

# TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023

Daily Evening Newspaper



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e-paper: [www.topnewsjk.in](http://www.topnewsjk.in)

RNI No. JKENG/2010/39369

Regd. No. JK-435

Vol.-14 Issue-291

Pages-12 Rs.-2/-

## BRIEFLY

### Earthquake of magnitude 3.5 jolts Kishtwar

KISHTWAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): An earthquake of magnitude 3.5 on the Richter scale jolted Kishtwar in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, the National Center for Seismology (NCS) informed.

According to the NCS, the earthquake struck at 22:56:52 IST, on Sunday, at a depth of 5 kilometres.

Posting from its handle on social media platform X, the NCS stated, "Earthquake of Magnitude: 3.5, Occurred on 22-10-2023, 22:56:52 IST, Lat: 33.34 & Long: 76.69, Depth: 5 Km, Location: Kishtwar, Jammu & Kashmir, India."

Further details are awaited.

Earlier, on Sunday, an earthquake of magnitude 4.3 on the Richter Scale jolted Nepal, according to the National Center for Seismology (NCS).

This was the second quake to have struck the land-locked Himalayan nation in less than 24 hours.

### Kishtwar Police holds candlelight march to pay tribute to slain Jawans

KISHTWAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): Kishtwar Police under the guidance of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Khalil Poswal on Sunday organized a candlelight march to honour the soldiers who died in the line of duty.

This solemn event commenced at Aman Memorial in front of DPO Kishtwar, drawing the participation of officers, community members, and representatives from the media fraternity.

It served as a platform to express deep gratitude for the unwavering commitment and sacrifices of these martyrs. The march reached its culmination at Kuleed Chowk Kishtwar, a symbolic destination for this gathering.

Addressing the candlelight march, SP Kishtwar Poswal underscored its significance in commemorating the dedication of these heroes.

He encapsulated the collective sentiment of paying homage to the brave individuals who epitomize the unbreakable bond between the

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## CISF takes over security of Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), one of the armed police forces under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has taken over the security of Kot Bhalwal jail in Jammu—a high-security Central jail in the Union Territory carrying over 900 prisoners that included some foreign nationals.

The security of the high-security Central jail was handed over to the CISF from the Central Reserve Police Force



(CRPF) on October 20 and nearly 260 odd personnel of the force headed by a Deputy Commandant rank officer are deployed to provide inner as well as outer security cover at the jail. For years, the security of the jail was in the hands of the CRPF, another Central armed police force under the MHA.

On October 13, the MHA issued an order to the CISF to take over the security of Kot

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## Devotees throng Shri Vaishno Devi Temple in Katra on Last Day of Navratri

JAMMU, Oct 23 (Agencies): As the Navratri festival entered its last day today, devotees thronged the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi temple in Jammu and Kashmir's Katra to get a glimpse of Goddess Durga.

Shri Vaishno Devi temple is one of the holiest sites for Hindu pilgrims, dedicated to 'Vaishno Devi', one of the forms of Goddess Durga.

Earlier on the occasion of 'Maha Ashtami' on Sunday, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid

obeisance at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and prayed for the peace, prosperity and progress of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Lt Governor launched and dedicated the 'Live Darshan Facility' and bi-lingual chatbot on the website of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, to the devotees and also released a Yatra Guide Book on Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage 'The Bhakti of Shakti' by Rupa Publications, a statement said.

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## Jammu-Srinagar National Highway opens to Traffic

JAMMU, Oct 23 (Agencies): Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway was restored early on Monday after remaining suspended for over 24 hours due to road repair work in landslide-hit Dalwas area of Ramban district, officials said.

Authorities also allowed traffic on the Mughal and Sinthan top roads, which were shut after fresh snowfall in high altitude areas, they said.

## Govt has vastly improved capacity in terms of services required in winters: Advisor Batnagar



SRINAGAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): Advisor Rajiv Rai Batnagar on

Monday said that government has vastly improved capacity in terms of services required in winters.

Speaking to reporters at Tagore Hall Srinagar, Advisor Batnagar as per KNS said the government has vastly improved capacity in terms of dealing with snow clearance and other necessary issues. "We have improved our capacity this year as compared to last year. Though you had seen improved services in last year but we are well equipped to deal with the emergencies this year."

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## Emoluments Governed by terms of service: Army on grant to next of kin of Agniveer Killed in Siachen

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Expressing support for the bereaved family of Agniveer Gawate Akshay Laxman, the Indian Army on Sunday sought to clear the air on compensation to the next of kin, saying that the same is "governed by the relevant terms & conditions of service of the soldier". Agniveer Laxman laid down his life in the line of duty in Siachen, the Army posted from its X handle on Sunday.

The Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADG PI), IHQ of MoD (Army) stated that "in view of conflicting messages on social media regarding financial assistance to the Next of Kin of the deceased, it was important to clarify that emoluments due to the Next of Kin were governed by the relevant terms and conditions of service of the soldier".

"As per the terms of engagement of

Agniveers, emoluments authorised to a deceased battle casualty will comprise : Non-contributory insurance sum, amounting to Rs 48 lakh. Seva Nidhi contributed by the Agniveer (30%), with equal matching contribution by the Govt, and interest thereon. Ex-gratia of Rs 44 lakh. Pay of balance tenure from date of death till completion of four years (more than Rs 13 lakh in the instant

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## Kupwara woman delivers quadruplets

SRINAGAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): In a rare case of its nature, a woman in north Kashmir's Kupwara district has delivered a quadruple at Sub-district hospital on intervening Sunday and Monday night.

A woman (name withheld), from Keran Kupwara was admitted with labour pains at PHC Keran. Sensing exigency of the case, the doctors referred the woman to SDH Kupwara around



midnight. Given due care and

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## Indian dog breeds to be deployed in Police duties soon



NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Indian dog breed Rampur hound, Himalayan mountain

canines Himachali shepherd, Gaddi and Bakharwal and the Tibetan mastiff are likely to be deployed soon for police duties like sniffing out suspects, narcotics and explosives, besides patrolling risk-prone areas, officials said.

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) like the BSF, CRPF

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## Buglers gang busted in Budgam, stolen property worth Lacs recovered: Police

SRINAGAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): In a significant achievement, Police on Monday have successfully busted a notorious burglar gang and recovered a substantial quantity of stolen Property in Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

A Police official said, "On 21st October 2023, a written complaint was received by Police station Khansahib from one Aijaz Ahmad Ganie S/O Khazir Mohammad Ganie R/o Kachipuram Khansahib to the effect that during intervening night of 19/20 October

2023 some thieves have barged into his house and stolen copper utensils, high-end clothing, artificial jewelry and gold items, collectively valued at several lakhs of rupees."

"In response to this complaint, Police

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## Karan Singh asks to be dropped from executive committee in J&K's Cong Unit

JAMMU, Oct 23 (Agencies): Veteran Congress leader Karan Singh has asked that his name be dropped from the 22-member executive committee of the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit, saying he has not been active in state politics for several years.

The 92-year-old conveyed his request to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in a letter dated October 21.

Kharge had on October 19 approved the constitution of the committee that included veteran leaders Karan Singh and Saif-ud-din Soz as well as senior party members Ghulam Ahmed Mir, Tariq Hameed Karra and Tara Chand.

"I see that my name has been included in the executive committee of the newly reconstituted Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee. As you know, I have not been active in state politics for several years. I, therefore, request that my name be deleted from the list," Singh said in the letter.

## Over 500 Positions Vacant at University of Kashmir Since 2016

SRINAGAR, Oct 23 (Agencies): The University of Kashmir is facing a shortage of non-teaching staff, leaving over 500 positions unfilled since 2016 due to a lack of recruitment, reported The Excelsior. This staff deficiency is directly affecting the university's ability to carry out its academic and

administrative duties. University officials familiar with the situation, while speaking to The Excelsior said that out of the total 2,450 sanctioned non-teaching positions, including those at satellite campuses, only 1,900 are currently occupied. The remaining 550 positions have been vacant since

2016, primarily due to retirements of employees.

This problem is compounded by an annual exodus of 70-80 non-teaching employees retiring, further worsening the staffing shortage. Several university departments are particularly impacted by

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## Army celebrates Navratri with fervor at Kupwara

Top News Report

KUPWARA, Oct 23: The vibrant festival of Navratri is being celebrated with utmost enthusiasm and fervor at Pathahiri garrison. With escalating excitement on each passing day, people are coming up with unique ways of celebrating the Navratri.

Navratri is one of the most significant festivals of the Hindus celebrated all across the world. This is also one of the most ancient festival dating back to the times immemorial.

Every year, Navratri is celebrated with a whole lot of pomp



and grandeur all across the country. Navratri is dedicated to the nine avatars of Goddess

Shakti. This festival celebrates feminine divinity and Goddess Shakti is worshipped by the

devotees with a lot of dedication and devotion. Navratri, which literally translates to nine nights, celebrates the nine avatars - Maa Shailputri, Maa Brahmacharini, Maa Chandraghanta, Maa Kushmanda, Maa Skandamata, Maa Katyayani, Maa Kalaratri, Maa Mahagauri and Maa Siddhidatri.

This year the nine-day festival would be observed from October 15 to 24.

While Col Harpreet Singh Commanding Officer of Kupwara Terriers celebrated Navratri by keeping fast, offering Puja to the goddess and observing rituals.

## Alert forces has broken backbone of militancy: Arvind

Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Jammu and Kashmir BJP Secretary, Arvind Gupta, has said that foiling an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir by killing two militants is highly appreciable work by the brave and round the clock alert security forces deployed on borders in the Union Territory (UT).

It is also the result of the perfect coordination between the intelligence

agencies, Jammu and Kashmir police and other forces.

Arvind Gupta said that during the long years of proxy war waged by our neighbour country against India, there had been repeated attempts of infiltration from across the border. Attempts had been made to push trained militants and sent deadly weapons into the Indian territory.

While many militants have been killing before they could succeed to enter and carry on their nefarious designs, a

large percent among those who could enter inside the territorial boundaries and reach their hideouts, were killed by the army, police and para-military forces in their joint operations.

Arvind Gupta said that failing the infiltration bids by killing the gun carrying militants on borders and their elimination in remote, far flung, civilian, defence areas of Jammu and Kashmir has sent a very clear message to the bosses and sympathisers of militancy that there would



be no leniency and that every such act which poses threat to the unity and integrity of the India will be dealt with strong hand.

"The days of uncertainty, taint, stone pelting, hartals, protests, killings of civilians, attacks

on security forces have declined to great extent, there is peace, normalcy, people are carrying on their day to day activities fearlessly, it could only be achieved due to the operations of security forces, which are always alert and eliminating militants," he said and added that our brave soldiers have broken the backbone of militants and even making supreme sacrifices for the nation in this region of the country and they all deserve salute and honour.

## Northern Railway to enhance safety, accessibility and sustainability at remodelled Jammu Tawi Station

Top News Report

NEW DELHI / JAMMU, Oct 23: Through the Amrit Bharat Scheme launched by the Indian Railways in August 2023, it plans to renovate 1308 stations across the country.

It intends to elevate and modernize them to make passenger travel hassle-free and convenient for their passengers. It also aims to turn them into vibrant transit centres. In its first phase, 508 stations are under construction. Out of these 71 stations across 5 divisions come under the Northern Railway.

One such station is the Jammu Tawi station, under the Firozpur division allotted a budget of 259 crores. The redevelopment plan compasses



various aspects of infrastructure improvement such as the construction of civil, structural and architectural works. New building designs as per the green building norms (4-star rated) to promote sustainability. Plumbing works (PHE) include a water supply, drainage, sewerage and Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), Water

Treatment Plant (WTP), RO, and Mechanical and Engineering Plumbing works (MEP) to ensure efficient utility services. Measures are taken to ensure fire fighting works to make the buildings safer.

Electrical work including, STP, substation, transformers, and Signaling and Telecommunications to be strengthened

to increase the efficiency of the station operations, NR statement stated and added "Heating, Ventilation, and Air-conditioning enhancements in certain areas to ensure proper ventilation."

The other developments include installation of lifts and escalators to make travel smoother, external

development of roads and parking areas to make it more commuter-friendly, installation of IT services such as LAN, IP-based EPABX, Wi-Fi to get with the digital age besides CCTV cameras are to be installed to ensure utmost security.

Through the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, the Railways intends to ensure the ease of accessibility for the passengers. Its overarching goal is to remodel these stations into dynamic transportation hubs that give significance to safety, accessibility, efficiency, inclusivity and sustainability.

This includes unfettered infrastructure for all passengers by enhancing security, promoting diversity and adopting eco-friendly practices.

## Shilpa Charak leads trekking group to Aitham on Oct 29

Top News Report

JAMMU Oct 23: In keeping with its policy of promoting heritage sites and lesser frequented beauty spots of Jammu through a series of short treks Tawi Trekkers J&K, the pioneer trekking club of Jammu, shall start its winter activities with a 1-day trek from Kattal Batal (Nagrota) to Aitham (7kms short of Suruinsar) via Bhed Devta.

The first batch of about 135 students of Oriental Academy Sr. Secondary School, Jammu shall undertake this trek on 29th October, 2023 which shall be followed by second batch of 135 students of St. Xavier Convent Sr. Secondary School, Jammu and so on and so forth.

The target for participation in the 1-day treks during the winter season has been fixed at 2000 which the club



hopes to achieve by the end of December this year.

However, this activity shall continue to the end of February, 2024.

Whereas Shilpa Charak, an international sport climber and a mountaineer shall be the leader of the first group Sumit Khajuria, Sushil Singh, Sonam Sidharth and Shashi Kant shall be among the leaders of the other groups.

Every group shall be escorted by at least two other activists of the club.

It is pertinent to mention here that Tawi

Trekkers J&K has been exploring the possibilities of linking Purmandal, Mohoregarh, Bhupnagar, Dhergarh, Mansar, Surinsar and Pahair Devta for creating an adventure and heritage cum pilgrim circuit.

Accordingly, the club has been regularly conducting reconnaissance of these areas for making them a winter hub of soft adventure activities like adventure camps/ picnics and short heritage treks.

The efforts of the club have already started bearing fruits as during the year 2022 alone about 600 boys and girls had participated in the one-day treks organized by the club from Mohore Garh to Mansar; Dher Garh to Mansar; Bhupnagar to Mansar; from Kattal Batal to Aitham via Bhed Devta and to Devi Pindian near Panthal in Reasi District.

## HDFC Bank launches XpressWay

Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: HDFC Bank, India's leading private sector bank, launched XpressWay, a digital platform offering banking products and services, enabling customers to experience the fastest way to bank.

XpressWay offers an array of services, including Xpress Personal Loan, Xpress Business Loans, Xpress Car Loan, Xpress Home Loan, Xpress Loan on cards, Xpress Credit Card, Xpress Savings Accounts, service journeys and more, designed to cater to diverse customer needs.

These products and services are meticulously designed to deliver fast, seamless, paperless, and do-it-yourself customer journey, for both existing and new customers.

Launched during the festive season, it is even more exciting as it also allows customers to indulge in festive

season shopping with greater ease of access to finance.

Parag Rao, Country Head - Payments, Liability Products, Consumer Finance & Marketing, HDFC Bank said, "XpressWay signifies HDFC Bank's commitment to customer-centric innovation, offering a digital ecosystem that empowers our customers with swift, paperless, and self-service banking.

As we launch this platform during the festive season, we aim to enhance the joy of celebrations. With XpressWay, HDFC Bank opens the door to a faster, more convenient, and enjoyable banking experience."

XpressWay is a part of HDFC Bank NOW, an umbrella brand for the Bank's digital products and services. For further information about XpressWay and to experience high-speed banking please visit [https://v.hdfcbank.com/festive-treats/index.html].

## GHSS Bhalra organises painting competition on Energy Conservation



Top News Report

BHADARWAH, Oct 23: Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Bhalra, Bhaderwah organised painting competition on energy conservation on the theme titled "Life Style for Environment" & "We are Pro-Planet People" here on Saturday.

On this occasion, through paintings, NCC Cadets and other students of the institution shared their ideas about the importance of the environment and human concerns to become pro planet so as to generate mass awareness to preserve the delicate ecological balance, a release in this regard said.

It further stated that the main aim of the event was also to highlight the immediate need to save our environment from human interference and work to involve more and more masses to become the part of the "Mission Preservation Of Ecological System" in localised habitations and given inhabiting areas.

The programme was organised by Dr Sanjeev Kumar Koul (Associate NCC Officer/Zonal Counselling Incharge) and Teachers namely Vishal Kotwal, Avinskshi Sharma, Anju Kumari under the overall supervision of Pradeep Singh Billawria (Principal of the Institution).

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION JAMMU**

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER (Short Term)**

**MHDJ/e-NIT 155 of 2023-24 Dated: 21.10.2023 Due : 02.11.2023**

On behalf of the President of India, e-tenders in two cover system on turnkey basis are invited from registered/reputed firms having sufficient relevant experience for the work mentioned below:

S. No	Description of work	Project Authority	Estt	AAA/TS	Earnest Money Deposit	Cost of tender document	Time of completion	Eligibility Criterion of Bidder
1	<b>SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING &amp; COMMISSIONING OF FIRE FIGHTING SYSTEM FOR PROPOSED BOYS HOSTEL AT BAKSHI NAGAR, JAMMU.</b>	Principal GMC & Associate of Hospital Jammu	5,494 LACS	ACCORDED	Rs.11000.00 in the Shape of COB/FBR/ID R valid for 12 months pledged to the Executive Engineer M&H Division Jammu	Rs 500.00 in the shape of Challan through J&K Govt. Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date and also indicating the name of work duly credited to 0059-PWD (Revenue) and uploading a copy of treasury challan / receipt on e-tendering portal.	45 days	OEM/Authorized /Registered & Reputed firms having sufficient experience as per Annexure "C" Similar nature of work

THE BIDDER MAY DEPOSIT TENDER FEE IN THE SHAPE OF e-Challan through Account no. 00970101000 02163 in the name of Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospital Division Jammu Name of Bank: J&K Bank Town Hall Jammu Branch Code:0097 JFSC code: JAKAOTNHALL MICR CODE: 180051025

THE NIT CONSISTING OF Qualifying INFORMATION, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, BILL OF QUANTITIES (BOQ) SETS OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT & OTHER DETAILS CAN BE VIEWED / DOWNLOADED FROM THE WEBSITE [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in).

**Sd/- Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospital Division Jammu**

**DIP/J-10100/23**

**OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER CIVIL MAINTENANCE DIVISION BHEP-I, CHANDERKOTE**

[xendambhep@gmail.com](mailto:xendambhep@gmail.com)

**E-NIT No:12of 2023-24 Date:20-10-2023**

1. For and on behalf of the Managing Director JKPCD; e-tenders from registered PWD/PDC/CPWD/MES contractors are invited for below mentioned works:

SN.No.	Name of the Work	Estimated Cost (in lakhs)	Cost of Tender Document (Non-Refundable)	Bid Security/ EMD (In Lacs) (Refundable)	Time Allowed for Completion	Class of Contractor
1	Procurement of KelunjiEcho Seismic Recorders for ES&S make Accelerograph and Seismograph of BHEP Chanderkote.	17.28	Rs. 1000/-	0.35	90 days	A, B& C Class only

2. Scope of the work mentioned above is defined in the Tender Document/ BoQ of the work. Minimum requisite eligibility and the terms & conditions applicable for each work are also laid down in the Tender Document.

3. The Tender Document for the works mentioned above can be downloaded from e-tendering portal of J&K Government [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) and the official website of JKPCD [www.jkspdc.nic.in](http://www.jkspdc.nic.in).

4. The tendering process shall proceed as per the following Schedule of Events:

SN.No.	Event	Date & Time
1.	Tender publish date on <a href="http://www.jktenders.gov.in">www.jktenders.gov.in</a> and <a href="http://www.jkspdc.nic.in">www.jkspdc.nic.in</a> .	21-10-2023 at 09:00 Hrs
2.	Bid document download start date	21-10-2023 at 09:00 Hrs
5	Bid uploading start date	21-10-2023 at 09:00 Hrs
6	Bid uploading end date	10-11-2023 upto 12:00Hrs
7	Opening of the Technical Bids	11-11-2023 at 14:00 Hrs
8	Opening of the Financial Bids	After the evaluation of technical bids

5. Any corrigendum/modification to Tender Document shall be available one-tendering portal of J&K Government [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) and JKPCD official website [www.jkspdc.nic.in](http://www.jkspdc.nic.in). The Applicants are advised to visit these sites before deadline for submission of bids. If there is holiday on the day of bid opening, the same shall be opened on the next working day.

6. Price bids/ Financial Bids of only technically qualified bidders shall be opened.

7. JKPCD reserves the right to reject the e-NIT or any subsequent bids without assigning any reason thereof and shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other Bid or to give any reason for such decision.

8. For any queries, the bidders should contact during office hours on following mobile numbers: **9419121036, 9797088487.**

**SD/- (Er. Nasib Chand) Executive Engineer Civil Maintenance Division BHEP Chanderkote**

**No: CMD/BHEP/T-1/1495-1500 Date: 20-10-2023**

**DIP/J-3642-P/23**

## EDITORIAL

## PARENTS ROLE

The concerns raised regarding the impact of drug addiction on the young generation and its consequences for the country are valid and important. Drug addiction can indeed have far-reaching negative effects, not only on individual lives but also on the society as a whole. Here are some key takeaways and suggestions based on the points you've mentioned:

It's essential to understand and communicate the devastating effects of drug addiction on individuals, including physical and mental health, social relationships, and the overall quality of life. Moreover, it's important to highlight how these consequences can ripple through society, affecting families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

The influence of peers, especially in adolescence and early adulthood, can be a significant factor in drug experimentation and addiction. Encouraging young people to choose their friends wisely and educating them about the risks of drug use is crucial.

Parents play a fundamental role in guiding their children away from drug addiction. Open communication, emotional support, and setting a good example are key aspects of this responsibility. Parents should also be aware of their children's activities and the company they keep.

Recognizing the importance of mental health and resilience is critical. Young people should be educated about coping with life's challenges, handling failures, and seeking help for mental health issues, including depression. They need to understand that turning to drugs is not a solution to life's problems.

You rightly pointed out the influence of media, including celebrities, films, and social media. Advocating for responsible media content and educating young people about the potentially harmful effects of glorifying drug use in the media can help counteract this influence.

Government initiatives such as de-addiction centers and awareness programs are important components of tackling the drug addiction issue. Public policy and law enforcement should be part of a comprehensive strategy to combat drug trafficking and illegal drug trade.

Encourage community involvement and support for those struggling with addiction. Support groups, community programs, and counseling centers can provide the necessary resources and a sense of belonging to those who are trying to overcome addiction.

Promoting awareness about the dangers of drug addiction and the benefits of a drug-free life is crucial. This can be done through schools, community organizations, and awareness campaigns.

Addressing the issue of drug addiction among the young generation is a multifaceted challenge that requires the involvement of parents, the community, the government, and society as a whole. By collectively working towards prevention, education, and support, it is possible to reduce the incidence of drug addiction and help young people make healthier choices for their lives and the future of the nation.

## Delhi May Need West Asia Policy Shift Amid Support for Israel

By: Bhopinder Singh

In past decades, Israeli commentators would often rue that New Delhi treated Tel Aviv like a "mistress": happy to engage intimately in private but disowned in public. They legitimised the relationship formally with the concurrent opening of embassies in 1992, but the crucial military supplies from Israel to India in the 1965 and 1971 wars is one for the spooks. Even more clandestine was the purported go-ahead by Indira Gandhi in 1982 of an Osirak-style operation (Israeli jets daringly blew up an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981) to similarly destroy Pakistan's nuclear facilities at Kahuta. Last-minute intervention by then US President Ronald Reagan is said to have abrogated this India-Israel mission. But despite such commonality of threats and mutual understanding, Delhi's support for the Palestinians deterred normalising relations with Israel.

Contrary to popular perceptions, India's dichotomous stand on Israel wasn't just idealism, but rooted as much in realpolitik. With its energy needs from West Asia at stake, sizeable foreign exchange remittances from the Indian diaspora, and also over 50 invaluable votes in forums like the United Nations -- officially not recognising Israel due to "morality" had some solid practicalities, that remained unstated. It was an arrangement which worked well as Israel was content to work in the shadows, as that also meant it knowingly compromised its own equation with Washington, which was a

firm Pakistan ally in 1965, 1971 or even 1982 when the Kahuta operation was murmured.

History and geography have made Israel extremely practical, and they work along with any country, irrespective of its ideology, if it does not endanger Israeli interests. Even today, despite all tensions besetting the United States and China and Russia, the Israelis harbour no major aversion to either and are willing to engage with both (Washington had to veto technology transfer to Beijing). For all its bloody past, it had normalised relations with Jordan and Egypt long ago, and more recently with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Talks with Saudi Arabia behind closed doors is the worst kept secret and Tel Aviv is similarly understanding of the societal concerns implicit for the Saudi authorities, to come out in the open about the same immediately.

With India, Israel was always extra-understanding. Jawaharlal Nehru had indulged in grandstanding on Palestine, but had also reached out to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion after the 1962 China tensions, Ben-Gurion had privately replied: "I am in total agreement with the views expressed by Your Excellency (Nehru) that it is incumbent upon us to do all in our power. All states big or small must be guaranteed of their sovereignty. We believe that every possible support should be lent to every measure contributing towards easing of tension on your borders so that India will once again be able to devote its undivided energies under your

distinguished leadership to construction and development".

During the Kargil War, when India still faced some technology sanctions, Israel had ignored international concerns and expedited supplies of mortar ammunition, laser-guided missiles, Heron and Searcher UAVs, etc. Since then, India has become Israel's biggest and most dependable purchaser of weapons, besides a "strategic partner" and co-producer of weaponry. However, all along, India hadn't diluted support for a "two-state solution", that envisages a sovereign state of Palestine. Admittedly, the hypersensitivity on Palestinian concerns had got diluted (tellingly in 2015, India abstained from voting against Israel at UNHRC) -- though, the same lukewarmness about the Palestinian issue could also be said about the Arab sheikhdoms that were on a rapprochement overdrive with Tel Aviv.

The recent attack by Hamas on Israel led to the unprecedented shedding of ostensible "neutrality" by New Delhi, which entailed playing a mealy-mouthed "please all" position for some time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new tweet -- "We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour" -- is unprecedentedly one-sided, and the Palestinians have Hamas to blame for that. While the neighbouring sheikhdoms have offered platitudinous contexts to rationalise Hamas' attacks, make no mistake, the sheikhdoms can never support a pro-Iran militia like Hamas. They were forced into adopting a "justifying" stance only as a continuation

of Ummah sensibilities -- but in the deeply sectarian divide in West Asia, beyond the public postures, the Arab sheikhdoms fear the Iran and its proxies like Hezbollah, Houthis, Hamas, etc, far more than Tel Aviv.

New Delhi, therefore perhaps felt empowered to take an untraditional and overtly pro-Israel stance for the first time. In one dramatic stroke, Hamas laid to waste the high ground that the Palestinian cause always evoked, even as the world put it on the backburner, as practicality had necessitated thawing relations with Israel. While breaking ranks with the Hamas may not be publicly possible for the sheikhdoms (as yet), the widely believed intent of disrupting the Mideast peace plans at Iran's behest will afford a short rope to Hamas' belligerence. Such intolerance with Palestinian militias running amok had similarly backfired with Operation Black September, when the Jordanians had attacked the PLO in 1970-71 or when Lebanese forces carried out the Sabra-Shatila massacres against Palestinian militias in 1982. Now even pacifist nations like India are reneging on "neutrality" over the Israeli-Palestinian issue, as Hamas has simultaneously discredited the Palestinian position. The Middle East will now increasingly look like the landscape of the past and New Delhi will have to recalibrate its own stand in line with its needs and, as always, there may be a slip between the cup and the lip. For now, it will be Advantage Israel.

## Why need e-commerce sites?



By: Vijay Garg

In the digital age, people are placing more emphasis on online shopping. Some time ago, small shopkeepers used to hope to increase their income during festivals, whereas now the festival sales available on e-commerce platforms have reduced the sales of shopkeepers. Before understanding this difference, it is important to know that one of the reasons for online shopping is wrong measurement of goods by the shopkeeper and charging more money. In today's time, people want to buy more and more products in less time at reasonable prices. People have so much time to spare the whole day for shopping, hence online shopping is increasing. Yes, one of the disadvantages of buying

goods from e-commerce sites is that the quality of the goods shown to you in pictures and videos may not be the same in reality. Whereas before going to the market and buying the goods, you can check its quality. However, considering the urgency of the times, shopkeepers have also started taking online payments, but people are still giving more preference to online shopping. To buy small items they go to the market, but expensive items like TV, smartphone and laptop etc. are being purchased from e-commerce sites. There is also an argument that employment of lakhs of people is linked to small and medium traders. If their business is affected then the employment of the people associated with them will also be at risk, hence it is important to take care of everyone during the festive season. In our country, the traffic police take every possible measure to ensure that traffic flows smoothly on the roads, but despite their best efforts, accidents still happen on the roads. In fact, while driving on the roads, drivers take shortcuts and cause accidents. Due to this, the number of road accidents and people losing their lives keeps increasing.

Even after repeated attempts by the traffic police, drivers do not remain alert. Often accidents occur on the highway due to complete lack of following traffic rules. Two wheeler drivers make more mistakes than four wheeler drivers. Among these, the most common complaint is about not wearing a helmet. There are more complaints of driving in the opposite direction on expressways. She goes. Vehicle accidents often occur at night due to unnecessary parking of vehicles at various places on the highways. We just want that the way the knowledge of moral education is given to children in school, it is very important to organize a separate session to teach traffic rules right from the small classes, so that these future vehicles of ours Drivers can get into the habit of driving and following its rules right from the beginning and they can also easily get training on how to drive safely. a matter of pride for us That the government is making serious efforts to make the travel of the common man comfortable. To make travel more convenient in the country, a high-speed train has got the green signal. This will make travel easier for people in and

around Delhi, and will also benefit other working people including office goers, businessmen and students. As traffic is increasing in metropolitan cities, it is necessary that the range of public vehicles also increases. Along with this, metro train facility should also be available in other areas of the country. To manage the increasing traffic system, state governments should provide metro train facilities even in small cities. Metro train is not only going to provide relief from the traffic problem, but it can also prove to be effective in stopping the increasing pollution. Because due to this people will reduce the use of their personal vehicles. When less number of vehicles run on the roads, there will be no problem of traffic jam and the environment will also not be polluted. Therefore, people should also use public vehicles as much as possible for travelling. Public vehicles like auto, train and bus not only make traveling comfortable but also relieve the problem of parking.

(Vijay Garg Retired  
Principal Educational  
Columnist Malout  
Punjab)

# Shat Chandhi Yagya for 'world peace' concludes at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

## Over 4 lakh pilgrims pay obeisance in 10 days

### Top News Report

KATRA, Oct 23: The nine-day long Shat Chandhi Maha Yagya organised by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) during Navratras for world peace, harmony, prosperity and health of humanity concluded on the auspicious occasion of Ramanavami at the Holy Shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji.

Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, other officers and staff of the Shrine Board, besides pilgrims participated in Purna Ahuti and other religious ceremonies performed amidst Vedic Mantras on the occasion. A group of pandits led by Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri, performed the Maha Yagya.

The special additions to the pilgrimage during these Navratras included Skywalk, remodelled Parvati Bhawan, Virtual Darshan through the Holy Natural Cave and free Langar Sewa at Shri Bhairon Ji Temple Complex, besides the 'Live Darshan Facility' and Bi-lingual 'Shakti' chatbot on the website of the



Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board for the pilgrims. These initiatives are aimed at making the pilgrimage more convenient and enjoyable for the devotees.

An average of 40,000 pilgrims is paying their obeisance daily and over 4 Lakh pilgrims have visited the holy shrine since the onset of Navratras. During the nine day long Shardiya Navratras last year, about 3.15 Lakh pilgrims had visited the holy shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji.

The pilgrimage has been increasing every month as the Shrine Board is encouraging

pilgrims by further adding on state-of-the-art facilities. Pertinent to mention that the Sky walk inaugurated by President of India on 12th October, played a pivotal role in the yatra management during these Navratras and achieved the desired aim of decongesting the Bhawan area by streamlining the entry and exit routes to the holy cave.

The Board had also made impressive and elaborate arrangements for the pilgrims during Navratras. These include decoration of the Bhawan of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji, Atka and the area surrounding it with

exquisite flowers, round the clock water and power supply all along the tracks leading to the Shrine and in the Bhawan area besides up keeping of sanitation and sanitisation, availability of special "fast related" food at the Board's Bhojanalyas. The illumination of the Bhawan area with attractive and colourful lights was also done. For the ease and comfort of pilgrims, facilities like the accommodation, battery operated vehicles, passenger ropeway and helicopter services were also operated smoothly. The Shrine Board also made arrangements for free food for the pilgrims at Tarakote Marg and Prasad Kendra at Sanjichhat, besides free Langar Sewa at Bhairon Ji.

Other highlights during these Navratras were Bhajan and Bhaint performances during morning and evening Atka Aarti by the renowned artists like Himesh Reshammiya, Mika Singh, Lakhwinder Wadali, Mithili Thakur, Mani Ladla, Kaler Kanth, Kumar Vishu besides budding students of SMVD Gurukul.

# First Aid awareness camp organised at GHSS Domana



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: A First Aid awareness camp was organised at Govt Higher Secondary School, Domana under the chairmanship of Mohinder Sharma, Principal to acquaint the students about the need and importance to know how the first aid is provided to the needy person.

Mamta Rajput, Executive Secretary, District Red Cross Society was the chief guest on the occasion. In her address to students and staff, she reiterated how important it is to use first aid in case of emergency situation, accident victim, heart attack patient, chance of survival of any human being increases if he/she is being provided first aid immediately.

Students expressed their keenness in learning this technique.

Team for first aid training was comprised of Dr Aadiya Shah, Dr Vasundhra Parihar, Surbhi Negi, Ajit and Ajay.

Regional Ayurveda Research Institute, Jammu also provided helping hands to the team and staff.

Principal, Mohinder Sharma thanked Mamta Rajput for providing first aid training to students in association with young doctors team who have imparted training with utmost interest and replied to every query of the students. Mohinder Sharma also praised his staff for making this camp a great success.

# Reserve jobs for local youth in industrial sector across J&K: Manjit Singh



### Top News Report

SAMBA, Oct 23: Apni Party Provincial President Jammu, and Former Minister, Manjit Singh on Monday demanded reservation of employment in the industrial sector for the locals up to 80 percent in respective industrial units of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Former Minister addressed a meeting of Apni Party leaders and workers in Samba to discuss the emerging situation and issues confronted by the people in the district in absence of an elected Govt.

The meeting was organized by Provincial President SC Wing, Lovely Mangol in which District President Samba, Raman Thappa, District President, Samba Women Wing, Ms Priyanka, and others were also present.

After listening to the grievances of the people as informed by the Apni Party leaders; the former minister said that it is unfortunate the authorities are unconcerned about the increasing unemployment in Samba district and other districts where the industrial sector

exists.

"These industrial sectors have violated the basic norms of providing employment to the locals on preference, providing employment, development and maintaining the ecosystem without harming the environment," he said.

He said that things are going opposite in the industrial sectors with huge investment with no development, no health care, no check on the pollution of the environment, water bodies, and unemployment is increasing with every passing day.

"These things are happening because there is no check from the industrial department on these industries units to hold them accountable for the violation of rules and contributing to creating a hazardous environment," he said.

He said that the industrial department has allotted industrial plots to even outsiders so that they can help in generating employment that would be beneficial for Jammu and Kashmir.

"Under the nose of the authorities, the industrialists bring the workers - skilled and unskilled - from outside J&K and do not provide employment

to the local educated youth in both these sectors of industries," he said.

He said that "The local youth get employment in the name of contract for several months through contractors in violation of promises made by the authorities with the local people."

He therefore demanded that the industrial sectors shall be held accountable for denying employment to the local educated youth in both skilled and unskilled sectors.

"There must be a policy to ensure over 80 percent reservation for the locals," he said and assured that if the Apni Party forms the next Govt, they will ensure employment is reserved for the locals in J&K's industrial sector.

He again demanded that the issues can be addressed when there is an elected Govt.

"The holding of assembly elections and restoration of statehood is must to restore lost confidence of the people," he further stated.

Meanwhile, District President, Samba, Raman Thappa also spoke on the issues and highlighted various issues.

# Manjit Singh grieved over the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Apni Party has expressed heartfelt condolences on the passing away of Raja Begum Sahiba, mother of Senior Party Leader and Media Advisor, Farooq Andrabi.

In a condolence message, the Provincial President Jammu, S. Manjit Singh on behalf of the Apni Party leaders has expressed his grief and sorrow over the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba.

"I am deeply shocked at the passing away of the mother of Farooq

Sahab," said Manjit Singh, expressing grief over the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba.

He extended his deepest condolences to the bereaved family members and pray for courage to them to bear this irreparable loss.

He also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Meanwhile, all the District Presidents in Jammu province, Office Bearers, Heads of Different Wings, Cells, and Frontal organizations have expressed condolences on the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba.

# Aijaz Ahmed Khan expresses condolences to Farooq Andrabi

### Top News Report

REASI, Oct 23: Apni Party Vice President, and Former Minister Aijaz Ahmed Khan has grieved over the demise of the mother of senior Party leader and Media Advisor, Farooq Andrabi.

In his condolence message, Aijaz Ahmed Khan expressed his

deep concern over the demise of the Raja Begum Sahiba, mother of Farooq Andrabi.

"I pray for eternal peace to the departed soul and courage to the bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss," he said while expressing grief over the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba.

# Ch. Zulfkar Ali expresses sympathy with Farooq Andrabi on his mother's demise

### Top News Report

RAJOURI, Oct 23: Apni Party Vice President and Former Cabinet Minister, Choudhary Zulfkar Ali has grieved over the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba, mother of Apni Party senior leader and Media Advisor, Farooq Andrabi.

"I extend my heartfelt condolences on the demise of Raja Begum Sahiba and pray for the

bereaved family members of Farooq Andrabi to bear this irreparable loss," said Choudhary Zulfkar Ali in his condolence message while expressing sympathies to Farooq Andrabi.

He also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and courage to the bereaved family members especially Andrabi Sahab to bear this irreparable loss.

# National Organizing Secretary BVP holds meeting with Jammu unit



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: BVP JK Prant organized meetings on the arrival of Suresh Jain National Organizing Secretary accompanied with Sushil Sharma General Secretary North 1.

Prant Executive Body members present in the meeting conducted at residence of Prant President Bharat Bhushan Sharma.

Sushil Sharma Regional General Secretary North 1, Regional Joint General Secretary North 1, Arun Sharma, Regional Secretary Mahila North 1, Amita

Sharma, Regional Secretary Sanskar North 1 Gopal Sharma, Prant side Dr Santosh Prant Patron, Shiv Ram Sharma Prant General Secretary, Sunita Gupta Prant Finance Secretary, Ashok Gupta Sanskar Parmukh Vice President Prant, Vijay Sharma Parmukh Vice President Prant, Prof Dr B. B Sharma Parmukh Sewa Prant, Ramesh Sharma Prant Organsing Secretary, Arati Sharma Prant Mahila Parmukh, Vijay Sharma Prant Coordinator, Madhu Gupta City Coordinator, Devinder

Mahajan Prant Coordinator (Sewa and Transport) Jagdish Sharma Distt Coordinator Reasi - Udhampur, Gurmeet Singh prant Convoer were Present in meeting.

Another Meeting held at Panch Mandir Channi Himmat Jammu Suresh Jain With Branches. Sitting arrangement by H.C.Vaid and team of Shivilak Channi Himmat Branch.

Third meeting of Suresh Jain was held at residence of Arati Sharma Prant Mahila Parmukh with Mahila Parmukh of Branches.

# Agniveer Laxman will be remembered for his sacrifice, continue to inspire others: Raman

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Saluting, what he termed as "the supreme sacrifice" of the Agniveer (Operator) Gawate Akshay Laxman in the line of duty while serving in the highest battlefield in the world-Siachen, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) J&K Executive Member Raman Suri said that Agniveer Laxman will be remembered for ages to come and his sacrifice will also inspire others to join the Indian Armed Forces and serve the nation.

He also expressed his grief and said that the entire nation stands firmly with the bereaved family whose son sacrificed his life protecting Indian borders near Indo-Pak LoC.

Raman Suri said that the entire nation is indebted to the sacrifice of Agniveer Laxman, who suffered casualty at the toughest terrain and added that he will be remembered as the first Agniveer who laid down his life in the line of duty in Siachen.

The BJP leader said that Agniveer scheme launched by the Union Government in June 2022, aimed at providing the youngsters with an opportunity to serve the nation, was criticised

by opposition leaders blatantly but despite that lakhs of young aspirants joined the Indian Army and are serving with full dedication and commitment.

Criticising those issuing conflicting messages on social media regarding financial assistance to the next of kin of the deceased Agniveer Laxman, Raman Suri said that while his sacrifice will be remembered for ages, the Indian Army will also surely release the emoluments as laid down in the relevant terms and conditions of service of the soldier which are good enough to let the family sustain independently without depending upon anyone else.

He disclosed that as per the terms of engagement of Agniveers, emoluments authorised to a deceased Battle Casualty will comprise Rs 48 lakhs as Non-Contributory Insurance sum, Seva Nidhi contributed by the Agniveer (30%) with equal matching contribution by the Government and interest thereon besides gratia of Rs 44 lakhs.

The next of kin of the Agniveer will also be given the pay of balance tenure from date of death till completion of four years (more than

Rs 13 Lakh in this case) and a sum of Rs 8 lakh as contribution from Armed Forces Battle Casualty Fund and Rs 30 thousand from AWWA as immediate financial assistance.

Hence, those trying to portray a wrong picture must desist from spreading lies and instead encourage youngsters to serve the nation as a soldier, which is a highly honourable duty.

Raman Suri said that the family of Agniveer Gawate Akshay Laxman, who hailed from Maharashtra, will also be provided with emoluments as mentioned. He said that Laxman has set an example of sacrifice by serving in Siachen glacier at a height of around 20,000 feet in the Karakoram range, which is also known as the highest militarised zone in the world where soldiers also have to battle frostbites and high winds.

It may be recalled that the Karakoram is a mountain range in the Himalayas spanning the borders of India, Pakistan and China, with the north-western extremity of the range extending to Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and Laxman was serving in Karakoram's Siachen Glacier after completing his training.

# 5 singers got entry into mega final of Devotional Song Competition

## Celebrity singer Shanker Sawhney, Anjusha, Ravi Kumar enthralled audience

### Top News Report

KATRA, Oct 23: In the Semi Final on eighth day evening as a part of Navratra Festival's All India Devotional Song Competition being organised by SMVD Shrine Board, Deptt. of J&K Tourism, Mh1 in association with J&K Bank, Nice Gems, DIVIN-ITI, Nidheesh Builders Jammu Pvt. Ltd., Pure Roots, Vishwayatan Yog Ashram Complex with active support of District Administration and the local host Community, began today at Yog Ashram Complex in the evening by lighting of a traditional lamp by famous singer Shanker Sawhney, Chairman CINEFIL the film Producers body Rishi Raj, Film maker and film Trade Analyst Kumar Mohan, Tauseef DFO, in presence of Rakesh Wazir Chairman



All Devotional Song Committee & President Hotel Association Katra, Asstt. Director Tourism, Arif Lone, Vice President Hotel Association, Katra Ajay Kotwal, Kartik Singh and Kriti Bhardwaj.

In this semi final, out of 16 participants who qualified for it through preliminary rounds of competitions, quarter final, and then this semi

final, five participants qualified for the Mega Final to be held at Yog Ashram Complex Katra including Sukhjinder from Punjab, Anmol Raj from Hoshiarpur, Laisel Rai from Chandigarh, Stenzin from Ladakh, Rajeev Salotra from Jammu in the tough contest held here.

The competition was adjudged by the panels of experts in music

including celebrity Singer Shanker Sawhney, Dr. Surinder Kumar Sharma HOD Govt. Degree College Sunni Shimla and Dr. C.L Verma Ex. Chairman Post Graduate University of Himachal Pradesh, Dr. Usha Bhagati former Head of Department of Music in many degree colleges.

Famous celebrity singer Shanker Sawhney who had come all the way for performing in the event enthralled the audience with his melodious songs and the total environment of the venue became spiritual and likewise the previous winners of the Competition including Anjusha and Ravi Kumar to mesmerised the audience with their beautiful songs and the people were seen dancing and singing on her tunes.

The proceedings of Competition were conducted by Rakesh Wazir Chairman of the said Competition.

## Swift bests Scorsese at box office, but 'Killers of the Flower Moon' opens strongly

In a movie match-up almost as unlikely as 'Barbie' and 'Oppenheimer', Martin Scorsese took on Taylor Swift in cinemas over the weekend. And while the box office belonged for a second time to 'Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour', Scorsese's 'Killers of the Flower Moon' got off to a strong start in Apple Studios' first major theatrical gambit.

After a record-breaking opening weekend of USD 92.8 million, 'Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour' took in an estimated USD 31 million over the weekend from 3,855 locations, according to AMC Theaters. In an unconventional deal, the theatre chain is distributing Swift's concert film, and playing it only Thursdays through Sundays.

Most Swift fans rushed to see the film on opening weekend, when a large per cent of sales were driven by advance ticketing. Sales dropped a steep 67 USD in its second weekend, potentially signifying that 'The Eras Tour' was predominantly an opening-weekend phenomenon.

But 'The Eras Tour' has still proved to be a movie event unlike any other. Within days, it became the highest grossing concert film ever in North America, not accounting for inflation. It's quickly accumulated USD 129.8 million domestically.

More was riding on 'Killers of the Flower Moon', a historical crime drama about a string



of murders against the Osage nation in the early 1920s. The film, which cost at least USD 200 million to make, is the largest production yet from Apple Studios.

The streamer partnered with Paramount Pictures to release Scorsese's adaptation of David Grann's bestseller in 3,628 theatres, with plans to later stream it on a not-yet-announced date on Apple TV+.

'Killers of the Flower Moon' debuted with USD 23 million, marking the third best opening for the 80-year-old Scorsese, following 'Shutter Island' (USD 41 million in 2010) and 'The Departed' (USD 26.9 million in 2006).

Though Scorsese's latest opus, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro, will have a hard road to reaching profitability, it's a successful launch for a 206-minute-long

adult-skewing drama — a type of movie that, outside 'Oppenheimer', has struggled mightily at the box office in recent years.

And 'Killers of the Flower Moon', with rave reviews, an "A-" CinemaScore from audiences and the backing of a robust Oscar campaign, should continue to play well over the long haul. It added USD 21 million overseas.

'Killers of the Flower Moon' also marks the best wide-release debut for a film from a streaming company. While Netflix (which backed Scorsese's last narrative feature, 'The Irishman', in 2019) has charted a mostly limited approach to theatrical release, Apple and Amazon, which last year closed its purchase of MGM, have pursued more expansive theatrical strategies.

Earlier this year, Apple said it plans to spend USD 1 billion

a year making movies that will have theatrical releases before reaching its streaming service. Apple is also behind Ridley Scott's upcoming 'Napoleon', with Joaquin Phoenix, which Sony Pictures will distribute November 22; and has partnered with Universal for Matthew Vaughn's 'Argyle', due out February 2.

Paramount had initially signed on to produce and distribute 'Killers of the Flower Moon', but transitioned into the deal with Apple when costs of project — shot during the pandemic — rose.

"If flexibility is the new mantra of the theatrical movie business, then this is a significant success — it establishes a viable option for the companies," David A. Gross, who runs the movie consulting firm Franchise Entertainment Research, said of the 'Killers of the Flower Moon' launch.

As dissimilar as 'Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour' and 'Killers of the Flower Moon' are, they're alike in their extended run times. A double feature of the weekend's top two movies would have taken six hours and 14 minutes, not counting ads and trailers.

'Killers of the Flower Moon' also reeled in more young moviegoers than one might have expected. Paramount said 44 per cent of ticket buyers were under the age of 30.

## Priyanka Chopra reflects on motherhood



Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has reflected on her role as a mom. The actress, 41, opened up about motherhood and how it was a journey filled with varying emotions.

The actress, who shares 21-month-old daughter, Malti Marie, with husband Nick Jonas, said, "I think when you put them to bed, it's extremely overwhelming because

every single day you worry about what you can do wrong and what mistake you might make. But you have to check yourself, and I check myself with my family. I look at my daughter's smile, and I'm like 'okay, okay'. I'm doing well so far. It's the greatest thing I've ever done, but it's extremely scary." Priyanka and Nick welcomed their first child together via surrogacy on January 15, 2022.

Priyanka added: "I don't know if having my own daughter has specifically made me want to get behind amplifying women's voices. That's something that I am extremely aware of, being a woman who has the privilege of choosing my life and my career. There are so many women around the world that don't get that opportunity."

Still, the Citadel star noted that motherhood had made her more aware of her own emotions. "It has made me a tad more sensitive and fragile, I think it has made me a little bit nervous. I didn't expect that," she said.

## Rashmika Mandanna's next film titled The Girlfriend

Actress Rashmika Mandanna is set to headline The Girlfriend, a film presented by veteran producer Allu Aravind of Geetha Arts, the makers announced on Sunday.

The upcoming movie is written and directed by Rahul Ravindran, known for films such as Chi La Sow and Manmadhudu 2.

Geetha Arts shared the announcement along with its first look on its official X page. "The world is full of great love stories. But there are those few love stories that haven't been heard or seen before. And 'The Girlfriend' is one such. #RM24 @GeethaArts Production No.51 is #TheGirlfriend," the banner said in the post. Mandanna's other projects include "Animal" and "Pushpa: The Rule".



## Dolly Singh, who is a part of the film Thank You for Coming, says it was her childhood dream to become an actress

Actress-influencer Dolly Singh is on cloud nine after her first big acting project, Thank You for Coming, has been appreciated by audiences. Featuring Bhumi Pednekar, Shehnaaz Gill, Kusha Kapila, Shibani Bedi and Dolly, it's a sex comedy, a topic that has often explored in Bollywood from the male point of view.

Dolly has been part of the series Bhaag Beanie Bhaag, Modern Love Mumbai and Double XL, but feels that she truly has arrived as an actress with Thank You for Coming. A successful influencer with a following of over 1.6 million on Instagram, she says, "In my first show, Bhaag Beanie Bhaag, I had a good role but it didn't work because of the pandemic. We didn't get enough time to pro-



mote it. After that I did act in big projects, but the roles were kind of blink and miss. When the first show came out, I thought my life was about to change. So, it really hit me hard because it did not work and I wasn't expecting that. I thought I would get a lot of offers, but nothing came by for a year."

Role call  
Dolly, playing Pallavi Khanna in Thank You for Coming, wasn't interested in portraying the role of a best friend yet again. "I gave an audition just for the sake of it and got rejected. But two-three months later, the makers asked for another audition. I gave it my all and everything fell in place."

On whether there's indifference in the indus-

try towards an influencer, Dolly clears the air, "One cannot deny that there is a slight bias against influencers turned actors. However, it is not true that our stature or numbers on social media get us a role."

Dream come true  
Although she never expressed it, Dolly's childhood dream was to become an actress. She says, "I remember I was so jealous when I got to know that a local girl from Nainital was picked for a prominent role in Koi Mil Gaya. The film was shot in Nainital, my hometown. I would often think why it was not me. Even though I wanted to be there, at the same time I was a very shy kid. I never actively took part even in school plays, but still always wanted to be an actress."

## Singer Rihanna planning a 'massive' comeback tour



The Love The Way You Lie hitmaker Rihanna may be on maternity leave, but she is planning a 'massive' comeback tour for 2024-2025 after striking a deal worth \$38 million with Live Nation. The singer already has two albums of new material

to release. An insider said, "Rihanna is quietly planning a comeback tour after signing with Live Nation. The deal was created to facilitate a world tour and her creative team is quietly at work in Los Angeles, putting it all together as she raises

her family. She'll press play on the live show once she's ready to go back to work and has two albums' worth of material to release once she's back."

Rihanna and her rapper fiancée A\$AP Rocky welcomed their second son, Riot Rose, in August. They are already parents to 18-month-old RZA. Rihanna, 35, revealed she was expecting another baby during her Super Bowl show in February. The singer has been enjoying lots of family time since then but Rihanna hasn't let her career slip, trusting her team to make all the necessary preparations for her return. The star isn't in a hurry to rush back though because in recent months, she has become a billionaire and the world's richest female musician, thanks to the success of her cosmetics' range.

## Balika Vadhu to air again



Avika Gor's show Balika Vadhu will air on Colors again.

She shared a poster and wrote, "Okay, so this is happening. Almost 15 years to this and it's back. This is just unbelievable. I'm sure you all have many memories watching #BalikaVadhu." She also thanked the channel for always supporting her.

Avika rose to fame with her role of Anandi in Balika Vadhu. She also won the Rajiv Gandhi Award in 2009 for the same.

## Pooja Gor ventures into the space of audio series

Actress Pooja Gor has entered the captivating realm of audio series. She has embarked on this new journey in collaboration with Pocket FM, global audio series platform.

In this unique promo, Pooja doesn't rely on her acting skills but rather on her narration. Her mesmerising voice takes centre stage as she introduces audiences to four phenomenal audio series — Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh, Secret Ameerzaada, Insta Millionaire, and Devil Se Shaadi.

Says Pooja, "As a medium, audio has been around in the entertainment space for a long time, although audio series is a new and exciting segment. I'm absolutely thrilled about my collaboration with Pocket FM for the special promo. In the age of OTT shows and movies, audio series are



a refreshing change. In today's busy world, we often talk a lot but forget to listen. Audio content is changing that. It encourages us to pay attention and understand better, instead of just talking nonstop. With our hectic lives and shorter attention spans, audio series

are a great way to enjoy exciting stories while travelling or relaxing at home. I've had a deep connection with audio stories since my childhood. Now, I'm thrilled to share this wonderful audio experience with others through this unique collaboration."

## India will always be grateful to Shekhawat for his exemplary leadership: PM Modi

*Shekhawat was BJP's first CM in Rajasthan and later served as the Vice President of India*

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid tributes to former Rajasthan chief minister and vice president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat on his 100th birth anniversary, saying India will always be grateful to him for his exemplary leadership and efforts towards its progress.

"Today is a very special day - it is the 100th birth anniversary of the respected statesman Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat Ji. India will always be grateful to him for his exemplary leadership and efforts towards our nation's progress," Modi wrote on X.



The PM also recalled the respect Shekhawat enjoyed across the political divide. He was someone who was

liked across the political spectrum and by people from all walks of life, Modi said, sharing his old pictures with him.

Shekhawat was the BJP's first chief minister in Rajasthan and is credited with building the party to prominence in the western state. He was elected the country's Vice President in 2002.

Personable, friendly and politically astute, Shekhawat enjoyed respect and warmth of politicians across ideological divides and his legacy endures in Rajasthan where assembly polls are scheduled to be held on November 25.

## Maharashtra Government employees to hold 'Family March' on Nov 8 to demand restoration of Old Pension Scheme

MUMBAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Nearly 17 lakh government and semi-government employees in Maharashtra have decided to hold a "Family March" in every district and tehsil of the state on November 8 to demand restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

Participants of the march, to be taken out with the slogan of 'My Family, My Pension', will reach the offices of district collectors and tehsildars to press for their demand, Vishwas Katkar, convenor of a coordination committee of various organisations of state employees, said on Monday.

The OPS was discontinued in the state in 2005.

"We have decided to take out a 'Family March' in each district and tehsil on November 8 and submit our demand of restoration of the OPS. If there is no proper response, then we will go on an indefinite strike from December 14 for the demand of OPS," Katkar said.

The employees have been disappointed with the Maharashtra government for not fulfilling their demand for the OPS, which provides an assured and reliable source of income post-retirement. They have also been

demanding cancellation of indirect privatisation of the education sector, and seeking filling up of all vacant posts.

Nearly 17 lakh government and semi-government employees will participate in the march, Katkar said.

Under the OPS, a government employee gets a monthly pension equivalent to 50 per cent his/her last drawn salary. There was no need for contribution by employees.

Under the New Pension Scheme, a state government employee contributes 10 per cent of his/her basic salary plus dearness allowance with the state



making a matching contribution. The money is then invested in one of the several pension funds approved by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and the returns are market-linked. Members of the Maratha community in the state have already

been holding protests to press for their demand for reservation.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday said his government was committed to giving reservations in jobs and education to the Maratha community and urged youth not to take extreme steps like suicide.

## Assam's eminent academician, singer Birendranath Datta dies at 88

GUWAHATI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Eminent academician, singer and lyricist Birendranath Datta died on Monday at a hospital here following a prolonged illness, his family said.

He was 88 and is survived by his wife, son and two daughters.

Datta was suffering from various old-age ailments for long and was admitted to the hospital recently.

A recipient of the Padma Shri in the field of art and literature in 2009, Datta began his career as an academician at B Borooah College here and went on to teach at different colleges of the state, before retiring as the head of the department of Folklore Research of Gauhati University.

After his retirement, he joined Tezpur University as a professor in the Department of Traditional Culture and Art Forms.

An eminent lyricist, Datta penned several songs and even sang many of those, with 'Bohu din bokuler gundh puwa nai' being one of his most popular num-



bers. He also served as the president of Assam's premier literary organisation Asam Sahitya Sabha for two terms from 2003 and a life member of the Gauhati

Artists' Guild. An author of repute, some of his prominent books include 'Cultural Contours of Northeast India' and 'Sankar Madhavar Manisha Aru Asomar Sanaskritic

Uttaradhikare', among others.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, in his condolence message, said the news of the demise of the eminent researcher of linguistics and culture has left a great void in the arena of culture, art and music.

"I pray for the eternal peace of the soul of the former president of Asam Sahitya Sabha and extend my deepest condolences to the members of the bereaved family," he added.

## Madhya Pradesh Ex Minister Rustam Singh Resigns From BJP Ahead Polls

BHOPAL, Oct 23 (Agencies): Senior BJP leader and former Madhya Pradesh minister Rustam Singh resigned from the party on Monday, ahead of the state assembly polls scheduled next month.

In a letter addressed to state BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Singh (78) said he is resigning from the BJP's primary membership and all party positions.

He was not "not treated fairly" by the party, a source close to Singh claimed. Rustam Singh's son Rakesh Singh has been fielded by the Bahujan Samaj Party from Morena seat. Since then, there was speculation that Rustam Singh may leave the ruling BJP to campaign for his son in Morena.

An influential Gurjar leader from the



Gwalior-Chambal region, Rustam Singh resigned from the Indian Police Service (IPS) in 2003 and joined the BJP.

He was an MLA for two terms, from 2003-2008 and 2013-2018.

Rustam Singh served as a minister for two terms from 2003-2008 and 2015-2018. Elections to the 230-member state assembly are scheduled on November 17.

## 80-Year-Old Woman With Disability Sexually Assaulted In Kerala, One Arrested

KOLLAM, Oct 23 (Agencies): A man was arrested on Monday for allegedly sexually assaulting an 80-year-old differently-abled woman in this district a few days ago, police said. The incident took place on October 20 when the victim was found injured in an isolated area in Kottiyam near here, they said.

Rashid (33) was taken into custody on Sunday night, and his arrest was recorded today.

The accused, a resident of Velinellur, allegedly sexually assaulted the octogenarian while she was sleeping in her shop at Kottiyam.

"Locals saw her in the morning, informed her family, and took her to the hospital. The family filed a complaint with the police as well.

The accused was caught on Sunday after verifying CCTV footage in the vicinity," police said.

## Delhi Government identifies 8 more pollution hotspots, will use dust suppressants: Gopal Rai

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): The government has identified eight more pollution hotspots in addition to the existing 13 in the national capital, and special teams will be deployed there to check pollution sources, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Monday.

After a meeting with 28 departments to ensure the effective implementation of pollution mitigation measures in the Capital, Rai said the government has also decided to use dust suppressant powder to prevent dust pollution in the city.

Delhi's air quality turned "very poor" on Sunday for the first time since May, mainly due to a drop in temperature and wind speed, which allowed pollutants to accumulate.

"In addition to the 13 existing air pollution hotspots in Delhi, we are focusing on eight

places where the AQI has exceeded the 300-mark. These locations include Shadipur, ITO, Mandir Marg, Nehru Nagar, Patparganj, Sonia Vihar, Dhyan Chand Stadium, and Moti Bagh," the minister told a press conference.

He added that special teams will be deployed at the eight places to identify pollution sources and take corrective measures in collaboration with the Delhi Pollution Control Committee. Rai also mentioned that district collectors have been instructed to conduct field visits on October 25 and ensure the strict implementation of pollution mitigation measures.

"Directions have also been issued to use dust suppressant powder in anti-smog guns to prevent dust pollution. The anti-dust campaign will be strengthened, and more field visits will be conducted," he said.

## Actor-politician Gautami Tadimalla quits BJP



CHENNAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Well-known actor Gautami Tadimalla on Monday said she was ending her 25-year association with the BJP, alleging among others, support from a section of the party to a man who had allegedly cheated her.

Despite the party "rescinding" in the last minute its assurance to give her a ticket in the 2021 Assembly polls in the state, she remained committed to the BJP, Tadimalla said in a statement uploaded on her X account.

She said she had decided to resign from the party with a "heavy heart and disillusionment" and tagged BJP president JP Nadda and the saffron party's Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai among others in her social media post.

She alleged a particular person "has swindled me of my money, property and documents". "...not only do I not have any support from the party and leaders, but it has also come to my knowledge that several amongst them have been actively helping and supporting the very person who has betrayed my trust and cheated me of my life earnings," she said in the detailed statement.

She recalled that she had lodged complaints with the police about the cheating and said she had hope in Chief Minister MK Stalin and the judicial system to ensure her justice.

Gautami said she was entrusted with the development of the Rajapalayam constituency during the 2021 polls and assured that she would be fielded from there, following which she dedicated herself to the strengthening of the party at the grassroots level.

"However, this assurance to contest was rescinded at the last minute. Regardless, I maintained my commitment to the party," she said but expressed regret that even after 25 years of service to the organisation, there was no support.

She said she was writing the letter of resignation "in great pain and sorrow, but with very firm resolve".

## Deep depression over Bay of Bengal may turn into cyclone by Monday evening: IMD

BHUBANESWAR/KOLKATA, Oct 23 (Agencies): The deep depression formed over the Bay of Bengal may intensify into a cyclone by Monday evening, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a bulletin.

The cyclonic storm, after its formation, will be called 'Hamoon', a name given by Iran.

The system is currently located in west-central Bay of Bengal after moving northeastwards on Sunday night. It lies centred around 400 km from Odisha's Paradip and 550 km southwest of Digha in West Bengal.

"It is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm over the next 12 hours. It is very likely to move north-northeastwards and cross the Bangladesh coast between Khepupara and Chittagong around October 25 evening as a deep depression," the IMD's morning bulletin said.

Meanwhile, the Odisha government has asked all the district collectors



to remain prepared for any eventuality, and directed the administration to evacuate people from low-lying areas in the event of heavy rain.

"The system (cyclone) will move in the sea around 200 km from Odisha coast," weather scientist U S Dash said, adding that under its influence, light to moderate rainfall is likely at a few places in coastal Odisha on Monday and at many places over the next two days.

The weather department said that light to moderate rainfall would occur at a few places in northern and southern coastal districts, besides Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal.

The fisheries and animal resources devel-

opment department has advised fishermen not to venture into deep seas.

In neighbouring West Bengal, the Met department forecast thunderstorms with lightning and moderate rainfall in parts of Purba Medinipur, Kolkata and South 24 Parganas districts.

The IMD advised people to stay in safe places during the thunderstorms.

Rainfall prediction on Nabami dampened festive spirit as revelers thronged various pandals on the penultimate day of Durga Puja celebrations.

Keeping in view of the weather conditions, Durga Puja organisers are preparing for possible rain and wind during the festivities.

## Two dead, three hurt in fire in residential building flat in Mumbai



MUMBAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Two persons, including an eight-year-old boy, died while three others were injured after a blaze broke out in a flat located on the first floor of an eight-storey residential building in suburban Borivali here on Monday afternoon, civic officials said.

The fire erupted in a first-floor flat of Veena Santur Cooperative Housing Society at around 12:30 pm and spread to the electric wiring and installations

on that floor, according to officials.

Earlier, the officials had given the name of the affected building as Pavan Dham Veena Santur and its location in Kandivali (west).

Four fire engines and other vehicles of the fire brigade rushed to the spot, a civic official said.

"Fire-fighting operation is going on with the help of two small hose lines and one first aid line of four motor pumps," the official said.

A total of five persons were rushed to nearby

Shatabdi Hospital after they suffered injuries.

"The doctors declared Glory Walphati (43) and Josu Gems Robert (8) brought dead," the officials said.

The injured persons include two women-Lakshmi Bura (40) and Rajeshwari Bhartare (24). Another person who suffered injuries is identified as Ranjan Subodh Shah (76).

"They are undergoing treatment. Among them, Bhartare suffered 100 per cent burn injuries, while other persons up to 50 per cent burns," the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation officials added.

Earlier this month, seven people had lost their lives and more than 40 were injured after a fire tore through a ground-plus-seven-storey residential building in Mumbai's Goregaon area while 30 residents were rescued.

## Hamas says new Israel strikes kill at least 70 in Gaza

*The Israeli military said Monday it had hit "over 320 military targets in the Gaza Strip" over the past 24 hours.*

GAZA, Oct 23 (Agencies): Israeli strikes on Gaza overnight and early Monday have killed at least 70 people, Hamas officials said, as the military said it had struck some 320 targets in the Palestinian enclave in 24 hours.

The Hamas-controlled government media office in the blockaded Gaza Strip said in a statement that "more than 60 were martyred in the (Israeli) raids" during the night including 17 who were killed in a single strike that hit a house in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza.

At least 10 other people were killed in new strikes on Monday morning, the media office said in a separate statement, bringing to overall toll since Sunday night to at least 70 deaths.

The Israeli military said Monday it had hit "over 320 military targets in the Gaza Strip"



over the past 24 hours.

"The terror targets struck included tunnels containing Hamas terrorists, dozens of operational command centres... and Islamic Jihad terrorists, military compounds, and observation posts," the army said in a statement.

For more than two weeks, Israel has pummelled the Hamas-controlled Palestinian

territory with air strikes, following a cross-border attack launched by the armed group on October 7.

The violence has left at least 1,400 people dead in Israel, according to official figures.

The bombing campaign has killed more than 4,650 Palestinians, mainly civilians including at least 1,873 children, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Between 200 and 300 people have been killed each day in the besieged territory, according to government tolls.

Amid the campaign, tens of thousands of Israeli troops are gathered along the enclave's borders for a widely anticipated ground invasion.

The military said Sunday that one soldier was killed and three others wounded during a tank operation inside Gaza.

Israel has warned more than one million residents in northern Gaza to move south for their safety, and the United Nations says more than half of the territory's 2.4-million population is now displaced.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are believed to remain in and around Gaza City in the north, unwilling or unable to leave.

## Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan charged in cipher case

*Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is also indicted along with Khan*



ISLAMABAD, Oct 23 (Agencies): A special court in Pakistan on Monday indicted former prime minister Imran Khan in the cipher case for allegedly violating the secret laws of the

country.

Khan, 71, was arrested in August after a case was filed against him for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a secret diplomatic cable

(cipher) sent by the country's embassy in Washington in March last year.

Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was also indicted along with Khan.

Khan had used that document to build a narrative that his government was ousted as a result of a foreign conspiracy.

The hearing of the case was held at the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi by special court judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain.

According to Geo News, Khan and Qureshi have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

## China crackdown on cyber scams in Southeast Asia nets thousands but leaves networks intact

BANGKOK, Oct 23 (Agencies): Zhang Hongliang, a former restaurant manager in central China, took various gigs in and outside China to support his family after losing his job during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March, a job offer to teach Chinese cooking at a restaurant led him into a cyber scam compound in Myanmar, where he was instead ordered to lure Chinese into giving up their savings for fake investment schemes via social media platforms.

Zhang is one of tens of thousands of people, mostly but not all Chinese, who have become ensnared in cyber scam networks run by powerful Chinese criminal syndicates in Southeast Asia.

Regional and Chinese authorities have netted thousands of people in a crackdown, but experts say they are failing to root out the local elites and criminal networks that are bound to keep running the schemes.

When scam operations are shut down in one place they often just resurface elsewhere.

The problem is an embarrassment for Beijing and is discouraging ordinary Chinese from travelling to Southeast Asia out of fear they might be duped or kidnapped and caught up in a cyber scam operation.

In recent years, media reports have uncovered instances of young people being lured to places in Cambodia or Myanmar for high-paying jobs, only to be forced to work as scammers.

Rescue organisations say people are regularly beaten or face physical punishments such as being forced to run laps if they don't perform well.

In August, China, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar agreed to set up a joint police operations centre to tackle cyber scams in the region.

On October 10, China's Ministry of Public Security announced that its "Summer Operation" had successfully brought back 2,317 scam suspects from northern Myanmar to China.

China calls such people suspects, though experts say most of them are victims who were forced to work



for the criminals. They question how they will be treated once back in China.

The schemes based in countries like Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are run by Chinese bosses hand-in-hand with local elites.

Many are based in places where China has financed big construction projects through leader Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative.

Myanmar's border regions long have been a magnet for criminals — historically including drug producers and traffickers — because of lax law enforcement.

Such places are generally under the control of ethnic minority armed groups, either opposed to or allied with Myanmar's central government. Some also cooperate with organised crime gangs.

"From the vantage point of the Chinese government, it's a source of extreme embarrassment that you have so many of these Chinese criminals operating all across Southeast Asia," said Jason Tower, an expert on transnational crime with the United States Institute of Peace.

The syndicates also are known for "pig butchering" cons, where scammers entice individuals, often halfway across the world, to invest their money in bogus schemes after duping them into digital romances.

The scammers divide their targets into two categories: Chinese and non-Chinese. They use scripts, images of models and influencers and translation software to trick the people they contact by phone or online into parting with their money. Victims can be anywhere in the world.

The criminals have "ridden on the shoulders of the Belt and Road Initiative," said Tower, who outlined links between the criminals and Chi-

nese state enterprises, think tanks and government officials in a 2020 report written for the United States Institute of Peace.

Zhang was working in Thailand and on a visa run to Laos when he met the man who lured him to the scam compound in Myanmar.

Giving what he said was his last name, Gao, he claimed to be a broker and travel agent for Chinese living in Thailand.

Zhang and his wife wanted extra money to pay for in vitro fertilization to have another child.

Gao suggested he go work in Myawaddy, in eastern Myanmar's Kayin state, teaching a local chef how to cook Chinese dishes in Gao's new restaurant. The pay would be double what Zhang made in China.

Zhang was wary. Since a 2021 coup, military-controlled Myanmar has been embroiled in civil conflict.

But Gao reassured him that he wouldn't be doing anything illegal and said the restaurant would have plenty of customers since many cyber scam businesses were operating in the area.

That might have raised a red flag but it was only once he got to Myanmar that Zhang realised his predicament. He asked to go back home, saying there was a family emergency.

His family helped him scrape together some 40,000 yuan (USD 5,472) to pay off the debt Gao claimed he owed him, and he slipped away one night, swimming across the Moei River into Thailand, where he turned himself in to Thai police, who contacted the Chinese Embassy.

Zhang showed the AP copies of his deportation notice from the Thai Immigration police and a temporary ID card.

He returned to China in late June and was ques-

tioned by Chinese police but not detained.

He has been sharing his story on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, to alert others to the risks and says people often contact him about relatives trapped in cyber scam compounds.

"We all went out with this wonderful sense of hope, but then reality slammed us in the face," he said.

In total, China has detained some 4,000 suspects and returned them back to China.

The Ministry of Public Security has claimed "breakthrough results" through operations in coordination with Myanmar authorities.

On Monday, they announced they had repatriated another 2,349 people. The ministry did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

One 31-year old former chef who was smuggled into Myanmar's Wa State earlier this year said he saw his company hand over four people to Chinese police with little fanfare in September.

Other companies did the same, said the man, who was smuggled into Myanmar and later rescued by a non-profit organisation.

He declined to be named out of fear of government retribution, and The Associated Press could not independently verify his account.

Overall, the enforcement actions don't seem very comprehensive, experts say. The groups now based in Myanmar originally were located in Cambodia.

When Cambodia cracked down on online gambling rings and illegal casinos in 2019, many of the groups just moved to less well policed places in Myanmar. Some were taken over by rival gangs.

China's efforts to repair its image have so far not made much headway, said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor of political science at Thailand's Chulalongkorn University.

"You can crack down on these symptoms and the manifestations ... that you can see in the borderland areas," he said, "but they'll come back unless you really have a sustained effort."

## EU debates Gaza truce call, as top diplomat urges more aid



LUXEMBOURG, Oct 23 (Agencies): EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Monday urged faster aid deliveries to Gaza, and said the bloc was debating calling for a "humanitarian pause" in Israel's conflict with Hamas.

"What's important? More, quicker, and in particular to enter the basic things that make water and electricity supply being restored," Borrell said, ahead of a meeting of European Union foreign ministers.

Borrell said that the few dozen trucks of humanitarian aid that had been allowed into

Gaza from Egypt was "not enough" and said fuel to produce power and drinking water was particularly needed.

He said ministers would discuss calls from United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres for a "humanitarian ceasefire" and the issue would be on the table at an EU leaders summit on Thursday.

"Personally, I think that a humanitarian pause is needed in order to allow the humanitarian support to come in and be distributed, seeing that half of the population of Gaza has been moving from their houses," Bor-

rell said.

He said "the attacks of missiles, rockets from Hamas, from Gaza, has to stop and the hostages, people who have been kidnapped, have to be released".

"It is part of any step towards de-escalation."

The 27-nation EU bloc has long been split over its policy on Israel and the Palestinians.

It has struggled with conflicting messaging since the surge in violence following the October 7 attack by Hamas and Israel's reprisals against Gaza.

Czech foreign minister Jan Lipavsky cast doubt on the feasibility of achieving a temporary ceasefire with the jihadist group in charge of Gaza.

"There is a terrorist organisation controlling Gaza, sending rockets every day, that perpetrated a barbarous attack on Israel terri-

tory," he said.

"So the question is how such a ceasefire should be established, it needs to be established on both sides."

Hamas militants in Gaza stormed across the border into Israel on October 7, launching a raid that killed at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians who were shot, mutilated or burnt to death on the first day, according to Israeli officials.

They also seized more than 200 hostages in the worst-ever attack in Israel's history. Israel has hit back with a relentless bombing campaign which has so far killed more than 4,600 Palestinians, mainly civilians, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Officials said the central town of Deir al-Balah had been particularly badly hit overnight Saturday to Sunday.

## Azerbaijan hosts joint drills with Turkey near Armenia

BAKU, Oct 23 (Agencies): Azerbaijan's defence ministry said on Monday it had begun joint drills with its ally Turkey near the border with Armenia, weeks after Baku recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenian separatists.

Azerbaijan last month took control of the long-disputed region in a 24-hour offensive that ended decades of Armenian separatist rule.

The ministry said "up to 3,000" troops would take part in the tactical drills held in the capital Baku, the Nakhichevan enclave between Iran and Armenia, as well as territories retaken from Armenian separatists.

The exercises -- dubbed "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 2023" -- involve dozens of artillery weapons and aviation.

Baku said they were aimed at "ensuring combat interoperability" between the allies.

The drills came as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Iran and Russia were set to send their foreign ministers to hold talks in Tehran in a diplomatic format initiated by Moscow in 2020 -- after Baku and Yerevan went



to war over Karabakh.

The talks are seen as Moscow's attempt to reduce growing Western influence in a region it has long considered as its backyard.

The European Union and United States have in recent years taken a lead role in mediating a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russia, which has traditionally mediated the conflict, has seen its role

diminished since being focused on its invasion of Ukraine.

Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave of Karabakh was at the centre of two wars between the Caucasus arch-foe neighbours -- in 2020 and in the 1990s.

On September 19, Azerbaijan launched a lightning offensive against Armenian separatist forces.

After less than a day of fighting, separatist authorities agreed to lay down arms and reintegrate with Azerbaijan.

Almost all of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population -- some 100,000 people -- fled for Armenia after the offensive, sparking a refugee crisis.

## Google faces Japan anti-trust probe



TOKYO, Oct 23 (Agencies): Japan's anti-trust watchdog said Monday it is inves-

tigating whether Google violated rules by asking smartphone manufacturers for preferential

treatment.

The Japan Fair Trade Commission probe adds to the search engine giant's woes as it locks horns with other competition authorities, including in the United States.

The agency said Google is suspected of requiring its search apps to be included in the devices and with their icons in specific

places.

Google also signed contracts with Android device makers to sign contracts not to include its rival search apps in their products in exchange for sharing profits generated from advertisement revenues driven from Google searches.

The commission will seek the public's input until November 22.



## Grand finale of Navratra Prabhat Pheri: A Spectacular Conclusion to Festivities



### Top News Report

KATRA, Oct 23: The nine days Navratra Festival Prabhat Pheri in the holy town of Katra-Vaishnodevi came to conclusion on Monday morning which was jointly organized by Department of Tourism J&K Govt. & Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine Board Katra in association with J&K Association Prabhat Pheri beside indirect support from other organizations during Navratra Festival 2023.

The function concluded amidst chanting of Bhajans & beating of drums at Bus Stand Katra.

Earlier Chief Guest, Baldev Raj Sharma, ex MLA Reasi and Guests of Honour, Jitender Singh Tehsildar Katra and Ghulam Abbas Joint Director Central Bureau of Communications in presence of Special Guests Gopal Dutt BMO Katra

and Shiv Kumar Sharma former Joint Secretary J&K Sports Council flagged off the Prabhat Pheri from Bus Stand Katra. A colourful procession was taken out in which artists of CBC from J&K, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and a large number of locals and devotees participated.

Today's attraction was jhanki of Maa Sidhidatri showcased by Nikita and Vanshita. Pilgrims group from Delhi and other states joined the Prabhat Pheri and they chanted the Jaikaras of Maa Vaishnodevi and danced to the beats of drum all along the route.

Baldev Raj Sharma wished may Maa Vaishnodevi shower her blessings upon all on the pious occasion of Ramnavmi & complimented the efforts of members of the J & K Association of Prabhat Pheri in making

this event colourful, successful and spiritual.

Ghulam Abbas said that Prabhat Pheri during navratras is a form of devotion towards the holy deity & performing Prabhat Pheri at Katra will definitely please maa Vaishnodevi.

Sr. Citizen Forum led by Rattan Chand participated in the Prabhat Pheri in large numbers.

Being the last day of festivity, the association members were all enthusiastic and danced in full swing all along the route while wearing colourful Pagaries.

A felicitation ceremony was hosted to honour the dignitaries present in the procession, various organizations and members of J&K association of Prabhat Pheri with mementos for making necessary arrangements and better coordination during Prabhat Pheri.

Baldev Raj Sharma and Jitender Singh and Ghulam Abbas felicitated with Pagari and Chunari and memento by association members.

After the felicitation function Kanya Poojan was performed by the dignitaries and Halwa was served to the Yatries and participants who participated in the procession of Prabhat Pheri.

Raj Kumar Padha, President J&K Association of Prabhat Pheri told that it was the result of coordination & sincere efforts put in by the people of Katra especially association members for making the event of Prabhat Pheri a grand success.

He thanked the J&K Tourism Deptt., district administration, Health Department, Police Department, Fire and Emergency Services Deptt., CRPF 6th Battaillon Katra, students, Municipal Committee Katra, print and electronic media and Katra people for their active cooperation and support during Prabhat Pheri processions.

Association members present on the occasion were Ajay Sharma, Raj Kumar Dubey, Ramnik Nawada, R S Manhas, Rattan Sharma, Neelam Singh, Brij Mohan Suri, Subash Chand, Rakesh Sharma, Renujei Dhar, Rattan Chand, Rajesh Gupta, Vimal Sharma, Satish Kumar, Prinu Dhar, P N Kaul and Suman Kotwal.

Among others present in the procession were Babu Ram Dubey, Murlidhar, Sham Lal, Sanjay Tickoo, P C Rana and Hemraj.

## 'Save Tawi Campaign' organized by JU

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Department of Environmental Sciences & Green Campus Task Force (GCTF-JU), University of Jammu (JU) organized 'Save Tawi Campaign' on the banks of River Tawi during the last day of Navratra festival.

The purpose of this campaign was to sensitize public about the importance of keeping Tawi river clean, and the causes and consequences of immersion of plastic and other materials along with the Khetri into the River.

The students and volunteers were divided into groups and each group interacted with the public

and made them aware regarding the harmful effects of waste especially the use of plastic materials and gave them easy solutions for effective management of such type of wastes.

The students also collected the materials like chunri, coconuts, pots, plastic waste etc., from the devotees and segregated it, and allowed only the immersion of Khetri into the river.

Prof. Piyush Malaviya, Head Department of Environmental Sciences, stressed on the adoption of adequate measures and techniques for the protection and conservation of Tawi River which is the

lifeline of Jammu.

Dr. Deepika Slathia, Member Secretary, GCTF-JU said that involving students in such campaigns instils in them a sense of environmental responsibility and provides a practical and interactive way to learn about the causes of water pollution, and the importance of conserving our water bodies. During the interaction, the devotees lauded the efforts of the department and fully cooperated in making the campaign successful.

Among others who participated in the event included Dr. Rakesh Kumar Atri, Dr. Ravinder Kumar and Dr. Ranjan Sharma.

## SLNMM Trust organizes Havan on Ram Navami festival

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Shri Laxmi Narayan Mandir Management (SLNMM) Trust, Gandhi Nagar on Monday celebrated the Ram Navami festival by organizing Havan under the guidance of pandits in a big way in the Yagyashala at Mandir complex.

Besides, the president, other members and special invitees of the trust, and large number of other devotees, which participated in the havan which was lasted about six hours in the morning followed by "Kanya Pujan" and special Aarti.

Earlier a series of pro-

grammes viz. Dandiya, Garbha, special scenes from Shri Ram Lila, recitations of bhajans were presented by the students of various colleges and schools. Special lectures by renowned scholars were also delivered during the Navaratri which was appreciated by one and all.

On Shri Durga Ashtami (the 22th Oct.2023) the prizes i.e medals were presented to the participants by Th. Gulchain Singh Charak, President of the Trust.

Charak congratulated all the devotees, especially office bearers and the members of function committee for organizing such

a grand celebrations and also special thanks were extended to the respected pujaris and other staff members of the Temple's complex for their efforts for making the Navratras festival a grand success.

Prominent amongst others who played an important role for making all the programmes a grand success were S.C Rekhi, (Gen.Secretary) Deepak Gupta, (Treasurer) Prithvi Raj Vaid, Harish Malohtra, Kapil Slathia, K B Mago-tria, Kulbhushan Bali, Parshant Sharma, P K Gupta, Sumesh Damral, Kiran Rajput, Krishan Gupta, Sandeep Singh and Pritam Singh.

## FROM PAGE 1

### CISF takes over security of Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu

Bhalwal jail from the CRPF. This is the second prison of Jammu and Kashmir to be secured by the CISF—a paramilitary force with current strength of nearly 1.75 lakh personnel.

On October 3, the CISF also took over the security of Srinagar jail from the CRPF following an MHA order issued to the force on September 22 this year.

"The CISF took over the security of Kot Bhalwal jail from the CRPF on October 20," CISF Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Shrikant Kishore said.

The CISF personnel are mandated to provide round-the-clock security at the inner as well as outer periphery of Kot Bhalwal jail—one of the two high-security Central jails in Jammu and Kashmir.

Srinagar and Kot Bhalwal jails of Jammu and Kashmir are very sensitive. Several dreaded terrorists and notorious criminals are lodged in these jails. There are over 900 prisoners in Kot Bhalwal and 500 in Srinagar jails.

There are 579 undertrials, 353 detainees and 67 convicts in the Kot Bhalwal jail, the source said, adding that "among these, 17 are foreign nationals."

At present there are thirteen jails of different types for lodgement of prisoners which includes two Central jails at Kot Bhalwal and Srinagar; eight district jails at Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Rajouri, Poonch, Baramulla and Kupwara and Leh and three sub-jails at Hiranagar, Reasi and Kishtwar. The total capacity for prisoners in these jails is 2,775.

With taking over security cover of Kot Bhalwal Central jail, the sensitive establishment is included in the list of India's most critical infrastructure facilities like nuclear installations, space establishments, sea-ports, and power plants being secured by the CISF.

The CISF security umbrella also protects 67 airports, Delhi Metro, important government buildings and iconic heritage monuments. The CISF also has a specialized VIP Security vertical providing round-the-clock security to important protectees. Post the Mumbai terror attack in November 2008, the mandate of CISF was broadened to provide security cover to private corporate establishments also.

The CISF, which came into existence in 1969 to provide integrated security cover to certain sensitive public sector undertakings with a strength of only three battalions, has since grown into a premier multi-skilled organization with a present strength of 1,71,635 personnel.

The CISF at present provides security cover to 358 establishments through the length and breadth of the country. The CISF also has its own Fire Wing which provides services to 104 of the above establishments.

### Jammu-Srinagar National Highway

### opens to Traffic

A traffic department official said the highway was reopened for traffic around 5 am Monday.

Traffic on the highway was suspended on Sunday to facilitate the road construction agency in carrying out the repair work.

The official said the traffic was also restored on THE Mughal road connecting the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu with south Kashmir's Shopian district and the Sinthan top road linking Kishtwar in Jammu with south Kashmir's Anantnag.

### Govt has vastly improved capacity in terms of services required in winters: Advisor Batnagar

Advisor Batnagar said. He said in terms of power, emergency services and disaster management we are equipping ourselves well to deal with the situation timely. "To provide essential services to people in winters, the stocking of essentials are being done and the process will be completed in time," he said.

He added that all civic services including health, emergency transport, police services etc would be kept available for general public to avoid any inconvenience in chill weather.

### Emoluments Governed by terms of service: Army on grant to next of kin of Agniveer Killed in Siachen

case). Contribution of Rs 8 lakh from the Armed Forces Battle Casualty Fund. Immediate financial assistance of Rs 30 thousand from Army Wives Welfare Association (AWWA)," the ADG PI wrote.

Earlier, on Sunday, the Army paid tribute to the fallen Agniveer, an operator who lost his life in the terrains of the Siachen glacier. Offering its condolences to the kin, the Army's Fire and Fury Corps posted on X, "Quartered in snow silent to remain, when the bugle calls, they shall rise and march again. All ranks of Fire and Fury Corps salute the supreme sacrifice of Agniveer (Operator) Gawate Akshay Laxman, in the line of duty, in the unforgiving heights of Siachen, and offer deepest condolences to the family."

### Kupwara woman delivers quadruplets

treatment by a team of doctors, the woman delivered four babies – 3 girls and a boy at around 2 AM.

All the babies and their mother, upon receipt of this report, are doing well.

When contacted, Medical Superintendent Kupwara Dr Mohammad Shafi told GNS that such cases 'are always difficult to tackle. "It fortunately was a normal delivery given the rarity of such cases", he

### Indian dog breeds to be deployed in Police duties soon

and CISF are all set to recruit Indian dog breeds for police duties as trials of a few such as the Rampur Hound are underway. An order has also been issued for testing the Himalayan mountain canines.

At present, almost all police dogs are foreign breeds like the German shepherd, Labrador, Belgian Malinois and Cocker spaniel.

"The trial of the Indian dog breed Mudhol hound has already been concluded by the SSB and the ITBP. Trials of a few other Indian dog breeds like the Rampur hound are also undergoing at the canine training centres of the CRPF and the BSF," a home ministry official said.

Besides, the ministry has also ordered trials of the Himalayan mountain dogs like the Himachali shepherd, Gaddi, Bakharwal and the Tibetan mastiff simultaneously by the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB). The trials are going on now.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in the past spoken about promoting local dog breeds through scientific means.

All dogs hired by the CAPFs are part of the Police Service K9 (PSKs) squads. The CAPFs which hire and train the dogs for police duties are the BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, SSB, NSG and the Assam Rifles.

Police dogs are trained for tasks like the detection of explosives such as IEDs and mines, narcotics and fake currencies, besides patrolling and others.

Dogs are also sometimes used in search operations to locate terrorists, the official said.

The home ministry has also taken a few vital steps to strengthen the culture and ecosystem of mutual learning and cooperation among the CAPFs and other police and law enforcement organisations on the issue of PSKs.

The CAPFs, with nearly 4,000 dogs, are the largest police dog users in the country. Around 300 pups are hired by the CAPFs every year.

Among the CAPFs, the largest number of dogs are with the Central Reserve Police Force (around 1,500), followed by the Central Industrial Security Force (around 700). The counter-terror organisation National Security Guard (NSG) has about 100 dogs, another official said.

The K9 squad was set up by the home ministry as part of its police modernisation programme in 2019 with an aim to streamline the breeding, training and selection of dogs.

Interestingly, all combat dogs of the CAPFs are now undergoing an annual evaluation exercise to assess their efficiency and suitability for their specified tasks like sniffing out suspects, narcotics and hidden explosives, besides patrolling risk-prone areas, the official said.

The home ministry, under whose command the CAPFs and several other forces work, has formulated a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the K9 squads of these forces and has directed them to include it in their dog-training curriculum. "The ambit of internal security was widening, the difference between internal and external security threats was getting narrower, and police and CAPF dogs were an effective force multiplier for ensuring safety and security of the troops in operations and also the citizens," the official said.

### Over 500 Positions Vacant at University of Kashmir Since 2016

this crisis, including the Watch and Ward section, sanitation, hostels, examination wing, and landscape division, all of which are dealing with 30-40 vacancies each.

The administrative block, Alama Iqbal Library, and the research centre are also affected, with nearly 100 technical positions remaining unfilled. These vacant positions include roles like laboratory assistants, lab attendants, junior technical assistants, professional assistants, and computer assistants.

These vacancies have significantly affected the science department, impeding crucial research work. "Some heads of departments have had to engage ad hoc assistants to compensate for the staff shortage, while in other cases, HODs are forced to take on clerical duties due to the lack of essential support," said a senior Professor.

The issue extends to the Physical Education Department, where critical roles, such as the women's gym coach and sports assistant, remain unfilled, posing risks to the safety of female students. "If the current trend of positions going vacant continues, it is projected that nearly 50 percent of positions will remain unoccupied," a Professor said to The Excelsior.

He emphasised that non-teaching staff members play a vital role in the university's operations and research activities. However, he lamented that this issue has been neglected since 2016, with no recruitment efforts taking place.

Despite the university's attempts to address the issue by advertising nearly 80 positions in May this year, an official revealed that the recruitment process has made limited progress. "The university released various notices this year to fill multiple vacancies, including Junior Assistants, Legal Assistants, and Research Assistants. However, the process has stalled for undisclosed reasons," he explained. He added that non-teaching positions typically involve only a written test, with no interviews required.

The delay in the recruitment process has caused growing frustration among applicants who eagerly await examination schedules and appointment finalizations. "I have been diligently preparing for the exams over the past five months, but unfortunately, there have been no significant developments. I sincerely hope that the recruitment process is expedited to ease

the concerns of aspiring candidates," one applicant from Budgam said.

Nelofar Khan, Vice Chancellor of the University, has declared that her top priority is to fill the vacant posts. "We were occupied with the University convocation, and now that we have successfully completed it, we will commence filling the vacant posts from next month," she added.

### Buglers gang busted in Budgam, stolen property worth Lacs recovered: Police

registered a case under \*FIR No. 148/2023, with charges under Sections 457 and 380 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC\*). During prompt action and exhaustive efforts, some suspects were questioned and one suspect identified as Farooq Ahmad Ganie, @Dil Jalay was subjected to rigorous questioning," he said.

"During the interrogation, he confessed his involvement in the burglary and revealed the whereabouts of the stolen items, leading to their swift recovery, which included copper utensils, clothing, artificial jewelry, and gold articles", an official said.

"As the investigation continued, the suspect disclosed the names of his accomplices involved in similar thefts. Subsequently, \*Asif Rashid Mir, also known as "Ubaid," S/o Ab. Rashid Mir R/o Dabipora and Maqsood Ahmad Gojri S/o Gh. Hassan Gojri R/o Soznipora, were brought in for questioning. The duo admitted their involvement in multiple theft cases, and the subsequent searches resulted in the recovery of a range of stolen property."

These items, including laptops, desktops, LED screens, gas cylinders, sheep, copper utensils, inverters, batteries, generator, water motor and pipes, collectively valued at approximately 4-5 lakhs, were reclaimed.

An official said that in addition, one more suspect Showkat Ahmad Dar S/o Gh. Nabi Dar R/o Rawalpura Watrhiail was also arrested in connection with his involvement as receiver of stolen property.

These arrests with subsequent recoveries have resolved three cases under investigation at Police Station Khansahib viz \*148/2023, 129/2023 and 99/2023. The police continues to pursue the investigation with the expectation of more recoveries and arrests in the near future.

### Kishtwar Police holds candlelight march to pay tribute to slain Jawans

land and its protectors. The Candlelight March concluded with a collective commitment to uphold the ideals of courage, patriotism, and unity, as embodied by this solemn event.

The participants departed with a renewed sense of purpose, resolute in their determination to carry forward the legacy of the slain soldiers in their hearts and actions.

## Sensex plunges 826 points as worries over broader Middle East conflict sink global equities

**JSW Steel, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, NTPC, Wipro, HCL Technologies, SBI, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Power Grid and Reliance Industries Limited major laggards**

MUMBAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty plunged more than 1 per cent on Monday, falling for the fourth day running, amid weak trends in global markets in view of heightened tensions in the Middle East.

Crude oil quoting above USD 90 a barrel mark also played spoilsport for the markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 825.74 points or 1.26 per cent to settle at 64,571.88. During the day, it plummeted 894.94 points or 1.36 per cent to 64,502.68.

The Nifty fell 260.90 points or 1.34 per cent to 19,281.75.

In the four sessions since Wednesday, Sensex tanked 1,925 points to fall below the 65,000 mark while Nifty plunged by around 530 points.

Among the Sensex firms, JSW



Steel, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, NTPC, Wipro, HCL Technologies, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Power Grid and Reliance Industries Limited were the major laggards.

Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled lower.

European markets were trading with cuts. The US markets ended in negative territory on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.04 per cent to USD 92.18 a barrel.

"Despite the healthy performance of private banks and

marginal reductions in oil prices, investor confidence remained pessimistic, and a widespread consolidation persisted in the domestic markets.

The global markets echoed the same trend, as the unrest in West Asia has the potential to spiral further.

"Increased apprehensions surrounding prolonged elevated interest rates fuelled a continued upward movement in the US 10-year yield," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 456.21 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark fell 231.62 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 65,397.62 on Friday. The Nifty declined 82.05 points or 0.42 per cent to 19,542.65.

## Wagh Bakri Tea Group scion Parag Desai dies after injury in freak mishap

**Desai had suffered a head injury after being attacked by stray dogs during his morning walk near his residence in Ahmedabad**



NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Parag Desai, the 49-year-old executive director at Gujarat Tea Processors and Packers Limited known for its Wagh Bakri brand of tea, died on October 22 following a severe head injury sustained in a freak accident last week. He is reported to have suffered a

severe head injury after being attacked by stray dogs during his morning walk near his residence in Ahmedabad.

He underwent a surgery for brain haemorrhage at a private hospital in the city and was in the ICU.

His last rites were conducted at the Thalje crematorium on Monday morning. He is survived by wife Vidisha and daughter Parisha.

An MBA from Long Island University in the US, Desai, oversaw sales, was an expert tea taster and evaluator and associated with marketing and export departments for the Rs 1,500 crore group that was founded by his great grandfather. He expanded the brand into tea lounges and introduced new products like iced tea.

He was also active on industry platforms like the Confederation of Indian Industry and international organisations and was also associated with charities like Blind People's Association and Jivdaya Charitable Trust, which runs an animal hospital in Ahmedabad.

## 'AOs to determine biz activities of charitable trusts'

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): In an effort to address the ambiguity surrounding the tax liability of charitable organisations that generate income beyond donations, Nitin Gupta, Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes, said that clarity has been established following a significant Supreme Court decision in the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority case last year.

Gupta in an interaction with this paper said that assessing officers will determine whether the business component of such organisations is considered normal or abnormal, thereby determining their tax liability.

"The certainty is already there because of the SC decision. That is the rule of the country now. They will have to pay taxes on the business component. The decision says that whether the business is normal or abnormal, will be decided by the assessing officer. Accordingly, tax will be charged," Gupta said.

The Supreme Court ruling, which came into effect in 2022, marked a turning point in the understanding of tax obligations for charitable organisations.

They play a crucial role in society, but their ability to carry out sustainable activities and scale up operations is often hindered by financial uncertainties. While grants and donations serve as the lifeblood of charities, securing them can be a challenging and unpredictable task. To address this issue, many organisations consider generating funds through their activities. However, the permissibility of earning fee-based or commercial income remains a subject of monumental ambiguity.

According to experts, the income-tax exemption for charitable organisa-

tions must be examined in relation to the activities they undertake. Charities engaged in objects of general public utility (GPU) face limitations, allowing them to raise non-grant income only up to 20% of their total receipts. This effectively forces GPU charities to rely heavily on donations to develop their initiatives. In the 2022 ruling, the Supreme Court emphasised that even within the 20% limit, revenue should be earned on a cost-to-cost basis, with marginal profits at best.

For years, charities have relied on the plough-back theory, arguing that any fee or revenue-based receipts are ultimately used for charitable purposes and should not be viewed negatively by Tax Authorities. However, the Supreme Court ruling rejected the plough-back theory, asserting that once commercial income is earned, the charitable character of the organisation could be compromised. According to the court, the utilization of commercial income does not impact its relevance.

"In light of the present times and recognising the contribution of the charitable organisations for the betterment of the society, it is expected that clarity on fee-based income earned by charitable organisations is provided, so that charities get an adequate breather to build and scale-up their operations," Chetan Daga, who is a chartered accountant and founder of AdvantEdge Consulting said.

"It is true that certain elements have misused the income-tax exemption by carrying out commercial activities in the garb of charitable activities, however, it is hoped that the Revenue identifies such Black Sheep rather than treating the entire flock of sheep "Black!", he added.

## Festive season starts with a bang, momentum to remain strong

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): From small buys such as apparel and sweets to making once-in-a-lifetime purchases, consumers are not holding back this festive season. According to Redseer, the first week of the 2023 Festive season sale, which concluded on October 15, saw online platforms clocking a gross merchandise value (GMV) of R47,000 crore, growing by 19% over the first week of the 2022 Festive season sale.

Now that the season is heading towards the end of Navratri and with Dhanteras and Diwali coming soon, there is increased buoyancy in the market that consumer spending may peak this season and various sectors of the economy may register their best ever festive season.

"I think the mood is set. The initial trend is very good. Dealers are ready with stocks unlike last year when semiconductor shortage led to a huge waiting period," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania told this newspaper when asked what the auto sector is expect-

ing this festive season. In the 42-day festive period of CY2022, passenger vehicle (PV) sales grew by 34% to 4.56 lakh units. Two-wheeler sales also registered a good growth of 26% last year at 21.56 lakh units.

"We have predicted a single-digit growth for the PV segment this financial year and till now that is what is happening," said Singhania. PV sales in September 2023 grew by 19.03% YoY at 332,248 units. On 2W sales, Singhania said that despite most months in FY24 not registering a growth, sales picked up in September and they expect to register a growth this festive season over last year. Besides attractive finance schemes, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and dealers are offering a discount of 5-10% on the purchase value of many hatchbacks, sedans and entry-level cars. There is not much discount on SUVs, especially on the top-end variants. One can expect a discount of 4-5% on two-wheelers as well. In the last few weeks, carmakers

such as Skoda, Honda, Citroen, and Maruti Suzuki have rolled out various festive season offers. According to industry estimates, car dealerships across India are offering discounts ranging from R25,000 to more than R1 lakh on various models.

Surge in housing sales Speaking on the demand in the housing sector, which has been hitting new highs every passing quarter, Anuj Puri, Chairman of ANAROCK Group, said as things stand now, they expect a surge in both new launches and housing sales this festive season because, despite all domestic and global headwinds in the first nine months of 2023, there was a significant surge in residential demand with housing sales creating a new peak.

As per ANAROCK Research, last year in the festive quarter of October to December, it saw as many as 93,000 units launched across the top 7 cities. Puri expects at least 10-15% yearly growth this year which means it will again

be above 1 lakh units.

"If we consider the trends in the first nine months of 2023, housing sales reached a new peak and were at an all-time high. To put in numbers, as per ANAROCK Research, 9M 2023 saw total housing sales of over 3.49 lakh units across the top 7 cities which is 96% of the total sales recorded in 2022 despite the rise in both interest rates and housing prices. We expect this trend to continue during the festive season as well," he said. A few developers speaking to this newspaper said that they are not offering heavy discounts or freebies this season as demand is very strong. They are expecting high action in the premium segment, especially units priced at R2 crore or more.

Electronic items high in demand

Electronic items, especially smartphones, are also expected to remain in high demand this festive season. According to Counterpoint Research, the festive season smartphone sales this year will grow

7% y-o-y in terms of volumes while the average selling price (ASP) will grow 15% y-o-y. Data by Counterpoint showed that iPhone sales crossed the 1.5 million units mark for the first time ever in the initial week (October 8-15) of festive season sales by e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart.

Among other sectors, gold, paint, apparel, shoes, sweets, snacks and the tourism industry are expecting a robust festive season. This festive season, corporate gifting is also seeing huge traction. "The nature of corporate gifting has evolved over the years and a key trend we are witnessing is that it is getting digitised very quickly and moving from physical form to digital form. Companies are increasingly choosing gift cards and gift vouchers as a means to reward and recognise internal stakeholders such as employees and external stakeholders such as suppliers, dealers, and channel partners," Akash Hegde, co-founder, of ShakeDeal told agency.

## Air pollution on the rise: Beware of these diseases

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): The overall air quality of Delhi slipped to the "very poor" category with the Air Quality Index (AQI) being 302. The condition of air pollution, mostly related to vehicular exhaust, is likely to rise, giving rise to various respiratory illnesses.

In recent studies, a strong link between air pollution and the emergence of various diseases has been established, underscoring the urgent need for cleaner air and environmental safeguards.

Air pollution, caused by emissions from vehicles, industrial processes, and other sources, is associated with a myriad of health issues, some of which are potentially life-threatening.

**Respiratory Diseases** One of the most commonly recognised health impacts of air pollution is respiratory diseases. These include asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The fine particulate matter and toxic chemicals in polluted air can irritate the respiratory system and exacerbate pre-existing conditions, making it difficult to breathe and reducing lung function over time.

**Cardiovascular Diseases** Air pollution has increasingly



been linked to heart problems, including hypertension, heart attacks, and stroke. Prolonged exposure to airborne pollutants can lead to inflammation and oxidative stress in the circulatory system, increasing the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

**Cancer** Several air pollutants are classified as carcinogens, with long-term exposure potentially leading to lung cancer and other forms of the disease. Substances like benzene and formaldehyde, found in polluted air, are known carcinogens.

**Neurological Diseases** Emerging research is shedding light on the potential links between air pollution and neurological disorders.

Fine particulate matter and toxins may affect the central nervous system, contributing to conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive impairments.

**Low Birth Weight and Premature Births**

Pregnant women exposed to air pollution may be at risk of delivering low-birth-weight infants and experiencing premature births.

The impact of air pollution on fetal development is a growing concern for public health experts.

**Allergies and Skin Conditions** Airborne pollutants can exacerbate allergies and skin conditions such as eczema. Particulate matter and pollutants in the air can irritate the skin and trigger allergic reactions.

Air pollution is a public health concern

Air pollution is a serious public health concern, with both short-term and long-term health consequences. With urbanization and industrialisation continuing to increase, the need for stricter environmental regulations and sustainable practices becomes more evident.

Minimising air pollution can significantly reduce the incidence of these diseases and improve overall public health.

## Scientists create magnetic gel that heals diabetic wounds three times faster

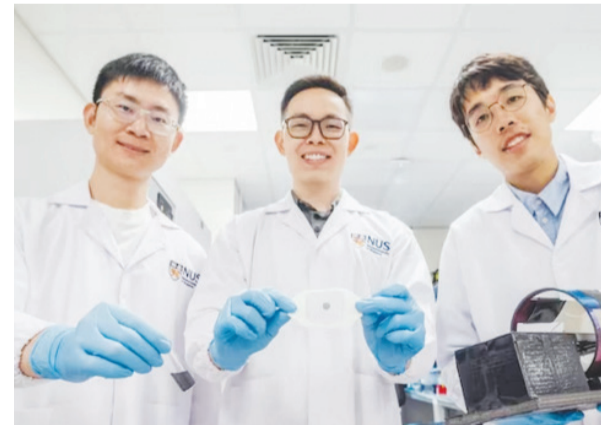
NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (Agencies): A group of researchers has created an innovative healing gel with magnetic properties that has the potential to accelerate the recovery of diabetic wounds, reduce the chances of them recurring, and ultimately decrease the need for limb amputations.

The team behind this breakthrough is from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

They have developed a treatment involving the application of a bandage infused with a hydrogel containing skin-healing cells and magnetic particles.

To optimise the healing process, an external wireless magnetic device is employed to activate skin cells, hastening wound recovery, with the ideal magnetic stimulation lasting around one to two hours.

Laboratory tests have revealed that this treat-



ment, in combination with magnetic stimulation, can heal diabetic wounds three times faster compared to current conventional methods. This research has been published in the scientific journal Advanced Materials.

Assistant Professor Andy Tay, who led the team, explained that their technology addresses multiple critical factors associated with diabetic wounds.

It simultaneously manages elevated glucose levels in the wound area, awakens dormant skin

cells near the wound, restores damaged blood vessels, and repairs the disrupted vascular network within the wound.

Currently, there are over half a billion people worldwide living with diabetes, a number expected to rise significantly.

Chronic diabetic wounds, such as foot ulcers, pose a substantial global healthcare challenge.

It's estimated that each year, there are between 9.1 to 26.1 million cases of diabetic foot ulcers worldwide, and about

15 to 25 per cent of diabetes patients will develop a diabetic foot ulcer during their lifetime, according to the researchers.

Tay added, "What our team has achieved is to identify a sweet spot by applying gentle mechanical stimulation. The result is that the remaining skin cells get to 'work out' to heal wounds, but not to the extent that it kills them."

The specially designed wound-healing gel is loaded with two types of FDA-approved skin cells: keratinocytes (critical for skin repair) and fibroblasts (essential for the formation of connective tissue), along with tiny magnetic particles.

According to the researchers, when combined with the dynamic magnetic field generated by an external device, the mechanical stimulation of the gel encourages dermal fibroblasts to become more active.

# Virat Kohli, Shami star as India end 20-year wait for win over New Zealand in ICC event

Rohit Sharma-led side beat Black Caps by six wickets | With fifth straight win, India remain unbeaten in World Cup

DHARAMSALA, Oct 23 (Agencies): Virat Kohli anchored another tricky chase with perfection after Mohammad Shami's sizzling five-wicket haul as India defeated New Zealand by four wickets in the World Cup here on Sunday, their first win over Black Caps in an ICC event after 20 years.

Shami (5/54) started with the ball to restrict New Zealand to 273 all out despite Daryl Mitchell's gutsy 130 off 127 balls.

Kohli (95 off 104) later anchored India's chase with a near blemish-free knock and shared three crucial 50-run stands with Shreyas Iyer (33), KL Rahul (27) and Ravindra Jadeja (39 not out) to guide his side home in 48 overs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated the Indian cricket team on their victory against New Zealand in a world cup match, lauding their "splendid team effort".

"Congratulations to the Indian cricket team on their splendid victory against New Zealand! It was a splendid team effort where everybody contributed. The dedication and skill on the field was exemplary," he said on X.

With India on the cusp of victory, Kohli went for the record equalling 49th ODI hundred but much to the disappointment of a packed crowd at the HPCA stadium, he was caught in the deep.

Chasing 274, Shubman Gill (26) relied on his exquisite timing to find boundaries, while Rohit Sharma (46) played the power game.

Gill drove Trent Boult through extra cover and square to pick up back-to-back boundaries in the seventh over. He then flicked Matt Henry through mid-on and



midwicket to bring up India's 50 in just 7.4 overs.

Rohit looked in ominous touch as he just planted his foot forward and lap-swept Henry to the backward square leg boundary and then followed it up with a six over mid-off two balls later.

Rohit was lucky as he was dropped by New Zealand skipper Tom Latham behind the stumps off Mitchell Santner in the next over and he punished the left-arm spinner by tonking him over deep midwicket for a six the very next ball.

But Rohit failed to cash in as he dragged a Lockie Ferguson delivery onto the stumps in the next over to end the dangerous-looking 71-run opening stand.

Ferguson dealt another blow to India in his next over in the form of Gill, who was caught by Mitchell at deep third-man boundary.

Kohli then took the innings forward with the help of Iyer (33 off 29) and K L Rahul (27 off 35).

However, two quick wickets of Rahul and Suryakumar Yadav made things little difficult for India before Kohli bailed out the hosts with a 78-run sixth-wicket

stand with Jadeja (39 not out).

While Rahul fell LBW to Mitchell Santner, Surya was a victim of an unnecessary mix up with Kohli as India slumped to 191 for 5.

Kohli, however, failed to match Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries as he departed in the 48th over while going for a six. His knock was studded with eight fours and two sixes.

India, though, had a rare ordinary day in the field and were guilty of dropping three catches. Kuldeep Yadav (2/73) was the most expensive bowler but got the important wickets of Tom Latham and Glenn Phillips.

Sent into bat, Mitchell and Rachin Ravindra (75 off 87 balls) rescued New Zealand after a poor start, sharing 159 runs off 152 balls for the third wicket.

Jasprit Bumrah (1/45) and Mohammed Siraj (1/45), also played their part well.

The start was far from rosy for New Zealand who lost Devon Conway early. The left-hander flicked a Mohammed Siraj delivery straight to Shreyas Iyer at forward square leg in the fourth

over.

Introduced into the attack in the ninth over, Shami struck with his first ball of the tournament by removing Will Young, who played on to an incoming delivery.

Regarded as one of India's best fielders, Ravindra Jadeja dropped a sitter at point of Shami's bowling to hand Ravindra a life.

Ravindra cashed in on the chance with both hands and together with Mitchell forged a much needed partnership to stabilise the innings.

The duo was particularly severe against Kuldeep Yadav, clobbering the left-arm spinner for three huge sixes straight over his head.

Ravindra brought up his fifty off 56 balls, while Mitchell's half-century came in 60 deliveries.

The Indians were sloppy on the field as Mitchell also got a reprieve on 69 in the 33rd over when Jasprit Bumrah dropped an easy chance at the long-off boundary.

Shami finally broke the partnership in the next over when Ravindra failed to clear the long-on boundary, handing a simple catch to Shubman Gill.

Ravindra's wicket hardly bothered Mitchell who continued to play aggressively, smashing the Indian bowlers with disdain as New Zealand brought up their 200 in 36.1 overs.

Kuldeep, who was put under pressure for the first time in the competition, finally tasted success when he had New skipper Tom Latham LBW with a wrong one.

India pulled things back significantly by picking up six wickets in the last six overs for only 30 runs.

# World Cup: Afghanistan coach Trott hopeful of win against under-pressure Pakistan



CHENNAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Head coach Jonathan Trott is hopeful Afghanistan can keep their World Cup campaign alive by pulling off a win against an under-pressure Pakistan, having come agonisingly close to defeating them earlier this year.

The 42-year-old added that the passionate rivalry between the two teams, who are desperate to win, would make it an enthralling contest here on Monday.

"I think for them (Afghans), it's a rivalry that excites them. It's a rivalry that sometimes in the past has been very passionate," Trott said at the pre-match press conference.

"But I'm sure we'll see an exciting game today. It's just the nature of the rivalry. And both teams respect each other but are very desperate to win," he added.

Pakistan had defeated Afghanistan 3-0 in a three-match ODI series in August with Babar Azam and Co. eking out a narrow one-wicket win in the second match.

"We've had an ODI series against them recently where we

should have won a few games, (but) we didn't. So hopefully, we can put that right today."

Afghanistan play their second game at the Chepauk, the Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side fell to 149-run loss to New Zealand at the same venue on Wednesday.

"The pitch I'm not sure. Chennai is normally a good wicket. So, everybody's got to put in a good team performance if we want to beat the likes of a strong side like Pakistan."

In the game against New Zealand, the Afghan spinners failed to make an impact.

"With spinners, there are only two or three of them playing a game. And, it's the other eight as well that have to play the game, so that's important," Trott replied to a query from agency.

"It's everybody's job. It's not just the spinners' job to win games. There are batters who've got to put runs on the board or chase down a total. Yes, the spinners are important and getting our selection is key for the fixture, but it's a team effort. There's no reliance on just spin-

ners." Afghanistan are at the bottom of the points table, having lost three of the four fixtures they have played. Their only victory came against defending champion England.

The game against Pakistan is a must-win of sorts for Afghanistan if they want to keep their fate in their own hands. A loss could mean they will have to rely on favourable results to stay in the semifinal race.

"Every game is a must-win game. This is a World Cup, and every game is important. So, I don't see the other matches just as more important as this," said Trott.

Pakistan is headed into the match having suffered back-to-back losses against hosts India and Australia. Trott asserted that his side would aim to exploit this situation against an under-pressure Pakistani side.

"We always look to put up put the opposition under pressure straight away, so we'll be looking to do that tomorrow, obviously. There's a lot of other things that come into the game with regards to the rivalry and the history of and the passion of everything."

"We know the Pakistan team will be very determined to win today and certainly want to sort of snap that losing streak of the two games," he signed off.

# I always felt part of the team: Shami after his 5-wicket haul

DHARAMSALA, Oct 23 (Agencies): Watching the proceedings from the sidelines is always difficult for any player, and Mohammed Shami is no different. But the pace-bowling stalwart, who produced a five-star performance against New Zealand in his first match of this edition of the World Cup, asserted he always felt he was part of the team even when he was not included in the first four games.

Afted into the playing XI on Sunday against the Kiwis, Shami produced excellent figures of 5/54 and played a pivotal role in the home team's four-wicket win against New Zealand in a top-of-the-table clash in scenic Dharamsala.

"I was watching everything from the bench. I will do something only when I am given the chance. When you are not playing, it is very difficult. But if your team is performing, your boys are moving in a rhythm, then I don't think you should feel guilty sitting outside," Shami said at the post-match press conference.

"You are also a part of the team and a part of the World Cup. I think everyone should enjoy each other's success."

The 33-year-old fast bowler said he never lost hope when he was sitting on the sidelines, and always kept a positive mindset.

"Personally, I keep my outlook simple, you need to keep enjoying. In India the biggest sport is cricket. The biggest place is the place where you are sitting."

"It's not necessary to be there (in the playing XI). You have 15 players. Four of them have to stay out. So, by being positive and enjoying, I feel you will get more results," Shami said.

"So, I always think, I am not here today, I will be here tomorrow. If not tomorrow, then day after tomorrow. They do come in rotation. And when your time comes, you need to contribute for the team."

Shami said he had full clarity about his role on Sunday and he



focused on his line and length on a pitch that wasn't offering much.

"...I know everything, but it depends on what your role is, what the conditions are. You have to see everything because when the ball is not coming out of the wicket, you have to focus on the line and length. And the result is in front of you," he said.

"When you start, it's very important that you get a good start for your team. That's your role. Our bowlers have chosen the right areas. We did well and we restricted them, and the result is in front of you."

Shami did not single out any particular wicket he wanted to put ahead of the other four, saying they were all important.

"All the wickets are good. When you play for your country, I feel every wicket is important for you. As such, I don't like any particular wicket more. I enjoy all my wickets." Coming into the match, India and New Zealand were unbeaten and Shami said there wasn't much to differentiate between the top-two sides in tournament, and the team that played better won.

"When the top-two teams are playing, how they play doesn't matter, but how they have played the game matters. No. 1 and No.2 teams don't have much difference. When two top teams are playing, I think the (previous) results don't

matter. Their game (on the day) matters.

"I think you should look at the game, the innings, the fielding, how you have bowled. That matters more in this stage. The one who does well, wins the match," he said.

Shami said that while it was good to win the toss as the wicket assisted the Indian bowlers in the first session, it was equally important to bowl in the right areas after that.

"It's good (winning the toss) because, obviously, batting second helps. It does benefit (you) when you are bowling during the day. Whenever you bowl, you always look for a good area. And whenever you bowl in a good area, you will definitely get results. So, my belief is that whether you put it in the day or in the evening, you will have to hit a good area," he said.

The HPCA stadium outfield here has come in for sharp criticism because of its soggy nature, but Shami said the conditions were the same for both teams.

"There is no complaint because it was the same for both teams. We cannot say anything to the groundsman because he is helpless, it's his job; he tries very hard... It is not good to put a question mark on someone," he said.

"The situation and the condition is the same for both teams. In India and abroad, there are ups and downs. Sometimes we play on wet grounds, sometimes we play on dry grounds. No complaints."

Shami had high praise for Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj, saying they all share a strong bond.

"When you talk about bonding, it's very important that you play as a unit; they are my second and third partners. We have a good package. You get to see the aggression," he said.

"As far as enjoying (the game) is concerned, I have told you before, that if you enjoy the success of others, you will get better results."

# World Cup: You will see a new team today, says Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq on Afghanistan clash

CHENNAI, Oct 23 (Agencies): Opener Imam-ul-Haq promised a "new" Pakistan team will take the field against Afghanistan following back to back defeats in the World Cup.

The Men in Green started the tournament well before losing to arch-rivals India and Australia.

"We have played four matches and we are 2-2. We are confident. We will accept that we did not play well in the last two matches," said Imam on the eve of the game against Afghanistan.

"We will have to perform up to the mark. It matters a lot how you play on the given day. You can talk as much as you want. But it matters how you play on the day. We have talked about it.

You will see a new team today in Chennai."

The Pakistani spinners have been unable to make an impact in the competition so far, and Chepauk being a spin-friendly wicket could allow them to get back among the wickets.

When asked if the preparations would largely be spin-focused considering Afghanistan have the likes of Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Zadran, he said: "I don't believe that now we have a chance to do any kind of more practice. It's just we are in the tournament, and it's just about the top-up. We don't have that much time."

"We have already done all the preparations. We have played against Afghanistan in Hambantota, where we won 3-0, and they were also spin

conditions venues.

"Yes, this is a spin-friendly ground, and we know that, and the guys individually really depend on how they practice. It's just that every individual has their own preparations, and we really back them, their ability, and it's just that's how it is."

Talking about the struggling Pakistani bowling attack, Imam added that the reason why their bowlers are getting smashed for runs is because the teams are determined to score around 350.

"If you see here, all matches are very high scoring. It is not that it is only against our team. If you look at the other teams also, they are scoring 350 - 360, like yesterday there was a score of 400 - so it's not

that only our bowlers are being beaten.

"The grounds here are small, the wickets are good, and when the batsmen are set, the margin for the bowlers is very low. This is not an excuse, but the conditions are such."

A defeat against the Afghans will only pile pressure on the Green Shirts, making their forthcoming contests must-wins. However, Imam asserted that there is no extra pressure on the team.

"We really back our bowlers and it's not a pressure, to be honest, we don't feel any kind of pressure. Yes, there will be some time when we lose two matches and the same there is positivity in the dugout," he concluded.

# Shubman Gill becomes fastest batter to score 2000 runs in ODIs

Reaches the milestone in 38 innings, bettering the record of South African Hashim Amla who had needed 40 innings to score it



DHARAMSALA, Oct 23 (Agencies): Indian opener Shubman Gill on Sunday became the fastest player to score 2000 runs in ODIs

during his side's World Cup match against New Zealand here on Sunday. Gill reached the milestone in 38 innings,

bettering the record of South African Hashim Amla who had needed 40 innings to score 2000 ODI runs.

The 24-year-old Indian, who scored 53 against Bangladesh in his previous outing, was 14 runs short of the milestone coming into the match.

He achieved the feat in the seventh over of the Indian run chase when he smashed Trent Boult for a boundary.

Gill, however, got out

for 26 off 31 balls in the 14th over with Lockie Ferguson taking his wicket.

Amla had set the record on January 21, 2011 in South Africa's match against India at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth.

Down with dengue, Gill had missed India's first two World Cup matches against Australia and Afghanistan.

He returned in India's marquee clash against Pakistan and scored 16.



**Devotees perform Sakh Visarjan on Mahanavmi on the last day of Navratri in Surya Putri Tawi at Hari Ki Pauri in Jammu on Monday.**  
Pic. Aman Sharma

## Dogri Sanstha Jammu felicitates Dr. Karan Singh

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Dogri Sanstha Jammu felicitated Padma Vibhushan Dr. Karan Singh in a Dogri Sanstha Special Award function organized at Kunwar Viyogi Auditorium, Dogri Sanstha, Dogri Bhawan, Karan Nagar, here on Monday.

The programme started with Prof. Lalit Magotra, President Dogri Sanstha Jammu welcoming esteemed guest by presenting a bouquet. Thereafter in his welcome address he said that Dr. Karan Singh, a multifaceted personality has a special bonding with Dogri Sanstha and showering his blessings he had donated this piece of land to Dogri Sanstha so that Sanstha should have its own space and a comfort zone thus preserving and promoting mother tongue Dogri and cultural traditions of Duggar region.

He further added that it's a special day for all of us and Sanstha in particular that we are blessed with gracious presence of an eminent personality like Dr. Karan Singh who has a special place in our hearts as an author, philosopher, intellectual and for his love and respect for regional language and cultural traditions.

A Bhajan Sandhya was organized in which dogri bhajans written by Dr. Karan Singh were given voices by internationally acclaimed singer Seema Anil Sehgal and well known singers of soil Kusha Sharma and Chinmaya Sharma. Parshotam Kumar and others accompanied on instruments.

In the second phase of the event, Dr. Karan Singh was presented a citation-cum-memento. It is pertinent to add here that for his colossal contributions to



society, he has been honoured by different Government and non-Government organizations that include Padma Vibhushan in 2005 and Memorial Medal of Tree of Peace, an International peace award granted by Slovak Non-Governmental Organization in 2021.

He remained Chancellor of Jammu University, Benaras Hindu University, Jawahar Lal Nehru University. He was also Member of Parliament for Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, President Authors Guild of India, The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Commonwealth Society of India, Delhi Music Society and many more.

He is Chairman of Virat Hindu Samaj which seeks social reforms on the basis of universal vedantic values. He is also Chairperson Trustee of Dharmarth Trust of Jammu & Kashmir and has richly contributed to the nation in art, music, environment, politics, education, literature, religious, cultural and social endeavors.

An author of distinction, he has written a number of books on political science, philosophical essays, travelogues and poems in English. His autobiography 'AUTOBIOLOGY' is an important collection of his writings entitled, "One man's world", and 'India and the World' and his essays on Hinduism are widely acclaimed.

Dr. Karan Singh appreciated Dogri Sanstha for continuous literary activities and promoting mother tongue Dogri. He said that we should promote it in our homes also because parents are not prepared to talk to their children in dogri which is a serious concern for survival of our sweet language. Mothers should take a lead and boost mother tongue.

He said that we should feel as proud Dogras and try our level best to preserve and promote our language and traditions because these will account for our existence. He said that in addition to organizational contribution there should be individual efforts also since it's a common cause of our existence and sooner we realize it, better

it will be. On the demand of audience, he also enamored them by singing one of his new Bhajan.

On this occasion five publications of Dogri Sanstha were released by Dr. Karan Singh. Some volunteers of Dogri Sanstha were also presented certificates and a rare collection of Dogri Sanstha Publications and dogri books of celebrated authors were also exhibited on this occasion on book stalls.

The dias was shared by Inderjeet Kesar and Prof. Veena Gupta vice presidents of Dogri Sanstha also. The citation on Dr. Karan Singh was read by famous broadcaster and dogri poetess Promila Manhas and the program was conducted by well-known theatre activist Raj Kumar Behrupia.

The function concluded with vote of thanks presented by Rajeshwar Singh 'Raju', General Secretary Dogri Sanstha, who said that this day will be registered as a golden page in the history of Dogri Sanstha because we are blessed by a personality who is so close to our hearts for many reasons and a role model for all of us.

## Central and State Govt should control rising population: Varinderjeet

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Chairman of National Sikh Front and senior leader of BJP Varinder Jeet Singh in Monday appealed to central and state governments to control the rising population in the country.

He said that if the population is not controlled at this stage it will not be possible to control in future. He said that when in 1951 the first census was done the population of India was 36 crore and now the population is about 142 crore which is even more than China. We have limited resources which will be exhausted very shortly if our popu-



lation continues to rise at this speed. Few of the state governments have made a decision that if anyone has more than two children they cannot contest the local bodies elections.

It is a good decision but now the central gov should implement it in the Lok Sabha and the state governments in the respective assembly elections. This decision

should also be implemented in government jobs and jobs should not be given to those who have more than two children.

Government should take some strict action so as to improve the condition of the population in the country. Now it is becoming increasingly necessary that a law should be made for population control in the country. All the people of the country should be responsible and control the population on their own as it will be the most patriotic thing to do for the country and it will be in the benefit of the country and its progress and development.

## Dussehra celebrated at Rich Harvest



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Oct 23: Students and Staff of RHS celebrated the victory of good over evil in a splendid cultural bonanza. In a Role Play, Smriti dressed up as goddess Kali annihilated the demon Mahi-

shasur. Short excerpts from the holy Ramayan were beautifully portrayed by the students. The students were made aware about the intricacies of the Navratri festival by their mentors.

The head of the Insti-

tute, Anita Bhatia, lit the effigies of Meghnath, Kumbkaran and Ravan amongst the echoes of Jai Shri Ram. She advised students to ignite positive feelings within to destroy any negativity.