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Ajit Pawar clears the air on leaving state cabinet meet early: 'All is well'

Sanjay Kumar

Mumbai, Oct 12: Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar tried to clear speculation about him leaving from a state cabinet meeting



early, saying that all is well within the ruling Mahayuti alliance, which includes the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena, and his Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Ajit Pawar during press conference at MCA lounge, Churchgate in Mumbai, India, on Friday, October 11. (Anshuman Poyrekar/Hindustan Times) Speaking at a press conference after welcoming

actor Sayaji Shinde into the NCP, Pawar sought to clear the air about potential unrest within the Mahayuti alliance. "I had to leave early for a scheduled program in Ahmedpur, Marathwada," Pawar explained. He assured that all cabinet decisions made in his absence had his approval. Ajit Pawar dismissed rumors of discord within the cabinet, saying, "All is well, and speculation about any dispute is baseless."

His early exit raised eyebrows, particularly since many important financial decisions were made after he left, even though he is the finance minister. Pawar added that the state cabinet can override objections from any department, including his finance department, regarding populist schemes announced before the upcoming assembly elections. NCP chief said that discussions on seat-sharing among the Mahayuti alliance partners are going smoothly and added, "We will announce the outcome when we feel ready."

President Murmu, PM Modi attend Vijayadashmi celebrations in Delhi

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Oct 12: President Droupadi Murmu

and Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Dussehra festivities and witnessed burning of effigies of demon King Ravana at Parade Ground of Lal Qila on Saturday evening. The organisers of Sri Dharmik Leela Committee presented with a "trishul" (trident) to the president and a "gada" (mace) to the prime minister in a ceremonial welcome at the Dussehra programme. They were also presented with bow and arrow as a symbol of "strength and good governance". Murmu and Modi watched the Ramleela performance depicting end of Ravana at the hands of Lord Rama. This was followed by burning of the effigies of Ravana, his son Meghnad and brother Kumbhakarn amid loud cheering by the crowd. Bisrakh, a village in Uttar Pradesh, located just 40 kilometres from Delhi, considers

itself to be Ravana's birthplace, with villagers counting themselves as his descendants. While the rest of the country derives joy from burning



effigies of Kumbhakarn, Ravana and his son Meghnad, the villagers of Bisrakh mourn Ravana's loss and conduct prayer rituals for his soul, reported Times Now. The villagers of Bisrakh believe that Ravana deserved to be revered for his knowledge and devout faith in Lord Shiva rather than vilained. At the same time, they still pray to Lord Ram, as he is a god. In one of the many deviating rituals in the village, people do not Ramlila celebrations for fear of inviting bad luck. During Dussehra they offer prayers in the Bisrakh Ravana Mandir. The temple, according to local belief, carries the same Shiva Linga which was once worshipped by Ravana and his father, the sage Vishravas. Ravana, as per Hindu mythology was the king of Lanka, and was very learned and powerful. In different iterations of the Ramayana text, he is portrayed as the antagonist in the god Ram's story but is also considered to be representative of several communities in India. There are temples dedicated to Ravana in Kanpur, the Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh, Mandya district of Karnataka and many other places as well. In a country as diverse as India, even celebrations such as Dussehra take on many different forms and variations.

Kharge's 'terrorist party' counter to Modi's 'urban naxal' jibe; BJP hits back

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Oct 12: Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge was pushing back against PM Modi's allegation that the opposition party is completely under the control of "urban naxals". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday rejected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent claim that the opposition party is controlled by "urban naxals," and launched a fierce counter-attack, accusing the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of being responsible for violence against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and tribals. Kharge, in a blistering speech, accused the BJP of fostering a culture of terrorism and enabling acts of mob lynching and violence. "Progressive people are being labelled as Urban Naxals by the Prime Minister. This is his habit. But it is his party that is a terrorist party. They engage in lynching, assault people, urinate in the mouths of Scheduled Caste members, and

rape tribals," Kharge said. He alleged that the BJP not only tolerates such heinous acts but also supports the perpetrators. "Wherever the BJP is in power, atrocities



against Scheduled Castes and tribals increase. Then they turn around and blame others. It is his government, and he can control it if he chooses," Kharge added.

Kharge's remarks come in response to Prime Minister Modi's attack on Congress during a rally in Jammu on September 28, where Modi accused the opposition party of being influenced by "Urban Naxal sympathisers" and appeasing foreign infiltrators for electoral gains. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla dismissed Kharge's comments as an insult to the Indian electorate. "Crores of people have voted for the BJP in 2014, 2019, and now in 2024. This is a clear insult to their wisdom but Congress has made it a habit. They have called the public 'Rakshasi'... They are saying that the people have elected terrorists," Poonawalla said. "They have always used such kind of language abusing PM Modi... They are abusing the OBC Samaj and the people... This shows the character and the DNA of Congress... They gave the reservation of SC/ST from Jammu and AMU to Muslims... Congress is the most anti-Dalit party," he added. Boost your career with IIT Delhi's Tech & AI Leadership Programme.

Congress has to take everyone along to defeat BJP: Owaisi

Hyderabad, Oct 12: Observing that the Congress party alone cannot defeat the BJP, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said the grand old party has to take everyone on board to succeed. Addressing a public



meeting at Vikarabad in Telangana, he also said social instability would be "triggered" in the country if the Waqf Amendment Bill is enacted into legislation. Reacting to Congress' defeat in the recent Haryana Assembly polls, he said 'secular' parties used to blame him for causing a split in anti-

BJP votes in elections, and asked how the Mallikarjun Kharge-led party lost in the northern state though the AIMIM did not field its candidates. "How did they (BJP) win (Haryana)? I was not there. Otherwise, they would have said 'B Team'... They lost there. Now, you tell me, they lost because of whom?" he said. "I want the old party to understand what I am saying. You have to take everyone along to defeat Modi (BJP). You will not be able to do anything alone," he said. The BJP clinched a stunning hat-trick win in Haryana, overcoming anti-incumbency and dashing Congress' hopes of a comeback. The saffron party won 48 of the 90 assembly seats in Haryana, well above the simple majority mark of 46. "I am telling Modi, if this Waqf law is made, social instability would be triggered in the country. We lost one mosque. We will not lose any mosque or graveyard now," he said. In an indirect reference to Yati Narsinghanand, head priest of a temple in Uttar Pradesh, who allegedly made derogatory remarks on Prophet Muhammad, Owaisi claimed that "Modi and Yogi are protecting him".

Another doctor on fast admitted to hospital as condition worsens

ST Correspondent

Kolkata, Oct 12: Another junior doctor, who was observing a fast-into-death in protest over the rape-murder of a woman medic at RG Kar hospital, was admitted to a healthcare facility on Saturday after his condition deteriorated, an official said. Alok Varma from North Bengal Medical College and Hospital became the second medic of those who have been on the indefinite fast to be hospitalised after Aniket Mahato was admitted to the ICU of RG Kar hospital three days back. Parichoy Panda from Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan and Alokika Ghorui from Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital joined the protest, taking the total number of medics on indef-



inite fast across the state to 11, including the two who have been hospitalised. The junior doctors commenced their fast-into-death in the Esplanade area in central Kolkata on October 5. The protesting doctors have been demanding justice for the deceased woman medic at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and immediate removal of Health Secretary NS Nigam. Their other demands include the establishment of a centralised referral system for all hospitals and medical colleges in the state, the implementation of a bed vacancy monitoring system, and formation of task forces to ensure essential provisions for CCTV, on-call rooms, and washrooms at their workplaces. They are also demanding increased police protection in hospitals, recruitment of permanent women police personnel, and swift filling of vacant positions for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers. The junior doctors went on to cease work following the rape-murder of a fellow medic at RG Kar medical college on August 9. They ended their stir after 42 days on September 21 following assurances from the state government to look into their demands. The healthcare services in West Bengal was severely disrupted due to the cease work by junior doctors. The Indian Medical Association had said that the demands raised by the doctors were possible to be met by the West Bengal government and not insurmountable.

CJI Chandrachud responds to 'tyranny of unelected jibe' at judiciary

New Delhi, Oct 12: Responding to criticism directed at judges for being "unelected and unaccountable," Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud noted that judges are obligated by the constitution of the country to ensure fair trial and protection of citizen's rights, even if they are not elected or directly accountable to the public like political leaders. Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice DY Chandrachud noted that judges are obligated by the constitution to ensure rights of people are protected. CJI Chandrachud was speaking at the Jigme Singye Wangchuk lecture in Bhutan. He said that the MPs, judges, and governments only hold constitutional authority as representatives and trustees of the people. "Public trust is central to the credibility of the judicial branch, which is otherwise insulated from public opinion in its operations - as it must be. Yet our insulation, which is intrinsic to our independence, provides a crucial need and justification for ensuring public trust in our functioning," the publication quoted him as saying.

Maharashtra ex-Minister Baba Siddique shot dead in Mumbai's Bandra

Navdeep Singh Sahni

Mumbai, Oct 12: Sending shockwaves in political circles, Ajit Pawar-led NCP's senior leader Baba Ziauddin Siddique was shot dead near Nirmal Nagar in Bandra East on Saturday. As per available information, at least two-three persons, who were lying in wait for the former state minister, rushed and fired multiple rounds indiscriminately at him. The businessman-cum-politician sustained two-three rounds, including one in the chest, outside his office there. An aide standing nearby also suffered a shot in the leg even as the assailants in the shoot-and-scoot incident disappeared from there, around 9.30 pm. Initially, the crowd did not notice the development as fire crackers were being burst on the roads as part of Dussehra celebrations and crowds were returning from the two major political rallies this evening. As some people

realised that there was a shootout, his aides and others helped rush him to the Lilavati Hospital in Bandra West where



he was declared dead. As news of the shootout and Siddique's demise spread like wildfire, top NCP, Congress and leaders of the MahaYuti, plus his Congress MLA son Zeeshan B. Siddique rushed to the hospital, besides his close

friend and Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt, among others. According to a police officer, two persons were detained from Andheri East soon after the shootout and further investigations are under way by the Crime Branch. Though the motives behind the killing of the influential and prominent minority community leader Siddique are not clear, it is tentatively suspected to be an outcome of some business rivalry. A veteran Congress leader for decades and a close associate of the former Union Minister Sunil Dutt and his daughter Priya Dutt, Siddique had quit the party to throw his lot with Ajit Pawar's NCP in February, ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. For the past few months, even his son Zeeshan has been sitting on the fence and is expected to make his political preferences clear soon, ahead of the upcoming state Assembly elections.

Supreme Court to hear Shashi Tharoor's plea in defamation case

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Oct 12: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor against a Delhi High Court verdict that refused to quash defamation proceedings against him for his alleged "scorpion on Shilving" remark targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While hearing Tharoor's plea on September 10, the apex court had stayed the proceedings before a trial court in the defamation case filed against the Congress MP. The top court had also issued notice to the Delhi Police and BJP leader Rajiv Babbar, who is the complainant in the case, seeking their responses on the plea. As per the cause list of October 14 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti is slated to hear Tharoor's plea. The Congress MP has moved the top court against the high court's August 29 order which refused to quash the

defamation proceedings against him. During the hearing on September 10, Tharoor's counsel told the apex court that the complainant cannot be said to be an aggrieved party in the case and members of the political party also cannot be said to



be an aggrieved party. His counsel argued that Tharoor's comment was protected under the immunity clause of the defamation law, which stipulates that any statement made in good faith was not criminal.

The lawyer said Tharoor made a reference to an article published in the Caravan magazine six years before the statement was made. The top court had expressed surprise that in 2012, the statement was not defamatory when the article was originally published. "Eventually it is a metaphor. I have tried to understand. It refers to the invincibility of the person referred to (Modi). I do not know why somebody has taken objection here." Justice Roy had remarked during the hearing. While refusing to quash the proceedings against Tharoor, the high court had said prima facie, imputations like "scorpion on Shilving" against the prime minister were "despicable and deplorable". The high court, which on October 16, 2020, stayed the criminal proceedings against the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram in the defamation complaint, vacated the interim order and

directed the parties to appear before the trial court on September 10. It had said that prima facie, the remark defamed the prime minister, the BJP as well as its office-bearers and members. Dismissing Tharoor's petition seeking quashing of the defamation proceedings pending before the trial court, the high court had said there was sufficient material before the judicial magistrate for summoning him under section 500 (punishment for defamation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Congress leader had sought setting aside the trial court's April 27, 2019 order summoning him as an accused in the criminal defamation complaint filed by Rajiv Babbar as also the November 2, 2018 complaint. The criminal complaint was filed against Tharoor in the trial court by Babbar, who claimed that his religious sentiments were hurt by the Congress leader's statement. In October 2018, Tharoor had claimed that an unnamed RSS leader had compared Modi to "a scorpion sitting on a Shilving".

News box

Southeast Asia trip turns dangerous, 75-year-old Kerala man infected with rare disease

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A trip to Cambodia and Vietnam took a perilous turn for a 75-year-old man from Thiruvananthapuram when he contracted murine typhus, a rare infectious disease. He returned home with symptoms resembling malaria, scrub typhus, and dengue, headache, and body aches. Despite receiving symptomatic treatment, his condition deteriorated, prompting his family to seek care at a private hospital in Thiruvananthapuram.

The patient's health worsened significantly, leading to the need for ventilation and dialysis due to organ failure. Diagnosing the illness proved difficult for doctors, primarily due to limited testing facilities in the state.

"The patient presented symptoms similar to malaria, scrub typhus, and dengue-fever, but all initial screening tests came back negative. Upon reviewing his travel history, we decided to test for Murine Typhus, but we couldn't find the antibody test kit anywhere. Ultimately, confirmation came from a test conducted at CMC Vellore," said Dr. Sujeesh R, Head of the Department and Senior Consultant at SP Medifort.

"The tropical Asian countries are frequented by the people here. So when they return with an unexplained fever, Murine Typhus testing should be done. The awareness is important to prevent complications," he added. The patient has recuperated well and is likely to be discharged in two days. The disease caused by bacteria Rickettsia typhi through the faeces of fleas to the human beings can be life-threatening if not treated on time.

Minister Nara Lokesh takes jibe at Jagan on TCS

VIJAYAWADA: Human Resource Development and IT Minister Nara Lokesh on Friday took a jibe at former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, quipping, "Maybe some misguided inner voice told him that he brought TCS to Andhra Pradesh." Speaking after inaugurating the Simha Kia showroom at Kolanukonda near Mangalagiri, Lokesh slammed the previous YSRC regime for failing to attract major industries to the State in the last five years, contrasting it with the tenure (2014-19) of the TDP government, which, he asserted, created 8 lakh jobs through the establishment of 44,000 industries. He also ridiculed the previous claims that former Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy played a key role in bringing Kia Motors to the State, remarking, "Now, Jagan thinks he brought TCS to the State." He dared Jagan to disclose the number of industries set up, and jobs created during the YSRC regime, emphasising that under the Chandrababu Naidu government, Andhra Pradesh has now attracted major investments from companies like TCS and Lulu. Reaffirming the TDP-led NDA government's commitment to decentralised development, Lokesh promised to bring manufacturing industries to Rayalaseema and service industries to Uttarandhra. Wind, solar and pumped storage projects will be set up in Kurnool, and electronics manufacturing units will be promoted in Kadapa and Chittoor, besides laying emphasis on automotive industry expansion in Anantapur. Additionally, aqua and petrochemical industries will be set up in East and West Godavari, and further investments are expected in Krishna and Guntur districts, he explained.

Teppotsavam cancelled due to safety concerns

VIJAYAWADA: The State government cancelled the traditional Teppotsavam (celestial swan boat ride) of Goddess Kanaka Durga and Lord Malleswara Swamy, which was scheduled for October 12. The decision was announced on Friday after Irrigation Department officials reported that heavy inflows from the upper catchment made it unsafe to operate boats in the River. Teppotsavam marks the conclusion of Dasara celebrations at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam (SDMSD) atop Indrakeeladri. Following a meeting with officials from police, irrigation, revenue, and endowments departments, temple authorities announced that the ritual would now be limited to offering pujas to the processional deities placed on the boat without the traditional Nadhi Viharam on the banks of the Krishna at Durga Ghat.

In an official statement, the State government cited safety of devotees as the primary reason for cancelling Teppotsavam. Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao told TNIE that the ritual was called off due to elevated water levels in the River Krishna. "Approximately 40 cusecs of water is flowing downstream. We conducted trial runs for the boat several times and decided to cancel the event," he explained. However, a limited number of devotees will still be allowed to witness the rituals and procession, known as Nagarotsavam.

Telangana govt seeks Rs 4,944 crore World Bank aid to strengthen health sector

HYDERABAD: With an aim to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, enhance service delivery, and address identified critical public health challenges, the health department has come up with a proposal of Rs 4,944 crore to be submitted to the World Bank for financing. The cost estimate includes 14 components - trauma care centres, dialysis centres; vascular access centres; simulation and skill labs for emergency care; integrated quality control labs; enhancing diagnostic services; Organ retrieval and storage centres including burn centre and skin, cornea bank; improvement in specialized MCH services including Arogya Mahila programme, cochlear implant centres; drug de-addiction centres; TIMS and super specialty hospital equipment; Osmania Hospital (New) equipment; Health card and PMU and cancer care.

"The proposed components focus on providing enhanced medical services in certain specialised fields, capacity building of human resources, strengthening of health care infrastructure and the expansion of key programmes aimed at improving public health outcomes," the department said.

Diagnostic services have been given the highest estimate of Rs 1,044 crore, followed by Rs 921 crore for trauma care centres and Rs 750 crore for TIMS and super specialty hospital equipment. Trauma care centres are proposed to be set up at 35 100-bed Government General Hospitals (GGH) and NIMS. New acute kidney infection treatment (dialysis) centres are proposed at

108 facilities with an estimated cost of Rs 54 crore. The 35 GGHs will also have vascular access



centres at a cost of Rs 49 crore and 30-bed drug de-addiction centres at a cost of Rs 350 crore.

The proposed plan also includes one simulation laboratory for

emergency care training in each teaching hospital, which is estimated to cost Rs 245 crore at the rate of Rs 7 crore each. As part of the Integrated Quality Control Labs, 10 new food labs are proposed to be set at a cost of Rs 180 crore; 10 new drug testing labs at Rs 70 crore; water testing labs at Rs 160 crore, as well as upgradation of 33 medicine stores will be done at Rs 3 crore each with a total outlay of Rs 100 crore.

Under the enhancement of diagnostic services, 60 mini hubs will be created under T-Diagnostics at Rs 10 crore each, with a total of cost of Rs 600 crore.

Further, every teaching hospital will be equipped with an MRI at an estimate of Rs 444 crore.

Ten organ retrieval and storage

centres including burn centre and skin & cornea bank are proposed to be set up at Sanathnagar, Nizamabad, Khammam, Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, Adilabad, Warangal, Osmania Hospital, Gandhi Hospital and NIMS at a cost of Rs 3 crore each. The Arogya Mahila Programme which is currently operational in 376 centres will be expanded to additional 1,000 centres at a cost of Rs 300 crore. The existing 44 Neonatal and Paediatric Intensive care Units will be upgraded and 10 new units will be set up. In addition, two new IVF (in vitro fertilization) centres are proposed in Nizamabad and Mahabubnagar at a cost of Rs 6.5 crore each. The plan has also been proposed at Rs 250 crore for equipment at the new Osmania hospital. New de-centralised cancer care centres are proposed across the state at a total estimated cost of Rs 165 crore.

319 AEOs get memos for dithering on digital crop survey in Telangana

The AEOs have been directed to explain their inaction and clarify why no disciplinary measures should be taken against them.

SANGAREDDY: The District Agriculture Officers (DAOs) have issued memos to 319 Agriculture Extension Officers (AEOs) across the erstwhile Medak district for failing to initiate the digital crop survey in the Sangareddy, Siddipet and Medak districts. The AEOs have been directed to explain their inaction and clarify why no disciplinary measures should be taken against them. However, the Telangana Agriculture Joint Action Committee (JAC) says that the AEOs are overburdened as they have to register every crop grown by farmers through a dedicated app. The JAC is demanding additional staff and resources to manage the workload. While AEOs have submitted individual explanations to their district officials, the JAC has taken



up the matter with higher officials at the state level. The AEOs say that they are already managing several responsibilities, including establishing purchase centres and ensuring harvested grains reach these centres. They point out that states like Telangana, where farmers cultivate crops such as paddy, maize and cotton twice a year, require extra

manpower and better equipment to efficiently conduct the survey. They have also noted that governments in other states have provided additional staff and modern mobile phones to ease such tasks.

An AEO from Sangareddy pointed to the logistical challenge, saying that an experimental survey in one mandal took three months, leaving them uncertain about how long a comprehensive survey across the district would take while attending to their other duties. Sangareddy DAO Shivaprasad confirmed that the memos were issued as per government orders. He said that the AEOs were required to download the app and input crop details from their respective areas but none had started the task.

Odisha government reopens creches, feeding centres for PVTG children

BHUBANESWAR: After abruptly closing down the creches and feeding centres for children of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) on September 30, the ST and SC Development department has made a U-turn and decided to reopen the facilities with immediate effect. The Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement Programme (OPELIP) director Narayan Chandra Dhal on Thursday notified that the Matru Sishu Poshan Kendra-cum-creche centres, maternal spot feeding centres and spot feeding centres under Odisha PVTG Nutrition Improvement Programme, which were operational till September 30, are allowed to be made functional with immediate effect. "The nutritional requirements, staff structure (NCs, GPNAs and WSHGs) and remuneration, honorarium, incentive will continue as such based on the norm

existing prior to September 30. The funds to this effect will be released shortly," Dhal said. The state chapter of National Right to Food Campaign had demanded restarting the creches and feeding centres alleging that they were closed down



without consulting any elected representatives, or tribal groups and without realising the impact it would have on the vulnerable tribal children. The facilities were functional under Odisha

PVTG Nutrition Improvement Programme (OPNIP) of OPELIP. The department had reasoned that the facilities had to be closed down as OPNIP was introduced as a part of the OPELIP whose continuation for a further period has not yet been decided by the government. Under this scenario, the OPNIP may not continue as well, it said.

The OPNIP was implemented in 89 gram panchayats of 17 micro project agencies in 12 PVTG-dominated districts. The three components under it include community-based creches (Sishu Gruhas), maternal spot feeding centres and spot feeding centres for children in remote villages.

Under this, 61 creches, 161 maternal spot feeding centres and 111 spot feeding centres for children were established in the 12 districts. These centres provided basic daycare facilities to children and hot cooked meals for both children and mothers.

Neighbours said that even after two years visitors from different regions arrive at the site to see the "house of horror". Shafi, a native of Perumbavoor, is the first accused in the case, while Bhagaval Singh and Laila are the second and third accused respectively. The cases were registered by the Kalady police on August 17 and the Kadavanthra police on September 27m, after the first victim went missing on June 6 and the second victim on September 26.

According to the police, Shafi, a rape accused, brought the victims to the house of Bhagaval Singh and Laila after convincing the couple that human sacrifice would help increase their wealth and prosperity. On October 11, police teams from Kochi and Pathanamthitta started searching for the victims' bodies after the three confessed to the crime. The accused revealed where they had buried what remained of the victims, investigators said. They told the officers that they buried the body parts of one of the victims near a banana plant on the premises. Subsequently, six body parts believed to be that of one of the victims, including a left foot, were exhumed.



Suspension bridge project for Vedvyas temple to start soon after long delay in Odisha

An engineer involved in the project informed for soil testing drilling was done to ascertain the ground strata.

ROURKELA: Work on a suspension bridge to connect Vedvyas temple with Panposh is all set to start soon. A letter to chief engineer (Bridges) of Works department dated August 8 stated the government's decision to take up construction of the suspension bridge and beautification of the Brahmani river bank. Sources informed around 15 days back, fresh soil testing was conducted on both sides of Brahmani river and soil samples sent for laboratory testing. An engineer involved in the project informed for soil testing drilling was done to ascertain the ground strata. However, after reaching around 12 metre depth the drill machine appeared to have hit hard rock. He said after arrival of the test report, design, cost estimate and detailed project report (DPR) would be prepared.

The tender would likely be floated by January next year. The length of the bridge would be around 350 metre from Harapoka Ghat on



Panposh side to the temple site. The move came after RN Pali MLA DC Tanti and Odisha unit BJP spokesperson Dhiren Senapati in July met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Works minister Prithviraj Harichandan and Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram. In July 2023, the Works department had also

conducted a preliminary survey for preparation of budget provisions. Still, the suspension bridge proposal had been lingering for a decade.

Earlier, in 2014 Jual had sanctioned around Rs 10 crore from his ministry for construction of the suspension bridge. But, after the Panposh Integrated

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News box

Cocaine haul: ED carries out raids in Delhi, Gurgaon and Mumbai

NEW DELHI. The Enforcement Directorate on Friday conducted searches across Delhi, Gurgaon and Mumbai in a recent case of seizure of more than 600 kg of cocaine and marijuana by the Delhi Police. The searches were part of a money laundering probe initiated by the central agency. The agency said its probe has revealed that the main accused Tushar Goel, alias Dikki, had stored the above drug consignments at his family-owned godown in Mahipalpur and had visited Dubai and Thailand in June this year where he met with other masterminds of the international drug syndicate. "Goel was in connivance with a Dubai-based mastermind who has previously also been linked with the supply of cocaine and other narcotic and psychotropic substances," ED said. Searches were carried out at the residential premises of Tushar Goel in Vasant Enclave and Rajouri Garden and on those of his associates Himanshu Kumar and Bharat Kumar in Prem Nagar and Nalaspur in Mumbai, respectively. The ED team also searched premises of several companies associated with the accused, including Tushar Books Publication Pvt Ltd, Tulip Publications and ABN Buildtech. It said the searches resulted in the recovery of key financial documents which have details of the financial activities of the accused.

Agencies to be fined if garbage is not cleared, says MCG chief

Gurgaon. MCG commissioner Narhari Singh Banger on Friday directed officials to ensure that garbage is not seen scattered on roads and public places. The corporation will penalise the private agencies responsible for maintaining sanitation for garbage strewn in their jurisdiction, said the commissioner in a meeting.

"All officials involved in sanitation work, including joint commissioners, should regularly visit areas under their jurisdiction to ensure proper and regular cleaning and garbage collection," he said, adding that waste should not be dumped anywhere other than the designated locations. Increased monitoring will be done to expedite actions against those spreading waste, he said, and instructed officials to speed up twaste disposal in Bandhwari to ensure all waste is disposed of within the stipulated time. "There is a need to increase monitoring of incidents of waste burning. Teams will ensure that an FIR is registered against those who set waste on fire and action initiated. Burning waste releases harmful gases and smoke, which not only pollutes the environment but also poses health risks," said Banger. The commissioner also stated that all bulk waste generators should manage their waste at their level and in compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

Man held for provocative post on Haryana vote counting day

Gurgaon: A 45-year-old unemployed man was arrested in Nuh for allegedly making a video that could possibly foment communal tension and uploading it on Instagram on the day votes were counted in the state on Oct 8. A suo motu case was registered against Mehboob of Jaisinghpur village on Wednesday. He was arrested on Friday. "With abusive language, the video was made and uploaded with the sole purpose of inciting anger between two communities on the basis of religion," said Krishan Kumar, a spokesperson for Nuh police. A case was registered against Mehboob under sections 196(1) (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and doing acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony), 296 (obscene acts), 3(5) (common intention), 351(3) (criminal intimidation), and 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) of BNS at the Nuh Cyber Crime police station on a complaint by inspector Vimal Rai on Wednesday. The video, uploaded on Instagram, shows Mehboob and another youth using abusive words against villagers. "Abuses were hurled at members of a particular community in the villages of Ujina and Sangel in Nuh," Kumar said.

Mehboob was arrested from his house in Jaisinghpur by a team of cyber cops. "The boy who recorded the video on his cellphone is a minor. We will detain him soon. Those who upload communally sensitive statements on social media will not be spared," a senior police officer said. During the election process, police in Nuh kept a strict watch on social media posts after a communal violence that started in the town on July 31 last year spread to other south Haryana districts.

Will halt work, Unitech warns homebuyers not paying dues

Noida. The govt-appointed board of directors at Unitech Group has issued a warning to homebuyers defaulting on payment of dues raised by the company, threatening to halt construction of their flats and even cancel allotments in extreme cases. The notice comes at a time when construction work has resumed on a number of Unitech projects after almost a decade. The board said it was struggling to continue with the pace of construction in the absence of a steady flow of funds.

A notice to homebuyers by the Unitech board read, "Homebuyers in a majority of the projects are not serious about making timely payments of their balance dues. It must be understood that it will be extremely difficult for the management to maintain the pace of work and make regular payments to contractors if homebuyers do not make timely payments of their balance dues. If this situation continues, the management will be forced to take two-fold action: (i) to advise the contractors to stop work on the units of homebuyers who default in paying their dues, and (ii) to take recourse to cancellation of allotments."

Apart from Noida and Greater Noida, work on Unitech projects has resumed in cities like Gurgaon, Ambala, and Bhubaneswar. Compliance rates on payments in Greater Noida projects have raised concerns.

For instance, homebuyers in Cascades have paid Rs 1.5 crore against a demand of Rs 3.3 crore raised by the board. Other projects, like Heights, have fared worse — with just Rs 4 lakh of a total demand of Rs 71 lakh cleared. In Habitat, only 4.4% of Rs 12.6 crore demanded by the board has been paid.

Toxic leak from Bandhwari landfill threatens Aravalis ecosystem

Gurgaon. Leachate samples collected from the Aravalis just outside the Bandhwari landfill contain toxic substances and chemicals, significantly exceeding the permissible limits. The samples, collected on Oct 3, were tested to determine if untreated leachate was being discharged into the delicate ecosystem of the Aravalis, the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) has said. The report, released on Friday, revealed that several contaminants — including biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), total suspended solids (TSS), chloride, ammoniacal nitrogen and fluoride — were alarmingly high. BOD levels at three sites outside the landfill were recorded at 580 mg/l, 190 mg/l and 650 mg/l, while the maximum permissible limit is 30 mg/l. Elevated BOD levels indicate bacterial contamination in the water. Similarly, COD results were reported at 4,160 mg/l, 1,120 mg/l and 4,640 mg/l, significantly surpassing the standard limit of 250 mg/l, rendering the water quality detrimental to both fauna and flora. Chloride levels were measured at 2,498 mg/l and 2,019 mg/l at two sites, which is approximately 21 times higher



than the standard limit of 1,000 mg/l, making the water unsuitable for human consumption. The tests were conducted after a group of environmentalists lodged a complaint to HSPCB that the toxic liquid has been seeping into the groundwater from the Bandhwari landfill. BOD is a measure of the oxygen required for bacteria to decompose organic components present in water, while COD is an indication of the chemicals in it. According to the Central

Pollution Control Board (CPCB), BOD and COD in a river or waterbody should be less than 30 mg/l and 250 mg/l, respectively. TSS were also on the higher side — 270 mg/l, 820 mg/l and 750 mg/l — against the prescribed limit of 100 mg/l. Environmentalists, meanwhile, pointed out that the pollution board didn't carry out sample collection in Aug and Sept. "No samples are being collected by HSPCB Gurgaon for testing despite continuous spillage of lakhs of litre of

leachate in Aravalis forest at Bandhwari landfill and reduced number of parameters. Examination of the content of heavy metals was not carried out. This is a cause for concern," green activist Vaishali Chandra Rana, who lodged a complaint with HSPCB, said.

"For the last several months, HSPCB has been omitting checking certain parameters or metals in the samples collected on at least three occasions. This lackadaisical or malfeasant attitude will only give a clean chit to MCG, which is getting away with contaminating the groundwater and surface water bodies of not only Bandhwari village, but also of the nearby four other villages and surrounding areas. In all probability, the contamination has further expanded to a radius of 20kms or more, since CPCB and NEERI last conducted tests five years ago," she added. Responding to complaints that all parameters were not checked by the board, an HSPCB official told TOI that this month they will collect samples again and all parameters will be tested to get a clearer picture. "We have analysed samples for nickel, lead, copper, mercury and zinc but they were within the permissible limit," an official said.

After loss in Haryana assembly polls, ex-MLA Balraj Kundu discontinues bus service for girls

GURGAON. After his defeat in the Haryana assembly elections from Meham constituency in Rohtak, former MLA Balraj Kundu has discontinued the complimentary bus

service he had started for girls to go to schools and colleges within the district. Kundu, leader of Haryana Jansevak Party (HJP), said the newly elected MLA should now offer this service. He said his supporters were angry that people had not rewarded such an initiative with their votes and sought its termination. There were 18 buses that took girls from villages in Meham to educational institutions. Kundu started the service in 2017, beginning with eight buses and adding more later. After winning the 2019 polls as an Independent candidate, Kundu had formed the party and contested the 2024 polls in its colours. "These buses facilitate the commute for girls from



approximately 40 villages to their respective schools, colleges and universities. It eased the financial burden on families and ensured girls could safely reach their educational institutions," Madan Lal, a local resident whose daughter commutes on one of these buses, said. Sources said each bus covered more than 100km daily, going to the interiors. During the meeting with his party workers this week after the defeat, Kundu shared that he was deeply hurt by the reaction

of voters. "I did not choose social service for political gains," he said, expressing his disappointment.

If the buses no longer play, many students will be left in the lurch. The buses solved two main questions for students — safety and affordability — that other means of transport like local autos and pool cars don't assure.

Balraj Dangi, the Congress candidate who won from the seat this election, told TOI he will ensure the bus service is not discontinued. "He claims he did not do it for political gains. If not, then why stop now? Right afterwards he pulled back. I spoke to the general manager, Rohtak of Haryana Roadways. He has assured me he will consider running the bus service for students who have now been deprived of the facility. He said he is putting up a team to start the service and we are hoping it will begin this week itself."

Ggn, Fbd MLAs hit ground running to resolve civic mess

Gurgaon: Days after winning the polls, MLAs elected from Gurgaon and Faridabad constituencies, who had to face the ire of voters dealing with numerous civic issues during campaigning, have hit the ground running. The BJP had to fight anti-incumbency, largely stemming out of the civic mess that the state was, to win the recent polls. Now, legislators have swung into action to address people's issues. Badshapur MLA Rao Narbir Singh on Friday instructed officials to clean the city before Diwali. Gurgaon MLA Mukesh Sharma, meanwhile, visited Khandas Mandi to take a stock of the situation. Sohna MLA Tejpal Tanwar visited Sohna Anaj Mandi to inspect the procurement of crops and resolve problems faced by the farmers, and in Faridabad, MLAs held a meeting with officials and instructed them to clear the drains and clean the city. The BJP won nine out of 10 assembly constituencies in the

Gurgaon and Faridabad districts. In Gurgaon, the party made a clean sweep by winning all four assembly constituencies, while in Faridabad, it won five out of six assembly seats. Most candidates had centered their campaigns around addressing the cities' civic issues. The Badshapur MP, who was re-elected as an MLA from the seat after 2014, outlined his five-year plan for the district, conveying to officials that the disputes regarding garbage collection should be resolved at the earliest and cleanliness of the millennium city restored. "The foundation for metro work will be laid in the next 100 days. Additionally, considering the needs of the public, foundation for a bus stand will be laid within a month and a half. Within 100 days, foundation for a 700-bed multispecialty hospital in Civil Lines will also be laid. Construction for all these projects will start soon after," he said.

Newly elected MLA from Gurgaon, Mukesh Sharma, too, addressed issues faced by his electors. He met with traders at Khandas vegetable market and grain market and took note of their demands including for installation of CCTV cameras and lights and repair of the market's internal roads. The commission agents presented him and SDM Ravindra Yadav, who accompanied the legislator, with a list of 15 problems. The SDM assured the agents and the legislator that work to resolve these issues would commence on Saturday. "There is no place for non-performing officials in Gurgaon," said Sharma. He also made it clear to the officials that he will neither indulge in corruption nor allow others to do so. He said he had become a legislator only to address people's problems and to boost the city's development, and also listed his plans to resolve the issue of congestion on Khandas road.

Fighting bad air: Central govt set to roll out 'e-detection' system for old polluting vehicles entering Delhi

NEW DELHI. The central govt is set to roll out an online system to detect diesel and petrol vehicles older than 10 and 15 years plying on Delhi roads and those without valid fitness and pollution certificates. The "e-detection" system, which will enable the transport departments to find out where such vehicles are registered to generate e-challans automatically, will start by Diwali, sources said.

This will be a big deterrent for old polluting vehicles from any state entering Delhi roads. Though over a decade old vehicles are not allowed to ply on city roads, enforcement agencies can't implement it fully as physically checking each vehicle entering from other states is impossible. E-detection addresses this issue to a large extent, officials said. Under this system, as soon as vehicles cross National Highway toll plazas at Delhi borders, the details from FASTags fixed on vehicles, photograph and registration will be captured. This data will be shared with NIC for matching with the Vahan da tabase, the central repository of all vehicles which has details of the year of registration and validity of documents such as fitness, permit and pollution under control certificate. Subsequently, the transport department concerned will be able to generate e-challans for violation of rule and initiate other actions under the Motor Vehicle Act.

Sources said there have been rounds of deliberations among stakeholders including Delhi govt's transport department, Union road transport ministry and NHAI for expeditious launch of the new mechanism. "The target is to start this before Diwali when Delhi faces acute air pollution," said a source. The official added that there are around 52 entry points, including through NHs, where cameras will be installed to capture the details of FASTags and vehicle registration numbers. To begin with the NHAI will share the details of vehicles passing through its toll plazas every few hours for matching with Vahan database and subsequently it will be made real time. The Centre is looking at a gradual roll out of this system across the country to check violations of transport and traffic rules.

TOI has learnt that at present there are about six crore out of the 38 crore registered vehicles across the country are unfit, but there is no clue of how many of these are plying on roads. "Some of these might have been scrapped by unorganised scrap dealers or are lying in yards. Once we have a mechanism to detect unfit vehicles plying on roads, it would be easy to enforce their scrapping," a source said. At present, e-detection is being implemented in Odisha for challaning vehicles without valid documents on National Highways.

60 illegal structures cleared in demolition drive on SPR amid protest

Gurgaon. GMDA has launched a large-scale demolition drive to remove illegal encroachments along major sector roads and green belts. Eight earthmovers were deployed for the drive on southern peripheral road (SPR) and the road in front of Park Hospital, dividing sectors 49 and 47. Seven illegal stalls were demolished, and numerous unauthorised vehicles were towed. The Banjara market community attempted to halt the operation, but the GMDA team continued the drive and razed 60 illegal structures, including jhuggis, on a half-kilometre stretch.

The action, coordinated by GMDA's DTP enforcement, RS Bath, was undertaken after directives from the GMDA CEO. A large team comprising two assistant town planners (ATPs) and 50 junior engineers (JEs), supported by 70 police personnel, was deployed. Eight JCBs were brought in to carry out



the demolition, which included removing illegal makeshift stalls and towing unauthorised vehicles parked along the roads. The drive primarily focused on the road in front of Park Hospital, dividing Sectors 49 and 47. "This is just the beginning. We have a clear directive from the CEO to remove all encroachments," said

Bath. "Even if we do it in smaller patches, we will continue with full force to beautify Gurugram's roads and ensure they remain free of illegal structures," he added.

Residents of the area, many of whom previously lodged complaints about encroachments, welcomed the move. "It's been years since we raised

concerns about the illegal stalls and vehicles taking over the roads," said Rajat Verma, a resident of Sector 49. "Finally, something is being done to address the issue." Another resident, Neha Singh, appreciated the step, stating, "We faced so many issues with traffic jams due to encroachments on SPR. This action will hopefully make our commutes safer and smoother."

The GMDA's demolition drive also included the clearing of approximately 60 makeshift slums along a half-kilometre stretch of SPR, an area that was a root of contention for the nearby residents due to concerns about sanitation and security. Another senior official said, "As GMDA plans more such drives across the city, the goal remains clear: remove illegal structures and restore the functionality and aesthetics of Gurugram's rapidly developing sector roads."

NEWS BOX

Kamala Harris plans to create bipartisan council for policy feedback if elected

Scottsdale Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential candidate, said on Friday she would create a bipartisan council of advisors to give feedback on policy if elected in the November 5 election. Harris also said she would put a Republican in her Cabinet. "I don't want any 'Yes' people. I want people to come in ... and kick the tires on ideas," she said while speaking at an event in Arizona for Republicans supporting her campaign. "So I'm going to create a bipartisan council so we can put some structure around exactly this point. And do the work that is important," she added. Harris travelled to Nevada and Arizona from Wednesday through Friday in a southwestern campaign swing. During the trip, she participated in events including a Univision town hall in Las Vegas, a meeting with the Culinary Workers Union Local 226, and a campaign rally in Phoenix. Nevada and Arizona are both considered key battleground states in the election. A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll found that Harris led her Republican rival Donald Trump by three percentage points - 46 per cent to 43 per cent.

US imposes sanctions on Iran's 'ghost fleet' of oil tankers over Israel attack

World The United States expanded sanctions against Iran's petroleum and petrochemical sectors on Friday in response to an Iranian missile attack on Israel, the administration of President Joe Biden said. The US move adds petroleum and petrochemicals to an executive order that targets key sectors of Iran's economy with the aim of denying the government funds to support its nuclear and missile programs. "The new designations today also include measures against the 'Ghost Fleet' that carries Iran's illicit oil to buyers around the world," Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, said in a statement. "These measures will help further deny Iran financial resources used to support its missile programs and provide support for terrorist groups that threaten the United States, its allies, and partners." "Israel is vowing to respond to Iran's October 1 missile attack, launched in retaliation for Israeli strikes in Lebanon and Gaza and the killing of a Hamas leader in Iran. The US Treasury can now 'impose sanctions on any person determined to operate in the petroleum and petrochemical sectors of the Iranian economy,'" it said in a statement. Biden has said Israel should seek alternatives to attacking Iran's oil fields. Gulf states are lobbying Washington to stop Israel from attacking oil sites because they are concerned their own facilities could come under fire from Tehran's proxies if the conflict escalates, three Gulf sources told Reuters. The Treasury Department also said it was designating 16 entities and identifying 17 vessels as blocked property, citing their involvement in shipments of petroleum and petrochemical products in support of the National Iranian Oil Company. Concurrently, the State Department took steps to disrupt the money flow into Iran's weapons programs and support for "terrorist proxies and partners." It imposed sanctions on six entities involved in Tehran's petroleum trade and identified six ships as blocked property.

HC pulls up cops over RG Kar arrests



KOLKATA. On a day when the condition of junior doctor Aniket Mahato, who was hospitalised because of deteriorating health due to a fast he began on Sunday, was described as "critical but stable," the Calcutta High Court granted interim bail to nine youths who were arrested for raising "We want justice" slogans on the RG Kar hospital rape-murder incident outside a Durga Puja marquee on October 9. The nine were remanded in seven days of police custody by the chief judicial magistrate's court in Alipore on Thursday. Upon reviewing the petition filed by their relatives, a single bench of Justice Shampa Sarkar granted interim bail to the youths against a surety of Rs 1,000 each. The court noted that their demonstration was not intended to spread hatred, harm religious sentiments, or engage in anti-national activities. Fasting junior doctor Aniket has started responding to treatment, a member of the five-doctor team monitoring him in the critical care unit (CCU) of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital said on Friday. He was admitted to the state-run hospital on Thursday night. In a related development, representatives of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), led by national president RV Asokan, met the agitating junior doctors who have been on an indefinite hunger strike demanding justice for their murdered colleague at RG Kar hospital. "I am touched by the way these children are fighting for the cause of the people and not for themselves. I am emotional. They are the real heroes, and we are all very proud of them," Asokan said on Friday after meeting the junior doctors at Dorina Crossing. Speaking to media, Asokan said that during their meeting, the junior doctors detailed their demands and expressed frustration over the West Bengal government's indifference. They did not talk much about withdrawing the fast but focused on their demands and the indifferent attitude of the state government towards their movement. They are quite confident about the success," he added. Asokan mentioned he would convey the junior doctors' anguish to other IMA officials.

TikTok knew about harm to young users, yet failed to act, claims lawsuit

Internal documents from a Kentucky lawsuit reveal TikTok knew its design features harm young users, and that its tools to limit kids' time were ineffective.

UPDATED. TikTok was aware that its design features are detrimental to its young users and that publicly touted tools aimed at limiting kids' time on the site were largely ineffective, according to internal documents and communications exposed in a lawsuit filed by the state of Kentucky.

The details are among redacted portions of Kentucky's lawsuit that contains the internal communications and documents unearthed during a North Korea accuses South Korea of drone flights, threatens forceful retaliation more than two year investigation into the company by various states across the

country. Kentucky's lawsuit was filed this week, alongside separate complaints brought forth by attorneys general in a dozen states as well as the District of Columbia. TikTok is also facing another lawsuit from the Department of Justice and is itself suing the Justice Department over a federal law that could ban it in the US by mid-January. The redacted information — which was inadvertently revealed by Kentucky's attorney general's office and first reported by Kentucky Public Radio — touches on a range of topics, most importantly the extent to which TikTok knew how much time young users were spending on the platform and how sincere it was when rolling out tools aimed at curbing excessive use. Beyond TikTok use among minors, the complaint alleges the short-form video sharing app has prioritised "beautiful people" on its platform and has noted internally that some of the content-moderation metrics it has publicised are



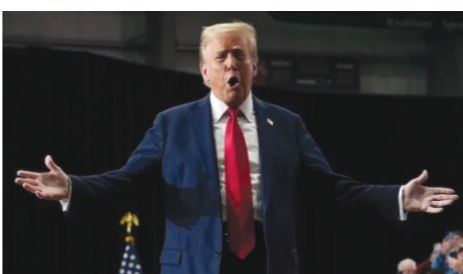
"largely misleading." The unredacted complaint, which was seen by The Associated Press, was sealed by a Kentucky state judge on Wednesday after state officials filed an emergency motion to seal it. When reached for comment, TikTok spokesperson Alex Haurek said: "It is highly irresponsible of the Associated Press to publish information that is under a court seal. Unfortunately, this complaint cherry-picks misleading

quotes and takes outdated documents out of context to misrepresent our commitment to community safety." "We have robust safeguards, which include proactively removing suspected underage users, and we have voluntarily launched safety features such as default screentime limits, family pairing, and privacy by default for minors under 16," Haurek said in a prepared statement. "We stand by these efforts."

TikTok use among young users The complaint alleges that TikTok has quantified how long it takes for young users to get hooked on the platform, and shared the findings internally in presentations aimed at increasing user-retention rates. The "habit moment," as TikTok calls it, occurs when users have watched 260 videos or more during the first week of having a TikTok account.

Trump calls for death penalty for migrants who kill Americans

World Donald Trump portrayed migrants as dangerous criminals during a rally in Aurora, Colorado, on Friday, calling for the death penalty for migrants who kill US citizens as he escalates the anti-immigration rhetoric that has fuelled his presidential run. Flanked by posters of alleged members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, Trump also said that if elected he would launch a national "Operation Aurora" to target the gang members. Trump, the Republican presidential candidate, has noticeably hardened his anti-immigration rhetoric in the final weeks of the Nov. 5 election campaign, where he aims to defeat Democratic candidate Kamala Harris. Illegal immigration is a top voter concern, and Trump is seen by most voters as the best person to be able to address it, opinion polls show.



half of U.S. states ban the death penalty. While there is a federal death penalty, it is rarely used, according to the Death Penalty Information Centre, a non-profit group. An expansion of eligible crimes would require an act of the U.S. Congress. One of the hallmarks of Trump's third presidential run has been his focus on what he calls "migrant crime", even though academic studies show immigrants do not commit crimes at a higher rate than native-born Americans. The Harris campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment related to the death penalty proposal. Vice President Harris toughened her stance on border security after becoming the Democratic nominee in August, and faults Trump for helping stifle a bipartisan border security bill in

"I'm hereby calling for the death penalty for any migrant that kills an American citizen or a law enforcement officer," Trump said to loud cheers from a large crowd of supporters. Trump has already proposed an expansion of the death penalty for other offenders, including people convicted of sex trafficking women and children. Nearly

Congress earlier this year. **SPOTLIGHT ON AURORA**

During a September 10 presidential debate with Harris, Trump claimed that members of Tren de Aragua controlled several dilapidated Aurora apartment complexes - allegations refuted by top city officials. At the rally on Friday, he reiterated a pledge to focus enforcement on Aurora if reelected.

"I will rescue Aurora and every town that has been invaded and conquered," Trump said. "We will put these vicious and bloodthirsty criminals in jail or kick them out of our country." Despite Trump's dramatic statements aimed at rousing his base, no town in America has been taken over by migrants.

Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman, a Republican, said in a statement ahead of the rally that "concerns about Venezuelan gang activity have been grossly exaggerated" and welcomed Trump to tour the city. Major crimes in Aurora have dropped year-on-year, according to Aurora Police Department statistics. V Reeves, a community organiser with the Housekeys Action Network, said residents were nervous about the Trump visit.

UN finds war crimes against humanity in Israel's attacks on Gaza

World A United Nations commission of inquiry has accused Israel of implementing a "concerted policy to destroy Gaza's healthcare system" amid its ongoing war with Hamas.

The commission's report alleges that Israeli attacks on healthcare facilities and the treatment of Palestinian detainees constitute war crimes and the crime against humanity of "extermination." The report, led by Navi Pillay, a former UN human rights chief from South Africa, will be presented to the UN General Assembly on October 30. It claims that Israeli security forces have "deliberately killed, detained and tortured medical personnel," and emphasises that children have been particularly affected by the collapse of the health system in Gaza. A case cited in the report is that of five-year-old Hind Rajab, who was killed after an ambulance attempting to reach her was shelled. Hind had managed to call the Palestinian Red Crescent for help after her family was struck by a bomb. The commission states that the attacks on healthcare facilities have created "conditions



Fareed Zakaria on West Asia conflict, US polls and more: Full interview

World. Fareed Zakaria: We are at a moment of real danger for regional escalation. The focus has shifted from just Israel-Gaza to Israel addressing a broader issue it's faced for years. For over a decade, Iran has been using proxies — Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthi in Yemen, and militias in Iraq and Syria — to pressure Israel and occasionally Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Israel, rightly or wrongly, has decided to confront this head-on. Israel's actions in Lebanon are an attempt to stop the constant rocket fire from Hezbollah in the north and the Houthi from Yemen. They're asking, "Should we strike Iran directly?" This raises the risk of direct confrontation between Israel and Iran, which is a much larger and more complex adversary than its proxies. Iran is a

nation of 80 million and a major petroleum exporter. The real danger is a potential Israel-Iran conflict, which would have global repercussions, especially for oil supplies and possibly drawing in the US. Rajdeep Sardesai: Is this conflict now inevitable? Fareed Zakaria: Some level of escalation is inevitable. The Biden administration is advising Israel to strike in a controlled way — targeting military and intelligence sites, avoiding nuclear and oil infrastructure — to prevent a dangerous escalation. The hope is that Iran will respond in a measured way, leading to a cycle of de-escalation. But there are risks: Israel might not follow this advice, and Iran could perceive any strike as escalatory.

WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE Rajdeep Sardesai: Adding to

those risks, the Biden administration is seen as weakened politically, with elections approaching. Does that complicate things further? Fareed Zakaria: It does. The US has leverage only with Israel, and even that is limited, as many in Israel feel the US is already pressuring them too much. The Biden administration is trying to balance its stance, but it's a difficult time politically. Netanyahu, being a shrewd observer of US politics, likely knows he has a window before the US election to act with more freedom. Rajdeep Sardesai: Given Netanyahu's thinking and the dynamics in Israel's war cabinet, could the next 30 days see further escalation? Fareed Zakaria: Yes, there's a real risk of escalation. Netanyahu, along with his war cabinet.

North Korea accuses South Korea of drone flights, threatens forceful retaliation

Seoul North Korea has accused rival South Korea of flying drones to its capital to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets and threatened to respond with force if such flights occur again. South Korea issued a vague denial of the allegation. North Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Friday that South Korean drones were detected in the night skies of Pyongyang on October 3 and Wednesday and Thursday this week. The ministry accused the South of violating North Korea's "sacred" sovereignty and threatening its security, and described the alleged flights as a "dangerous provocation" that could escalate to an armed conflict and even war. It said North Korean forces will prepare "all means of attack" capable of destroying the southern side of the border and the South Korean military, and respond without warning if South Korean drones are detected in its territory again. "The safety lock on our trigger has now been released," the ministry said. "We will be prepared for everything and will be watching. Criminals should no longer gamble with the lives of their citizens." Asked about the North Korean claims during a parliamentary hearing, South

Korean Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun told lawmakers, "We have not done that." He said he was still trying to assess the situation and didn't elaborate further. It wasn't immediately clear whether Kim was referring to South Korean military drones, or also drones possibly operated by South Korean civilians. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff later said in a statement that it couldn't confirm whether the North's claims were true, without elaborating why. The joint chiefs warned the North to "exercise restraint and not act recklessly." "If the safety of our citizens is threatened in any way, our military will respond with stern and thorough retaliation," it said.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of the authoritarian government of leader Kim Jong Un and his family's dynastic rule over the country. Since May, North Korea has sent thousands of balloons carrying paper waste, plastic and other trash to drop on the South, in what it described as retaliation against South Korean civilian activists who flew balloons with anti-North Korean



propaganda leaflets across the border. South Korea's joint chiefs said in a separate statement that the North was again flying balloons toward the South Friday evening and warned civilians to beware of objects falling from the sky. South Korea's military responded to the North's balloon campaign by using border loudspeakers to broadcast propaganda and K-pop to North Korea. The psychological warfare campaigns have further escalated tensions created by Kim's weapons tests and verbal threats of nuclear conflict against Washington and Seoul. The allies have responded by strengthening their combined military exercises and

expanding three-way cooperation with Japan, while also upgrading nuclear deterrence plans built around US strategic assets. On Wednesday, North Korea said it will permanently block its border with South Korea and build front-line defence structures to cope with "confrontational hysteria" by South Korean and U.S. forces.

North Korea's military said in a statement on state media that it will "completely cut off roads and railways" linked to South Korea and "fortify the relevant areas of our side with strong defence structures."

North Korea called its steps a "self-defensive measure for inhibiting war and defending the security" of the country and accused its rivals of "getting ever more reckless in their confrontational hysteria." North Korea cited what it called various military exercises in South Korea, the deployment of U.S. strategic assets and its rivals' harsh rhetoric. Experts say Kim's nuclear push is aimed at eventually forcing the United States to accept North Korea as a nuclear power and allowing the North to negotiate security and economic concessions from a position of strength.

News box

Widespread rainfall likely in next few days

VISAKHAPATNAM: The upper air cyclonic circulation currently over central parts of the south Bay of Bengal is expected to bring widespread rainfall across Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Rayalaseema and south coastal regions over the next few days. The system extends up to 3.1 km above mean sea level, and is moving north-westward. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast light to moderate rains in many parts of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP) and Rayalaseema from October 14 to 16, with North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP) likely to experience similar conditions from October 15 to 16. Isolated heavy rainfall is expected in Rayalaseema and SCAP, particularly over districts like Tirupati, Annamayya, Chittoor, Nellore and Prakasam on October 14. Heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in Tirupati, Annamayya and Nellore, while Chittoor, Sri Sathya Sai, Kadapa, Anantapur, Nandyal, Prakasam, Bapatla, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram may also see heavy rains on October 15. Isolated heavy rainfall is forecast for Sri Sathya Sai, Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa, Prakasam, Bapatla, Krishna and West Godavari districts on October 16. Thunderstorms are likely at isolated places over NCAP, Yanam, SCAP, and Rayalaseema on Saturday and Sunday.

Mahabub Education Institution gets Telangana HC protection

HYDERABAD: The Telangana High Court has issued injunction orders preventing interference by the Venkat Narayana Education Society (VNES) in the administration of the 160-year-old Mahabub Education Institution in Secunderabad. Justice T Madhavi Devi issued the orders against VNES, Dr Rev KVK Rao, and K Sriharsha Shashank. The ruling prevents them from interfering with the administration or entering the premises of the institutions. The judgment was delivered in response to a petition filed by PL Srinivas, president of Mahabub College. Srinivas approached the high court citing attempts by KVK Rao, Sriharsha, and their associates to take over the college premises. Photographic evidence submitted to the court showed KVK Rao and his men, accompanied by bouncers, attempting to forcibly enter and occupy the properties.

Given the urgency of the situation and the ongoing Dasara vacation for trial courts, Justice Madhavi Devi took up the matter and issued the injunction in favour of Mahabub College. The dispute dates back to an agreement made in 2015 between the management of Mahabub Education Institution and VNES, a society founded by Dr K Anil Kumar.

The agreement permitted VNES to use the college premises to conduct educational activities. However, violations of the agreement terms led to legal action in the civil courts of Secunderabad.

Despite the pending court case, KVK Rao and his associates allegedly attempted to take control of the institution. The institution's managing committee reported that local police failed to act on their complaints, prompting them to seek relief from the high court.

Odisha tribals keep tradition alive with Dansaye

BARIPADA: Even as modernity has taken over almost every aspect of life, tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district, particularly Santhals, are keeping their tradition alive by performing 'Dansaye', a dance form meant to appease Goddess Durga. The erstwhile kings of the district when it was a princely state loved to watch



'Dansaye' during Durga Puja. Several dance troupes from Santhal community, dressed in white with peacock feather on their head gear play musical instruments like 'lau tamba', flute and brass ghant and dance around Baripada town.

When Mayurbhanj was a princely state, the dance was performed at Rajbati (palace) near Grand Road. The king used to watch the performances and have away baskets of laddoo and other goodies to the troupes.

It is said the best performing troupe was given a basket of laddoos with an ornament in it. Now the kings are gone and the troupes perform in front of houses and shops. The laddoos and the goodies have been replaced with whatever cash the locals can part with.

On revival path? 85 per cent of KSRTC depots achieve operating profit

"The operating profit doesn't include factors like pension and salaries," said Minister Ganesh Kumar.

KOCHI: The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has long been labelled as a "white elephant", even struggling to pay salaries to its staff. But there is now light at the end of the tunnel as the public entity is finally showing signs of revival. In the last one month, 79 out of the total 93 depots have either recorded operating profit or achieved break-even.

"If we take the figures of the last 30 days, 85% of the depots achieved operating profit or break-even. It's a laudable effort from the part of the employees and officials. Now, they have been given an overall daily target of Rs 9 crore and efforts in that regard have been started," Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar informed the assembly on Friday. The Chief Office (KSRTC Headquarters) recently issued strict instructions to all unit heads to come out with 'feasible' proposals to achieve a combined daily collection of Rs 9 crore, a 33% rise from the current operational earnings of Rs 6 crore to Rs 7 crore. While the average daily earning has risen from Rs

4.5 crore in 2022 to Rs 6.5 crore now, the daily expenditure hovers around Rs 8.7 crore-mark, that includes pension and salaries.

This means, the corporation has to find an additional Rs 60 crore to Rs 70 crore to

include provident fund, pension, NPS arrears and NDR," Ganesh Kumar said.

KSRTC to boost non-operation income sources

Explaining some of the action taken, the minister said, individual depots have been given the decision-making capacity when it comes to operating new services. "Earlier, if a depot suggests a new viable route, it used to take much time to get the nod from the Chief Office. Now, that has changed. If such a suggestion comes, we'll allow the particular depot to operate the services for two weeks and then assess the viability. If it's profitable, then they can continue with the service. This will help the unit offices and the staff there identify good schedules,"

he said. Meanwhile, the corporation has also initiated a slew of measures to increase its non-operation revenue sources. "Ten new fuel stations are all set to be operational soon. The KSRTC is also planning to expand its courier service by starting doorstep collection and delivery of courier packages.



stay afloat. Now, it has started clearing the dues as well, albeit with governmental aid from time to time.

The operating profit doesn't include factors like pension and salaries. While the dues have accumulated over thousands of crores of rupees, the corporation has cleared dues worth Rs 883 crore to its employees since last December which

OMC to collect Rs 12 crore pending deposits for taps

ONGOLE: The Ongole Municipal Corporation (OMC) is set to launch a special drive to collect Rs 12 crore in pending deposit amounts from households that availed water tap connections under the Union Government's AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) scheme. The deposits were not collected from beneficiaries over the past four years. The AMRUT scheme, aimed to provide every household with access to a tap with assured water supply, sewerage connections, and to enhance city amenities through greenery and public

spaces. Under the first phase, the OMC planned to provide tap water connections to 6,500 households with an initial fund sanction of Rs 3 crore. The deposit amounts were set at Rs 200 for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and Rs 6,900 for others, payable in eight instalments after receiving the connection. While water connections were provided to around 5,900 households, certain OMC staff misappropriated the collected deposit amounts. As a result, beneficiaries are only paying a monthly tax of Rs 60, and no efforts have been made to recover the pending deposits, which have now

accumulated to Rs 12 crore. According to Municipal Engineer Sk Johny, the OMC is preparing to recover these funds.

"In a recent tax collection review meeting, OMC Commissioner K Venkateswara Rao directed officials to issue demand notices, combining the unpaid water tap deposit amounts with house tax dues," Johny explained. Failure to complete the first phase of the AMRUT scheme has also prevented the OMC from receiving approval for an additional 6,500 water connections under the programme's next five-year phase.



Cuttack pandals celebrate Durga Puja with a unique blend of traditions

CUTTACK: There are some mandaps in the millennium city where Durga Puja is celebrated with a unique blend of traditions. One such place is the mandap of Sri Sri Madan Mohan Jew Puja Committee of Bamphi Sahi where idols of 'Smashan Mahadev' and other accompanying deities are worshipped. The idol of presiding deity 'Smashan Mahadev' is adorned with a garland of skulls.

Secretary of the committee Lalatendu Pradhan said earlier, the puja ritual of Smashan Mahadev was performed after midnight. But as devotees were deprived of taking part in the rituals and witnessing the unique custom, the puja is now being performed after 8 pm in the night. The puja committee has been celebrating Durga Puja for the last 75 years. The festival is organised with cooperation of villagers who voluntarily donate money for all arrangements, informed Pradhan. Similarly, Maa Bagala

Thakurani committee of Bhagatpur has been organising Durga Puja since the 1960s. According to locals, a man



approached the residents of Bhagatpur with a photo of two-armed Goddess Durga.

Subsequently, the locals constructed a two-armed idol of the goddess by using an alloy comprising eight metals and consecrated it permanently at the puja mandap. Here, the

colour yellow play an important role in puja rituals. The idol of Goddess Durga is draped in yellow apparel. The colour of 'bhog' which is offered to the goddess, is also yellow. At Deula Sahi, the Durga Puja is being observed since 1942. Initially, a 20-feet-high idol of Lord Hanuman was consecrated at the puja mandap. But later, the puja committee constructed an idol of Goddess Durga and observed the festival in strict adherence to Utkaliya culture and tradition. Apart from the idol of Goddess Durga, the puja committee also constructs different idols depicting characters of 'Ramayana' like Rama, Laxman, Sita, Hanuman and Bhisbhisat at the pandal. Secretary of Deula Sahi Puja Committee Sanjit Kumar Nayak said, "We started construction of Chandhi Medha (silver backdrop) for our puja mandap from last year. Around 20 per cent construction work has been completed so far. Efforts are underway to complete the Chandhi Medha within a year or two."

QQSUDA proposes to create iconic tourism centres in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: The Quli Qutub Shah Urban Development Authority (QQSUDA), established to oversee development in the Old City, has proposed the creation of iconic tourism centres on a global scale. The project will be funded through the Union government's Special Assistance to States for Capital Investments (SASCI).

QQSUDA plans to appoint a consultant to prepare a detailed project report (DPR), provide financial advisory services and serve as an independent engineer for the works.

According to official sources, the selected agency will conduct a reconnaissance survey and finalise site boundaries in consultation with town planning, engineering and revenue officials. They will also perform a total station survey using DGPS and prepare ground-validated drawings,

including mapping of existing buildings and structures. Meanwhile, the transaction advisor will handle financial planning, review similar projects executed under the

from the competent committee. They will also assist QQSUDA in the tender process, evaluation and agency selection. The independent engineer will review the work programme provided by the executing agency, support the client in grounding the project, monitor tests conducted by the agency and oversee trial runs before the project becomes operational.

Project components

Conservation of the remaining facade at the Pathergatti stone arcade. Construction of a tourism/cultural centre. Conservation and development of Sardar Mahal near Charminar as a cultural centre. Facade development at Laad Bazaar. Conservation, restoration and rejuvenation of Khursheed Jah Devdi at Hussaini Alam, Charminar. Construction of an iconic pedestrian bridge at Afzalgunj on the Musi river. Construction of an iconic pedestrian bridge on the eastern side of Nayapul bridge on the Musi river.



PPP/annuity model in Telangana and India and draw relevant insights for this project. Additionally, they will prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) that defines the project scope, eligibility criteria and evaluation methods, ensuring approval

High-rise apartments can set up own polling booths in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR: High-rise apartments or group housing societies with 800 residents or more can now have their own polling stations. A letter to this effect was issued by the Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) recently. Acting on the basis of a communication of the chief electoral officer (CEO), Odisha, ORERA has written to the CREDAI, Odisha unit stating that the Election Commission of India (ECI) desires setting up of new polling booths in high-rise apartments or housing societies with 800 residents or more and having common facility area or community hall on the ground floor. These societies can market such amenity as "separate polling booth for residents". Sources said ORERA was asked by the office of CEO to instruct the existing and upcoming housing societies to facilitate establishment of dedicated polling stations within their premises.

Welcoming the move, RERA activist Bimalendu Pradhan said such voting facility at apartment complexes and housing societies would increase electoral participation of people residing in flats, especially in cities like Bhubaneswar where the voter turnout is significantly low. Pradhan, however, said ORERA must ask the development authorities and civic bodies in different cities and towns to disseminate the information to 'association of allottees' as under RERA norms, ownership of common areas of an apartment or housing project rests with them.

"Around 120 associations of allottees have been already registered in Bhubaneswar. More such associations are in the process of being registered. They need to be communicated about the same," he said.

Spread of invasive aquatic plants poses threat to Upper Kuttanad wetlands in Kerala

The scientists recommended the implementation of effective management strategies to control and eradicate the spread of the weed.

KOTTAYAM: Raising biodiversity concerns in the wetlands of Upper Kuttanad, an invasive plant known as Malayan Hanguana is rapidly spreading throughout the backwater areas of Kumarakom panchayat. The aquatic plant, scientifically named Hanguana anthelmintica, is commonly found in the coastal regions of Southeast Asian countries.

Belonging to the family of Hanguanaceae, Malayan Hanguana is a large, perennial plant that poses a significant threat to local biodiversity and human life in the region. The dense growth of Malayan Hanguana creates ideal conditions for dangerous reptiles, putting human lives at risk. In 2020, Anoop P Balan, an assistant professor with the botany department of BAM College, Pathanamthitta, and N S Pradeep, a senior scientist with the Malabar Botanical Garden, Kozhikode, were the first to identify the presence of this invasive plant in Kumarakom. According to them, that marked the first reported instance of the plant's invasion in India, specifically in the Kumarakom-Vembanad backwaters, with the plant primarily establishing itself in the Kumarakom and Muhamma regions.

Following reports of its presence, scientists from the Kerala Agriculture University (KAU) and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kumarakom, recently conducted a visit to the Ithikkayal area in Kumarakom to assess the situation further. The team consisted of P Prameela, professor and principal investigator, All India Coordinated Research Project on Weed Control, KAU, Savitha Antony, assistant professor, AICRP, and G Jayalekshmi, professor and head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kottayam. Hanguana anthelmintica are halophytes that thrive in marshes, partially submerged in water and sprout from buds beneath the water's surface. These unique plants can reach heights of up to 3 metres. They are distinguished by their long, fleshy, giant leaves that can grow to 1-2 metres tall, emerging from the waterlogged basal rhizomatous stem. Local residents have indicated that the infestation of this plant began as early as 2001 and has since spread to cover an area of approximately 2.50 acres. Speaking to TNIE, Prameela expressed concerns about the spread of these plants. "Initially, we were exploring the possibility of utilising the plant for various purposes such as making fibre. However, this plant poses a significant threat to the region and should be eradicated promptly," she said. "The dense foliage and extensive floating islands created by the plant provide an ideal habitat for dangerous reptiles, such as venomous snakes and crocodiles, increasing the risk."

Mourning the loss of a good citizen

IN the death of Ratan Tata, former chairman of Tata Sons, owners of the Tata legacy, the city of Mumbai has lost not only a tall leader but also, more importantly, a man who never flaunted his wealth nor his achievements, but remained rooted in the values that a resurgent India should strive for. In Switzerland, near the city of Zurich, lies the university town of St Gallen. Every year, the university organises a symposium for students selected from universities outside Switzerland. Participants are picked up on the basis of essays they submit. The winners are invited to the University of St Gallen and exposed to the views of select individuals from across the globe on subjects ranging from business to politics to social mores.

Some years ago, student participants from India questioned one of the three invited speakers, Ratan Tata, (the other two being P Chidambaram and I), on how the Tatas could survive with their old-world values intact in the face of competition advanced by the then up-and-coming Ambanis.

I distinctly remember Ratan's ready answer. "There is place for us (Tatas) at the table. We will continue to perform as per our norms. We do not comment on the practices followed by our competitors, except to the extent that we will not try to emulate or adopt practices that are repugnant to our philosophy."

On another such occasion inside India, an occasion to which I was not invited, someone present said Ratan was asked the same question. He appears to have replied more directly that time, asserting that the Tatas were "industrialists" and not "businessmen". That, I thought, said it all.

JRD Tata, the doyen who nurtured Ratan, as well as Ratan himself, never flaunted their wealth. Money earned was distributed not only to shareholders, who had a major stake in the profits, but also to the needy and the dispossessed through various charitable channels patronised by the Tata companies. Recently, the two Tata Trusts, which own 65 per cent of the total shares in the companies managed by the conglomerate, set up their own special cell to perform the tasks that various NGOs to which they donated funds would undertake. I met up with Ratan more closely when Mukund Rajan, a Rhodes Scholar and son of my IPS batchmate R Govindrajana, was the Tata Chairman's principal aide. The occasion was an inquiry into the unethical conduct of one of Ratan's own confidantes and managing director of a Tata company. The inquiry necessitated an expert from the world of computer technology who could recapture erased data. Some former English police officers, who had served in the Hong Kong police and whom I had met during my stint with the Indian music industry's Protection of Copyrights Cell, were up to the task. I introduced them to Ratan. The Chairman's spontaneous reaction to acrimie committed under his very nose awoke my own desire for justice and fair play. That the head of a big conglomerate could pursue a misdeed with such vigour and commitment restored my own fading belief in the choice of a right over a wrong that should guide a leader's choice. In the IAS and the IPS, there still are officers of integrity and principles, who are not willing to sell their souls in return for their own advancement in service and post-retirement sinecures. It is more difficult to find corporate houses that follow the right path for fear of having to exit the business altogether if they do not comply with questionable requests. It is refreshing to know that the mighty House of Tatas is still standing tall even as many around it fall like ninepins. Governments in power may favour those corporates which seek shelter under their powerful wings. But they will continue to respect the House of Tatas and its leader for their uncompromising adherence to ethical practices in the cut-throat world of commerce and industry. My friend and colleague SM Sukhtankar was chosen as chairman of the Tata Electoral Trust by Ratan. At the same time, I was entrusted with similar responsibilities as head of the Birla Electoral Trust by its chairman, Kumarmangalam.

Why Israel is making full use of US political paralysis

All the equities that the West Asian/ GCC countries have with the US pale into insignificance in the face of the powerful domestic US Jewish lobby.

WHY is Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu going for broke? Why has Israel upped the ante in the one-year-old conflagration by expanding military operations into Lebanon and, perhaps, beyond? Will Israel take the high-risk route of attempting to neutralise Iran's nuclear capabilities? The answers are fairly linear. What Netanyahu is simply doing is taking advantage of a unique six-month window in the US presidential electoral cycle, coupled with a lame duck President in the Oval Office who has lost control of the events in West Asia. The reason why the electoral cycle provides space for manoeuvre is because of the very influential Jewish special interest groups in the US that have been courted and coveted by both Democrats and Republicans alike for more than a century — the famed and feared Jewish lobby. Some of the most prominent and formalised pro-Israel groups that have both financial and electoral muscle are the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), American Jewish Committee (AJC), Christians United for Israel, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish organisations, Democratic Majority for Israel (DMFI) and J Street. Then, there are the informal groups that promote a pro-Israel narrative, namely the Christian Broadcasting Network, Christian Television Network, Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem and a host of others. Individually, and collectively, these groups mobilise billions of dollars to support openly pro-Israel candidates on both sides of the aisle and defeat those both pro-Arab/ Palestinian or anti-Israel. The AIPAC has set up its Super Political Action Committee (S-PAC), namely the United Democracy Project (UDP) to further this cause which acquired a new urgency after the barbaric events of October 7, 2023.

Israel's disproportionate response has alienated young people in the US and could lead to an erosion in the bipartisan support for it in the rarefied corridors of power and influence in Washington DC. In contrast, Arab and, especially, Palestinian influence and support groups have been historically weak in the US, allowing organisations like the AIPAC and AJC to have a relatively smooth run. Had this unique window and constellation of circumstances not manifested themselves, the US Administration may just have been more assertive in

tamping down Israel's newfound enthusiasm for widening the war. Especially relevant is the fact that the US has a military base presence and military-diplomatic ties across at least 19 Muslim Arab nations in the wider West Asia, not limited to Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the UAE. Across the wider West Asia, the sentiment on the street has traditionally been anti-Israel, even though its 'regimes' have nimbly finessed hosting US military bases/boots on

obvious proxy on the list that needed to be first kneecapped was Hezbollah in Lebanon. Then there are the Houthis in Yemen, who recently fired a powerful ballistic missile at Israel; Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Badr Organisation and Kataib Sayyad al-Shuhada in Iraq; Zaynabiyoun Brigade and Fatemiyoun Division in Syria; Hezbollah al Hejaz in Saudi Arabia and Saraya al Ashtar, Saraya al Mukhtar in Barhain, to name a few.

Israel could well widen the conflict by going after these Iranian proxies across West Asia. It certainly believes that this high-risk-high-reward strategy of proxy decapitation will bring a tense but enduring strategic stability to the region. The problem with this strategy is the inherent danger it poses of getting drawn into a conflict with various other Westphalian entities which may host and encourage these semi-state actors — as evidenced by reports of Houthis turning up in Russia, ostensibly for tactical support.

This could well prove to be both an escalatory ladder without any off-ramps, a surefire recipe to a prolonged quagmire. If Israel, indeed, goes down this path, then all bets are off. Finally, will Israel have a go at Iran's yet undeclared nuclear weapons programme or its nuclear enrichment processes that are a precursor to the production of a nuclear bomb? There is a lot of commentary in influential western strategic and foreign policy journals that this is the moment when Israel may well go for Iran's 'crown jewels'.

However, the fact is that it is one thing to go after an enemy's proxy terror groups and a completely different ball game to strike at the enemy — read, Iran's — nuclear programme. Even Israel in its current state of paranoia has to be aware of that.

Coupled with that is the fact that Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist parliamentarian, has just been elected Iranian President, following the tragic demise of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May. An Israel attack on Iran will only strengthen the hands of ultra-conservative hardliners who already seem to have the upper hand following Israel's strike on Hezbollah.

Israel may want to give the new person in Tehran a chance by not taking this 'extreme precipitate step,' while maintaining pressure on the proxies.

The fact remains that the strategic calculations it made in the wake of the October 7, 2023, attack are making Israel play for broke. This has serious implications, to say the least.



their soil, despite the US being Israel's principle security guarantor.

However, all the equities that the West Asian/ GCC countries have with the US pale into insignificance in the face of the powerful domestic US Jewish lobby. This is the window of political paralysis in the US which Netanyahu has deftly exploited, pushing the envelope as far as he can. The next question is: why is Israel's War Cabinet — consisting of Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, head of Israeli Resilience Party Benny Gantz and three non-voting observers General Gadi Eisenkot (ret), Aryeh Deri and Ron Dermer, Minister of Strategic Affairs — upping the ante by widening the war in the region? Here, there is strategic convergence between the US and Israel. Both believe that the way to circumscribing the influence of Iran is to weaken its influential proxies across the Shia Crescent, which became powerful as an inadvertent consequence of the US military intervention in Iraq in 2003. The

Save Buddha Nullah

Turn rejuvenation plans into reality

THE recent review of the Buddha Nullah rejuvenation project underscores the urgent need to restore this vital waterway. A tributary of the Sutlej river flowing through Ludhiana, it has long been a significant resource for the region. However, rampant pollution has turned it into a toxic drain, threatening both public health and the environment. The Central and state governments' commitment of Rs 840 crore to rejuvenate the nullah is promising, yet progress has been sluggish, with pollution sources still unchecked. Industrial waste from Ludhiana's dyeing units, untreated sewage and solid waste have severely polluted the nullah.

One major problem is the lax enforcement of pollution control regulations. Although the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) recently ordered three common effluent treatment plants to stop discharging into Buddha Nullah, compliance remains spotty. These facilities continue to disregard the ZLD (zero liquid discharge) mandate, and over 120 pollution points remain unchecked, adding to the degradation. A recent decision



to form a joint task force by the Centre and the Punjab Government is a step in the right direction. This team of experts is set to inspect critical pollution points, address infrastructure gaps and recommend long-term solutions.

This collaborative approach underscores that restoring the nullah requires strict oversight, improved waste management and community involvement.

The situation is critical. For the residents of Ludhiana and surrounding areas, the pollution in the nullah results in contaminated drinking water, increased health risks and degraded agricultural lands. Civil society and environmental groups have advocated for stronger pollution controls, immediate action at the pollution sources and public awareness on waste management. The Buddha Nullah

rejuvenation project represents an opportunity to reverse years of environmental degradation. This lifeline must be restored to its pristine state so it can again support the ecosystem and serve the people sustainably.

NC must recalibrate in new bipolar order

The National Conference would be better off negotiating the future rather than bargaining for the past position.

THE National Conference has secured not just an electoral victory but also a political one. For the party, the run-up to the elections was primarily about electoral salvation and government formation.

But with the monopolistic mandate that it has been given by the Valley, along with a strong showing in the Pir Panchal region of Jammu, the party will need to recalibrate its politics, if not reinvent it.

Its foundational ideology of "accession on the basis of autonomy" was dismantled in 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated. The many and multiple changes — constitutional, legislative and administrative — have altered the warp and weft of the politics in Jammu and Kashmir. Over the past five years, every policy change has been perceived in the context of a threat to identity and a need for self-assertion.

Given this context, the political leadership of the National Conference has to be transformative, seeking to articulate and pursue an alternative way forward for the state. This will, of course, include a social, economic and political vision as also strategies of navigating it. In the Valley, this election served a major purpose, which was to give vent to feelings of rage and resentment. As in the parliamentary elections, this time too the vote was seen as replacing the stone. Significantly in Jammu, votes were cast in direct contrast to the Kashmir vote. This is akin to a prisoner's dilemma; a paradox that illustrates how two rational individuals acting in their own self-interest can lead to a sub-optimal outcome. These elections have resulted in a massive political consolidation in Jammu and Kashmir, with almost all the political start-ups and Independents being decimated. All the smaller parties, proxies or

no proxies, have been wiped out. The Peoples' Democratic Party, which had declared itself to be the kingmaker rather prematurely, has been reduced to a rubble. The Congress has ensured that it stands on the periphery of irrelevance in the state. Where it could have easily won 10 to 12 seats in Jammu, it has managed to win just one, giving the BJP its highest ever tally of seats. The net result is that the new political order in J&K, post the elections, is fundamentally bipolar, with the National Conference on the one end and the BJP on the other. Though the National Conference has swept the Valley, it has not managed to increase its vote share the way in which the BJP has done in Jammu and the Valley. The bipolar political landscape could have been seen as positive development, except that it largely overlaps the regional and religious divide.

While the National Conference, has, post the "ghar wapsi" of its rebels, got a handful of seats from Jammu and the regional minority community, the BJP has dominated the Jammu plains and got a presence in the Chenab region. There is no denying the fact that these elections have communalised the context of politics in Kashmir. As such, the mandate that has been given, while decisive, can become difficult and even divisive, depending on how the BJP-ruled Centre decides to play its politics in this sensitive state. Even as Jammu and Kashmir must reclaim its position as a fully empowered sub-national government, statehood and the legislative competence of the newly elected Assembly, what is

important at this juncture is to recognise and redress the apprehensions, anxieties and aspirations of the people. Post August 5, 2019, saw a phase of desperation, leading to despair. As such, first, the National Conference government must give the people of Kashmir a voice and articulate the

the government with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. While the electoral verdict is unambiguously one of Jammu versus Kashmir, the National Conference has to make sure it is within the framework of Jammu and Kashmir.

It is not only about politics. A lot of these developments also emerge from the neo-liberal market policies that have been pursued rather recklessly since 2019. They have been based on the optics and perceptions outside of the state, rather than what is required for and by the regional economy. These economic policies have created a socially and sectorally disarticulated regional economy, with developmental distress, soaring levels of unemployment, trade and commerce imperatives and challenges. At the same time, it must not be underestimated that an increasing number of Kashmiris, who, though not supportive of the abrogation, are appreciative of the post-abrogation environment of certainty in their quotidian lives. There are no haltals, no bandhs, not even a call for a boycott. No curfews either.

With the kind of mandate that it has been given, the National Conference would be better off negotiating the future rather than bargaining for the past position. The possibility of new terms of engagement which are more meaningful and relevant to the current time should be explored. A zeitgeist engagement.



existential anxiety they have felt over the past five years. Second, end the "invisibilisation" of Kashmiris and reclaim space in an institutionalised forum, the legislative Assembly, no matter how disempowered. The process of rebuilding the social capital has to be started. Third, engage with the people so as to be able to negotiate with the Centre for a new social compact with the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

But before that, it has also to be about the compact of

6 little changes that can take your Career to the next level in 2020



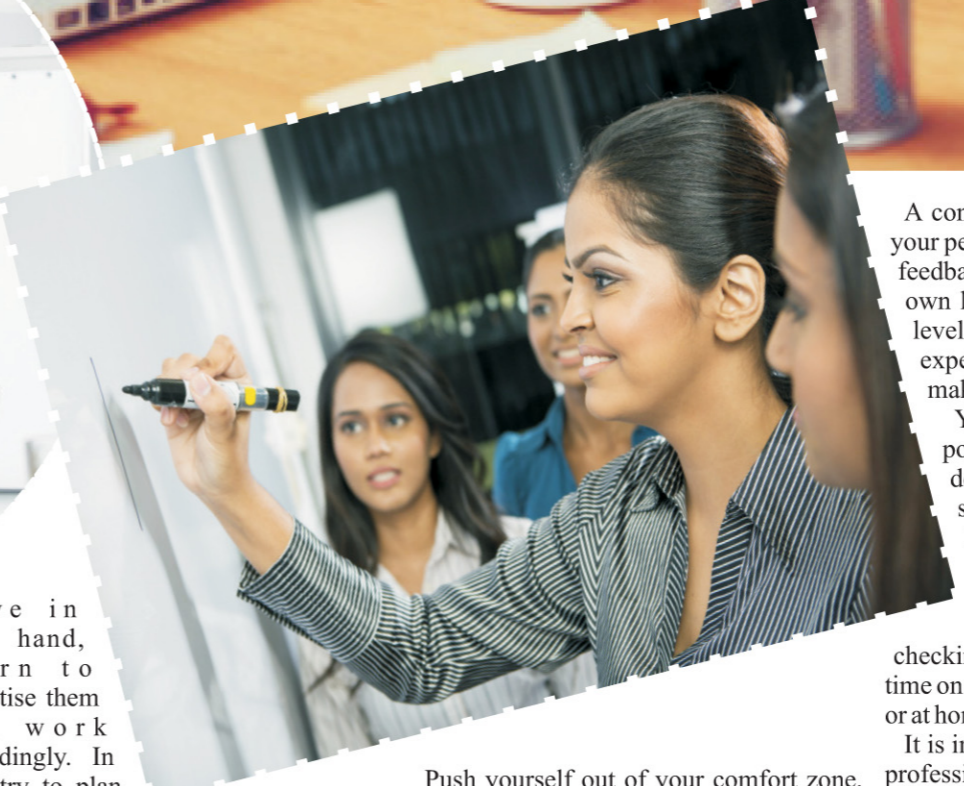
The much-awaited New Year is finally here. While you might have made resolutions to exercise daily, read 20 books before the year ends, splurge less on clothes or learn to play a musical instrument, but have you spared a thought about your professional life? In case, you are still figuring out what all you can do to climb up the corporate ladder in 2019, we have got you covered.



We have compiled a list of six small changes that can make a huge difference in your career. Apart from increasing your daily productivity and managing the stress levels at workplace, these habits would also help you to achieve a better work-life balance. Plus, these changes are quite easy to inculcate in your daily schedule, and are bound to give results even before you start realising.

We all procrastinate at work and it is not a serious issue till the time it starts to hamper your performance. Instead of

delaying a task simply because it does not interest you, set a deadline and challenge yourself to complete it. Remind yourself that there is no point in escaping or delaying it and ultimately, you are increasing your own work burden. Make it a habit to prepare a to-do list every morning, and include a few boring tasks (that make you procrastinate) in it among the important ones. If not this, break your task into small, achievable steps, and push yourself to complete them.



Push yourself out of your comfort zone, and try to take up new projects that offer you learning opportunities. It would help you to address your weak areas, and challenge your existing skills. Commit yourself to give your best shot to whatever you are doing, and you will soon become your own source of motivation.

A constructive feedback hurts no one! Ask your peers to review your work and share their feedback. It will help you to accelerate your own learning and improve your knowledge level. Further, it would help to meet the expectation levels of your manager and make you a better team player.

You might not have realised it, but the pop up notifications on your mobile and desktop, especially from your personal social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, affect your concentration levels. As soon as you reach office, make it a habit to switch off all the app notifications and limit checking these during the day. Instead, spend time on all these apps when you are commuting or at home.

It is important to be ambitious and strive for professional success, but do not forget to appreciate what you have in hand. The next time you crib about your job, think about those who are sitting jobless at home, or those who have got fired due to cost cutting. You are definitely at a better position than millions and therefore, do not forget to count on your blessings every day.

10 career advice you wish your younger self knew

We all learn from our past mistakes and experiences, and later repent brooding—wish we would have known about this earlier...isn't it? And when it comes to professional life, some 'innocent' mistakes can cost you strained relationships with colleagues, and even your job, sometimes!



- We got in touch with ten professionals from different walks of life and asked them the one advice they would like to give their younger self. Here's what they had to say...
1. "When I joined my first office, I used to think everyone is good-hearted and humble. I started considering a few colleagues very close and got deeply hurt when the same people started bitching about me behind my back after some time. That was my first learning in the corporate world, and that day, I made sure to not start trusting anybody and everybody in professional life."- Nitya Agarwal, 25
 2. "I firmly believe one should not share their secrets and personal problems with anyone in the office. You never know what happens the next day in office and what the situation is. People may change and things may backfire anytime."- Nitish Mishra, 27
 3. "I was really ambitious since day one of my professional life and used to think way

more than required on how I can grow professionally and get a better salary package. I wish somebody would have advised me to just work hard and go with the flow; and that things fall in place eventually. Additionally, I would have surely advised my 21-year-old self to enjoy

4. "Mine is pretty simple and effective. Bitching and gossiping won't make you popular. You need to prove your worth with your work."- Anurima Roy, 28
5. "My advice to myself would be to never

6. "I would advise myself to realise where my real talent lies. Don't go after salary for the initial years and focus on the larger picture. If you are good at what you do, you are bound to be successful. Struggle in initial years of professional life would be worth it."- Samaera Mohan, 29
7. "Initially, I used to get really apprehensive about what my colleagues think about me. I wish I could tell my 21-year-old self that it hardly matters what your office mates think about you. You should

8. "It was my first job and I gossiped about my boss with my colleague in an online chat. Later, she showed the same chat to my boss, and I got fired! I would surely advise my younger self to not do that. I got really upset at that time but now, I laugh thinking about it."- Alka Behl, 32
9. "My advice would be to go out and socialise. Going out for office events, parties will help you network with the right kind of people. Getting to know new people will inspire you in so many ways, and it might help you at work someday. So don't just stick around your desk and say no to all parties and events!"- Navya Anand, 25
10. "I am still trying to inculcate this advice in my life, and it's a pretty common advice. One must leave all office-related stress at office, and chill at home. Taking work home or even thinking about office at home should be banned from one's life." Abhilash Kumar, 30



The price of expertise: Are 'expert committees' a burden on the taxpayer?

NEW DELHI: Throughout India's history, expert committees have played a key role in addressing complex policy, legal, and social issues requiring specialised knowledge. These committees are often formed to provide independent recommendations or propose solutions in areas such as agriculture, economics, medicine, and science, where technical expertise is crucial. Government officials or the judiciary may lack the necessary expertise in these fields, so expert committees are convened to gather facts, analyse data, and offer evidence-based recommendations. These committees also provide neutral assessments on contentious issues, acting as third-party evaluators during public protests, legal standoffs, or disagreements—such as the debate around the farm laws. They help shape government policy and judicial decisions and can mediate conflict resolution, as seen during the Shaheen Bagh protests and other social movements.

Expert committees in India are typically constituted by both the Government of India and the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court. Government-appointed committees are usually formed through notifications or executive orders. While in principle, the government forms an expert committee

whenever expert opinion is required, in practice, these committees are often created when the government faces pressure to implement significant policy changes or social reforms. On the other hand, committees formed by the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, are often established in response to public interest litigations (PILs) or high-profile cases requiring expert opinion to ensure transparency and fairness. These panels have played critical roles in resolving protests, investigating financial irregularities, and ensuring the safety of marginalised sections of society. However, their effectiveness depends heavily on the follow-up actions taken by the relevant authorities based on their recommendations. The Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, is a key piece of legislation empowering both the central and state governments to establish commissions to investigate matters of public importance. Governments often establish committees under this Act in compliance with court orders. The Act provides a legal framework for setting up commissions, outlining their powers, procedures, and reporting structures. The Commission of Inquiry Act has been used to investigate several high-profile cases, such as the



Gujarat riots, the Bhopal gas tragedy, and corruption scandals involving public officials. While the recommendations made by these commissions are not legally binding, they often influence significant policy decisions or judicial outcomes. Who Pays for These Expert Committees?

Neither the Commission of Inquiry Act nor the rules framed under it specify the expenses for the functioning of these expert committees.

Research shows that compensation for committee members can vary significantly depending on several factors, including the size and composition of the committee, the complexity of the issues, the duration of the committee's work, and the expertise of the

individuals involved. Compensation is typically determined by government-established norms to ensure that committee members are fairly remunerated for their time, effort, and specialised knowledge. For instance, committees dealing with highly complex or sensitive issues may require members with particular expertise, which commands a higher fee. Additionally, the duration of the committee's work plays a role; some members receive fixed payments for the entire task, while others are compensated on a per-day or per-meeting basis, especially if their involvement is intermittent. Travel-related expenses—such as accommodation, transportation, and per diems—are typically reimbursed to ensure these costs do not burden the members.

Funding for these payments is usually drawn from the government's budget, often allocated to the relevant department overseeing the committee's work. This mechanism maintains transparency and accountability, as public funds are used to compensate experts. Ensuring impartiality in decision-making and avoiding private or corporate influence are essential, especially since taxpayer money is involved. Therefore, it is crucial that the committee's

work is driven by merit and the public good, rather than personal or financial gain.

However, it is important to note that any commission's findings are advisory and not legally binding. As a result, recommendations are often ignored or only partially implemented, reducing their practical impact. A frequent criticism of such committees is the significant time and cost involved. Some inquiries stretch over several years, producing lengthy reports and delaying corrective actions. This prolonged process adds to the financial burden, contributing to inefficiency.

The Liberhan Commission was established by the Government of India in 1993 to investigate the events leading up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Chaired by retired Justice MS Liberhan, the commission sought to ascertain the facts surrounding the incident, which had significant political and communal ramifications across India. The commission's inquiry focused on several aspects, including the roles of political leaders, organisations, and law enforcement agencies in the events leading to the demolition. It also examined the broader context of communal tensions in the region and the involvement of right-wing groups.

BSF shoots down Pak drone carrying heroin, pistol in Punjab's Ferozepur

New Delhi: The Border Security Force (BSF) has shot down a Pakistani drone that was carrying heroin and a pistol in Punjab's Ferozepur, officials said on Saturday. The drone, a DJI Mavic 3 Classic made in China, was



carrying 500 grams of heroin, a pistol, and a magazine, officials added. "Alert troops of BSF Punjab intercepted a Pakistani drone that violated Indian airspace. BSF personnel immediately fired at the drone, subsequently brought it down using technical measures," the BSF Punjab Frontier tweeted.

The BSF has previously shot down multiple Pakistani drones in Punjab. Two Pakistan-made drones were seized by the Punjab Police near Amritsar in March. Another China-made drone was shot down near the India-Pakistan border in Gurdaspur district in February.

Woman, lover kill 65-year-old man after he asks her to live together in MP

New Delhi: A 65-year-old retired railway employee was killed by a 35-year-old woman and her lover in Madhya Pradesh's Niwari. The woman had been in a relationship with the victim and killed him after he started pestering her to live with him. The matter came to light after police recovered the half burnt body of the man, identified as Ghanshyam Kushwaha, on October 7. Police began scanning CCTV footage to identify the accused, noting that the body had been burnt to hide the victim's identity. Police were able to trace the woman and her lover after scanning the footage. During questioning, the woman revealed that she was with the victim for his money and



killed him with the help of her partner after he started asking her to live with him. On the night of the incident, the two took the victim to a secluded spot where the man hit Ghanshyam with an iron rod, following which he fell unconscious. The accused burnt the victim's body to hide his identity and then escaped on his bike. A police official revealed that over 100 CCTV cameras were scanned to identify the accused. Furthermore, he said that the police found blood-stained clothes, an iron rod, matchsticks and oil bottles at the spot.

How Air India Express Pilots Handled Mid-Air Scare Over Trichy

New Delhi: A report of hydraulic failure from a Tiruchirappalli-Sharjah Air India Express flight and its subsequent holding pattern for over two hours may have caused panic on the ground, but things were always under control inside the cockpit, senior sources from the airline have told NDTV. Flight AXB 613 took off from Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu at 5.40 pm on Friday and landed at the same airport around 8.15 pm.

The sources said that after the plane, a Boeing 737-800, was airborne, the landing gear was retracted normally.

When the landing gear, or undercarriage, was stowed successfully, the cockpit master caution, which indicates a system malfunction, sounded. Sensors detected that oil had drained out of the hydraulic system which controls the

undercarriage. The aircraft flew normally in all other respects, the sources said, adding that the 737-800 has redundancies built into the



hydraulic system to deal with such situations.

The pilots decided to return to the Tiruchirappalli airport and chose not to undertake an 'overweight landing' with full fuel on board. The aircraft maintained a holding pattern at a short distance from the city to ensure that

the fuel was burnt off and the landing weight was acceptable for making a normal approach to the Tiruchirappalli airport. The undercarriage was manually deployed and locked into position at the first attempt, enabling the aircraft to make a normal landing. On the ground, meanwhile, preparations had been made for an emergency landing. Tiruchirappalli Airport Director Gopalakrishnan said that 20 ambulances and 18 fire engines were on standby. Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu had also asked officials to remain on alert and the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was coordinating.

'Will Investigate Cause'

An Air India Express spokesperson said the cause of the snag would be investigated and the safety of passengers was their main concern.

Police Case Against Digvijaya Singh's Nephew Over Street Play Disruption

New Delhi: A police case has been filed against Aditya Vikram Singh, the nephew of ex-Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh in Raghogarh in Guna district.

The case relates to an incident during a street play on women's safety - under the 'main hoon Abhimanyu' awareness that was organised by the cops at a city college. Aditya Vikram Singh and his driver, Udham Singh Rajput, have been accused of disrupting the event, arguing with police officers, and misbehaving with college staff.

Aditya Vikram Singh and his driver arrived at the scene and objected to the programme, and a video of that confrontation was widely shared online. It showed Digvijaya Singh's nephew smoking a cigarette while arguing with the cops. In the video he

can also be heard threatening the officers, stating, "You are above the Supreme Court?" and driver can be



heard saying, "Entire Raghogarh belongs to them."

The play involved 25 students from JP College and several police officers, including Station In-charge (TI) Zuber

Khan and SDOP Deepa Dodwe, were present. Aditya Vikram Singh reportedly argued with Sub-Inspector Ravi Bhilala at the scene, demanding the program be stopped. When TI Zuber Khan tried to pacify him, he allegedly pushed him and declared, "No program will take place here, remove everyone." Despite efforts to resolve the matter peacefully, he reportedly continued to harass the officers and even told the students to leave the scene. In the video, SDOP Dodwe is heard saying, "I am not doing anything wrong", and his comment is met with dismissive remarks. At one point, TI Zuber Khan is seen folding his hands, requesting Aditya to leave, "Hukum, I humbly request you to please leave from here" but the situation escalated further.

ED conducts searches across Delhi, Mumbai in case involving 600 kg of narcotics

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted search operations across Delhi-NCR and Mumbai on Friday, following the seizure of over 600 kg of drugs by the Delhi Police. The investigation was initiated by an FIR which mentioned the names of four accused - Tushar Goyal, Himanshu Kumar, Aurangzeb Siddiqui, and Bharat Kumar. The drugs, which included 562 kg of cocaine and 40 kg of hydroponic marijuana, were seized by the Delhi Police's Special Cell. The ED's investigation revealed that Tushar Goyal, the alleged kingpin, had stored the drugs at his family-owned godown at Mahipalpur in Delhi. Tushar Goyal had also visited Dubai and Thailand in June to meet associates and plan drug distribution. It was uncovered that he was working with a Dubai-based mastermind previously linked to narcotic trafficking. The ED searched the residential premises of Goyal in



Vasant Enclave and Rajouri Garden, and his associates Himanshu Kumar and Bharat Kumar in Mumbai's Prem Nagar and Nalasolpara. The agency also raided Goyal's business establishments in Delhi's Jhandewalan and Gurugram, which are owned by his family. The

officials recovered crucial financial documents, which had details of the financial activities and properties of the accused. The marijuana is suspected to have originated from Phuket, Thailand, and was brought to India via air route. The cocaine is believed to have been

sourced from West Asian countries and various Indian states. Officials added that the accused mostly paid in cryptocurrency to acquire the drugs and later sold them. The investigation revealed that the gang was planning to sell large quantities of drugs at concerts, rave parties, and upscale localities in Delhi and other metropolitan cities. Goyal was found to have international links. Goyal's alleged connection with Congress sparked a political row, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah criticising the grand old party. The mastermind's purported Facebook account features a profile picture with a tiger, and his bio mentions that he is the "Chairman of Delhi Pradesh RTI Cell of DYPC, Indian Youth Congress." However, the Indian Youth Congress stated that he was expelled from the organisation in October 2022 for indulging in anti-party activities.

Delhi Zoo's Lone African Elephant "Freed From Chains" After Welfare Review

New Delhi: The Delhi Zoo's lone African elephant, Shankar, walked freely in his enclosure after being released from chains on Friday, the Ministry of Environment said.

Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh had reviewed Shankar's health and habitat conditions on Wednesday with officials from the Environment Ministry and experts from Vantara, the Jamnagar-based wildlife facility of the Reliance Group. On Monday, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) had suspended the membership of the Delhi zoo due to concerns over Shankar's welfare, as he had been living without a companion and "kept in chains".

The ministry said in a statement on Friday that Shankar was seen walking freely in his enclosure after being released from chains.

Vardhan Singh shared a video on his official X account and said, "Following my visit to the zoo on October 9 and meeting Shankar, the lone African elephant, we brought together the Ministry of Environment, Team Vantara from Jamnagar, and expert veterinary doctors. I am happy to share that Shankar is finally free from chains. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the team -- including Neeraj, Yaduraj, Dr Adrian from South Africa, and Michael from the Philippines -- rehabilitation is progressing as per the action plan." The minister's initiative aimed at improving Shankar's health includes 24/7 behavioural monitoring by veterinary experts and mahouts, the statement said.

Shankar was freed from his chains without any medication. Experts will continue to observe his behaviour over the next few days to ensure smooth progress, while zoo staff and mahouts will receive special training to interact with him, it added. A personalised diet and activity plan for Shankar will be created based on his behaviour and daily routine, the ministry said. Vardhan Singh also consulted with Michael, a mahout from the Philippines, via video conference to check on Shankar's well-being. On Friday, Shankar appeared more relaxed, indicating positive developments in his rehabilitation, according to the statement. Zimbabwe had gifted the elephant to then President of India Shankar Dayal Sharma in 1996. Shankar was brought to India and has been housed at the Delhi zoo ever since. Shankar has been alone since his companion, another African elephant named Bambai, died in 2005.

CZA Member Secretary Sanjay Shukla earlier told PTI that Botswana has agreed to provide an African female elephant to be paired with Shankar. "Shankar and his companion will be kept at the Delhi zoo as per global standards," he had said.

Not just bad Superiors

people shun good bosses too

If you thought that a bad boss triggers employee exodus, you are probably wrong as workers leave good bosses too and use friendly terms as a source of future business or get key market information to boost their career ahead,



an Indian-American professor has found. According to Ravi S. Gajendran, professor of business administration at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an organisation's former employees -- or "alumni" -- can potentially be important strategic assets in the future, provided they leave on good terms.

"If you have a good relationship with an employee who's left to join a client or competitor, you can leverage that relationship and potentially use them as a source of future business or as a back-channel source of information," Gajendran said in a university statement. "Therefore, thinking of ex-employees as a strategic constituency is something more organisations should start doing,"

he added. Using data from interviews with ex-employees, Gajendran and his co-authors found that among employees who quit, the quality of the boss-worker relationship is positively related to higher salaries and greater responsibility in a worker's next job as well as the goodwill they feel toward their former company. "If you're making people happier, it should stand to reason that they're more committed to the organisation. But the numbers don't bear that out," the authors said. So why do

workers leave despite having such a high-quality relationship with their manager? "What we find is, if you have a good manager, they're going to invest in you, they're going to develop you, you're going to become a better, more competent employee, which also means you're more in-demand as a worker," Gajendran noted. You could move up in the organisation but that path may not always be available. "Managers also might not want you to go up internally because then they're

losing a valued employee. So it means you're attractive to employers in the outside job market," the professor pointed out. That is why people leave good managers, precisely because good managers invest in and develop their employees. They typically get a better job with more responsibilities at their next employer. While that scenario might leave managers in a bind, Gajendran's research finds that there's a silver lining to valued employees leaving good managers. They are more likely to be

open to a reunion with the organisation as a so-called 'boomerang employee', but they could also be a good source of information for the organisation," Gajendran emphasised. "Our paper also shows that even employees who are leaving can be valuable somewhere down the line," Gajendran said. As a result, companies need to pay closer attention to the "off-boarding" process. According to the paper, it also helps if managers at least make an overture to retain employees, even if they think it's unlikely they'll accept the offer to stay.

Should you consider taking a Sabbatical?

Sabbatical goes a long way to help rejuvenate one's life and career. Preeti was getting bogged down by her mundane routine job. Her, otherwise, successful career was getting monotonous. Finding a way out of the boredom, she took a sabbatical for one year and spent it with her parents in a sleepy and quaint town in Himachal Pradesh. A year later, Preeti returned, feeling much rejuvenated and energised. Like Preeti, you may also take a break and get a whiff of fresh air to escape the monotony and infuse fresh life in your work. Today's highly demanding job schedule and work load are most likely to create a sense of lethargy or monotony in one's working life. A sabbatical from the hustle bustle of the city life helps to recharge yourself. But a sabbatical is somewhat more than a

quick break. It is a prolonged break from one's professional job. It gives us the space and time to introspect on our personal and professional lives and evaluate ourselves. It gives us room to take a quick look at our career and long-term goals that are often neglected, thanks to the kind of pressure we need to undergo in our professional life. Sanjeev Agrawal, vice president, operations and human empowerment, Impetus Infotech (India) Pvt Ltd says, "With job pressures on the rise in modern times, many employees are opting for breaks to rejuvenate themselves. Sabbaticals provide one such opportunity and help them address their personal issues, pursue their hobbies, acquire new skills and be more fulfilled. If used judiciously, sabbaticals can help individuals to emerge as refined professionals." A sabbatical allows us to review our

accomplishments and shortcomings, fix priorities and set goals in our life. It also helps us strike a perfect balance between our personal and professional lives. Rajeev Bhardwaj, VP HR, Sun Life Financial Asia Service Centre maintains, "A sabbatical can make a positive difference in one's life, but a lot depends on how an individual puts it to use. If taken positively, a sabbatical can turn out to be the turning point of one's life. One gets valuable time to take stock of their life, understand what they are doing and what they would like to do. Once clear about all these aspects, one can be at greater peace with one's self and not afraid or apprehensive of the unknown." Find out how to save huge on CV fuel cost Mahindra RisePower in your pocket. Trade anytime, anywhere for a sabbatical is typically one year and it leaves a deep impact

on our personal attitude if taken in the right perspective. Bhardwaj suggests, "A sabbatical is a great opportunity to renew professionally and evolve into a satisfied and well-rounded individual. Such an opportunity can be used to address aspects of burnout or exhaustion, investing time in rebuilding one's self. Such de-stressing of the fatigued mind and soul can be done by engaging in hobbies and interests that might have taken a back seat, volunteering for social causes or even reading or teaching to fine-tune one's craft." Normally, once we start working, we don't get enough time to renew and upgrade our skills and competencies. As the focus is purely on doing day-to-day work, one's output can quickly and without realising become stale. One may even end up losing the energy and effectiveness one had at the start. V Krishnan, executive director-HR, Dabur India Ltd says the objective of taking a sabbatical is key to serve the

purpose. "If the purpose of the sabbatical is to improve your knowledge and gain skills that help you in performing your roles better and also add value to the organisation, it's a win-win situation," Krishnan notes. Professional success is a combination of competency, energy, drive and ability to reach out and achieve closure. During a sabbatical, one can look at these components and hone these elements to become a better professional and human being, asserts Bhardwaj. "With changing times, employers are also more receptive to employees who have taken breaks as against a few years ago. In fact, the concept of sabbaticals is gaining more and more acceptance across the industry," he adds. A sabbatical helps you come back as a successful professional with a pronounced freshness in spirit, creativity and energy. It's all about self-renewal and self-growth. So go ahead, take that break and discover yourself, all over again!

Corporate philanthropy impacts employees positively

philanthropy brings in a positive impact on employees of businesses that actively partake in corporate giving, says a study. Giving enhances a business's reputation and strengthens a business's efforts toward corporate social responsibility and also benefits the employees, the study said. The way that firms choose to deploy those funds has a huge impact on the degree to which giving affects employees, the findings showed. Just saving is not enough anymore. MyUniverse. Specifically, the impact is stronger when firms donate to a few big and visible targets rather than to a wider range of charities chosen by the employees themselves," said Emily Block, researcher from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, US. By coupling donations with opportunities to volunteer, organisations can enhance the positive impact on employees, the study revealed.

Employees care about impact and they respond more positively to donations to larger, more strategic and more centralised



targets, revealed the study, published in the Journal of Business Ethics. To examine how corporate philanthropy affects those inside the organization, the researchers analysed three years' of data on the attitudes of an average of 14,577 employees in 53 offices.



Telecom sector to stabilise by FY27 with 15% increase in tariff

NEW DELHI. The Indian telecom sector is expected to stabilise with an additional tariff hike of 15% by the fiscal year 2027, according to a report by JP Morgan. The report notes that despite a decade marked by disruption, the Indian telecom sector will stabilise, with another tariff increase anticipated by FY27.

Additionally, the current regulatory climate provides a conducive environment for telecom companies to implement successive tariff increases without alienating consumers. "We believe India will stay in tariff repair over the next few years supported by a benign regulatory regime after a decade of disruption given limited returns, lack of AGR relief and persistent affordability. We build in 15% tariff hikes in FY27 as well," reads the report. According to the report, mobile tariffs in India remain significantly lower than those in other Asian markets, with the Indian data yield at just \$0.09 per GB. J.P. Morgan believes that as affordability improves and regulatory pressures ease, telecom operators such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea can progressively raise tariffs to align more closely with regional trends.

"India has the lowest data yield among its Asian peers nine years after Jio's disruptive entry and after three tariff hikes," said the report. This low pricing structure, coupled with mobile fees accounting for 0.7% of GDP, indicates substantial headroom for tariff increases.

Prataap Snacks to offload 26% stake

NEW DELHI. Authum Investment & Infrastructure and Mahi Madhusudan Kela, who bought the 47% stake of private equity (PE) firm Peak XV (formerly Sequoia Capital) in Prataap Snacks (PSL) on Friday submitted a draft letter to the stock exchange to launch the mandatory open offer for acquiring an additional 26.01% stake.

"This offer is being made by the Acquirer along with the PAC to the Public Shareholders to acquire up to 62,98,351 equity shares representing 26.01% of the voting share capital (offer size), at an offer price of Rs 864 per equity share (offer price) determined in accordance with the provisions of SEBI (SAST) Regulations," said the draft letter filed on the BSE. The acquirers will be spending up to Rs 544.17 crore to acquire the 26.01% stake. The offer price of Rs 864 per share is significantly lower than the current share price of PSL. On Friday, shares of the Indore-based company closed 1.75% lower at Rs 1,123.75 apiece on the NSE. The acquirer (i.e. Authum Investment & Infrastructure) and the PAC (i.e. Mahi Madhusudan Kela) had entered into a share purchase agreement on September 26 with Peak XV to which the acquirer had agreed to acquire 1.02 crore equity shares of PSL and PAC (Kela) agreed to acquire from the 11 shares at Rs 746 per share for an aggregate consideration of Rs 846.60 crore.

Satellite communication companies allocated spectrum

NEW DELHI. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Friday said it has provisionally allocated spectrum to eligible satellite communication players for a period of six months. The DoT, in a notification, said the spectrum will be given to firms that have secured licences from DoT as well as In-Space authorisation certificates. Currently, there are two companies -- OneWeb and Jio-SES -- that have received licences for satellite communication in the country. Elon Musk-led Starlink and Amazon have applied but yet to get approval from the government. DoT said the purpose of providing the provisional spectrum is to demonstrate all the compliances related to security and technical conditions by the licensee. The government said in a circular that the firms will be able to use these for trial purposes not for the commercial rollout.

"No claim can be made for regular use/assignment of the provisional spectrum frequencies. Any regular spectrum assignment will be subject to the regulations/policies including authorization framework, spectrum pricing mechanism etc... prevalent at or after the time of expiry of the above security compliance period," reads the notification. The government's move comes amid a dispute between Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel. Jio is in favour of a satellite spectrum auction, while Bharti Airtel is in favour of direct allocation to satellite communication players.

RBI asks banks to ensure access for differently-abled

NEW DELHI. The Reserve Bank of India on Friday asked banks to review their payment systems to ensure easier accessibility to persons with disabilities. The RBI said in a circular all sections of the population, including differently-abled persons, are increasingly adopting digital payment systems.

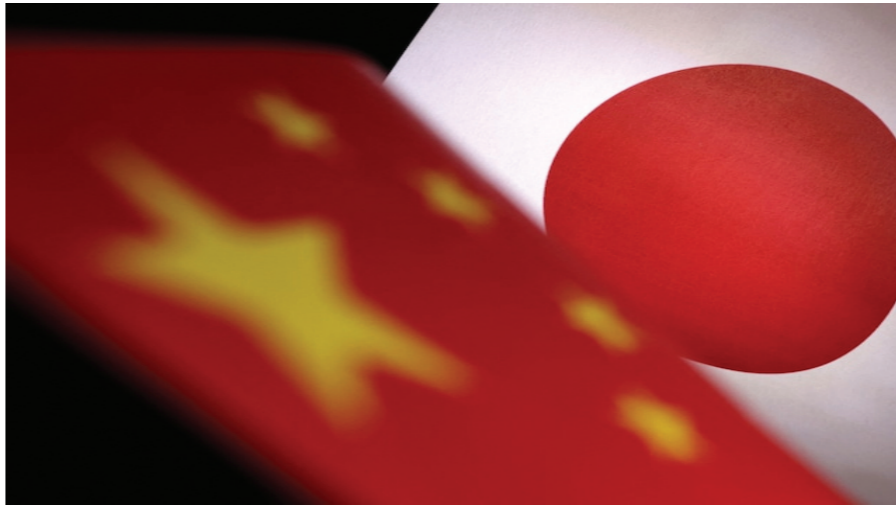


"To promote effective access, payment system participants (PSPs), that is, banks and authorised non-bank payment system providers are advised to review their payment systems/devices in terms of accessibility to persons with disabilities," it noted. Based on the review, banks and non-bank payment system providers may carry out modifications in payment systems and devices like point-of-sale machines, which can be accessed and used by persons with disabilities with ease. It asked them to refer to the accessibility standards issued by the finance ministry in February.

China's Finance Minister Says Room for More Economic Stimulus but Offers No Plan

China's Finance Minister Lan Fo'an Lan's remarks leave the door open for a stimulus plan in the future but he did not divulge what is under consideration.

NEW DELHI. The Chinese government is looking at additional ways to boost the economy, Finance Minister Lan Fo'an said Saturday, but he stopped short of unveiling a major new stimulus plan that analysts and stock investors were hoping for. Lan's remarks left the door open for such a plan in the future but he did not divulge what is under consideration. "There are other policy tools that are being discussed that are still in the pipeline," he said at a news



conference, adding that there is "ample room" in the government budget to raise debt and increase the deficit. China's economy has remained sluggish despite the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions at

the end of 2022. Companies have cut back on hiring and wages and a prolonged downturn in the property market has deflated consumer confidence, curbing spending. The government has raised

pensions and offered subsidies to people who trade in old cars or appliances for new ones, but such steps have failed to jolt economic growth. Chinese stock markets rallied after the central bank and other government agencies announced steps at the end of September to revive the property sector and prop up financial markets. But the rally has since cooled amid concern about whether the moves were enough to generate a sustainable economic recovery. Investors were hoping Lan would announce a stimulus package of up to 2 trillion yuan (\$280 billion). The finance minister instead said the government would roll out a package of incremental measures to speed up implementation of its existing policies. They include increasing scholarships for students, issuing bonds to help major banks replenish their capital, and providing more support to highly indebted local governments, some of which have had to curtail public services.

Forex ends seven-week winning streak, down \$3.7 bn; rupee falls below 84 level

MUMBAI. The country's forex reserves, which crossed the \$700 billion mark to become the world's fourth largest, have halted the seven-week winning streak to come off by \$3.71 billion in the reporting week ending October 4, after having risen by a total of nearly \$35 billion in the previous seven weeks.

The fall can be attributed to the constant market intervention by the RBI to stem the rupee slide, which has been under pressure for months now.

Meanwhile, the rupee plunged to record low of 84.06 on Friday, crossing the sensitive level of 84 first-time ever. During the day the unit had a lower 84.07. Yet on a weekly basis, the rupee is down only 0.3%. The week also marks the worst since May 2024 and losing 0.3% on-week as equity outflows surged and crude prices rose due to a worsening of the Middle Eastern conflict. The RBI intervenes in the forex market to manage liquidity and prevent excessive

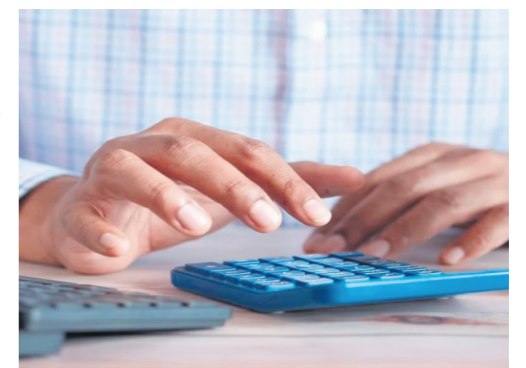


rupee volatility either towards depreciation or appreciation, ensuring orderly market conditions without aiming for specific exchange rate targets. The monetary authority has no official level for the currency. As per the weekly statistical supplement released by the RBI on Friday, the country's foreign exchange reserves fell for the first time in eight weeks and came off a record high to stand at \$701.18 billion

in the week to October 4. The RBI data, the foreign exchange reserves had scaled \$704.89 billion in the previous week, becoming the world's fourth largest after China, Japan and Switzerland. The reserves had hit a record high in the week to September 27, rallying by \$12.6 billion, making the biggest weekly rise since mid-July 2023. The reserves were at \$625.63 billion when the current fiscal year began. As per the data, foreign currency assets (FCAs), which are biggest component of the reserves, dipped by \$3.51 billion to \$612.6 billion. Expressed in dollar terms, the FCAs include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves fell by \$40 million to \$65.76 billion. Special drawing rights saw a marginal dip of \$123 million to stand at \$18.43 billion. Reserve position in the IMF fell by \$35 million to \$4.35 billion.

Net direct tax revenue grows by 18.3% to Rs 11.25 lakh crore

NEW DELHI: Net direct tax collection increased by 18.3%, reaching Rs 11.25 lakh crore as of October 10 this fiscal year, according to the government data released on Friday. The total revenue includes personal income tax collections of Rs 5.98 lakh crore and corporate tax collections of Rs 4.94 lakh crore. Additionally, the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) amounted to Rs 30,630 crore, while other taxes, which encompass the equalization levy and gift tax, contributed Rs 2,150 crore. Net direct tax revenue, after accounting for refunds, was Rs 9.5 trillion during the same period last year. The tax department reported that it has issued refunds totaling Rs 2.3 trillion to taxpayers, including both individuals and



IIP in August contracts by 0.1% on weak mining, power output

NEW DELHI. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) in August registered a year-on-year decline of 0.1%, a significant drop from the 4.7% growth recorded in July. This decrease is on account of reductions in the output of mining and electricity, alongside a notable slowdown in manufacturing for the month, the National Statistical Office (NSO) data showed. As per the data, mining output fell by 4.3% in August, a sharp fall from the 3.8% growth recorded in the previous month. Electricity output fell by 3.7%, down from 7.9%. Manufacturing output slowed to 1% in August, compared to 4.4% in July. Data indicated that 11 out of the 23 manufacturing sectors saw a fall in output growth during August, with sectors including food products, beverages, paper, coke, and refined products among those affected. Output in various use-based categories saw a



slowdown, with capital goods growing by 0.7%, intermediate goods by 3%, infrastructure goods by 1.9%, and consumer durables by 5.2%. Conversely, output in primary goods contracted by 2.6%, while consumer non-durables saw a decline of 4.5% during the month. Meanwhile, from April to August 2024, the IIP saw a growth of 4.2%, in contrast to 6.2% growth observed during the same period in the previous fiscal year. As

per Rajani Sinha, chief economist, CareEdge Ratings, "The slowdown was due to unfavourable base. Among major sectors, mining and electricity sectors saw a contraction. Heavy rainfall in August may have had a bearing on the mining sector slowdown. Consumption-related segments showed a mixed performance, with the output of consumer durables rising by 5.2%, while non-durables remained in contraction for the third consecutive month, declining by 4.5%." "Although the monsoon has been favourable, its distributional issues remained. Domestic private consumption demand is expected to pick up during the early festive season this year. External demand remained weak, evidenced by two consecutive months of contraction in merchandise exports during July and August," Sinha added.

Boeing will lay off 10% of its employees as a strike by factory workers cripples airplane production

NEW DELHI. Boeing plans to lay off about 10% of its workers in the coming months, about 17,000 people, as it continues to lose money and tries to deal with a strike that is crippling production of the company's best-selling airplane planes. New CEO Kelly Ortberg told staff in a memo Friday that the job cuts will include executives, managers and employees. The company has about 170,000 employees worldwide, many of them working in manufacturing facilities in the states of Washington and South Carolina. Boeing had already imposed rolling temporary furloughs, but Ortberg said those will be suspended because of the impending layoffs. The company will further delay the rollout of a new plane, the 777X, to 2026 instead of 2025. It will also stop building the cargo version of its 767 jet in 2027 after finishing current orders. Boeing has lost more than \$25 billion since the start of 2019. About 33,000 union machinists have been on strike since Sept. 14. Two days of talks this week failed to produce a deal, and Boeing filed an unfair-labor-practices charge against the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. As it



announced layoffs, Boeing also gave a preliminary report on its third-quarter financial results — and the news is not good for the company. Boeing said it burned through \$1.3 billion in cash during the quarter and lost \$9.97 per share. Industry analysts had been expecting the company to lose \$1.61 per share in the quarter, according to a FactSet survey, but analysts were likely unaware of some large write-downs that Boeing announced Friday — a \$2.6 billion charge related to delays of the 777X, \$400 million for the 767, and \$2

billion for defense and space programs including new Air Force One jets, a space capsule for NASA and a military refueling tanker. The company based in Arlington, Virginia, said it had \$10.5 billion in cash and marketable securities on Sept. 30. Boeing is scheduled to release full third-quarter numbers on Oct. 23. The strike has a direct bearing on cash burn because Boeing gets half or more of the price of planes when it delivers them to airline customers. The strike has shut down production of the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling plane,

and 777s and 767s. The company is still making 787s at a nonunion plant in South Carolina. "Our business is in a difficult position, and it is hard to overstate the challenges we face together," Ortberg told staff. He said the situation "requires tough decisions and we will have to make structural changes to ensure we can stay competitive and deliver for our customers over the long term." Ortberg took over at Boeing in August, becoming the troubled company's third CEO in less than five years. He is a longtime aerospace-industry executive but an outsider to Boeing.

The new CEO faces many challenges to turn the company around. The Federal Aviation Administration increased scrutiny of the company after a panel blew out of a Max during an Alaska Airlines flight in January. Boeing has agreed to plead guilty and pay a fine for conspiracy to commit fraud tied to the Max, but relatives of the 346 people who died in two Max crashes want tougher punishment. And Boeing got attention for all the wrong reasons when NASA decided that a Boeing spacecraft wasn't safe enough to carry two astronauts home from the International Space Station.

NEWS BOX

Never pulled out after action, but Test cricket still No.1 priority: Pat Cummins

Australia captain Pat Cummins reacts to new IPL auction rules. IPL is set to ban players for 2 years who pull out after getting picked in auction. Cummins says that he has never pulled out of an auction before. Sunrisers Hyderabad captain Pat Cummins reacted to the new Indian Premier League rules. In an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald, Cummins was asked about the new rule of IPL banning players for 2 years who make themselves unavailable after getting picked in the auction. Cummins said that he would not know anything about it, since he has not pulled out of an auction before. The Board of Control for Cricket in India has added several rules to the auction dynamics this year. One of the rules state that in case an overseas player does not register for a mega-auction, they will be ineligible to participate in the next year's auction as well. Cummins reacted to the rule and said that they do present a new challenge because for him Test cricket and ICC tournaments for Australia are the main



priority. "I'll work out in the next little bit what this season looks like. There's a bit of a tweak in the rules, but I don't know whether that would have affected me in the past, I've never pulled out after the auction. But it is one more factor to consider with the IPL. Test cricket is the absolute No. 1 priority, World Cups are right up there, and then I think you use them as your tent poles and work out what else makes sense around that," Cummins told Sydney Morning Herald.

The Australia Test and ODI captain led SRH to the final of the tournament in the 2024 season. Under Cummins, the franchise had a new aggressive, batting identity. Cummins was sold for Rs 20.50 crore in the 2023 auctions, the second-highest sum of money in the history of the tournament. SRH, Chennai Super Kings and Royal Challengers Bengaluru were engaged in an intense bidding session for Cummins which helped him fetch a massive payday.

Nikhat Zareen opens up on Olympics heartbreak: Boxers I had defeated won medals

New Delhi. India boxer Nikhat Zareen expressed her disappointment following a medal-less Olympic campaign, revealing that it hurt to see boxers she had previously defeated go on to win medals. She acknowledged that it simply wasn't her day, but remains determined to return stronger, actively seeking a personal coach to aid in her training. Nikhat, a strong medal contender, exited the 50kg women's boxing competition after a unanimous decision loss to top seed and reigning Asian Games champion Wu Yu of China in the preliminary rounds. Making her Olympic debut, she was the first of six Indian boxers to qualify for the Games. "Nobody is perfect. It was not my



day, I was unseeded and had to face a very good boxer in the early rounds. What really hurts was that boxers who I had already defeated (in past competitions) won medals; that was heartbreaking," she told PTI Videos. But we have to accept the reality and keep going. I don't want to plan anything and want to go with the flow. I didn't have a personal coach," she added.

A two-time world champion, Nikhat is now on the lookout for a personal coach. "I want a personal coach to train with. I was training at the Inspire Institute for a while. I am trying to find a good coach who can help me become a better boxer. Once I find someone, I will let you know," she said. She also expressed a desire to train abroad, stating, "Change is always good. Internationally, I get better practice opportunities as those boxers push me to come out of my comfort zone. I will also try to train with different styles of boxers; one needs to have the quality to fight various styles on any day." When asked about areas for improvement, Nikhat emphasised her goal to "improve on my strength." The future of boxing in the Olympics is uncertain due to the International Boxing Association's suspension over governance and financial mismanagement issues. India has distanced itself from the IBA to join World Boxing, which is backed by the International Olympic Committee.

Australia's Ashleigh Gardner ready for 'personal challenge' against India

Australia's Ashleigh Gardner anticipates a tough challenge against India in their Women's T20 World Cup clash, highlighting the competitive edge India brings, especially after her experience playing alongside Indian stars in the Women's Premier League.



Dubai. Australia all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner believes that her team's upcoming clash against India in the Women's T20 World Cup could prove to be a tough challenge, both for Australia as a unit and for her personally. Gardner, who has gained experience playing alongside key Indian players in the Women's Premier League (WPL) for the Gujarat Giants, is well aware

of the strength of the opposition. Her all-round abilities have already positioned her as a critical player for Australia ahead of the highly anticipated contest. Australia, after their victory over Pakistan, is all but guaranteed a spot in the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup. However, to cement their place, the Alyssa Healy-led side must

overcome a strong and in-form Indian team. Gardner, reflecting on the win against Pakistan, acknowledged that Australia has been preparing intensely for the India game and recognises how competitive the encounter could be. "We have a really big challenge coming up against India. They will certainly challenge me personally, and

have had a few good battles with them over the years," Gardner said. Gardner has herself been in some considerably good form for Australia in the T20 World Cup, which also saw her become the side's fifth bowler to get a four-wicket-haul during their clash against Pakistan.

India's strong recovery

India, after a shaky start to the tournament with a loss to New Zealand, have bounced back impressively. They secured dominant wins against both Pakistan and Sri Lanka in their subsequent matches. With these victories, India now sits comfortably in second place in Group A with 4 points. Their upcoming clash with Australia on October 13 is a critical fixture, as a win would not only secure India's place in the semi-finals but also reaffirm their status as one of the top teams in the tournament. For Gardner, the match also holds personal significance, given her involvement in the WPL, where she has faced many of the Indian players. This familiarity with the Indian team adds another layer of intrigue to what promises to be an exciting and closely fought game.

IND vs BAN, 3rd T20: Sanju Samson, Harshit Rana in focus as India eye clean sweep

New Delhi. Bangladesh have been handed a reality check in their tour of India. Having beaten Pakistan 2-0 away from home in Tests, a confident Bangladesh side would have hoped to put up a strong fight against the Indian team. However, the Najmul Shanto side are now staring down a 0-5 whitewash against their neighbours as they gear up to play the 3rd and final match of the series. Bangladesh were outplayed in both Test matches of the series against India. The second Test match in Kanpur was particularly disastrous for them as they managed to lose the match despite more than 2 days of play being washed away due to rain and wet outfield. But somehow, Bangladesh were even poorer in the T20I series. In the first match in Gwalior, Bangladesh fell nearly 70-80 runs short of the par score. The Indian batting unit was so dominant in the game that they managed to chase down 128 runs in just 11.5 overs, courtesy of quick starts from openers Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma and then a whirlwind knock from Hardik Pandya. The

India squad for Hong Kong Sixes announced, Robin Uthappa named captain

Robin Uthappa will captain India in the Hong Kong Sixes 2024, leading a team of experienced cricketers, including Kedar Jadhav and Manoj Tiwary. India is set to face Pakistan in a highly anticipated Pool C clash.



New Delhi. Former India cricketer Robin Uthappa has been named captain of Team India for the Hong Kong Sixes 2024 tournament. On October 12, it was confirmed that Uthappa will lead a squad of former Indian stars, including Kedar Jadhav, Manoj Tiwary, and Stuart Binny, in the six-a-side tournament, set to take place from November 1 to 3 at the Tin Kwong Road Cricket Ground.

The Hong Kong Cricket Sixes, returning for the first time since 2017, will feature 12

nations competing in a fast-paced, condensed format of cricket. Each team will play six-a-side matches, showcasing a thrilling brand of cricket with shortened innings and more aggressive gameplay. India has announced its squad for the tournament, and expectations are high with a lineup packed with experienced players. Hong Kong Sixes: Team India full squad Robin Uthappa (Captain), Kedar Jadhav, Stuart Binny, Manoj Tiwary, Shahbaz Nadeem, Bharat Chipli, Shreevats

Goswami (wicket-keeper) India in Hong Kong Sixes India and Pakistan have been drawn in Pool C, and the much-anticipated clash between the two rivals is scheduled for November 1. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) completes the group. In Pool A, South Africa, New Zealand, and hosts Hong Kong will battle for a spot in the knockout stages, while Pool B features Australia, England, and Nepal. Pool D includes Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Oman.

The tournament will follow a structured format with 12 group-stage matches, followed by six Bowl Matches and the quarterfinals. The semi-finals for both the plate and main draws will take place on November 3, leading to the Bowl Final, Plate Final, and the Cup Final on the same day. With seasoned campaigners like Uthappa, Jadhav, Tiwary, and Binny in the mix, Team India will be aiming for a strong performance and a chance to bring home the coveted title in this high-octane

AUS vs IND: Pat Cummins expecting another closely-fought Test series vs

New Delhi. Australia Test captain Pat Cummins is expecting another closely-fought Test series against India in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy. India are set to travel Down Under to play a 5-match Test series, which might have a major bearing on the World Test Championship finals. India and Australia are favourites for the finals but that might change depending on the results.

Speaking to Sydney Morning Herald, Cummins said that the last Test series in 2020-21 came down to the final session of the last Test match at Gabba. In that series, Rishabh Pant played a heroic knock to hand India a famous series win under the captaincy of Ajinkya Rahane. In fact, India have won the last two away tours of Australia and have not let Australia get their hands on the BGT trophy in the last decade. "The couple of home series I've played against India there's always an element of attrition to them. The last series came down to the last session at the Gabba



on the last day of the last Test match. That's a good thing to keep in mind; it is a long series, and it might be tightly held until the last game, so you've got to manage your resources throughout," Cummins told SMH.

Cummins on Cam Green's Injury

The captain also opened on fast bowling allrounder Cameron Green's injury. Green was recently sidelined from the England white-ball series due to a stress fracture in the back, which could potentially keep him a

long time out of cricket. Cummins said that he was really sympathetic of Green's injury but reminded that fast bowling was fraught with injuries. "Really sympathetic. We want him bowling, Cam wants to be bowling, and he has a long career ahead of him. So it's about trying to place Cam the cricketer in the best position he can be to have the career that he's hoping for. He's young, so I'm sure he'll be right in the long run," Cummins said.

"Bowling and trying to bowl fast is unfortunately fraught with injuries. In some ways, the hardest thing is missing cricket and seeing games go by that you could have been part of, but also it can be a pretty lonely way back," he further added.

Cummins himself had spent six years away from Test cricket between his first and second Test match due to multiple back injuries. The fast bowler has now prioritised giving his body rest to keep himself fresh in the longer run.



second match followed a similar plot-line once again, where Nitish Kumar Reddy took the game away from Bangladesh's grasp.

While the visitors have been in tatters, the hosts will be happy with the performances from debutants Mayank Yadav and Nitish Kumar Reddy. Indian bowling coach Morne Morkel hinted that Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana might be handed a debut in that game, which will mean that KKR will not get to retain the pacer as an uncapped star at Rs 4 crore. Bar Rana, eyes will also be on Sanju Samson who has squandered starts in both matches. Samson, who debuted for India back in 2015 is yet to fix his spot in any formats of the game, and it is high time that he capitalises on the opportunities given to him.

Our batting was embarrassing: Pakistan's Muneeba Ali after Australia

Pakistan's acting skipper Muneeba Ali called her team's batting performance "embarrassing" after their crushing 9-wicket loss to Australia in the Women's T20 World Cup. Ali stressed the need for improvement to compete at the highest level.

pointed to poor batting as the key reason behind the defeat and emphasized the need for her side to improve if they are to compete at the highest level. In the post-match presentation, Muneeba expressed her disappointment with Pakistan's approach, admitting that her team lacked belief and failed to measure up to the challenge of Australia. She stressed the importance of self-confidence, particularly against top-ranked teams like Australia, where a lack of it can prove costly. "It has been challenging, but as professionals, we are aware of the magnitude of this game. We have to play good enough cricket but we were not up to the mark in the batting department. That is not how you approach T20s and it was embarrassing. Belief should have been there - that is why we are here to play and win matches," Muneeba said. "I have been a vice-captain for this team. Good opportunity for



me to learn as well. We are here to play, we are here to win and everyone has to step up and have the confidence to win the last match (against NZ). Everyone in the batting group needs to step up," Muneeba added. After being put in to bat first, Pakistan managed a meager 82 runs in 19.5 overs, posting their worst start in the tournament by reaching just 40 runs in the first 10 overs. It took them 13.1

overs to make 50, the slowest team fifty in the competition. Only Aliya Riaz showed some resistance, scoring 26 off 32 balls with three boundaries. The rest of the batting lineup struggled to counter Australia's strong bowling attack, especially Ash Gardner, who took 4 wickets for 21 runs in her four overs. Annabel Sutherland and Georgia Wareham also contributed with two wickets each. Australia's chase was as comfortable as expected, with Alyssa Healy and Ellyse Perry taking charge before Healy retired hurt due to a hamstring injury. Despite injury concerns for Healy and Tayla Vlaeminck, who left the field with a shoulder issue, Australia cruised to an easy victory. Pakistan's hopes now rest on their crucial match against New Zealand on October 14, which could define their campaign in the tournament.



Vivian Dsena Slams

Chaahat Pandey

for Throwing Food on Bigg Boss 18: 'Tu Jaha Se Aati Hai...'

Bigg Boss 18 continues to deliver intense drama, with Vivian Dsena taking center stage after reprimanding Chaahat Pandey for her disrespectful behaviour. The episode kicked off with a light-hearted yet heated banter over food between Nyrraa Banerji, Avinash Mishra and Shehzada Dhama. What started as a playful fight for milk soon escalated into something more dramatic, with Alice Kaushik and Eisha Singh accusing Nyrraa of overacting. However, the real controversy of the day involved Chaahat Pandey, who threw a pomegranate at fellow housemate Rajat Dalal, hitting him in the chest. She also aimed fruit at Shehzada Dhama, who grew visibly furious at her actions. Rajat was equally irritated, asking Chaahat if she'd have reacted the same way had someone thrown fruit at her. Despite Rajat's complaints, Chaahat shrugged off the incident, mimicking his frustration.

Shehzada, too, expressed his anger at Chaahat, sarcastically showing her how the fruit had been smashed when she threw it. To diffuse the situation, Chaahat joked that she'd eat the squished fruit herself. Despite her lightheartedness, Shehzada pointed out that if the tables were turned, she would have likely made a scene. He humorously mimicked her fainting in such a scenario, sparking a sarcastic exchange between them.

Amid the chaos, Vivian Dsena, known for his calm demeanour, lost his patience and sternly addressed Chaahat. He questioned her upbringing, saying, "Tu jaha se aati hai vaha aise hi karte hai kya? Khana khane ki jagah fekta hai ek dusre pe?" (Is this how things are done where you come from? Do you throw food at each other instead of eating?). He said that food must be respected by everyone, regardless of the situation.

Rajat, still upset, demanded that Chaahat admit her mistake, but she refused to back down. Vivian further remarked, "Pehli baar aisi heroine dekhi joh heroine aur villain ka role sath mei karti hai" (For the first time, I've seen a heroine who plays both the hero and villain). Eisha Singh added humorously, "Saas ka bhi" (Even the mother-in-law's role). Meanwhile, in a separate part of the episode, Muskan Banne became emotional in the confession room, missing her family, while Bagga and Hema Sharma went on a hunger strike to secure their release from the house jail, further fuelling the high-octane drama.



Alia Bhatt Reveals Ram Charan Adopted An Elephant In Raha's Name: 'A Giant Elephant Walking In My...'



Alia Bhatt's RRR co-star, Ram Charan, adopted an elephant in her daughter Raha's name. Alia made this revelation in a recent chat and said that she appreciated this sweet gesture. Alia said that while she, Jr NTR and Ram Charan couldn't spend much time together while shooting the film, they got close during promotions. Alia told Suresh Productions in a recent chat, "Tarak, Ram Charan, and I, we couldn't spend a lot of time together on the sets of RRR due to different schedules, but around promotions, we became very close."

She said, "This is a very funny story. A month after Raha was born, I had stepped down to walk for a bit. Suddenly, I had someone coming and telling me, 'Ma'am, Ram Charan sir has sent an elephant.' I was stunned. I was like, 'Anything can happen: I might have a giant elephant walking in my building right now.' She added, "It wasn't a real elephant. It was a wooden elephant he sent after he adopted an elephant in the wild in Raha's name. It was such a sweet gesture by him. We call that elephant: Ele, and have kept it near our dining table on the fifth floor. Raha often hops on to it and plays." Ram Charan has often spoken highly of Alia and admired her acting chops. Ram Charan previously told Mid Day, "I have been an admirer of her work since Highway. After Raazi, I became her fan. After working with her, I understood why people love her so much. There were times when I didn't get my Telugu lines properly, but she got them bang-on. She was a thorough professional."

"Meanwhile, Alia Bhatt is currently seen in Jigra with Vedang Raina. The film is directed by Vasan Bala and co-produced by the actress and Karan Johar. The film has opened to mixed reviews and is facing competition at the box office from Vicky Aur Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video, starring Rajkumar Rao and Triptii Dimri.

Janhvi Kapoor Reveals Facing Life Threatening Moments While Shooting For Devara's Chuttamale Song



Janhvi Kapoor is currently basking under the success of her recently released film Devara: Part 1 with Jr NTR. The film also marks her Tamil debut. Well, today she took to her Instagram handle and shared behind-the-scenes photos. The actress also revealed life-threatening moment while shooting for the song Chuttamale in Thailand. Taking to her Instagram handle, Janhvi Kapoor shared photos and videos. "Too late for some #Chuttamale BTS? I think not," read the caption. In a video, the actress was heard saying, "This might be the most life threatening moment. I am going into jellyfish infested waters. Nothing but a thin silk saree to protect me. I hope I survive, I hope it is worth it. I hope it is a memorable shot." In another slide, she showcased the "beware" sign as the water is infested with Jellyfish, whose stinging cells in their tentacles can injure humans. In one clip, the actress was seen talking about climbing "really sharp rock" and then coming to the dangerous waters.

Despite receiving mixed reviews, Devara: Part 1, starring Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor, is steadily approaching the Rs 500 crore mark in global box office earnings. Buoyed by the film's success, director Koratala Siva and his team have already initiated discussions about the sequel, Devara: Part 2. In a recent interview, Siva acknowledged the weight of this achievement and expressed his dedication to ensuring the sequel's success.

In an interaction with Zoom, the director was asked about the possibility of cameo appearances in the sequel. He responded that while he's not particularly interested in cameos, he does plan to bring in some well-known names from the film industry for significant roles. "I won't say cameos also. They are very important characters in the film, and we are going to unveil them very soon, character by character," added Siva.

When asked about Janhvi's limited screen time in the action drama, Siva mentioned that her character would unfold in the sequel. "She can bring a lot of freshness into the film and have multiple dimensions in her character, which will be unfolded in part two. There is a lot of drama for her and surprising twists and turns that can happen with her character. So you will have to wait and watch part 2 to see more of Janhvi," added the director.



Nia Sharma

BREAKS Silence on Bigg Boss 18 Controversy: 'It Was Colors, and I Was Informed...'

Television actress Nia Sharma made headlines after being confirmed as the first contestant for Bigg Boss 18 during the grand finale of Khatron Ke Khiladi 14. However, in an unexpected turn of events, she announced on October 6 that she wouldn't be participating in the show, leaving fans disappointed and confused. Now, Nia has finally broken her silence on the fiasco, offering insights into what really happened. In an interview with Pinkvilla, Nia revealed that she was initially meant to join Bigg Boss 18, but a sudden change of plans led to her withdrawal. She explained, "It was Colors, and I was informed at the very last minute. I was supposed to be part of the Laughter Chef integration, but by the time they announced it, Laughter Chef got cancelled." This left her in a strange situation, as the hype around her participation had already been created. Despite the abrupt change, she didn't hold any grudge, adding, "The whole thing was to create buzz, and I think they succeeded." Nia further mentioned that it was entirely the network's decision, and she fully supported their strategy. She said, "If they're doing something using my name, it's completely alright. I have two shows with them, and I respect their planning." Interestingly, Nia appreciated the attention the announcement garnered, admitting that the excitement around her name was massive. "The hype was huge, and I enjoyed it," she remarked. She added humorously, "Until someone actually does Bigg Boss, people don't give a f*ck."

However, her decision to not participate also came with some backlash. Nia shared that she received hate messages and abuse from some fans who felt let down by her withdrawal. Despite this, she remained unfazed, choosing to focus on the positive side of things. "I felt I owed an apology to my fans for not going, but I take it in my stride. It was fun to experience that level of hype again." Lastly, the Jamai Raja actress remarked, "It was beautiful hype and a review that I saw myself after a very long time. Other than that, it's all about my clothes, it's how I dress up, how naked I am all the time about my cleavage. It's time we moved on from there, and I think after Laughter Chef's quite a lot has changed."

