"Harmmeet has always stood up to protect our civil liberties, including taking on big tech for censoring our free speech, representing Christians who were prevented from praying together during Covid, and suing corporations who use woke policies to discriminate against their workers," Trump said. — PTI

POWERED BY AI

Sanyo Electric unveiled first 'human washing machine' in '70

Japan unveils human washing machine

AGE CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 10

Japan has unveiled Mirai Ningen Sentakuki or the "human washing machine," an AI-powered device that can wash and dry a person's body in just 15 minutes.

The human washing machine, developed by Osaka-based Science Co., uses artificial intelligence to analyse your body before delivering a customised wash-and-dry experience. The machine looks like a

pod or fighter cockpit and it takes 15 minutes to wash a human. It will be showcased at the Osaka Kansai Expo in Japan, where 1,000 guests will try it.

"We're about 70 per cent there. We plan to offer 1,000 general visitors an opportunity to use it during the expo," company chairman Yasuaki Aoyama told *The Asahi Shimbun*.

Seven to eight people will be able to experience a wash-and-dry job each day, Aoyama added. It fills partially with hot water when



the bather sits in the seat, which is embedded with sensors to check person's pulse and other data to ensure appropriate water tem-

perature. It uses microscopic bubbles to clean the body of the user. At the same time, an AI system monitors the user, if the

person is calm or excited. It also plays video inside the pod to help the person remain refreshed. This concept is not new as the first "human washing machine" was unveiled by Sanyo Electric in 1970.

It used hot water and emitted ultrasound waves and also had plastic balls to massage person's body but the device never made it to the market. However, Yasuaki Aoyama has not revealed the price or when the product will be available for public.



THE ASIAN AGE

11 DECEMBER 2024

Dhaka needs to act swiftly, firmly to restore normalcy

India has had its say on the situation in Bangladesh where the safety of minorities has been under a grave threat. In diplomatic terms, the meetings the foreign secretary Vikram Misiri had with his counterpart Md Jashim Uddin, the chief adviser to the interim regime, Muhammad Yunus, and the foreign affairs adviser, Md Touhid Hossain, were said to have been a “frank exchange of views”.

It was on the cards that Bangladesh would come up with the response that India’s premises were based on “misleading and false information” and that whatever is happening in the country since the fall of Sheikh Hasina Wazed’s government are the internal affairs of a sovereign country that brook no interference.

The response is a giveaway that incidents have taken place and that the administration led by a microfinance lender is struggling to rein in lumpen elements threatening the safety and welfare of the minorities while ransacking and setting fire to their places of worship.

The foreign secretary expressed concerns over the welfare of Hindus regarding attacks on whom have been circulating freely in the media and have triggered protest marches as far away as in Washington where NRIs marched from the White House to air their misgivings over the goings on in Dhaka and elsewhere.

It is clear the Bangladeshis were bristling with this affront to their failure over maintenance of law and order after the hasty retreat of Sheikh Hasina last August came about and the Peace Nobel winning banker was parachuted by certain liberal groups in the USA to be the chief adviser to an administration by bureaucrats.

All the regrettable incidents of attacks on cultural, religious and diplomatic properties that have taken place and recorded in and freely available on the social media were brought out in the dialogue while at the same time seeking to move the ties in a constructive direction.

It might not be helping that Sheikh Hasina, resident in India as a political refugee, has been airing her criticism of her country’s current regime, terming it “fascist”. How can she be restrained from making public her concerns over the direction Bangladesh seems to be headed with religious fundamentalists seemingly driving the prevailing sentiment over the minorities in the Muslim-majority country that includes over two crore Hindus?

The reaction predictably came from political personalities on the other side of the border threatening to take over Kolkata thus riling Mamata Banerjee who brought out a colourful imagery of not eating lollipops if threatened by an “invasion”. The atmosphere of the ties is such that certain excesses in wordplay are only to be expected.

The point is Bangladesh is yet to accept there is a problem though it must be said that, as with all such incidents of sectarian clashes or minority bashing, members of the majority community have also been helping their friends among minorities.

The arrest of a Hindu monk who went legally unrepresented at the hearing has added to the tensions. But until Bangladesh looks at the picture as seen from outside, it might be in no position to correct the impression that the minorities there are living in fear.

Bangladesh would have to see beyond the events and tensions of the last six months to realise that the country needs development cooperation in “areas of connectivity, trade, power, energy and capacity building, which are all geared towards the benefit of the people of Bangladesh”, as India put it.

A genuine effort to rein in the fundamentalist elements and assure all its citizens, regardless of their religion, that their safety in the society they live in is important might help, which means Bangladesh must first seek to restore normalcy in its “internal affairs”.

Will RBI tweak inflation focus?

The appointment of Sanjay Malhotra as the new RBI governor continues the long-standing tradition of IAS officers heading the Central bank, a quasi-autonomous body that decides the country’s monetary policy. Of 26 governors who headed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) since 1935, only eight were economists and 18 were ICS or IAS officials who served at the finance ministry.

Mr Malhotra took over the charge of RBI from Shaktikanta Das — the second longest serving governor after Sir Benegal Rama Rau’s stint of seven years and 197 days — at one of the most critical times in Indian history. He is faced with a difficult choice that almost all governors in the last 20 years have confronted — whether to focus on inflation or economic growth.

Some governors focused on economic growth in their belief that growth will ultimately take care of inflation. Some exclusively focused on keeping inflation under control because price rise will transmit faster and affect the poor. Under Shaktikanta Das, the RBI remained focused on fighting inflation, even if it meant sacrificing some economic growth.

The latest GDP data showed that India’s growth declined more than anticipated, which would warrant a nudge through boosting consumption by lowering interest rates. If RBI opts for easy monetary policy, it will have to deal with inflation — traditional nemesis — and strengthening of the dollar.

If the dollar turns attractive because of US President Donald Trump’s policy, India needs to keep interest rates elevated to maintain the interest rate arbitrage. Otherwise, the easy dollars that entered India will follow back, putting pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Traditionally, people have unrealistically high expectations from RBI’s monetary policy. In a complex economy, the role of Central banks to either control inflation or boost economic growth has considerably diminished. Without a supportive fiscal policy, monetary policy alone cannot do much. One needs to, therefore, watch as to how Mr Malhotra will perform this balancing act.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

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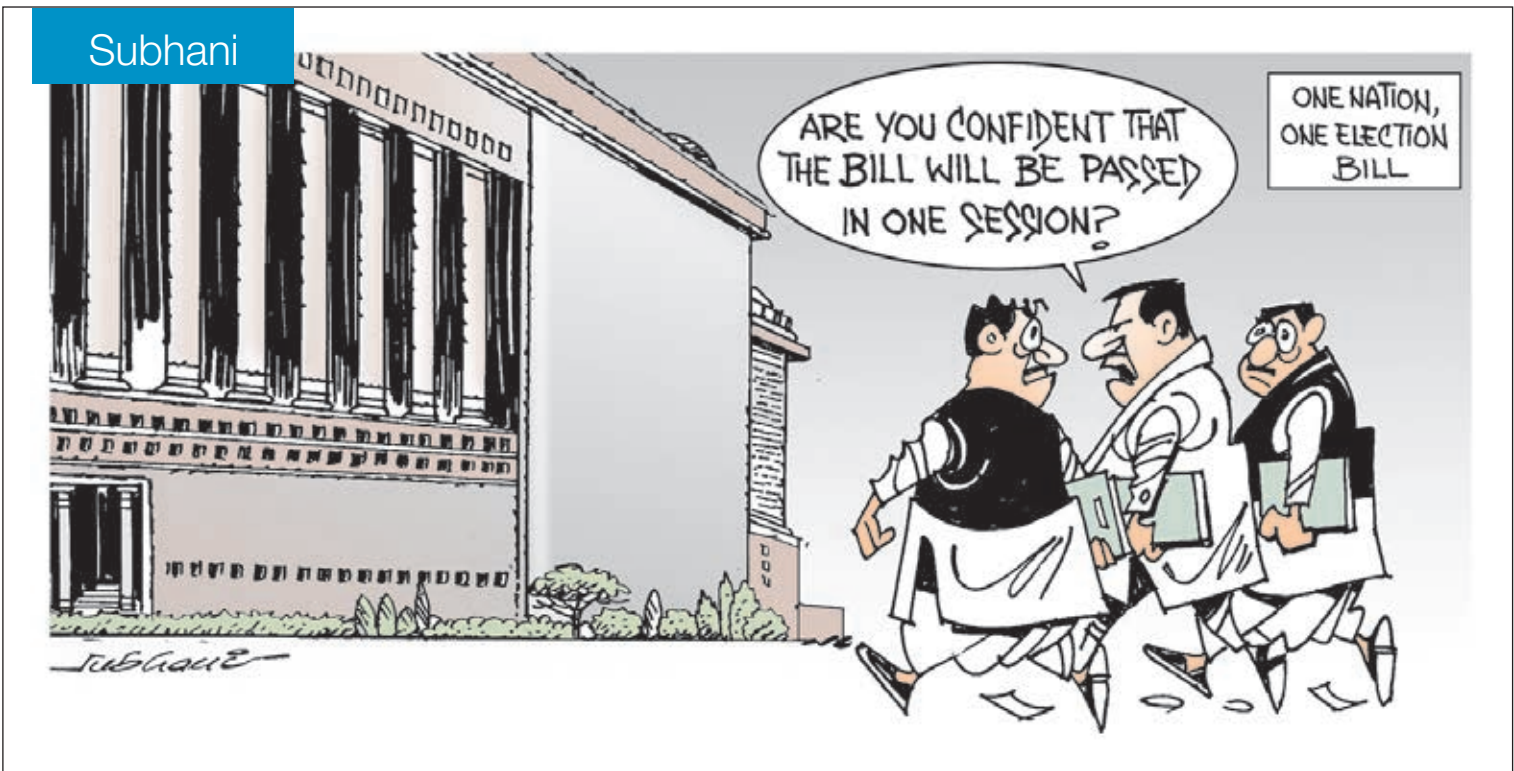
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Subhani



Edgy Mahayuti equations: The new game of thrones



Shikha Mukerjee

The swearing-in of Devendra Fadnavis as Maharashtra’s new chief minister, almost two weeks after the alliance bagged 80 per cent of the total 288 seats in the Assembly, settles nothing. It is probably the start of a game of thrones that will play out over several years as the three-legged Mahayuti alliance of the BJP-Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party jostle inside and outside the coalition and the government over two vacancies — the dominant face and the dominant party in the state. Maharashtra is consequently hobbling, instead of up and running.

Infuriatingly frustrating as it probably is for the bigger BJP as it treads unsettled waters over portfolio distribution with Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, the reality is that the party is not in control, nor can it be seen to be in control. The hold-up is a consequence of the much smaller, but obviously not weaker, Eknath Shinde’s reluctance to give up on his ambition to be Maharashtra’s CM again. The BJP has had to patiently get Mr Shinde to agree to his demotion and allow Mr Fadnavis to take charge as chief minister.

To set the record straight, to use a well-worn cliché, the BJP in Maharashtra doesn’t call the shots, despite winning 132 seats and getting the support of five other newly-elected legislators, against 57 that Mr Shinde won, of the total 288 seats. It is a deliciously piquant twist to a particularly sordid saga of contrived defections, break-ups and alliances. The record establishes that unlike in Uttar Pradesh, and more like in Bihar, the BJP must keep its smaller, but not weaker partners, happy.

There are kingmakers

and parties that are crucial for cobbling up coalitions. Neither Eknath Shinde nor Ajit Pawar have, as yet, succeeded in becoming the big guys of Maharashtra politics, though they are on course to be so. Their strong showing has made every other party and leader vulnerable unless they blow up their futures or inexplicably fall into a decline. By exceeding the expectations of certainly the BJP and obviously Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar, Mr Shinde and Ajit Pawar are now potential challengers to the line-up of leaders. Curiously enough, so also is Mr Fadnavis to the BJP’s order of things. He has been transformed, like Narendra Modi once was, into the face of the BJP in Maharashtra. This makes him indispensable and different from hitherto all other BJP chief ministers, including men like Shivraj Singh Chouhan, former Madhya Pradesh chief minister, who have served at the pleasure of the party and its masterminds, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

When Mr Shinde split the Shiv Sena in 2022 with 40 MLAs, compared to the BJP’s 105 MLAs, and became chief minister, his achievement was at par with Nitish Kumar’s reappointment as chief minister of the NDA government in Bihar in 2017. Both leaders compelled the BJP to play second fiddle, docile and placatory deputy, despite its obsession with being the dominant partner in coalitions.

The lesson that the big guys must stoop low to put themselves in power seems to have been learnt by Ajit Pawar and Mr Shinde. It can mean only one thing: the capacity to delay gratification in order to gain greater and more enduring rewards in the future. By curbing their ambitions for

Infuriatingly frustrating as it probably is for the bigger BJP as it treads unsettled waters over portfolio distribution with Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, the reality is that the party is not in control, nor can it be seen to be in control

now, Ajit Pawar and Mr Shinde have set themselves on course to play a long game. Whether they play it together or go their separate ways will perhaps determine the BJP’s future in Maharashtra, if the Mahayuti’s present balance of power remains unchanged.

It, however, doesn’t mean that Mr Shinde or Ajit Pawar have permanently curtailed their ambitions.

Ajit Pawar made his position clear by choosing to affirm rather than swear in the name of God his oath of office and secrecy. It is a sign that he has every intention of establishing his identity, his politics and his ideology, separate and distinct from that of the BJP. For Mr Shinde, drawing the line distinguishing his politics and ideology from that of the BJP is complicated, since both profess themselves crusaders of the Hindu cause.

Where does this leave the BJP? It had to negotiate with its allies to confirm its natural position as the Mahayuti’s leader. It must have figured out that the Mahayuti’s stability and its hopes of smooth sailing are contingent on its two partners, Shiv Sena and NCP. This is a new game for the BJP. To play it, it has two choices; it can follow its old playbook or write a new one following the Maharashtra election.

The other uncomfortable truth is the BJP is not the leader of the Maratha heartland and does not embody the spirit of the Marathi *manos* (people) or Marathi *Asmita*. Without the heartland and the spirit, the BJP falls short of the sort of domination it has in Uttar Pradesh and to

a lesser degree in Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. It does not have the political capital that is accumulated over decades, through participation and leading grassroots movements in support of the demands of labour, farmers and the infrastructure sector as the Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party does.

Up against regional grassroots leaders, who have control over the course and direction of their parties, the BJP is at a huge disadvantage. The BJP, even in the cause of Hindutva, is dependent on the RSS and its network of voluntary outfits for mass mobilisation. As a centrally-controlled institution where hierarchy and protocols prevail, the BJP needs to constantly juggle regional politics versus national goals and agendas. Contrary to the party’s narrative that regional leaders are puppets and foot soldiers who are entirely dispensable because what matters is the unprecedented popularity and durability of the great helmsman, that is Narendra Modi, the Maharashtra story has produced a new leader, who is indispensable for the success of the Mahayuti.

This is a new reality and the BJP will have to figure out how to handle it. The more history and the more varied that history becomes as the BJP matures as a national party, its simple design of leadership, collective or singular, more or less authoritarian or democratic, will necessarily have to accommodate the emergence of local leaders, some of whom could be like Narendra Modi, superstars on their own turf and on the national scene. As a national party, and one with a future, the BJP has to find ways of grooming the second and third generation of leaders, which it can start doing from Maharashtra, because unlike the Congress, there is no dynasty that will produce successors as a matter of duty.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS

TOO MANY COOKS

The practice of having a deputy chief minister is nothing but an attempt to pander to the ego of the leaders of the allies and at times those in the same party too. Parties who claim they do everything for the good of the people should explain how the appointment of a deputy chief minister helps. I don’t know about the perks and salaries of deputies but I imagine they would be higher than others in the government. Maharashtra has two deputies but the places between the deputy and CM have changed. This is not going to be the end of political games in Maharashtra and despite the Mahayuti’s staggering majority, the climate is uncertain.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

DIGNITY OF SPORT

INDIAN PACER Mohammed Siraj was fined 20 per cent of his match fee by ICC for giving an aggressive send-off to Travis Head during the ongoing second Test at the Adelaide Oval. Travis was sanctioned too. Athletes must always remember that they are representing the country and crores of fans belonging to all ages are watching them. Their minor mistakes can tarnish image of the sport as well as of the country and contaminate the youngsters’ minds. Maintaining respect and discipline is crucial to uphold the dignity of sports on a global platform.

Jakir Hussain
Kanpur, UP

INDIA AFTER ASSAD

IT IS A NEW era of uncertainty for West Asia. Chances of durable peace are slim. Turkey wants to control Syria’s new administration. Although India’s economic ties with Syria have not grown significantly, both countries joined forces in the battle against terror. Not only that, Bashar al-Assad has always supported India on Kashmir. It remains to be seen how much Syria’s position will alter on this crucial issue. Indo-Turkish relations have improved recently. While its attitude on Kashmir has softened, India has not attempted to block Turkey’s partner nation status in BRICS.

Abhijit Roy
Jamshedpur, Jharkhand

Bhopinder Singh



The collapse of Assad’s Syria to have sectarian consequences

Way back in 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan had coined a controversial and loaded term called the “Shia Crescent”, that indicated land and territory from Shia-dominated Iran running across the Iraqi-Syrian swathes up to the southern coast of Lebanon. The subsequent fall of Saddam Hussein’s Sunni-led Iraq to Shia forces, along with the successful negation of both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, or ISIS, by Iran-led Shia militias and the assertive rise of the Yemeni Houthis, the Hezbollah of Lebanon and like-minded groups, almost confirmed a geographical crescent-like shift of power from Sunni sheikdoms (Shia offshoot) Syrian President Bashar al-Assad further reiterated the portents of King Abdullah’s feared sectarian shift.

Civilisational tensions between the Sunni-Shia rift played out thereafter with Iran emerging as the rallying point of the Shia uprising, to the consternation of the wary and predominantly Sunni-led sheikdoms. Relations deteriorated to such an extent that despite paying homilies towards the beleaguered Palestinians in the face of disproportionate and brutal Israeli revenge, Jordan almost openly supported the Israeli forces as it shot down the Iranian drones targeting Israel. Since the time Israel launched the relentless bludgeoning of the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, the Sunni Arab leadership has played coy and mealy-mouthed, and it was left to Iran and its proxies like

Hezbollah, the Houthis and the forces of Syria’s Bashar al-Assad to offer a modicum of defiance.

Cut to 20 years after Jordanian King Abdullah’s sectarian fear-mongering of the “Shia Crescent” in 2004 — Iranian elements have been attacked, almost all of the top Hezbollah leadership assassinated, the Houthis routinely attacked, and perhaps most dramatically, the Syrian nation under Bashar al-Assad has collapsed. This dramatic ouster of Syria’s President comes approximately fifty-five years after his father, Hafez al-Assad, had taken over in 1971. He was sensitive to the sectarian undercurrents and had knowingly ensured that the control of the Syrian military, intelligence, bureaucracy and key security posts were given to his fellow Shia-Alawite brethren only.

Naturally, the Syrian state under the Assad clan had a reflexive bonhomie with the fellow Shia Iran, and as the Arab sheikdoms were aligned to the United States, the Syrians forged a rebound relationship with the Soviet Union (later Russia). All these contrarian positions and alignments militated with Syria’s neighbours like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, as also with the other staunch US ally in the region, namely Israel. The Sunni-Arab side were out to avenge the Syrian defiance and strategic alliances by supporting dissent and sectarian tensions in Syria, to the extent of supporting Sunni extremist militias like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, that is believed to be the principal group behind the capitulation of the Assad regime a few days back. Tellingly, the HTS has its origins

in Al-Qaeda (that was earlier in the forefront of facing Shia forces in the region) and is backed in its recent endeavour by the support of Turkish-backed Syrian Sunni militias, collectively called the Syrian National Army. Expectedly, the rout of Bashar al-Assad’s citadel in Damascus has led to the retreat of the supporting Hezbollah fighters to their bases in the mountains and Lebanon, just as many from the Bashar al-Assad’s Army have fled and crossed over in droves to neighbouring Iraq (led by Shia Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia’ Al Sudani).

The revised landscape in the region with the targeted diminishment of Iran and its regional proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon or the Houthis in Yemen, and now with the Sunni-militia takeover in Syria, will have serious repercussions on the deeply polarised sectarian sentiments. The Shias are estimated to be around 15 per cent of the global Ummah (Muslim community), with a majority only in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Bahrain, out of the 50-odd Muslim countries in the world. Even in India, the Shia numbers are around the same percentage and the unspoken and historical tensions with the Sunnis is unmistakable, if generally controlled. However, in neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan, they are violently, routinely, and systematically persecuted. Many Sunni supremacists go as far as declaring Shias apostates and non-Muslims.

The fall of Bashar al-Assad’s Syria is one more blow to Iran and its conflated Shia ambitions, and

thus to the imminent danger to the minority Shias across the world.

The political leadership in the region has always been the key to check the sectarian “other” in the regional tinderbox. The Sunni House of Khalifa, which controls Bahrain, has managed to checkmate the Shia majority, just as Bashar al-Assad’s minority Shia Alawite sect had countenanced its Sunni majority till quite recently. In the complex and diverse Lebanese nation, the Shia Hezbollah had managed to carve out a space and relevance for itself in the south, in the face of rival groups from the Christian, Sunni or even Druze denominations. Now, all these levers and counter-levers will get undone and rearranged, to the detriment and disadvantage of the Shia populace.

At the end of the day, it was the combined vilification, the process of “enemising” and seemingly coordinated efforts of the United States, Israel, the Arab sheikdoms and Turkey that led to Bashar al-Assad’s ouster. While he was hardly any benign or liberal leader himself, it is unlikely that Abu Mohammed al-Jolani (an internationally declared terrorist with \$10 million on his head), whose HTS was mainly behind the Syrian regime’s utter collapse, will be any better or more tolerant. But it is the grave risk to Shias across the world that is most disconcerting.

The writer is a retired lieutenant-general and a former lieutenant-governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	81,510.05 0.00
Nifty 50	24,610.05 -0.04
S&P 500*	6,055 0.036
Dollar (₹)	84.85 -0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	108.22 -0.03
Euro (₹)	89.37 0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	78,138.652 0.84
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.13 -0.01
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.705 -0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.232 0.033

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IHCL onboards 125-key hotel in Rishikesh

Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Tuesday announced the signing of a 125-key brown-field property in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, under Gateway brand. "Rishikesh is witnessing growth in cultural and adventure tourism, driven by improving infrastructure and connectivity," said executive vice president V. Suma.

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INFLATION-GROWTH BALANCE IS KEY

Cyber security risks and threats key challenge in India and globally, says outgoing gov Shaktikanta Das

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI DEC. 10

The outgoing Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday said that restoring inflation-growth balance is the most important task ahead of the central bank.

At his final press conference, Das, who demitted office after six years, highlighted key challenges for the incoming RBI governor. "So far as the RBI is concerned, I think restoring the inflation-growth balance is the most important task ahead of the Reserve Bank. I am sure the team RBI, under the leadership of the new governor, will take it forward."

"There is a changing world order. I have talked about it in my last monetary policy statement, the entire global geopolitical dynamics, the geo economic dynamics is undergoing fast change. In this situation, it is always necessary to remain alert and agile, and I am sure the RBI will certainly be at its best," he added.

Das highlighted cyber security and its associated risks and threats as another challenge not only in India, but all over the world, and particularly for a central bank. He said that his successor Sanjay Malhotra, who will assume charge on Dec. 11, will have to focus on harnessing new technologies, nationwide rollout of the central bank's digital currency and Unified Lending Interface, continue to improve on UPI and financial inclusion.



RBI's outgoing governor Shaktikanta Das addressed a press conference in Mumbai on Tuesday. Bureaucrat Sanjay Malhotra will helm RBI. — DEBASISH DEY



THE ENTIRE GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS, THE GEO ECONOMIC DYNAMICS IS UNDERGOING FAST CHANGE. IN THIS SITUATION, IT IS ALWAYS NECESSARY TO REMAIN ALERT AND AGILE.

—SHAKTIKANTA DAS, RBI outgoing governor.

Key decisions dot RBI gov's tenure

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, DEC. 10

Shaktikanta Das's tenure as 25th governor of RBI, witnessed unprecedented events, including the Covid pandemic, significant global challenges such as the Ukraine war and the Middle East crisis.

Das-led RBI had reduced the repo rate by 115 basis points to revive the economy that was hit by the Covid 19 pandemic. He continued with low interest rates for almost 2 years and offered a six month loan moratorium to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic.

As economy revived, RBI raised interest rates starting May 2022 to keep inflation under check.

He was instrumental in ensuring that economic growth remains over 7 per cent in the last 4 years of his six-year term. His success in checking inflation and boosting growth earned him re-appointment for another three years in 2021. Das deftly

handled the NBFC crisis, which saw collapse of IL&FS, Dewan Housing Finance and Reliance Capital. He also saved Yes Bank and Laxmi Vilas Bank.

His tenure saw bad loans (gross non-performing assets) reduce from 10.8 per cent in September 2018 to 2.8 per cent at end-March 2024.

Das focused on making Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and RuPay global. Daily UPI transactions rose from 10 mn in 2018 to over 500 mn by 2024, with a record 16.5 billion transactions worth ₹23.4L-cr by Oct. 2024. RBI also launched the central bank digital currency (CBDC), or digital rupee, for both wholesale and retail use. In May 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of ₹2,000 notes aimed at reducing the risk of counterfeiting.

The withdrawal of ₹2000 notes was done without disruption. RBI paid record dividend to the government of ₹2.11 lakh crore for 2023-24.



CHANGING WORLD ORDER



INDIAN ECONOMY RESILIENT AND ROBUST WITH CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH GLOBAL SPILLOVERS EFFECTIVELY.

PERSPECTIVES of finance ministry and RBI can differ at times.

RBI keeps in mind requirements of wider economy.

INDIA'S ECONOMIC growth slowed to near two-year low of 5.4% in Sept. quarter of this fiscal year due to poor performance of manufacturing and mining sectors.

GDP EXPANDED BY 8.1% IN THE JULY-SEPT. IN FY24.

RBI MANDATE is to ensure that consumer price index-based inflation remains at 4%, with a margin of 2% on either side.

RBI's effort has been to make monetary policy as appropriate as possible.



SANJAY MALHOTRA will take charge as RBI governor on Dec 11.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

India aim to avoid clean sweep in Oz

Perth: A battered and bruised India will look to avoid a clean sweep and address some glaring issues ahead of next year's 50-over World Cup at home when they face Australia in the third and final women's ODI here on Wednesday. The three-match series against the seven-time defending world champions has served as a harsh reality check for India, who have faltered in batting, bowling and fielding, with each area contributing to their struggles.

A record 122-run defeat in the second ODI highlighted India's vulnerability. Even though the batters shone in patches, they never truly looked to chase down Australia's 371/8.

In batting, the biggest disappointment has come from India's two big stars — skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and her deputy Smriti Mandhana. Mandhana has capped scores of 8 and 9 in Australia following her century in India's 2-1 home series win over New Zealand in October. — PTI

Record shooters for Nationals

New Delhi: A record 13,522 shooters are set to participate in the 67th National Shooting Championship Competition (NSCC), starting here on Thursday with the shotgun events. While the shotgun (December 11, 2024-January 19, 2025) and pistol (December 13, 2024-January 5, 2025) competitions will be held at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here, Bhopal's MP State Shooting Academy ranges will hold the rifle nationals from December 15 to 31.

The official pre-event training for skeet shooters belonging to Group 2 and Group 3 will be held on Wednesday, with the qualification rounds beginning on Thursday. — PTI

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REDY TO ROLL

Indian batters focus on red-ball preparations before Brisbane Test

Adelaide, Dec. 10: Reeling from their humiliating 10-wicket defeat in the pink-ball Test, the under-fire Indian batters, led by Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, turned their attention to red-ball preparations with an intensive net session here on Tuesday, aiming to bounce back in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

While Australia moved to Brisbane for the third Test from Saturday, the Indian team chose to stay back, focusing on honing their red-ball skills, particularly their defensive techniques and judgment in leaving deliveries.

"It's time to look ahead. Preparations for the Brisbane Test starts right here in Adelaide," the BCCI posted on X, sharing a video of Team India's practice.

Struggling with poor form, having scored just 142 runs with only one fifty (52) in his last 12 innings, the Indian skipper, who rejoined the team after the birth of his son, aimed to quickly regain his rhythm as he faced



India are scheduled to reach Brisbane on Wednesday to play third Test against Australia. — AP

both Indian spinners and pacers.

Dropped himself to No. 6, Rohit was capped scores of three and six; first, he was adjudged LBW to a fuller delivery that nipped back, while in the second essay he was cleaned up a by

length ball from his Aussie counterpart Pat Cummins that held its line and clipped the off stump.

Kohli, who ended his 16-month century drought with a hundred in Perth, fell victim to edging two deliveries — first to second

slip and then to wicket-keeper in the pink ball Test.

The star Indian batter looked full of intent as he had a watchful start to his net session before slowly finding his flow.

K. L. Rahul looked more subdued, focusing more on his defence, while Rishabh Pant played a few pick up shots.

Young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who starred with a 161 in India's massive 295-run win in the opening Test, was the aggressor among the all, displaying his cheeky shots and even stepped out to the Indian bowlers.

The bowling unit consisted the likes of Harshit Rana, Akash Deep, Yash Dayal and the spin trio of Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin and Washington Sundar, while there were a few throw-down specialists as well.

The key Indian pace duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj along with seam-bowling all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy looked to have a lean day. — PTI

BOXING DAY TEST OPENING DAY SOLD OUT

Melbourne, Dec. 10: Tickets for the opening day of the fourth Test of the between India and Australia at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground have sold out, highlighting the public's strong interest in the prestigious Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The two rivals will head to the MCG for the Boxing Day Test, starting December 26 after the third Test in Brisbane.

"All available public tickets for Day 1 of the NRMA Insurance Boxing Day Test have been sold," Cricket Australia posted on their 'X' account on Tuesday.

"There will be a possible final release of a small number of public tickets on December 24 for non-members to get their seats," CA added. — PTI

WORLD CHESS | CHAMPIONSHIP

Gukesh & Liren eye close finish

Singapore, Dec. 10: A handy lead has slipped through his grip but Indian Grandmaster D. Gukesh will rely on his steely resolve to bounce back when he takes on enigmatic defending champion Ding Liren in the 13th game of the World Chess Championship that has been quite a roller-coaster ride for the players.

The 18-year-old Gukesh, who is the youngest challenger to the title, and the 32-year-old defending champion from China have been locked in an intriguing battle in which both have held leads for not too long. They will resume on Wednesday after a day of rest.

The scores are currently tied at 6-6 with the first to reach 7.5 assured of the coveted crown.

After squandering away a full point leading with just three games to go, the 12th round loss was heart-breaking for the young Indian and many experts believe that he will go for an aggressive approach in his last game with white pieces under Classical time control.

It won't be off the mark to say that nerves are likely to play a crucial role in the final stretch.

The scores were tied 5-5 after game 10 but the last two decisive games thereafter have breathed new life into an otherwise well-contested match in which both players have had their chances.

After what he described as a see-saw victory in the 11th game, Gukesh was simply not himself in the 12th game and his idea to play a new position for the first time backfired spectacularly.

If the scores are still tied in the \$2.5 million championship, tie-break games of shorter duration will be played to determine the winner.

Generally a smooth operator, Liren looked a pale shadow of himself after the 11th game and the case was no different for Gukesh when he was completely outplayed for the first time here on Monday. To regain composure is the name of the game here and Gukesh has shown resolve in the past. — PTI

Shami in focus as Bengal face Baroda

Bengaluru, Dec. 10: Continuing his fine run in his comeback from ankle surgery, India pacer Mohammed Shami will be in the spotlight as Bengal face strong challenge from a rampaging Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 quarterfinal here on Wednesday. Shami played a key role in Bengal's thrilling three-run win over Chandigarh to help them enter the last-eight stage.

Batting at No. 10, Shami hit a crucial unbeaten 17-ball 32 to lift Bengal to 159 for 9. With the ball, he bowled a tight spell, taking 1/13 in his initial three overs.

In all, Shami has now played nine domestic games — one Ranji Trophy

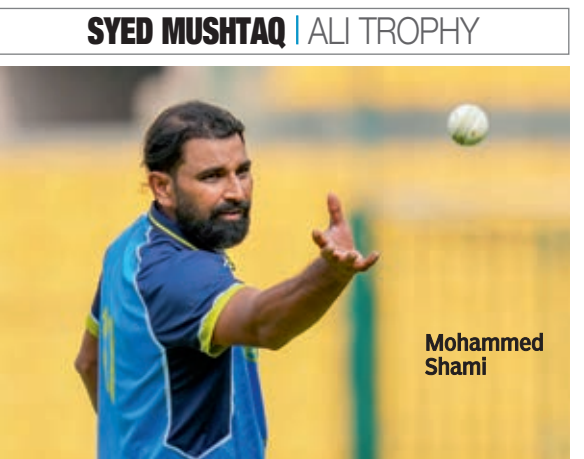
QUARTERFINAL LINE-UPS

■ At Alur: Madhya Pradesh vs Saurashtra (9 am); Mumbai vs Vidarbha (1.30 pm).

■ At Bengaluru: Baroda vs Bengal (11 am); Delhi vs Uttar Pradesh (4.30 pm).

(42.3 overs) and eight SMAT T20 games (31.3 over) — after returning to action. He has bowled a total of 64 overs and taken 16 wickets.

But, Baroda have sounded warning as they sizzled with the bat in the competition by setting a world record for the highest total in men's T20 cricket, post-



ing 349/5 against Sikkim to storm into the quarterfinals.

They also broke the record for most sixes in a

T20 innings, hitting 37. Bhanu Pania led the charge with a blistering 134 off 51 balls, supported by Shivalik Sharma (55 off

17) and Vishnu Solanki (50 off 16).

Baroda's bowlers, led by skipper Krunal Pandya, has been in fine form as well and Bengal will have their task cut out.

The evening match here will see Delhi take on Uttar Pradesh who defeated Andhra Pradesh to make the cut.

Rinku Singh and Vipraj Nigam have been in fine form for UP as the duo added 48 runs in just three overs to seal their four-wicket win.

At Alur, Madhya Pradesh will take on Saurashtra, while Mumbai will face Vidarbha. All eyes would be on skipper Shreyas Iyer as Ranji giants Mumbai won five out of six to top their Group 'E'. — PTI

City seek comfort to ease EPL pain

Manchester (England), Dec. 10: Manchester City's malaise leaves the English champions in the unusual position of fretting over qualification for the knockout stages of the Champions League ahead of a tricky trip to Italian giants Juventus.

City have won just once in their past nine games in all competitions, with an injury crisis and a loss of form for some of their biggest stars leading to the worst run of Pep Guardiola's managerial career.

Despite a 4-1 humbling by Sporting Lisbon and an embarrassing collapse from 3-0 up to draw 3-3

against Feyenoord, they are still in a position to qualify from the new league-phase format.

They sit 17th in the 36-team table, with a top-24 finish enough to secure a place in the playoff round at the least.

However, their chances of direct entry to the last 16 by finishing in the top eight look slim, with another difficult trip to Paris Saint-Germain to come in January before a home game against Club Brugge. The Champions League is even more significant for City this season with their Premier League title defence seemingly in tatters. — AFP