

SHORT TAKES

Murder accused on run for 25 yrs held

New Delhi: The Delhi police arrested a man who had been absconding in a murder case for the past 25 years, an official said on Friday. Ajay Kumar Dahiya (59), a proclaimed offender, was arrested from the Kala Amb area on the Haryana-Himachal border on January 7, the official said. He had been living under a false identity for over two decades to evade the law, the official added. The case dates back to August 2000, when Krishna Sethi accused Dahiya and her daughter-in-law, Saroj, of murdering her son, Ashwani Sethi. Ashwani Sethi's body, which bore gunshot wounds, was found in the village of Birdhana in Haryana. Suspicion fell on Saroj and Dahiya after the former disappeared, prompting Krishna Sethi to file an FIR against them at the Uttam Nagar police station here. Dahiya and Saroj were declared proclaimed offenders in 2008, the police said.

2 arrested in ₹8cr heroin bust

New Delhi: The Delhi police arrested an illegal Bangladeshi migrant and his maternal aunt for allegedly possessing 768 grams of heroin, valued at ₹8 crore in the market, an official said on Friday. The anti-narcotics squad (ANS) of the south-east district arrested Hamidul and his aunt Naseema from the Sunlight Colony area in Delhi, the official said. Hamidul (23) had entered India illegally three months ago and became involved in drug peddling to earn quick money, deputy commissioner of police (southeast) Ravi Kumar said. Naseema who previously worked for a news channel allegedly supplied the heroin, he added. Acting on a secret tip, the ANS conducted a raid at Jungpura Extension, where Hamidul was apprehended.

Scammers dupe man of ₹9 lakh

New Delhi: Cyberfrauds duped a man in west Delhi of ₹9 lakh by posing as officials assigned by the electricity department to resolve his complaint, officials said on Friday. This happened after the man went to the electricity department for a name change application of his power connection, they said. According to the FIR, on December 26, the complainant went to the electricity office for name change in his documents. While returning, he received a call from an unknown number. The caller was posing as a power discom official and asked him to pay ₹13 outstanding balance, which the complainant paid. Subsequently, the complainant said his phone got hacked and he lost over ₹9 lakh between December 29-31 over multiple transactions.

3 NABBED AFTER ELDERLY HELD HOSTAGE, ROBBED

Ghaziabad: A few days after an elderly couple were allegedly held hostage and robbed at knife-point here, the police on Friday arrested three robbers and recovered a portion of the loot. Gold ornaments worth ₹80 lakh and ₹25 lakh in cash was robbed from the couple's house in Kavinagar, the police said. The incident took place on Tuesday when two masked men, armed with knives, barged into the house of Ramdas Gupta (78), a steel trader, and his wife Sumitra Gupta (75), a police officer said. On Friday the main accused Chandan (20), who worked as a servant at the couple's house was arrested along with Omprakash (20) and Sunil Kumar (28), he said. Commissioner of police (DCP) Rajesh Kumar said that ₹10.5 lakh in cash and jewellery worth ₹50 lakh was recovered from the accused. According to the police the burglars took the couple to their wardrobe, where they spent approximately 45 minutes rummaging through their valuables. Ramdas in his complaint alleged that the accused robbed gold ornaments worth ₹80 lakh and cash amounting to ₹25 lakh from the couple, the officer added. The couple was watching television around 9.30 pm when the robbers entered their home. — PTI

■ Blames BJP for Delhi crimes ■ What about earlier vows? Verma Ahead of polls, Kejriwal vows funds for RWAs' pvt security

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

In yet another poll promise, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the RWAs will be provided financial assistance to hire private security guards after his party returns to power in Delhi.

Making the announcement in a press briefing, the former chief minister said the guidelines for the amount for the financial assistance and the number of guards to be hired will be laid down later.

The AAP chief stated, "I have been assuring people across the city that if the AAP forms the government, all RWAs will be provided with appropriate funds from the Delhi government to appoint security guards in their areas. A systematic approach will be developed to ensure fairness and proper implementation."

Slamming the BJP on the occasion, Mr Kejriwal charged that the party did not care for the well-being of the residents of Delhi and because of which they were not in power for 27 years.

He asserted that the AAP cared for the people of Delhi and that's why they announced financial assistance for the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) to help people ensure better security in their neighbourhood by hiring private security guards.

Reacting to the new poll promise by AAP, the BJP slammed Mr Kejriwal and



Water cannons being used to disperse the BJP members during a protest against the AAP in New Delhi on Friday for allegedly making "fake" claims regarding registration of voters from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. — PTI

accused him of making "false" promises on the RWAs again.

His BJP rival from the New Delhi constituency, Parvesh Verma, in a post on X, asked the AAP supremo if he remembered his previous promises to the RWAs in 2018 and 2022.

United Residents Joint Action (URJA) president Atul Goyal said, "We appreciate the announcement but some promises were made earlier as well, which makes it difficult to fully trust this one."

"However, if concrete steps are taken to support RWAs, it will naturally benefit local residents as they are deeply connected to the community and understand their needs," B.S. Vohra, president of north Delhi RWA Federation, said.

"Last time, it was prom-

ised that councillors would be appointed, but we are still waiting for them," he said.

Meanwhile, the former Delhi chief minister slammed the BJP, saying its government at the Centre has failed to control the "escalating" crime in Delhi.

Asserting that the 2 crore people in Delhi were like family to him, he said their safety was the top priority of the Aam Aadmi Party.

The crime rate has "skyrocketed" in the city with "rampant" thefts, robberies, chain snatching, and even gang wars, Mr Kejriwal said.

He mentioned that to manage these issues effectively, the AAP government will build upon measures like the installation of CCTV cameras across Delhi.

BJP Jat netas slam Kejriwal for 'not giving rightful quota'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The BJP on Friday slammed the AAP for not giving Delhi's Jats their rightful due and is now indulging in the politics of confusion in Delhi.

The Jat community of Delhi has understood that it is because of the AAP government that they did not receive reservation, the BJP claimed.

BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat and NDMC vice chairman Kuljeet Singh Chahal along with Praveen Shankar Kapoor, Vikram Mittal and Sanjay Mayukh addressed a joint press conference at the party's headquarters in New Delhi on Friday.

Ms Sehrawat stated that the AAP over the last 10 years, has never raised this issue, neither in the Assembly nor on any public forum despite forming a majority government.

Arvind Kejriwal, who claims to be the most educated CM, should know that providing reservation to any community or caste is the responsibility of the state government, she said adding that the AAP is playing politics in the name of Jats.

Freebies dominate Delhi elections

Residents raise concerns over lack of action plans to combat pollution

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Delhi's political discourse is currently being dominated by conversations around "freebies" ahead of the Assembly polls overshadowing other major issues, including pollution, law and order, crimes against women, and infrastructure.

While AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal has promised financial assistance to Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) to hire security guards when the party returns to power in the national capital, Congress

has countered it with its 'Pyaari Didi Yojana,' offering ₹2,500 monthly for women, alongside the 'Jeevan Raksha Yojana,' which promises insurance coverage of up to ₹25 lakh.

Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who termed these free schemes as 'free ki revdi' once, had to reassure the people of Delhi that the BJP would continue all the welfare schemes if voted to power.

Mr Kejriwal is leading the charge with its campaigns like 'Revdi Par Charcha,' emphasising its free electricity, water, healthcare, education, and public transport initia-

tives for women.

It has also announced new schemes, including the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojana, promising ₹2,100 monthly for women, and the Sanjeevani Yojana, ensuring free healthcare for senior citizens in both government and private hospitals.

Meanwhile, the BJP is likely to unveil its manifesto soon, with anticipated schemes such as 300 units of free electricity for households and ₹2,500 monthly allowances for women.

"Facing defeat, these 'AAP-da' people are perplexed. They are scaring

Delhiites that if the BJP comes to power, this or that scheme will be discontinued. But I have come to assure Delhiites that under BJP rule, no scheme will be stopped, but those involved in corruption in these schemes will be weeded out," Mr Modi said, urging the people to vote for a 'double engine' BJP government both at the Centre and in Delhi.

Many residents have raised concerns over the lack of concrete action plans to combat air pollution, which continues to pose a severe health risk to Delhiites.

Fog blankets Delhi, over 100 flights delayed at IGI

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Dense fog enveloped Delhi, reducing visibility to zero and disrupting flight and train operations on Friday as the weather department predicted rain over the week-end.

Over 100 flights were delayed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport and 26 trains were late, according to officials.

The India meteorological department (IMD) said zero visibility was recorded in Palam at 4.30 am.

At 5.30 am, visibility at Safdarjung was 50 meters, it said. The national capital recorded a maximum temperature of 17.6°C, a notch below normal, with



Visitors at the India Gate on a cold and foggy winter morning in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

a minimum temperature of 6°C, 0.9 notches below normal.

The weather department has predicted a cloudy sky with light rain and thun-

derstorms over the week-end. Dense fog is also likely in some areas in the morning.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are

expected to settle around 15° and 8°C, respectively.

The air quality in the city is nearing the 'severe' category as the air quality index (AQI) at 4.00 pm was 397 in the 'very poor' category on Friday, according to the CPCB.

Out of 29 monitoring stations, 18 stations, including Ashok Vihar, Bawana, Dwarka, and Jahangirpuri, recorded AQI readings in the 'severe' category, with readings above 400.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good,' 51-100 'satisfactory,' 101-200 'moderate,' 201-300 'poor,' 301-400 'very poor,' and 401-500 'severe.'

Abhishek Kar, the senior programme lead at the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water

(CEEW), said, "The city recorded a minimum temperature of 6°C in the early hours of January 10."

"Dense fog reduces the amount of solar radiation reaching the ground, thereby lowering the mixing layer height and leading to the accumulation of pollutants near the ground," he said.

"The CAQM has imposed GRAP Stage 3 in Delhi and adjoining areas. Authorities should strictly enforce CAQM's orders, including banning older vehicles from plying, intensifying public transport, introducing differential pricing to promote off-peak travel, and banning dust-generating construction activities, to improve air quality," he added.

BJP will project Bidhuri its CM candidate, claims Atishi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

On a shaky wicket in the face of an apparent anti-incumbency ahead of the February 5 Delhi Assembly polls, the top leadership of the AAP is dishing out conflicting narratives and counter-narratives to mock the chief ministerial claimants of the Opposition BJP.

While Delhi chief minister Atishi on Friday claimed that the BJP has decided to project its leader Ramesh Bidhuri as the party's chief ministerial face for the Assembly polls, her predecessor and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal had in a post on X just a fortnight back named BJP's New Delhi seat candidate Parvesh Verma as the saffron party's CM can-

didate.

The ruling party had on Thursday released a video on its official X handle, featuring a horse dressed in wedding attire, accompanied by the caption, "BJP people, who is your groom?" The jibe was aimed at projecting as if the BJP did not even have a chief ministerial face for the national capital.

While citing "credible" sources, Ms Atishi claimed on Friday that the BJP has decided to project its leader Ramesh Bidhuri as the party's chief ministerial candidate for the Assembly polls.

The chief minister said this was Mr Bidhuri's "reward" for being the "most abusive" leader of his party. Atishi is seeking re-election from the Kalkaji seat in the Delhi Assembly

polls and is pitted against BJP's Mr Bidhuri and Congress's Alka Lamba.

"It has been learnt from credible sources that the Gali Galauj Party has decided that the most abusive leader of the party Ramesh Bidhuri will become their chief ministerial candidate," Ms Atishi claimed in a press conference.

The AAP leaders, including party supremo Arvind Kejriwal, have dubbed the BJP as "Gali Galauj" (abusive) Party due to its sustained attacks on them by the saffron party leaders, ahead of the Assembly elections.

Mr Bidhuri was recently embroiled in controversy over his remarks against Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and the Delhi CM.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
For and on behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (RSO), Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites E- Tender' in prescribed tender form for the following work.	
1. Name of work with its location	Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, and integration of complete Equipments of Terminal Support System (Hardware) & allied accessories for computerized crew management system application at various lobbies Shikharbasti, Delhi Sarai Rohilla, Delhi, Meerut City, Rohtak, Jind & Jakhai over DLI division as per CRIS Specification no. 2007/CRIS/NDLS-HQ/CMS/Project/Rollout-II/0030/Pt-II date 26.07.2024.
2. Approx. Tender value (Rs.)	Rs. 48,51,137.89/- (including GST)
3. E.M.D (Rs.)	Rs. 97,100/-, Note:- Online payment mode available on IREPS website.
4. Date & time of tender opening (immediately when tender submission ends)	03.02.2025 on 15:00 hrs.
5. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in
TENDER NOTICE No.-NIT-04-2024-25-Elect-RSO, Dt. 09.01.2025 114/2025	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

NORTHERN RAILWAY Applications are invited under scheme of 'One Station One Product' for setting up	
A. Total Nine (09) Stall at: Gurgaon, Subzi Mandi, Palwal, Delhi, Delhi Cantt, Panipat, Meerut City, Meerut Cantt. & Delhi Shahdara stations.	
B. Total Twenty Two (22) Trolley at: Delhi Sarai Rohilla, Okhla, Faridabad New Town, Tughlakabad, Ballabhgarh, Khekra, Noli, Baghpat Road, Baraut, Nangloi, Shakurbasti, Julana, Sampla, Sakoti Tanda, Delhi Safdarjung, Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge, Muradnagar, Deoband, Khatauli, Partapur & Modinagar stations.	
• The period for setting up of stall at Gurgaon, Subzi Mandi, Meerut Cantt. stations per spell will be 90 days.	
• The period for setting up to Trolley at stations mentioned in (B) above will be 30 days per spell.	
• Registration fee for NSG 1, 2, 3 & 4 stations will be charged @ rate of Rs. 2000 for each spell of thirty days and for NSG 5 (Meerut Cantt. Khekra, Baghpat Road, Okhla, Julana, Sampla, Khatauli, Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge, Muradnagar, Deoband & Delhi Safdarjung) & NSG 6 (Sakoti Tanda & Partapur) registration fee will be charged @ rate of Rs. 1000 for each spell of thirty days.	
• The following are the eligibility criteria for participant viz.	
a) Holder of Artisans/Weaver ID card issued by Development Commissioner Handicraft, Development Commissioner Handloom, or by the requisite state/Central Government Authority.	
b) Individual artisans/weavers/craftsmen enrolled/registered with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)/National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC)/Khadi/Village Industries Commission (KVIC)/associated with Social Organizations, State Govt. bodies and associated with registered micro enterprises on the Udyam Portal of the Ministry of MSME and NGOs etc.	
c) Self Help Groups registered with PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme).	
d) Marginalized or weaker sections of society.	
e) No separate logo shall be allowed.	
• The applicant will have to submit an undertaking to the Station Superintendent indicating that no activity would be undertaken to adversely affect the train operations, passenger safety and image of the Railways.	
• Application should be addressed and can be submitted to Station Superintendent at station by the applicant till 15:00 hrs of 15.01.2025, which will be opened on same day.	
• Station Superintendent will make priority roster of all approved participants and priority will be established through a draw of lots conducted at the station in the presence of all approved applicants by the Station Manager /Sectional CMI and nominated Finance representative.	
• The One Station One Product scheme shall be governed by Railway Board's Commercial Circular No. 12 of 2022 and 09 of 2023 respectively available at website: www.indianrailways.gov.in & URL: https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic_comm/Comm_Cir_2022/OSOP%20Policy.pdf & https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic_comm/Comm_Cir_2023/CC%20%2009%20of%202023.pdf	
• For any queries applicant may contact Station Superintendent or CMI of the respective stations.	
124/2025	
Serving Customers With A Smile	

SHORT TAKES

Kerala MLA Anvar joins TMC in Kolkata

Kolkata: In a surprise move, Independent MLA from Nilambur in Kerala P.V. Anvar joined the Trinamul Congress (TMC) on Friday, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee officially welcomed him to the party. Mr Anvar recently quit the LDF. He was arrested on January 5 for his alleged involvement in an attack on the divisional forest office (North) in Nilambur. The MLA was later granted bail by the court. "Warmest welcome to Shri PV Anvar, the esteemed MLA from Nilambur, Kerala, as he joins the @AITCofficial family. His dedication to public service and his advocacy for the rights of the people of Kerala enrich our shared mission of inclusive growth. Together, we will strive for a progressive India where every voice matters and every dream is realized!," Mr Banerjee wrote on X.

SC bars tree-felling by BMC sans its nod

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) tree authority to refrain from permitting any further tree felling in Mumbai's Aarey Colony without prior approval from the court. The order came after the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited informed the bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Aravind Kumar there was no pending proposal to cut off more trees in the area. The bench posted the hearing on March 5. The court had directed the Maharashtra to inform if there was any proposal to fell more trees in Aarey forest. The court in 2023 permitted some forest-dwelling communities to move the Bombay high court over felling of trees for the Metro rail project.

ED raids RJD MLA in ₹85cr bank fraud

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday conducted multiple raids across several states, including Bihar, on premises linked to RJD MLA Alok Kumar Mehta. The raids are part of a money laundering probe linked to an alleged embezzlement of funds at the Vaishali Shahri Vikas Cooperative Bank. Sources said as many as 18 premises in Bihar, West Bengal (Kolkata), Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have been searched in this case by the agency. These include premises linked Mr Mehta, one of the promoters of the Bihar-based Vaishali Shahri Vikas Cooperative Bank. The probe stems from police FIRs alleging the embezzlement of about ₹85 crore through the bank. The fraud reportedly involved about 400 loan accounts, with funds disbursed based on "fake or forged" warehouse receipts, an ED official said.

SHAH TO CHAIR KEY NCB MEET IN DELHI TODAY

AGE CORRESPONDENT, NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Union home minister Amit Shah will chair a regional conference on "drug trafficking and national security" here on Saturday. The conference, organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau, aims to address the growing concern of drug trafficking and its impact on national security, with a special focus on eight states and Union territories of northern India. The conference will focus on the sharing of real-time information from the National Narcotics Helpline 'MANAS' portal with the anti-narcotics task force of states and UTs, evaluating the progress of states in combating drug trafficking, and assessing the effectiveness of the narcotics coordination mechanism. It will also address strengthening and enhancing the functionality of state forensic science laboratories, utilising the NIDAAN database to bolster efforts against drug trafficking, implementing provisions of the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and establishing special NDPS courts for the speedy trial of drug-related cases.

■ Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has evolved into vital link between India & its global community: Murmu ‘Indian diaspora represents best of our country’

Odisha will leverage PBD effectively, says Jaishankar

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 10

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar lauded the Indian diaspora for their remarkable contributions to both India and the world, describing their achievements as a source of immense pride. Speaking at the valedictory session, he highlighted the diaspora's exceptional role in shaping India's global image. "From holding political

remains as strong as ever," she emphasised, expressing confidence that the diaspora's continued engagement would contribute immensely to India's progress. The President outlined India's vision for becoming a developed nation by the centenary of its independence in 2047, and emphasised that this mission could not be achieved without the active involvement of its diaspora.

offices and leading organisations to excelling across various fields, NRIs have left an indelible mark on global society. Their extraordinary talent, creativity, and dedication have strengthened India's relationships with nations worldwide. Today, when the world thinks of India, it often does so through the prism of our diaspora's accomplishments, shaping a collective brand that fills us with pride," Dr Jaishankar said.

"Your global presence gives you a unique perspective, and your achievements place you in a position to significantly contribute to the realisation of a developed India," she urged. Drawing from her own interactions with the diaspora during her overseas visits, she called upon them to actively participate in shaping India's future. Addressing the government's efforts to support

its overseas citizens, the President highlighted the simplification of consular services for non-resident Indians (NRIs) and the digitisation of processes for Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs). She also mentioned initiatives like the "Know India Programme," aimed at helping younger members of the diaspora rediscover their roots.

"The government has also launched missions like Operation Kaveri, Operation Ganga, and Operation Vande Bharat to assist distressed Indians abroad, ensuring that the homeland remains a pillar of support for its citizens, no matter where they reside," she said.

Concluding her address, the President reaffirmed India's vision of creating a global ecosystem based on the ancient philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" — the world is one family. She envisioned a future where India balances economic progress with social justice and environmental sustainability, offering a bright future for generations to come.

Celeb poet Amaan on lyrical trip from Dubai to Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 10

Amid the bustling crowd of thousands of delegates at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention, TV crews eagerly follow a tall, handsome figure, hoping to capture his enchanting voice. True to form, Haider Amaan Haider, the renowned Indian poet based in Dubai, never disappoints. With a warm smile and unwavering patience, he engages in interviews, many of which take the form of poetry.

Amaan, who has earned fame as a celebrated poet, has quickly become the media's darling. Within just three days, he has won the hearts of Odisha's people, leaving a lasting impact with his lyrical talent.

"Since my arrival in Bhubaneswar three days ago, both NRIs and locals have been asking me to



Haider Amaan Haider

compose and recite shayaris inspired by the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas theme. For the first two days, I promised them that I wouldn't disappoint. I would compose these shayaris when I felt a natural, spontaneous 'outpouring from my heart,' he shared.

When asked to describe his impressions of Odisha, Amaan spoke with genuine admiration. "It feels like a beautiful village that captivates every guest," he said. The poet in him instantly rose to praise the state, reciting the lines: "Mere gaon mein aajao, ujala hi ujala hai,

Yahan jab raat aati hai to jugnu chhod jaata hai." (Come to my village, it's filled with light everywhere. When night falls, fireflies leave behind their glow.)

In a heartfelt tribute to the security personnel stationed at the venue, Amaan recited: "Hind ke sainik itne baahadur hain, sun lo... Ye dushman ko dhool chhataae karte hain. Hindi ki mitti zehan aur dil mein rahti hai, Isko hum maathay mein lagaai karte hain."

(Indian soldiers are so brave, listen... they make the enemy taste defeat. The soil of India, which resides in our hearts, is something we proudly carry on our foreheads.) Amaan, who is the first non-Arabic poet to receive the UAE's prestigious Golden Visa, also shared a powerful message with the audience.

Social media strengthened democracy, claims Modi

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said social media has strengthened democracy by opening up ways to verify information which earlier was available from a handful of sources with little alternatives. In an interaction with Zerodha founder Nikhil Kamath, Mr Modi said earlier there were very few persons who used to report on events and their version was considered as the truth.

"You were trapped as there was no opportunity to seek verification. But, today you have an alternative to verify information on different platforms. Everything is available on your mobile phone," Mr Modi said. "If you pay little attention, you can find out the truth. This is the reason that social media can strengthen democracy," he said.

The PM said youngsters have the tendency to verify information on social media before believing anything as the truth. Mr Modi said he was amazed to see the amount of interest the youngsters have shown in developments in the space sector.

"Chandrayaan's success has created a new enthusiasm in today's youth. I meet many children who are aware of Gaganyaan's time table. See the strength of social media. They are following Gaganyaan closely," he said.

Mr Modi said students are aware of the details of the astronauts of the Gaganyaan and the place where they are undergoing training.

■ Willing to discard old ideas, embrace new ones, says PM ‘I am also a human, not God’: Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP president J.P. Nadda and defence minister Rajnath Singh during the party's CEC meeting in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI myself. And, thirdly, I am human and I can make mistakes. But I will not do anything wrong out of bad intentions. I have made it a mantra of my life. Mistakes are inevitable. I must have made mistakes. I am a human too, not a god."

When Mr Kamath asked him if he has planned for the time beyond him,

training those he has faith in, not for today but after 20-30 years, Mr Modi said, "I can see people with a lot of potential. When I was in Gujarat, I would say that I want to go after preparing (team) for the next 20 years. I am doing it. My success lies in how I prepare my team who will be able to deftly handle things. This is my bench-

‘Controlled my emotions’: PM speaks on Godhra

It was a painful sight. There were dead bodies everywhere, but I knew I am at a post where I have to rise above my emotions. I tried to keep myself together

— Narendra Modi Prime Minister

but my security denied saying it is risky I insisted that I will go. I went and sat in the car, and said I will go to the hospital first. They said there were blasts in hospitals too, but I insisted that I will go. You can say there was anxiety,

restlessness in me. But my way was to be totally involved in my mission, a sense of responsibility takes over," he said.

Mr Modi also recalled the Godhra train fire incident of 2002 in which many kar-sevaks returning from Ayodhya were killed.

"On February 24 2002, I became an MLA for the first time. On February 27, I went to the assembly for the first time. I was three-days old as an MLA and the Godhra incident happened. I was restless, I was worried, I was in the House... I said I want to go to Godhra. I suggested that we will go to Vadodara, and take a helicopter from there. They said there is no helicopter and I asked them to find one..." Mr

Modi recalled.

"There was one chopper of ONGC, but it was a single engine one. They said they can't take a VIP in that... I said I am not a VIP but a common man, I will go by a single engine helicopter... and I reached Godhra," he said.

"It was a painful sight. There were dead bodies everywhere, but I knew I am at a post where I have to rise above my emotions. I tried to keep myself together," he said.

Asked if he thinks about the worst-case scenario, Modi said, "I have never thought about life or death, those who lead calculated lives may feel so. When I became the chief minister, I was surprised how I became the CM..." — PTI

IT raids on MP BJP MLA, 3 crocs found

₹3.98cr cash, 9.8 kg gold also seized

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JAN. 10

Income Tax (IT) raids on the properties of former BJP MLA Harvansh Singh Rathore in Madhya Pradesh capital have unearthed an unusual discovery — three adult crocodiles in a small pond in the house.

The raids, which began on Sunday and are ongoing, have also led to the recovery of gold, cash, and properties worth crores, a forest officer confirmed.

The IT officials alerted the state forest department after they found three crocodiles.

"We will release these crocodiles in the dams in the state after examining their health," principal chief conservator of for-

est (PCCF) (forest force) Aseem Srivastav said on Friday.

Mr Rathore was elected to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly in 2013 as a BJP MLA and is currently vying for the post of district unit president of BJP.

The IT raids were simultaneously conducted on Mr Rathore's properties in Sagar district and those of a former councillor Rajesh Kesharwani following allegations of tax evasion amounting to ₹155 crore.

During the raids, officials seized 9.8 kg of gold, ₹3.98 crore in cash, and documents detailing benami properties. Mr Kesharwani, who owns businesses in beedi production and construction, allegedly evaded taxes of ₹140 crore.

Keep status quo on well at Sambhal mosque: SC

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered status quo on a "private well" near the entrance of Sambhal's Jama Masjid and issued a notice to the Uttar Pradesh government, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and others on an interim plea by the mosque management committee.

The apex court directed the respondents to file a status report within two weeks.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar issued notices to the Centre, the director general of the ASI, Sambhal district magistrate and other private individuals from the Hindu side led by Hari Shankar Jain.

"Issue notice returnable on February 21. In the meanwhile, a status report to be filed by the respondents in two weeks. The respondents shall not give effect to any notice in relation to the well," the court said. In a fresh plea, the mosque committee said the Sambhal administration was conducting a purported drive to revive old temples and wells in the city with reports indicating at least 32 old unused temples were revived and 19 wells were identified for public use and prayers.

"In the list of wells being sought to be revived by the district administration is also a water well situated in the precincts of the mosque itself," the petition said.

The plea sought a

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday cited a number of incidents, including the post-Godhra, happenings and terror attacks in Gujarat to describe how he tries to detach himself from his emotions to overcome anxiety.

In a podcast with Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath, Mr Modi was asked if he ever faced anxiety. "A lot of youngsters these days say they face anxiety... Have you faced it in your life," Mr Kamath asked the PM.

"Definitely such situations arise... But everyone has different style and capacity to face such situations," Mr Modi replied.

"I am in a position in which I have to detach

myself from emotions, and the natural tendencies human beings have... I have to rise above it," he said.

"Like in 2002, there were elections in Gujarat. It was the biggest test of my life... I was not watching TV, at noon I heard sounds of drums outside my house. I had told people not to tell me about the results till noon... then I was sent a letter that we are ahead.

"I don't think it had any effect on me, whether you call it restlessness or anxiety... but there was a thought to overpower it," Mr Modi said.

"Once there were blasts at five places... Imagine my situation as the chief minister. I said I wanted to go to the police control room,

SC backs merger of Krishna Janmabhoomi-mosque suits

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The Supreme Court on Friday said a plea challenging the Allahabad high court order to consolidate 15 lawsuits by Hindu petitioners in the Mathura Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Masjid dispute may be raised later, saying it is seized of an issue related to a 1991 law on places of worship and intervention is not required at the moment.

Observing that the clubbing of the lawsuits favours both sides of the litigation, the apex court deferred hearing on the interim application to April.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said: "Why should we interfere on the issue of consolidation (of law-

suits)? In any case, we are hearing the issue. What difference does it make if it is consolidated? Anyway, think about it, we are adjourning it, but I think consolidation makes no difference at all. Relist (the plea) in the week commencing April 1."

The bench said it is seized of an issue related to a 1991 law on places of worship and asked as to why it should intervene on the matter of the consolidation of the lawsuits at the moment. "If required, you can raise the plea later," the CJI told the lawyer representing the mosque committee.

The counsel for the Committee of Management Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah said the lawsuits were not similar in nature and yet they have been consolidated by the high court.

This situation will lead to complications as dissimilar lawsuits will be taken up together, the lawyer said.

The bench, however, said, "No complications at all... It is in your benefit and their benefit also, as multiple proceedings are being avoided."

On January 11 last year, the Allahabad high court directed that the 15 suits on an application filed by the Hindu plaintiff be consolidated as they were of similar nature.

On December 12, the top court had restrained till further directions the courts in the country from entertaining fresh lawsuits and passing any effective interim or final orders in pending ones seeking to reclaim religious places, especially mosques and dargahs.

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH						
E-Tender Notice No. P(IEP)/24-25/06				Phone No. 0172-2756469		
Tender applications are invited for purchase of various items against tender No. 1-11 from the Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributors/agents. The bidders can place their bids as per terms & conditions contained on https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocureapp						
S. No	Equipment/Item Name	Qty.	EMD	Bid submission Date	Bid Opening Date	Deptt Name
Pre Bid case						
1	Lower Tract Endoscopy Set for TURP, TURBT, OIU, Cystoscopy etc.	01 Set	Rs. 1,20,000/-	01-02-2025	03-02-2025	Urology
Non-Pre Bid case						
2	Lower Tract Endoscopy Set for Emg. OT	01No	Rs. 70,000/-	-do-	-do-	Urology
3	Micro Endodontic Surgical Kit	10 Nos	Rs. 50,000/-	-do-	-do-	OHSC
4	Pedo Extraction Set	25 Sets	Rs. 50,000/-	-do-	-do-	OHSC
5	General Plastic Surgery Instruments Set	02Nos	Rs. 40,000/-	03-02-2025	04-02-2025	Plastic Surgery
6	Micromanipulators (for patch clamp)	01Set	Rs. 34,000/-	-do-	-do-	Biophysics
7	Ionic and Non-Ionic Contrast Media	As per technical specification	Rs. 30,000/-	-do-	-do-	Nuclear Medicine
8	Breath Test System	01No	Rs. 30,000/-	-do-	-do-	Gastroenterology
9	Table Top Casting Machine (Buy Back)	01No	Rs. 24,000/-	04-02-2025	05-02-2025	OHSC
10	Combined Unit Ultrasonic Cum Medium + Low Frequency Current (Buy Back Basis)	03Nos	Rs. 22,000/-	-do-	-do-	Physiotherapy
11	Intraosseous Cannulation insertion device with intraosseous cannulation needles	Device 4 & Needle:100	Rs. 14,000/-	-do-	-do-	Internal Medicine

Tender document can also be downloaded from website www.pgimer.edu.in and can be applied on website www.eprocure.gov.in Bid security (EMD) should be for the amount as per the instruments defined in tender documents having its validity at least for one year duly pledged in favour of **Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh**. The tenders will be opened on the dates given above at 12:00 PM in the presence of the authorized intending tenderers. Tenders not submitted on the prescribed form, not accompanied with Bid Security shall be summarily rejected.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof.

PRE-BID CONFERENCE* WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM'Sr. No. 01 shall be held on 17.01.2025 from 03:00 P.M. ONWARDS IN THE P.I.E.P, OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARH. The intending bidders are free to join Pre Bid Conference through idio conference. For more details contact:0172-2756469 at Procurement Branch (Import).

NOTE 1: The terms and Conditions of the original Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) available on PGIMER Website will remain same. However on switching over to e-tendering on e-Procurement, the bids will be received in electronic form on e-Procurement website and no bid will be received in Physical form. **The EMD will be received in Physical form in Procurement Branch (Import) and scan copy is to be uploaded in electronic form on e-procurement website, CPPP Portal (Central Public Procurement Portal).**

NOTE 2: If any of the tender opening dates happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next full working day.

Additional Terms and Conditions.

The Institute has adopted amended Notice Inviting Tenderers (NIT) which is available on e-Procurement website (<https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocureapp>) and website www.pgimer.edu.in. Therefore the bidders are requested to go through the Instructions Carefully before submitting bids.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof.

Professor In-Charge (EP)

Tender document can also be downloaded from website www.pgimer.edu.in and can be applied on website www.eprocure.gov.in Bid Security (EMD) should be for the amount as per the instruments defined in tender documents having its validity at least for oneyear & duly pledged in favour of Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. The tenders will be opened on the dates given above at 12:00 PM in the presence of the authorized intending tenderers. Tenders not submitted on the prescribed form, not accompanied with Bid Security shall be summarily rejected.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof.

"PRE-BID CONFERENCE" WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM Sr. No. 01 shall be held on 17.01.2025 from 03:00 P.M. ONWARDS in the P(IEP), OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARH. The intending bidders are free to join Pre bid Conference through video conference. For more details contact:0172-2756469 at Procurement Branch (Import).

NOTE 1:The terms and Conditions of the original Notice Inviting Tender (NTI) available on PGIMER Website will remain same. However on switching over to e-tendering on e-Procurement, the bids will be received in electronic form on e-Procurement website and no bid will be received in Physical form. The EMD will be received in Physical form in Procurement Branch (Import) and scan copy is to be uploaded in electronic form on e-procurement website, CIPP Portal (Central Public Procurement Portal).

NOTE 2: If any of the tender opening dates happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next full working day.

Additional Terms and Conditions.

1. The Institute has adopted amended Notice Inviting Tenders (NTI) which is available on e-Procurement website (<https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>) and Website: www.pgimer.edu.in. Therefore the bidders are requested to go through the Instructions Carefully before submitting bids.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof.

Professor In-Charge (EP)

SHORT TAKES

Bomb threat to AMU, security stepped up

Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University has received an email with the sender threatening “to blow up the campus,” police said on Friday. The sender claimed to detonate the bomb already planted on the campus and also threatened to mix “pork oil” in the food if he did not get ₹2 lakh, his demand, through UPI. Superintendent of police (City) Mrigank Shekhar Pathak said all sensitive areas on and around the campus have been going through checks since last evening, when top varsity officials, including the vice chancellor, received the email. Authorities are “not taking any chances” with the threat, Pathak said. The police and university authorities have been maintaining a strict vigil in all areas where students gather, including the Maulana Azad library, the officer said. — *PTI*

‘Cong has history of sinking its partners’

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav has said that he is not surprised to see Congress dumping its alliance partner Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, and added that the grand old party has a habit of sinking its allies. Mr Yadav predicted that the AAP would fare poorly in the Delhi polls because the Arvind Kejriwal-led party has committed the blunder of supporting the grand old party in the last Lok Sabha elections. “The Congress has a history of sinking those which join with it. The party never did good to anyone. The AAP will very soon realize it”, Mr Yadav said. He took potshots at both the parties saying that they were fooling the public. He said that both Congress and AAP have now separated and are going alone in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

Modi confers with BJP CEC to finalise names for Delhi polls

■ **Continued From Page 1**
Amidst voices of disquiet within the Opposition INDIA bloc of which both the AAP and the Congress are members, the latter is also geared up to take on the ruling AAP, thus making it a triangular contest. Allegations and counter-allegations are being levelled by the three main players in the electoral battle for Delhi, with both the BJP and the Congress lashing the ruling AAP for “anti-incumbency” and mis-governance. Before the CEC meeting, the BJP core group leaders had met Mr Shah and Mr Nadda at the latter’s residence in the morning. Delhi will go to the polls on February 5. The result will be declared on February 8.

‘Fadnavis should be successor of Modi’

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JAN. 10

Days after Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP(SP) leaders heaped praises on Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis’s work, Maharashtra Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar on Friday stated that Mr Fadnavis should become the successor of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Speaking at an event at Chandrapur in Vidarbha region, Mr Wadettiwar said that the Maharashtra CM has all the qualities to lead the country. “You (Fadnavis) have got the determination, the ability and the courage. So now you should become the heir of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is quite natural. There is nothing unusual about it,” said Mr Wadettiwar while addressing a gathering on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary celebrations of former Maharashtra chief minister Marotrao Kannamwar, the first leader from the Vidarbha region to hold the top post in the state. Both Mr Wadettiwar and Mr. Fadnavis come from the Vidarbha region. “Kannanwar in those days was seen as the political heir of (then Maharashtra CM) Yashwantrao Chavan and he too later became the chief minister. Likewise, we feel that Mr Fadnavis should become the heir of Mr Modi,” the Congress leader said.

Kaziranga Park records highest footfall in 20 yrs

Brahmaputra dolphins add new appeal for visitors

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JAN. 10

Kaziranga National Park, a Unesco World Heritage Site in Assam, has registered the highest footfall in the past two decades. Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attributed it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s night stay in the park last year as one of the major reasons, the tour operators however said that better conservation and frequent spotting of Royal Bengal Tigers by tourists has drawn the attention of the tourists more. Famous for its iconic one-horned rhinoceros, new attractions for the visitors of the Kaziranga National Park are the river dolphins of the



Artiste performs during the royal entry procession or “Chavni Pravesh” of Niranjani Akhara for the Maha Kumbh 2025 at Sangam in Prayagraj on Friday.

Challenges EC to release CCTV footages NCP-SP neta alleges booth capturing in Parli Assembly

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JAN. 10

Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) on Friday made serious allegations against the state branch of Election Commission of India (ECI) in connection with the alleged booth capturing in the Parli Assembly constituency of Beed district. Senior NCP(SP) leader Jitendra Awhad alleged that 201 booths were alleged that the district collector, SP of Beed and an election observer were hand in gloves in the booth capturing and demanded that the ECI should make public the CCTV footage of 122 polling booths. Nearly 50 days after the Assembly election results were announced, NCP(SP) made these allegations. NCP(SP) candidate Rajee Saheb Deshmukh was defeated by Dhananjay

■ **NCP-SP leader said that the Bombay high court had directed to provide tight security to 122 booths with continuous monitoring by CCTVs**

Munde by the margin of more than one lakh votes. Addressing a press conference at NCP (SP) office in South Mumbai, Mr Awhad said that the way the polling booths were captured in the Parli Assembly constituency, he is worried about how the republic can remain alive in the country. “If it is decided by the administration that a particular candidate should be chosen, the administration can do anything. The best example of this is the Parli Assembly constituency in Beed,” he said. The senior NCP (SP)

leader also claimed that there are 386 polling booths in Parli Assembly. Of these, there was booth capturing at 201 places. We have video clips of four polling booths, he claimed. Mr Awhad further said that the Bombay high court had directed to provide tight security to 122 booths with continuous monitoring by CCTVs. “We demand that the ECI should make CCTV footage of 122 booths available in public domain,” he said.

Challenging the ECI to prove his allegations wrong by releasing the video footage of 122 booths, Mr Awhad claimed that when a voter went to the polling booth, he was inked by the election officer but subsequently someone else pressed the EVM button. He had shared a video of the same on his X handle.

SC halts ₹1L-cr GST notices to gaming firms

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The SC on Friday stayed show cause notices issued by GST authorities worth over ₹1 lakh crore to online gaming companies and casinos over alleged tax evasion, saying the matter needs hearing. A bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said the matters needs hearing and all proceedings against the gaming firms should remain stayed. Additional solicitor-general N. Venkataraman, representing the GST department, said some notices would come to an end in February. The bench, however, posted the matter on March 18. GST authorities in October 2023 issued notices to online gaming companies for tax evasion.

Blame game on in INDIA bloc over Maha debacle

■ **Continued From Page 1**
took 20 days to finalise its seat sharing. Congress leader Nana Patole and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut were there. Other leaders also took part in the talks. Had we finalised our seat sharing in two days, we would have got 18 more days for the campaign,” Mr Wadettiwar said. Earlier, another Congress leader Nitin Raut said that the MVA leaders were busy in one-upmanship instead of focusing on winning the election. Mr Raut, however, put the blame entirely on the Congress’s central leadership. He alleged that state Congress leaders were adamant over the seats for which they did not have good candidates and the Congress high command did not intervene in it. He also said that it was the fact that the MVA lost too much time in discussions on seat sharing. “There were several Assembly seats where the NCP(SP) and the Shiv Sena(UBT) had good candidates, but the Congress did not give up its claim on those seats. Instead of one-upmanship, we could have concluded the seat-sharing deal unit- edly,” Mr Raut said. The Rajya Sabha MP also said that the Congress was responsible for the disintegration of the INDIA bloc. He said the alliance achieved good results in the Lok Sabha elections, but if the alliance partners feel the INDIA bloc doesn’t exist now, the Congress is to be blamed.

Family of 5 wiped out in Meerut; 2 detained

Cops find parents wrapped in sheets, kids in bed box

Meerut (UP), Jan. 10: Five members of a family were found killed in their home, the bodies of the parents wrapped in sheets and their three children, the youngest one-year-old, stuffed in sacks and kept in a bed box, police said on Friday. Two persons were detained for the grisly murders that shocked this Uttar Pradesh town. Several suspects have also been taken into custody for the killing that came to light on Thursday night. The bodies of the parents were wrapped in bed-sheets.

And all five had deep head injuries and slash marks on their necks. Senior superintendent of police (SSP) Vipin Tada said, “Based on a complaint filed by the relatives of the deceased woman, a case has been registered against three named accused and some unidentified persons. Two named suspects and several others have been taken into custody for question- ing.”

The police said the bodies of the husband and wife were found wrapped in bedsheets, while those of their three children were stuffed in the storage compartment of a bed at



Police personnel conduct an investigation after five members of a family were found dead at their residence in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on Friday.

the family’s home in the densely populated Suhail Garden neighbourhood in the Lisari Gate police station area. Mr Tada added that one named suspect is abscond- ing, and police teams have been deployed to arrest him. “All pieces of evi- dence are being gathered, and the case will be solved soon,” he said. The deceased were identified as Moin alias Moinuddin (52), his wife Asma (45), and their daughters Afsah (8), Aziza (4), and Adeeba (1). As per the Lisari Gate police, Asma’s brother, Shamim, had arrived and lodged a formal complaint

late at night. He accused Asma’s younger sister-in-law, Nazrana, and her two brothers of involvement in the suspected murders. The SSP, who visited the crime scene Thursday night along with other senior officers, said the family’s house was locked from outside when locals and neighbours checked it in the evening. “After gaining access through the roof, they found the bodies,” Mr Tada told reporters. “The manner in which the house was locked suggests that the individual involved in the crime may have been someone known to the family.” — *PTI*

IED expert among 3 Naxals killed in Sukma encounter

Carry cumulative bounty of ₹18L

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
RAIPUR, JAN. 10

Maoists’ IED expert Korsa Mahesh was among three hardcore Naxals who were killed in the January 9 encounter with security forces near Palliguda in Sukma district under south Bastar of Chhattisgarh, the police said on Friday. “Bodies of the three slain Maoists were identified on Friday,” Sukma district superintendent of police Kiran Chavan said. The three deceased Naxals cumulatively carried a bounty of ₹18 lakh, he added. The three are Korsa Mahesh, Madvi Navin alias Kosa, and Albam Bheema. While Korsa carried a bounty of ₹8 lakh, Madvi and Albam who were area committee members carried rewards of ₹5 lakh each on their heads. Korsa Mahesh was known in the Maoist cadre as an expert in making and planting

IEDs. He was the deputy commander of the platoon number 30 functioning under the south Bastar division of the Maoists. He was a former member of Maoists’ battalion one which held ground for the Naxals in their core area on the borders of Sukma and Bijapur districts. Korsa was allegedly involved in the killing of CRPF inspector Sudhakar Reddy near Bedre security camp under Jagargunda police station in Sukma district on December 17, 2023. He had also allegedly masterminded the land- mine blast to blow up a vehicle killing two CRPF jawans near Tekalgudam under Jagargunda police station on May 23, last year. Security forces have also recovered two Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGLs), one 12 bore rifle, three container bombs, and five BGL shells at the encounter site.

Efforts must to make House more effective, says Om Birla

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday said that efforts should be made to make Parliaments more effective, inclusive, and transparent to foster good governance and promote sustainable development. Mr Birla was speaking while chairing the Standing Committee Meeting of the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments (CSPOC) in Guernsey. Mr Birla noted that the thrust of the 28th CSPOC scheduled to be held in India next year would be application of AI and social media in working of Parliaments. Elaborating on the transformation of India under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, Mr Birla informed that India has now become the fifth largest economy and third largest ecosystem for startups. “India is witnessing massive transformation in several sectors, such as agriculture, fintech, AI, and research and innovation,” he said.

Kejriwal is anti-Poorvanchalis: BJP

■ **Continued From Page 1**
had deserted them during the Covid-19 crisis while consistently ridiculing them when opportunities arose. A day after BJP chief J.P. Nadda launched a scathing attack on Mr Kejriwal on Thursday, accusing him of insulting the people of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, thousands of BJP workers held a protest in the national capital, raising slogans against the former chief minister. The BJP protest was led by Dinesh Pratap Singh and saw the participation of prominent faces of the party from Poorvanchal, like Abhay Verma, Manish Singh and Vipin Bihari Singh, among others. Heads of the Delhi BJP women wing and youth wing Richa Pandey Mishra and Sagar Tyagi, respectively, also joined in. Holding placards reading “Purvanchal Virodhi Kejriwal” (Poorvanchali baiter Kejriwal), the BJP workers raised slogans such as “Litti chokha khayenge,

Kejriwal bhagayenge”, “Chhathi Maiya ki jai” and “Poorvanchal Virodhi Kejriwal murdabad” echoed during the protest. Third-term Lok Sabha member of the BJP from Northeast Delhi Manoj Tiwari, who hails from Bihar, said, “Mr Kejriwal has always insulted the Poorvanchali community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he made several objectionable statements and now he has referred to them as ‘fake voters’. We will not forget this insult and neither will the people of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar. This betrayal will remain etched in the memory of Delhiites as well.” “Poorvanchalis will give a befitting reply to the AAP and Mr Kejriwal by bringing the BJP to power in February,” Mr Tiwari added. In a counterattack, the AAP chief accused the BJP-led Union government for neglecting the Poorvanchal community over the last

decade. Mr Kejriwal said that while the AAP government has worked tirelessly to uplift unauthorised colonies, provide water and sewer pipelines and improve education and healthcare, the BJP, despite holding immense power and resources, has failed to deliver anything substantial for Poorvanchalis over the last decade. Both the BJP and the AAP are embroiled in a bitter battle to win over the Poorvanchalis because they hold sway in about 20 Assembly seats. The fact that since the 1990s both Congress and the BJP have been giving representation to the community bears testament to Poorvanchalis’ political clout. While the BJP and the AAP slug it out, the Congress too is working overtime to woo the Poorvanchalis. Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, who is in Delhi on Friday, said that the party will build a sepa-

rate Chhath Ghat at the Yamuna banks on the lines of Maha Kumbh. He alleged that the BJP and the AAP treat people of Poorvanchal only as votebanks. Poorvanchalis, a traditional vote bank of the Congress, switched sides and voted en masse for the AAP in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls. However, when Mr Tiwari took control of the Delhi BJP, they voted in favour of the saffron party in the 2017 civic polls. In 2020 Assembly polls, they, however, again voted for the AAP, bringing the Kejriwal-led government to power for the third time. Some of the Purvanchali-dominated seats in Delhi include Burari, Seemapuri, Gokalpuri, Karawal Nagar, Kirari, Badli, Nangloi, Rithala, Matiala, Vikaspuri, Dwarka, Uttam Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Deoli, Badarpur, Tughlakabad, Patparganj, Laxmi Nagar, Wazirpur and Rajinder Nagar.

’24 warmest year on record, 1st to breach 1.5° C guardrail

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The year 2024 was the hottest year on record, and the first with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) confirmed on Friday. The past 10 years (2015-2024) were the 10 warmest years on record, the UN weather agency said. The European climate agency, Copernicus, said the average global temperature in 2024 was 15.1 degrees Celsius — 0.72 degrees above the 1991-2020 average and 0.12 degrees higher than that in 2023, the previous record-holder.

The WMO said the global average surface temperature in 2024 was 1.55 degree Celsius above the 1850-1900 base-line, the period before human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, began significantly impacting the climate. However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement refers to long-term warming over a 20 or 30-year period. “Today’s assessment from the WMO proves yet again global heating



Commuters walk amid low visibility due to fog on a cold winter morning in New Delhi on Friday.

is a cold, hard fact,” said UN secretary-general António Guterres. “Individual years pushing past the 1.5 degree limit do not mean the long-term goal is shot. It means we need to fight even harder to get on track. Blazing temperatures in 2024 require trail-blazing climate action in 2025,” he said. “There’s still time to avoid the worst of the climate catastrophe. But leaders must act now,” he further mentioned. WMO secretary-general Celeste Saulo said every fraction of a degree of warming matters. “Whether it is at a level below or above 1.5

degree Celsius of warming, every additional increment of global warming increases the impacts on our lives, economies and our planet,” Ms Saulo said. Experts feel that the world is now entering a phase where temperatures will be consistently above the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold. Harjeet Singh, climate activist and the founding director of Satat Sampada Climate Foundation, said the world is entering a new climate reality — one where extreme heat waves, devastating floods, and intense storms will become increasingly frequent and severe.



THE ASIAN AGE

11 JANUARY 2025

Cong is mainly to blame for crisis in INDIA bloc

The INDIA bloc is facing a threat of extinction because it may have outlived its usefulness. The alliance formed with the sole purpose of defeating the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and continued at least into the Maharashtra elections where reasons for disbanding the alliance came aplenty in the results. Most of the problem is of the bloc's own making as its big component of regional parties was bound to go for the delete button after the general elections.

The Congress Party, which sees itself as the national leader of the group as the only national party among a bunch of units of regional satraps, was bound to struggle to retain its hold. It was never in such a strong position as to dictate what the ideological thrust or a common minimum programme should be. It was always unlikely that any of the regional parties would wish to encourage the Congress as a national political force beyond its current spheres of influence in some states.

The very idea of INDIA is being challenged now by at least four major allies in the SP, TMC, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NC. All of them may have seen the Congress move to contest the Delhi Assembly elections as not being in conformity with the idea of a united Opposition. Given the AAP's strength in Delhi where it has ruled for 10 years and is seeking a third term, it was a misadventure on the part of the Congress to have put its oar in the water to test the tide of public opinion.

The very idea of INDIA is being challenged now by at least four major allies — SP, TMC, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NC. The Congress move to contest Delhi polls separately may have irked all of them.

The Congress had more gains from the Lok Sabha polls than its allies as it also landed the post of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament after gaining seats from below 54 to near 100. It is clear enough then that leaders like Omar Abdullah and Tejashwi Yadav, who see the Congress as a junior ally in their states, are calling for disbanding the INDIA bloc or reviving it only before the next general elections in 2029.

Stung by being abandoned by allies ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls in which it is expected to finish behind the AAP and the BJP, which are the principal contestants in the national capital now, the Congress might have to reconcile to a lesser role, not only in an essentially opportunistic alliance but also in a consensus approach to the bigger national issues that are bound to come up in Parliament.

The differences that cropped up in the bloc over whether to let Parliament function, the question of criticism of EVMs rather than accepting poll results and latent resentment against the role of Rahul Gandhi as LoP have gone to show how quickly cracks can develop in such an alliance that was based primarily on electoral aspirations. The Congress' ambition to seek a higher place as a national party by contesting the Delhi elections has led to this existential crisis in the INDIA bloc.

Work smarter, keep life 'balance'

Larsen and Toubro is known for its construction prowess in India. It has been one of the companies that engineers dream to begin their careers in. Some of the best engineers have come out of this company. However, the company's only motive today, going by its chairman S.N. Subrahmanyan's remarks, appears to be to transform its employees into robots in an age and time when the world is racing towards turning robots into humans.

Mr Subrahmanyan's promotion of a 90-hour week for his employees and his disdainful remarks on the private lives of his employees are unbecoming for an official of his stature and experience. He appears to be living in eighteenth century Europe where the industry considered labour as a mere factor of production, disregarding the fact that labour is a collective for societal human beings.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the average working hours of Indian men is 49 hours and 54 minutes, the sixth highest in the world. If one believes in Subrahmanyan's argument that longer working hours is key for development of the country, Bhutan, Lebanon, Lesotho, and Pakistan who supersede India in terms of longer working hours would have been wealthier than India.

Mr Subrahmanyan and others like him must understand that today's tech-savvy world requires smart individuals and not those who toil in the office or factory floor for 90 hours a week. Being at the apex of the organisation with a monetary compensation that is 534 times more than an average salary of an employee in his company, Mr Subrahmanyan cannot present himself as an example to emulate.

After Mr Subrahmanyan's statement kicked up a fury on social media, L&T issued a statement trying to defend its chairman as a person who wants to shape India's future. However, the person who drafted that message on behalf of Mr Subrahmanyan appears to have forgotten that the family forms the core of the Indian civilisational ethos.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

Editor

K. SUBHAKAR

Printer & Publisher

THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



To Kumbh or not to Kumbh: 12 years, 3 rivers, 1 holy dip



Shobhaa's Take

To Kumbh or not to Kumbh — that is the question. 12 years, 3 rivers, 1 holy dip". That's what a full-page newspaper ad for SpiceJet states, with the standard visual of an elderly sadhu blowing a conch, eyes shut, beard flowing, rudraksh malas around his neck and wrists. He is clearly mid-dubki, and entirely immersed in a meditative trance.

Around him a bunch of men are getting ready to take the plunge in the ice-cold waters of the three rivers at Prayagraj. The Maha Kumbh is here! And for the next month, the media will be in overdrive featuring similar images of holy men in saffron converging at this historic site to experience something so profound and inspiring, the watching world gasps at its enormity. I am in two minds — to go or to skip? My memories of being at the last Maha Kumbh remain vivid and enthralling. No matter how much you read up on the Kumbh, no matter how many documentaries you watch or what others tell you, to understand and appreciate Kumbh, you have to be there yourself. And when you do make it, remember not to judge anyone or anything. Just surrender. Tell yourself how blessed you are to be a tiny, tiny, entirely obscure part of a life transforming event that demonstrates the power of faith in motion.

Looking back, I feel my Kumbh love affair was complete and deeply fulfilling. To go back after nearly a quarter century, that much older and far more jaded, would dilute the romance. I'd rather stick to the images imprinted on my imagination,

even if they are overromanticised and exaggeratedly dramatic. The Kumbh does that to you. And you don't have to be a religious freak to appreciate its magnificence.

On a more mundane but certainly alarming note, I am keying in this column with two masks covering my mouth and nose. Mumbai has been in the grip of the weirdest weather during the last fortnight — cold and sultry one day, hot and sultry the next. This has resulted in a sharp spike in respiratory conditions, with everyone coughing and complaining of acute breathing problems. Now comes this scary report that the toxicity in the air in Mumbai has worsened from what it was before the Covid-19 pandemic. The PM2.5 levels peak during the winter months, leading to major emergencies in the megapolis: Mumbai is reeling right now. Combine that with the unwelcome arrival of another unknown demon — HMPV. In our family alone, hardly anybody has been spared. We have been suffering long bouts of symptoms that suggest HMPV, but could be something less terrifying: just another friendly Chinese virus attacking our throat and lungs! Who knows? The prohibitive cost of the Respiratory BioFire test is between 25K and 30K. Since young children are the ones most affected by the deadly virus, parents are in panic mode, rushing kids to hospitals if they sniffle or sneeze.

Dr T. Jacob John, medical virologist and vaccine expert from Vellore, insists that there should be no comparison between HMPV and Covid-19. The good doctor says that HMPV has an extremely low fatality rate and pri-

Looking back, I feel my Kumbh love affair was complete and deeply fulfilling. To go back after nearly a quarter century, that much older and far more jaded, would dilute the romance.

marily affects the very young and the elderly. Well, after the mass devastation caused by Covid-19, it's understandable that nobody wants to take a chance.

I am shakily leaving to attend the most wonderful AKLF Lit Fest in Kolkata, and wondering which polluted city will be worse for my health — mental and physical — Mumbai or Kolkata. If some obscure virus does not fell me in my own city, will Kolkata reverse my fate? The vaatavaran in Didi's "City of Smog" is a downer, but I so love my short trips to "Cal". Funny how one automatically shifts gears on landing and gently wafts into another era. Lovely how the folks in Kolkata are in no hurry to catch up with the rest of India, forget the world. They happily live in a time warp that lulls them into believing "Aaal Eeeez Well", when it so obviously isn't! Delulu Didi — how do you do it???

In Mumbai, Zeeshan Siddiqui, son of slain political leader Baba Siddiqui, is demanding answers to some significant questions about the brazen murder that left people fuming over the so-called "investigations" by the cops. Zeeshan wants to know how and why the Crime Branch ruled out the SRA (Slum Rehabilitation Authority) angle and arrived at misleading conclusions about his father's killing at point-blank range, allegedly by the Bishnoi gang. The three motives of the killers, say the cops, were primarily Baba Siddiqui's close association with actor Salman Khan, the

gang's aim to establish supremacy in Mumbai, and finally to extort money from Bollywood bigwigs and business people. Nobody believes the cops. That's how low their reputation has fallen. Zeeshan has not publicly named the builders he suspects are behind the assassination, but all of them are named in his statement. Citizens are with Zeeshan on this — it is widely believed the Crime Branch is protecting the powerful builders' lobby. The theories doing the rounds are hair-raising, leaving open the question of how blatantly compromised our cops are. And if the cops are indeed shielding the builders, we also know who the political patrons of these builders are — has Zeeshan dared to name them? Cops do not work in isolation. They follow orders. Whose orders were they following in this case?

Never a dull moment in Manic Mumbai. Which is something I love about my city. It keeps us all on our toes, wondering which calamity may catch us off guard and when. The recent case of two vehicles with identical number plates being intercepted in front of the iconic Taj Mahal Palace Hotel has once again got us wondering. The version put out by the cops does not add up. Apparently, one of the drivers was shocked to find an identical car with the same number plate cruising past. He alerted the cops who showed up and marched off both the drivers to Colaba police station. The cops claim it was nothing more sinister than a car loan gone wrong. Really? What are the odds of these two "identical" cars being in the exact same area, and, wonder of wonders, getting caught? Who was in those two cars, besides the drivers?

More drama coming up. The Theatre of the Absurd never disappoints a hungry audience!

Instagram handle @ShobhaaDe; Twitter handle @DeShobhaa

LETTERS

NATURE'S WARNING

The fire in Los Angeles has gone out of control and spread to five areas in California, namely Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth, Hurst, and Lidia. It has destroyed 10,000 structures, including celebrity homes, and taken 10 lives thus far. Even after the deployment of 961 fire-fighting trucks and 40 helicopters, the fire is spreading rapidly. Incidents of looting of houses have made the task of the authorities even more challenging. According to the European C3S scale, the observed temperature has eclipsed the 1.5°C warming barrier for the first time.

R.S. Narula
Patiala, Punjab

LOCAL EDU NEEDS

I WOULD like to address the recent suggestion in the UGC Draft Guidelines 2025, which states that the UGC has the authority to override state governments in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors in universities. From an academic perspective, this policy raises concerns regarding the autonomy of state governments and their role in higher education governance. University administration is inherently linked to regional governance, and state governments often possess a nuanced understanding of local educational needs and challenges. Therefore, the centralisation of such appointments could undermine the decentralisation of power, potentially disregarding regional interests and perspectives. Academic institutions thrive on a balance of autonomy and cooperation between state and national bodies.

Ahmed Raza Manuul
Hyderabad

SELFISH ALLIANCE

THIS REFERS to the news report "Wind up INDIA block if only for LS be polls: Omar" (January 10). The comment made by Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah warrants serious consideration. If the AAP and Congress continue to fight with each other and show no signs of cordiality, the INDIA bloc be better wound up for it unnecessarily shakes the confidence of voters. Ever since it was formed, these stresses and strains have been occurring as the parties lack solidarity. The INDIA bloc, I am very sorry to say, is making itself a laughing stock because it is clear that it is not united by either a common agenda or ideology.

Arun Gupta
Kolkata

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"Birds they say sing and twitter
Their sounds to me are music's litter
Animals moo and woof
Communication's disproof
The wind makes leaves go swish
Vegetation making a wish?"

— From **Haq-Kal Baddi-hapheen**, by Bachchoo

Perhaps Elon Musk in his dreams alters his name to Elon Musketeer and, like those valiants before him, goes charging at windmills, calling them giant devils — or hang on — was that Elon Muskwhote? Sorry, I get my literary references mixed up nowadays. It's not surprising — in the age of Twittering on X we don't write books to make a point. We use a few words of abuse which suffice.

Musk says heist the free-speech bull-shitter extraordinaire. True.

When last year a deranged teenager in Stockport murdered three girl children in a dance class, right-wing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim provocateurs urged people to attack and even burn down the refugees where the government housed asylum seekers. They also urged attacks on all Muslims.

Riots resulted and brave Elon, thousands of miles away in the United States, characterised the fascistic riots as "civil war". Maybe he has never heard of Oliver Cromwell and prefers to read tweets on X rather than, say, Dostoevsky's novels. To each his own.

Musk has no business or stake in Britain's present or future but he audaciously assumes to not just express mendacious and meddling opinions, but to resort to the illiterate abuse of a pioneering MP and attacking the Labour government and Prime Minister.

That he is against the Labour Party government of Britain is not surprising. Over the last year, having endorsed Donald Trump for President, he has kept the company of Nigel Farage, leader of UK's far-right Reform Party. It began life as the Brexit Party but now has ambitions, using its anti-immigrant and undeclared but clandestine, anti-Muslim stance, to overtake the Tories, now led by Kemi Badenoch, the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, in the forthcoming elections.

Musk declared that he would help Farage do this by giving him and the Reform Party a billion dollars. That was a few weeks ago. Since then, however, their cosy relationship has ruptured. Why? Because Musk, again from the other side of the Atlantic, had declared that one Tommy Robinson, a British fascist thug who has been jailed for contempt of court after lying accusations against a teenage Syrian youth, is a "political prisoner" and should be immediately released.

Even supporters of Farage's Reform Party would balk at this description of Tommy R, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, and so Farage was quick to distance himself from Musk's nonsensical demand.

Musk, this self-anointed apostle of free speech, doesn't like to be contradicted and he immediately denounced Farage as unfit to be the leader of Reform, intending that such a post on X would mobilise Reform members to ditch his former friend. As P.G. Wodehouse would say: "O the troops of Midian prowl and prowl..."

So, gentle reader, to the latest lying conceit of this megalomaniacal, delusional American billionaire. He has publicly called Jess Phillips, one of Britain's most conscientious MPs and a champion of women's rights and a courageous defender over decades of victims of sexual and domestic abuse, "a rape genocide apologist".

Why? Well, since about 2010 or so it came to light that in Rotherham, Telford, Oxford and other cities in England gangs of men of Pakistani origin were grooming mostly white, vulnerable girls — drugging and using them in ways that can be called, under any definition, rape. The gangs were exposed and the then head of the Crown Prosecution Service, Keir Starmer, appointed a Muslim to investigate, pursue and prosecute these "grooming gangs".

Consequently, several of the gangs in several towns were apprehended, prosecuted and jailed. There were numerous enquiries initiated by local government councils in the towns where the gangs operated enquiring into the possible failure of the care of these victims and the failure of the police to prevent or apprehend the criminal groomers.

The most significant of these enquiries was led

by Prof. Alexis Ray, whose comprehensive report in 2022 made over 20 recommendations to prevent and tackle such abuse. The Conservative Party was then in government. They did absolutely nothing about the Ray enquiry recommendations. Nothing!

Now Elon Musk, again from some retreat in the US, and again inspired by his conviction that "Muslims" are criminally responsible for this sort of behaviour, calls for a national inquiry into British grooming gangs. The current leaders of the Tories and of Reform back up his calls for such a national inquiry.

Consequently, Prof. Ray steps forward and categorically says that any new inquiry would be procrastination and demands that the recommendations of her inquiry, which the Tory government absolutely ignored, should be implemented now!

Musk has then resorted to the absolutely false claim that Keir Starmer, when he led the Crown Prosecution Service, had instructed the police not to pursue the grooming gangs as this would alienate Muslim votes. This is as true as the "fact" that Elon Musk, Donald Trump and Nigel Farage have all converted to Islam and are agents of ISIS. Jess Phillips has, after Musk's nasty epithets and deranged demand that she be sent to prison, suffered renewed threats to her person and life. Her response was that Musk should concentrate on getting himself to Mars and staying there — instead of pretending to be concerned about the welfare of British rape victims.



SHORT TAKES

VENEZUELA'S MADURO TAKES OATH AS PREZ

Caracas: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro was sworn in Friday for a third six-year term rejected by the opposition as a "coup d'etat" achieved through election fraud and a campaign of repression.

The opposition accuses Maduro, 62, of stealing the election of July 28 last year, and the United States, European Union and several Latin American countries have recognized opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia as Venezuela's legitimate president-elect.

AUSSIE BUNGLING ARSONIST SETS PANTS ON FIRE

Sydney: Australian police have released CCTV video of a bungling arsonist who set their own pants alight and had to hot-foot it from the scene without them.

Footage of the attack on a fast-food outlet in the southern city of Melbourne showed two people in dark hoodies and trousers with a container of what police described as "flammable liquid". One of them tried to set the fluid alight at the front of the outlet.

In an instant, the arsonist is seen again engulfed in flames and then hurriedly removing the burning trousers.

'PIZZAGATE' GUNMAN KILLED IN N. CAROLINA

Kannapolis: A man who fired a gun inside a restaurant in the nation's capital after a fake online conspiracy theory called Pizzagate motivated him to do so nearly a decade ago was shot and killed by North Carolina police during a week-end traffic stop.

Edgar Maddison Welch was a passenger in a vehicle stopped in Kannapolis on Saturday, according to a Kannapolis police department news release. One of the officers recognised the car as the vehicle of someone he had arrested and who had a warrant for a felony probation violation.

MILITANTS ATTACK RESIDENCE OF MINISTER IN PAK

Karachi: Armed militants attacked the residences of a senior minister and a deputy commissioner and stormed a police checkpoint in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, police said.

A senior police official said armed militants attacked the residence of Balochistan Minister for Finance and Mineral Resources Mir Shoaib Noshervani with a hand grenade in his native town of Kharan late on Thursday night.

The armed men came on motorcycles and drove away after hurling the hand grenade.

8 INJURED IN HAMMER ATTACK IN TOKYO VARSITY

Tokyo: At least eight people were wounded in a hammer attack at a university in Tokyo on Friday, with the suspect apprehended, Japanese media said.

All the wounded people are conscious, according to public broadcaster NHK, which reported that the afternoon attack took place at Hosei University's Tama Campus. Police could not immediately confirm details.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE IN WATER BUFFALO

Berlin: Germany on Friday reported three cases of foot-and-mouth disease in water buffalo on a farm near Berlin, the country's first reported cases of the livestock disease since 1988.

Foot-and-mouth disease is a highly contagious viral infection that is not dangerous to humans but which affects hooved animals and some other mammals including sheep and pigs. Symptoms include fever and blisters in the mouth and near the hoof. The infections were identified in Brandenburg, which surrounds Berlin, a state spokesman said, adding that they had been confirmed by the Institute for Animal Health.

Trump convicted, without punishment

President-elect gets discharged unconditionally; becomes first convicted person to assume US Presidency

New York, Jan. 10: Donald Trump, the first former US president convicted of a felony, was sentenced by a New York judge Friday to no jail for his hush money case, setting him up to return to the White House this month with a criminal record.

Justice Juan Merchan on Friday gave Trump a so-called unconditional discharge at a hearing attended virtually by the president-elect. The sentence means Trump emerges from the case without any probation, fine, or continued responsibility to the court, after being found guilty on 34 felony counts.

The judge read the sentence in a packed courtroom in lower Manhattan, just 10 days before Trump is set to be sworn in as the 47th US president. It caps off a week of rapid-fire legal challenges by his lawyers, who sought to delay the hearing, including a failed last-ditch attempt to get the US Supreme Court to block it.

The hush-money trial centred around Trump approving a \$130,000 payment to an adult-film star during the 2016 presidential campaign to keep her from going public with allegations that they had an affair a decade earlier.

Trump has denied her claims and any wrongdoing, saying the case was part of a coordinated

● **THE JUDGE** read the sentence in a packed courtroom in lower Manhattan, just 10 days before Trump is set to be sworn in as the 47th US president.

● **THE SENTENCE** means Donald Trump emerges from the case without any probation, fine, or continued responsibility to the court, after being found guilty on 34 felony counts.

"witch hunt" intended to undermine his re-election.

Trump has stepped up his fight since his November election victory to erase the conviction, and is expected to seek to overturn his verdict through the appeals process. The case could return to the US Supreme Court for final resolution after New York's appellate courts rule.

In the hearing Friday, which lasted about 40 minutes, Trump spoke virtually for several minutes, reprising his familiar complaints about District Attorney Alvin Bragg, the decision to prosecute him.

— Bloomberg



Plan to damage my reputation: Trump

New York, Jan. 10: US President-elect Donald Trump called his criminal prosecution a "disgrace to the system" on Friday ahead of his sentencing for covering up hush money payments to a porn star.

"It was done to damage my reputation so I would lose the election and obviously that didn't work," he said. "It's a disgrace to the system." It's been a political witch hunt. It was done to damage my reputation so that I would lose

the election, and obviously, that didn't work," Trump remarked. He called the case a weaponisation of government and an embarrassment to New York. The hush money case accused Trump of fudging his business records to veil a USD 130,000 payoff to porn actor Stormy Daniels. She was paid, late in Trump's 2016 campaign, not to tell the public about a sexual encounter she maintains the two had.

— Agencies

10 people died as infernos ripped through neighbourhoods

New LA fire prompts more evacuations, 10K homes lost

Los Angeles, Jan. 10: The two biggest wildfires ravaging the Los Angeles area this week burned at least 10,000 homes, buildings and other structures, officials said Thursday as they urged more people to heed evacuation orders after a new blaze ignited and quickly grew.

The fast-moving Kenneth Fire started in the late afternoon in the San Fernando Valley near the West Hills neighbourhood and close to Ventura County. Only hours earlier officials expressed encouragement after firefighters aided by calmer winds and help from crews from outside the state saw the first signs of successfully beating back the region's devastating wildfires that have killed seven people so far. "We are expecting this fire to rapidly spread due to high winds, Los Angeles", Mayor Karen Bass said, echoing the forecast that called for winds to strengthen Thursday evening through Friday morning.

The orders came as Los Angeles County officials announced the Eaton Fire near Pasadena that started Tuesday night has burned over 5,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartments and businesses.

— AP



Water is dropped by helicopter on the Kenneth Fire in the West Hills section of Los Angeles on Friday. — AFP

Fire survivors patrol to ward off looters

Los Angeles, Jan. 10: People forced to flee their homes by massive wildfires tearing through Los Angeles were taking turns to patrol their streets to ward off looters. At least 20 people have been arrested after the fire, police said on Thursday, warning that anyone found loitering without cause would be questioned.

Well-to-do locals are tak-

ing matters into their own hands. One man whose house was one of just a handful left standing on a burned-out Altadena street told AFP that he was working with his neighbours. "We're so stressed about this looting happening all around. My neighbours were on watch all last night for several houses," said the man, who did not want to give his name.

— AFP

RIGHT-WING DISINFORMATION TARGETS DEI

Los Angeles, Jan. 10: Incoming US president Donald Trump sparked a political battle with outgoing leader Joe Biden and California's Democratic governor Gavin Newsom as he held them responsible for the wildfires ravaging Los Angeles.

Trump said Democrat-ruled California had wasted water for fish conservation than to have fought the fire with it.

Trump said the deadly Los Angeles fires showed that January 20, when he replaces Biden in the White House, "cannot come fast enough." "Let this serve, and be emblematic, of the gross incompetence and mismanagement of the Biden/Newsom Duo," he said. Months of dry weather and recent strong winds created optimal conditions for the deadly wildfires engulfing Los Angeles, but narratives on social media falsely singled out "liberal" policies, including those to increase diversity in the city's fire force.

— Agencies

ONLINE CONTENT REGULATION IS NOT CENSORSHIP, SAYS UN RIGHTS CHIEF

New York, Jan. 10: The United Nations (UN) rights chief insisted on Friday that regulating harmful content online "is not censorship", days after Meta scrapped its fact-checking programme on Facebook and Instagram citing censorship concerns.

"Allowing hate speech and harmful content online has real world consequences. Regulating such content is not censorship," Volker Turk said on X.

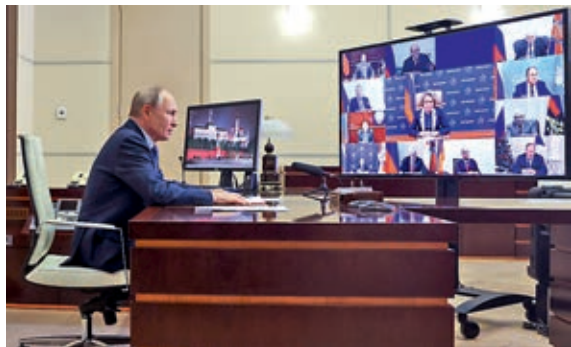
"My office calls for accountability and governance in the digital space, in line with human rights," Volker Turk added.

Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg announced on Tuesday the group would "get rid of fact-checkers" and replace them with community-based posts, starting in the United States, complaining the programme had made "too many mistakes and too much censorship".

Instead, Meta platforms including Facebook and Instagram, "would use community notes similar to X (formerly Twitter), starting in the US," Zuckerberg further said.

Asked about whether the UN might reevaluate its presence on Meta and X, UN spokesman Michele Zaccheo said the organisation was "constantly watching this space and evaluating it".

But for now "it's important for us to be present with fact-based information". WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris agreed. "Our role is to provide good science-based health information, and we need to provide that wherever people are looking for it," she told reporters. — AP



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via videoconference at the Novogaryovo residence outside Moscow on Friday.

Russia: US slaps new sanctions

Washington, Jan. 10: President Joe Biden's administration announced on Friday that it's expanding sanctions against Russia's critically important energy sector, unveiling a new effort to inflict pain on Moscow for its nearly 3-year-old war in Ukraine as President-elect Donald Trump gets set to return to office vowing to quickly end the conflict.

The outgoing Democratic administration billed the new sanctions as the most significant to date against Moscow's oil and liquefied natural gas sectors, the driver of Russia's economy.

Officials said the sanctions, which punish entities that do business with the Russians, have the potential to cost the Russian economy upward of billions of dollars per

month. More than 180 oil-carrying vessels that are suspected to be part of a shadow fleet utilised by the Kremlin to evade oil sanctions as well as traders, oil field service firms and Russian energy officials are also targeted by the new sanctions.

Several of the vessels targeted are also suspected of shipping sanctioned Iranian oil, according to the Treasury Department. British officials are also announcing complementary sanctions against Russia's energy sector on Friday. Both countries are targeting two of Russia's major oil producers, Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftegas, and dozens of the companies' subsidiaries. The US is taking sweeping action against Russia's key source of revenue for funding its brutal and illegal war.

— AP

WINTER STORM IN U.S. SOUTH, 3,000 FLIGHTS CANCELLED

Dallas, Jan. 10: A powerful winter storm sweeping the US South has grounded almost 3,000 flights, halted passenger trains and threatening the region with heavy snowfall.

As of 12:30 p.m. New York time, 2,946 flights around the US were canceled, with Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and nearby Charlotte-Douglas airport accounting for more than half of them, according to FlightAware. In addition, Dallas area airports, hit hard Thursday, saw hundreds more flights scrubbed on Friday. A ground stop on some flights scheduled to arrive in Atlanta is set to expire at 2 p.m., according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

"Flying into any of the airports in this region wouldn't be ideal today," said Allison Santorelli, a forecaster. — Bloomberg

Scots leader hails UK's first drug use room

London, Jan. 10: Scotland's leader John Swinney hailed Friday the opening next week of Britain's first official consumption room for illegal drugs, after a years-long battle with the UK government over the issue.

The pilot facility in Glasgow, backed by a 2 million

(\$2.5 million) Scottish government grant, will allow users to take their own drugs in a clean environment under medical supervision.

It aims to reduce harms associated with injecting drugs, including the risk from blood-borne viruses such as HIV, as Scotland

grapples with the highest drug misuse death rates in Europe.

The devolved government in Edinburgh, led by Swinney's Scottish National Party, also hopes to help drug users improve their lives at the centre and reduce the wider negative impacts of them

injecting in public places. "While this facility is not a silver bullet, it is another significant step forward and will complement other efforts to reduce harms and deaths," First Minister Swinney said Friday as he toured the location. He noted people "with lived experience" of

the issue were involved in designing the service and recruiting staff.

Opening Monday in Glasgow's East End, a hotspot for deprivation and drug use, it follows years of political legal wrangling between the parliaments in London and Edinburgh. — AFP

SERIOUS CONCERN

Breaches long-term 1.5C global warming threshold, says EU monitor

Earth records hottest year ever in 2024

Washington, Jan. 10: Earth recorded its hottest year ever in 2024, with such a big jump that the planet temporarily passed a major climate threshold, several weather monitoring agencies announced on Friday.

Last year's global average temperature easily passed 2023's record heat and kept pushing even higher. It surpassed the long-term warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s that was

called for by the 2015 Paris climate pact, according to the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Service, the United Kingdom's Meteorology Office and Japan's weather agency.

The European team calculated 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.89 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming. Japan found 1.57 degrees Celsius (2.83 degrees Fahrenheit) and the British 1.53 degrees Celsius (2.75 degrees Fahrenheit) in releases of data coordinated to early

Friday morning European time.

American monitoring teams NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the private Berkeley Earth were to release their figures later Friday but all will likely show record heat for 2024, European scientists said. The six groups compensate for data gaps in observations that go back to 1850 in different ways, which is why numbers vary

slightly. The primary reason for these record temperatures is the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from the burning of coal, oil and gas, said Samantha Burgess, strategic climate lead at Copernicus. As greenhouse gases continue to accumulate in the atmosphere, temperatures continue to increase, including in the ocean, sea levels continue to rise, and glaciers and ice sheets continue to melt. — PTI



View of a children's square after a heavy frost fell due to low temperatures, in El Pinar, Canelones, Uruguay, on July 14, 2024. The year 2024 was the warmest globally since records began in 1850. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

Satwik-Chirag in Malaysia semis

Kuala Lumpur: Star Indian men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the semifinals of the Malaysia Open with a gritty victory here on Friday. The seventh-seeded Indians battled for 49 minutes to secure a 26-24, 21-15 win over the Malaysian duo of Yew Sin Ong and Ee Yi Teo in the quarterfinals of the prestigious Super 1000 tournament. The opening game was a nail-biter, with both pairs keeping the contest evenly poised. The Indians held a narrow 11-9 lead at the interval and extended it to 18-16, but the Malaysians rallied, earning three consecutive points to level at 19-19 and even snatched a 20-19 lead. Undeterred, Satwik and Chirag displayed remarkable composure, saving four consecutive game points before closing the first game 26-24. In the second game, the Malaysian pair started strong, leading for most of the game up to the interval with an 11-8 advantage. However, Satwik and Chirag staged an incredible comeback, winning 13 of the next 17 points to seal the match. — *PTI*

Pratika, Tejal shine for India

Rajkot: Pratika Rawal showcased maturity beyond her experience, while Tejal Hasabnis capped a memorable comeback, posting a fifty each, as India outplayed an inexperienced Ireland by six wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match women's ODI series here on Friday. Rawal anchored the modest run chase of 239 after stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana's brisk 41, smashing 10 fours and one six for a career-best 89 (96 balls). Hasabnis, who last played an ODI against New Zealand in October 2024, struck her first fifty after her comeback, remaining unbeaten on 53 off 46 balls with the help of nine boundaries. Rawal and Hasabnis put together a match-winning 116-run partnership from 84 balls with India winning the match with 93 balls to spare. Mandhana gave the team a fantastic start with a blistering 29-ball 41. — *PTI*

Brief Scores: Ireland 238 for 7 in 50 overs (Gaby Lewis 92, Leah Paul 59) lost to India 241 for 4 in 34.3 overs (Pratika Rawal 89, Tejal Hasabnis 53 not out, Smriti Mandhana 41).

Pacer Varun Aaron retires

New Delhi: India pacer Varun Aaron, who was once regarded as the country's fastest bowler before injuries hampered his promising career, announced retirement from "representative cricket" on Friday after his home state Jharkhand's campaign ended in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy. The 35-year-old Aaron made the announcement on social media after Jharkhand failed to go beyond the preliminary stage of the marquee domestic one-day event. After a dazzling start, Aaron struggled with erratic form, which was made worse by injury breakdowns, and he had not represented India since 2015. "For the past 20 years, I have lived, breathed, and thrived on the rush of bowling fast. Today, with immense gratitude, I officially announce my retirement from representative cricket," Aaron posted on his Instagram account. At just 21, Aaron burst onto the scene during the 2010-11 Vijay Hazare Trophy, showcasing his raw pace. — *PTI*

PCB denies CT is on way out of Pak

Lahore: The Pakistan Cricket Board has rubbished speculations that the ICC Champions Trophy will be moved out of the country due to delayed construction work at three stadiums that will host the event, starting February 19. The venues in Pakistan organising the tournament are Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Karachi's National Bank Stadium, while India will play all its matches in Dubai. A PCB source said that the presence of a large International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation, including broadcast, hospitality and event operations officials, is an affirmation that the event is on schedule in Pakistan. "The PCB has spent nearly PKR 12 billion to upgrade our stadiums to make them fitting for an event like the Champions Trophy, which was awarded to us," he said. — *PTI*

NEW BALLS PLEASE

All eyes on Djoker as year's first Grand Slam set to roll

Melbourne, Jan. 10: Andy Murray says he is ready to be on the receiving end of Novak Djokovic's ire in pressure moments at the Australian Open, with the "unique opportunity" to coach him worth it.

The Serbian 24-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic made the shock decision to hire Murray in November, just months after the Scot called time on his playing career.

In his first comments since then, fellow former number one Murray, who has known Djokovic since their junior playing days, said the call came out of the blue.

"I said to him: 'Look, I need to think about it and talk to my family.' So I spoke to them and after a couple of days I thought that it was a pretty unique opportunity and experience," the *BBC* quoted Murray as saying.

Murray is himself a three-time major winner — and five-time finalist in Australia — with both players members of the so-called "Big Four", along with Rafael Nadal, who retired last year, and Roger Federer, who left the sport in 2022.

Djokovic and Murray faced each other 36 times in their careers with the Serb winning 25 of them. Nineteen of those clashes came in finals, with both men known for sounding off at their box in pressure moments.

This time it could be Murray on the receiving end. "I know it's not easy out there — it's stressful and at times he's going to want to vent towards his team and his box," said Murray.

UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

Djokovic said Murray inspired him and he was enjoying the collaboration. "I think that his unique perspective on my game is the fact that he has played me for 25 years," the Serbian star said on Friday.

"He knows the evolution of my game, I guess the weaknesses and strengths of my game. He also knows the game, the tennis game, of the biggest players in the world right now because he has just recently retired as a player. I'm excited to start the tournament with him," he added.

With Djokovic chasing an 11th



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus reacts as she holds a wombat, a native Australian animal, ahead of the Australian Open in Melbourne. — *AFP*

Australian Open title and record 25th major, Murray made clear he was not in town for a holiday.

'POISONED' BEFORE 2022 OPEN

Djokovic has claimed that he was "poisoned" by lead and mercury in his food while he was briefly held in Melbourne in 2022 before being deported on the eve of the Australian Open.

The former world number one had his visa cancelled and was eventually kicked out of the coun-

try over his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid.

He was held in a detention hotel as he fought a fruitless legal battle to remain.

"I had some health issues. And I realised that in that hotel in Melbourne I was fed some food that poisoned me," the 37-year-old Djokovic told *GQ* magazine in a lengthy interview published on Thursday.

"I had some discoveries when I came back to Serbia. I never told

this to anybody publicly, but discoveries that I had a really high level of heavy metal. I had lead, a very high level of lead and mercury," Djokovic added.

When asked if he believed his food was contaminated, the Serb replied: "That's the only way."

Djokovic refused to elaborate on Friday in Melbourne when asked if he had any evidence that his high heavy metal blood levels were linked to the food he was given. But he did not back down from the poisoning allegations.

"The *GQ* article came out yesterday... I've done that interview many months ago," Djokovic said.

"I would appreciate not talking more in detail about that because I'd like to focus on the tennis and why I am here. If you want to see what I've said and get more info on that, you can always revert to the article," he added.

A spokesperson for Australia's Department of Home Affairs said it could not comment on individual cases "for privacy reasons".

But the government says a lease agreement with the Park Hotel where he was held provides for freshly cooked, individually portioned lunches and dinners for detainees. "All catering staff have undertaken food safety certifications," it says.

NO GRUDGE

Djokovic insisted that he does not hold "any grudge over the Australian people" despite the 2022 controversy. A year later, he returned to Melbourne where he swept to the title.

"A lot of Australian people that I meet in Australia the last few years or elsewhere in the world, have come up to me, apologising to me for the treatment I received because they were embarrassed by their own government at that point," he said in the *GQ* article.

"And I think the government's changed, and they reinstated my visa, and I was very grateful for that. I actually love being there," he said.

However, he added: "Never met the people that deported me from that country a few years ago. I don't have a desire to meet with them. If I do one day, that's fine as well. I'm happy to shake hands and move on." — *AFP*

SAZO BEGINS WITH A BANG AS MI WIN

Gqeberha (South Africa), Jan. 10: A sea of fans clad in orange jerseys thronged the iconic St George's Park cricket ground here and remained in high spirits even after their side Sunrisers Eastern Cape began the SA20 campaign on a disappointing note.

MI Cape Town could not have asked for a better start as Dewald Brevis' brisk 57 and all-round show from Delano Potgieter 12-ball 25 not out and 5/10 in three overs powered them to a massive 97-run win in the tournament opener.

It was a start which MI Cape Town a team which finished last in both editions could not have dreamt of but for the defending champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape, it is an early wake-up call, who were shot out for 77 in 15 overs chasing 175. New Zealand veteran Trent Boult did not look like he was playing his first T20 game in South Africa as he struck twice in a row to rock SEC early, producing another masterclass with the new ball. — *PTI*

Brief Scores: MI Cape Town 174 for 7 in 20 overs (Dewald Brevis 57, Delano Potgieter 25 not out) bt Sunrisers Eastern Cape 77 in 15 overs (Delano Potgieter 5/10).

Rinku's hit — what a cracker!

Smashed window of South Africa press box awaits Singh's autograph

Gqeberha (South Africa), Jan. 10: It's been over a year since a Rinku Singh maximum smashed the window glass of St George Park's press box and with a repair unlikely anytime soon, the ground management won't mind the Indian marauder's autograph on the damaged portion the next time he is here.

It was in December 2023 when Rinku, during the second T20 International against the Proteas, hit one of his trademark unbeaten 39-ball 68 in a losing cause. One of the two sixes during that knock ended up breaking the glass window of the press enclosure.

However, it didn't fully crumble to ground and has stood tall despite the harsh weather, including a storm that took away a part of the roof in the stands last August.

After he damaged the press box window, which is located in the Graeme Pollock Pavilion here, Rinku had offered a soft apology for his hit which was termed as a "great shot" by the legendary Dale Steyn.

The local management hasn't felt the need to change it due to other pressing matters, including periodic repair and management of the facilities here amid budgetary limitations.

Changing the cracked window glass won't be an



St George's Park press box glass smashed by cricketer Rinku Singh still tells the story of the Indian batter's remarkable hit, in Gqeberha, South Africa. — *PTI*

easy task either. "You see, it is located at a specific height here and it will be a tough job to get it changed. Someone would have to be hoisted on a crane and then the repair work will be carried out, but we have focused on the

more serious matters which have kept coming up," a ground management official said.

"The ground is located near the (Indian) ocean, which means we have to constantly keep working to avoid corrosion in

metallic pillars that support various stands and structures at the venue," he explained.

Also, the glass "hasn't harmed anyone so far and doesn't look like it will."

"Maybe we can get it autographed by Rinku whenever he comes over here next," the official quipped before adding, on a more serious note, that it will be changed in due course of time.

That would take a while as India is not expected to tour South Africa anytime soon. However, the ground staff missed a chance to get Rinku's autograph when India were here for a T20 engagement in November last year.

The 27-year-old is a regular in the shortest format. The stadium official also mentioned budgetary constraints, which have forced them to keep their efforts and money focussed on more important issues.

"There was a storm on August 14 and it blew away a part of the roof for which we had to pay 4,00,000 Rands and it was a big portion. It (repairing the glass) will cost a lot of money," he added.

The official said the stadium belongs to the local municipality and the ground management staff are mere "custodians".

The public must feel that those in charge are doing a good job, he stated. — *PTI*

observe things." Uthappa added, "You have seen him struggle, then when you are captain, yes you have to maintain a level of standard, but there are always exceptions to the rule. Here is a man who deserves to be an exception because he is not just beaten and won you tournaments, but he has beaten cancer."

Uthappa revealed that Yuvraj asked for a point deduction in the fitness test but was denied any leniency by the team management. However, he was able to clear the test and make a comeback to the side before being dropped after a poor outing in the Champions Trophy in England.

Speaking about Kohli's leadership style, Uthappa said he was a 'my way or the highway' kind of a captain. "I haven't played under Virat as a captain very much. But Virat as a captain, he was very 'my way or the highway' kind of a captain. It's how to treat your team, your personnel," he said. — *PTI*

ENGLISH | FA CUP



Peterborough's Cypriot midfielder Hector Kyprianou (left) fights for the ball with Everton's Senegalese striker Iliman Ndiaye during their English FA Cup third round match at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England, on Thursday. Everton won 2-0. — *AFP*

Everton advance with decent win

London, Jan. 10: Everton avoided FA Cup embarrassment with a 2-0 victory against third tier Peterborough just hours after Sean Dyche was sacked by the struggling Premier League club on Thursday. Dyche was axed less than four hours before the third round tie, with the club's new owners, the Friedland Group, reportedly in talks with former Everton boss David Moyes about a return to Goodison Park.

Moyes is the bookmakers' favourite for the job of saving Everton from relegation, 12 years after he left for Manchester United.

The Scot, who managed Everton in a successful spell between 2002 and 2013, has been out of work since leaving West Ham at the end of last season.

The Toffees are once again battling to avoid relegation after winning just one of their past 11 games, with that sole success coming against lowly Wolves in December.

Everton have won only three times in 19 league matches this season and

are languishing in 16th place, with only one point separating them from the relegation zone.

Dyche took charge at Everton in January 2023 and kept them in the top-flight despite numerous issues, including last season's points deduction for breaching Premier League rules on profit and sustainability.

Although the former Burnley boss maintained Everton's streak of being ever-present in English football's top-flight since 1954, their fans were unhappy with the team's dull style of play.

That made it especially painful when they failed to muster a single shot on target in Saturday's 0-1 defeat at Bournemouth and managed only two in their loss to Nottingham Forest in the previous game. Dyche was at the Everton training ground earlier on Thursday to say his goodbyes after the axe fell, while the matchday programme for the Peterborough game still contained his column. — *AFP*

BAGAN LOOK TO TURN UP HEAT IN KOLKATA DERBY

Guwahati, Jan. 10: Mohun Bagan Super Giant would look to assert their dominance over arch-rivals East Bengal in the Indian Super League (ISL) when they face each other on Saturday in a match which has been shifted here owing to inadequate security arrangements in Kolkata.

The change in venue comes after the Bidhannagar Police in Kolkata, under whose jurisdiction the original match venue Salt Lake Stadium falls, cited concerns over inadequate security because of the Gangasagar Mela from January 10 to 18.

Mohun Bagan have won eight out of the nine encounters between the two teams in ISL history, with East Bengal yet to record a victory.

East Bengal have struggled in terms of scoring, having netted only five goals in this fixture. Their form has also been patchy this season, registering two wins in their last five games, which has seen them placed at 11th in the points table. Mohun Bagan are sitting comfortably at the top of the table on 32 points with 10 wins from 14 matches. — *PTI*

Neeraj is named best by US mag

New Delhi, Jan. 10: India's Paris Olympics silver medalist Neeraj Chopra has been named the best male javelin thrower in the world in 2024 by globally-renowned American magazine *Track And Field News*. The 27-year-old Chopra, who was beaten by Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem for the Olympic gold medal in August last year, piped two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada for the top spot in the 2024 rankings published by the California-based magazine.

Nadeem was ranked fifth as he competed in only one event in 2024 besides the Olympic Games where he came up with a monster throw of 92.97 metres as against 89.45m of Chopra. He finished fourth in Paris Diamond League.

Founded in 1948, the magazine, which claims itself to be "The Bible Of The Sport", publishes world and American rankings every year. The magazine is considered an authority in global track and field circles.

Chopra was also the top-ranker in the men's javelin throw rankings of 2023.

He did not win any Diamond League event in 2024, finishing second in Doha, Lausanne and Brussels. His only major win last year was at the Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland.

"Reigning leader Neeraj Chopra vs. 2022's winner Anderson Peters for the top spot was likewise not clear-cut. Chopra didn't score any DL wins, but was at 32 narrowly ahead of Peters," the magazine wrote. — *PTI*