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- Germany's top diplomat in Kyiv as Ukraine girds for impact of US election
- South Korea and EU condemn North Korea's reported troop dispatch
- PM Modi terms JMM-led coalition 'Gushpaitiya Bandhan'
- Aspiration for return to statehood remains strong: J-K LG Sinha

36 killed as bus falls into gorge in Uttarakhand

MARCHULA, Nov 4: A packed beyond-capacity bus carrying passengers returning to work after Diwali fell into a deep gorge in Uttarakhand's Almora district on Monday, killing at least 36 of the about 60 people on board.

Twenty-four people were injured, four of them critically, when the 43-seater bus, operated by the private Garhwal Motor Owner Association, was on its way from Pauri in Garhwal region to Ramnagar in Kumaon about 250 km away.

The accident took place around 8 am, almost the flag end of the overnight journey, said district magistrate Alok Kumar Pandey.

The bus plunged into a 200-metre gorge in Almora's Marchula area 35 km before its destination Ramnagar, he said.

Visuals from the area pointed to



the magnitude of the accident, the vehicle was reduced to a mangled mess as it rolled down the forested, rocky slope and stopped just short of a stream. Rescuers could be seen working to pull out the passengers. Of the 36 killed, 10 are women. A magisterial probe has been ordered and the assistant regional transport officers of Pauri and Almora were suspended.

"The news of the death of many people, including women and children, in a road accident in Almora, Uttarakhand is heart-rending. I express my deepest condolences to

the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," President Droupadi Murmu said in a post on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge were among those who expressed their grief at the loss of lives in the accident and prayed for the quick recovery of the injured.

The Prime Minister announced an ex-gratia payment of ₹ 2 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased and an assistance of ₹ 50,000 for the injured. He said the local administration is making every possible effort for relief and rescue.

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama announced a compensation of ₹ 4 lakh for the next of kin and financial assistance of ₹ 1 lakh for the injured. The injured were taken to the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam by-poll: Cong accused of using children during campaign

BJP moves EC against Rakibul-Tanzil duo

NAGAON, Nov 4: The ruling BJP has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India (ECI) against Congress MP Rakibul Hussain and his son Tanzil, who is contesting the upcoming assembly bypoll from Samaguri constituency in Assam, for allegedly using children during election campaigning.

In the complaint filed with the ECI, the BJP alleged that children were being used in campaigning activities in support of Hussain's son Tanzil, who is trying his electoral luck for the first time.

"The involvement of children in political rallies is a clear violation of the Model Code of Conduct as it exploits their innocence and undermines the integrity of the elec-



toral process. This practice raises ethical concerns and should not be tolerated," the complaint said.

The BJP claimed to have submitted video evidence along with the complaint to the ECI and demanded immediate action.

Bypoll will take place in Dholai (SC), Sidli (ST), Bongaigaon, Behali and Samaguri assembly constituencies as these seats fell vacant with the representatives of them winning the recent Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress named Tanzil Hussain as the party's candidate for the Samaguri seat against Dipu Ranjan Sarma of the BJP.

The BJP candidate, a first-timer, is a state general secretary and a former president of the party's state youth wing.

Congress MP Rakibul Hussain, who won the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat this year by a record margin of over 10.12 lakh votes, was an MLA from Samaguri for five consecutive terms.

The polling for byelections will take place on November 13 and the votes will be counted on November 23. (PTI)

HT BRIEFS

Body found

KHERONI: The dead body of a man identified as Vinod Chouhan was found on the railway track in Lamsakhang, West Karbi Anglong near the Lamsakhang Railway Station. The body was identified by family members. The victim's father alleged that three youths had beaten his son to death last night. The next day they threw the body on the train track near Lamsakhang railway station. A passing train ran over the dead body and cut it into pieces. The police recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. A case no. 55/2024 U/S 103/3 (5) has been registered and launched an investigation. The police have already arrested the accused Manoj Chouhan, Chotelal Chouhan and Harinder Chouhan on the complaint of the deceased's father Yogendra Chouhan.

Casual leave

DIPHU: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) announces casual leave for government employees on account of the Matri Pitri Vandana Scheme. KAAC in alignment with the notification issued by the government of Assam, general administrative department (vide No. eCF No. 169397/6, dated February 17, 2024), has granted casual leave to all government employees under the administrative control of KAAC. The leave is provided under the Matri Pitri Vandana Scheme and can be availed on the 6th and 8th of November 2024. Also, this leave can be used in conjunction with the 7th of November (for Chhat Puj), the 9th of November (being the second Saturday), and the 10th of November (being a Sunday) to facilitate the observance of Matri Pitri Vandana.

One arrested

GUWAHATI: One person was arrested with drugs worth ₹ 7 crore in Assam's Cachar district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The contraband, seized on Sunday, comprised heroin and Yaba tablets, he said. "Acting on credible intelligence, @cacharpolice conducted a special operation today at Lailapur, leading to the seizing of a vehicle and the apprehension of an individual," Sarma said in a post on X.

EC must act against Sarma's 'communal rhetoric': Ramesh

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday hit out at the Election Commission for the "tone and tenor" of its recent letter to his party while also urging the poll body to act against "communal and incendiary rhetoric" allegedly used by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during poll campaigns.

In an interview with PTI, the Congress general secretary in charge of communications also urged the Election Commission (EC) to take action against Odisha governor Raghuraj Das for campaigning in Janshedpur.

His remarks came days after the Congress slammed the EC after it rejected the party's allegations over irregularities in the Haryana assembly polls.

The opposition party had said if the poll panel's goal was to "strip itself of the last vestiges of neutrality", then it was doing a "remarkable job" at creating that impression.

In its letter to the EC signed by nine senior leaders, including Ramesh, the Congress had said, "We have carefully



studied your response to our complaints. Not surprisingly, the ECI has given a clean chit to itself. We would normally have let it be at that. However, the tone and tenor of the ECI's response, the language used, and the allegations made against the INC compel us to submit the counter-response."

In the Congress' letter to the EC, Ramesh said, "I don't want to say anything more than what we have already said. In fact, we met the EC in Haryana in 20 assembly constituencies on which we had specific complaints. We met the EC on October 9 and they gave a response on October 29 and we would have

(left the matter at that)," Ramesh said.

"We have exercised our democratic right, the EC heard us, they heard us patiently and they have responded but it is the manner in which they responded, the language that they used, the charges that they have hurled at us, giving a sense that they did us a favour by meeting a Congress delegation," he told PTI.

The EC is a constitutional body and its job is to meet political parties, Ramesh said.

"Its job is to listen, that is what we took objection to, we took objection to the tone and tenor of the language, we took objection to the patronising and condescending manner in which the Election Commission was calling into question the democratic right of a political party to be heard and to represent," the Congress leader said.

"We have to have our say, ultimately the EC will have its way and if you are still unhappy, we can go to court. So that is a separate issue," he added. Ramesh said the EC could not say that it had done a political party (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam govt enhancing waterways with new upgrades

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 4: The Assam government is modernising the state's waterways by enhancing safety, infrastructure, and connectivity, according to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on Monday.

These initiatives are being implemented by the Assam Inland Water Transport Development Society (AIWTDS).

"The Assam Inland Water Transport Development Society (AIWTDS) is modernising Assam's waterways by enhancing safety, infrastructure, and connectivity. Key advancements include the establishment of new regulatory bodies, night navigation, and the upgrading of the fleet with 20 steel catamarans," the CMO wrote on X. The Jibondinga Scheme has also been introduced to equip boat operators with marine engines and safety gear.

"As per the directives of HCM Dr. @himantabiswa, @CSAssam, Dr Ravi Kota recently held a meeting with AIWTDS to review the progress of these initiatives," the CMO stated. The CMO provided details indicating that AIWTDS aims to enhance passenger ferry services and infrastructure while strengthening the state's inland water transport framework.



Key project components include the establishment of the Assam Inland Water Transport Regulatory Authority and the Assam Inland Waterways Company Ltd.

"Night navigation has been initiated, benefiting over 8.5 lakh passengers," the CMO reported. To modernise infrastructure, a total of 20 advanced steel catamarans have been added to the fleet, which also includes three search and rescue vessels, three tugboats, and three survey boats. Additionally, 840 marine engines and life-saving gear have been provided to country boat operators under the Jibondinga scheme. "A fixed terminal has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IAF's MiG-29 jet crashes near Agra; Court of Inquiry ordered



AGRA/NEW DELHI, Nov 4: A MiG-29 fighter jet of the Indian Air Force crashed in a field near Uttar Pradesh's Agra on Monday during a routine training sortie after it encountered a "system malfunction", officials said.

The pilot manoeuvred the aircraft to ensure no damage to life or property on the ground before ejecting safely, the IAF said, adding that a Court of Inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of the crash.

Visuals emerged on social media

platforms showing the fuselage of the crashed jet engulfed in flames billowing a thick cloud of smoke.

A large number of curious onlookers gathered near the crash site in the field. "A MiG-29 aircraft of the IAF crashed near Agra during a routine training sortie today, after encountering a system malfunction. The pilot manoeuvred the aircraft to ensure no damage to life or property on the ground, before ejecting safely. An enquiry has been ordered by the IAF, to ascertain the cause of the accident," the IAF posted on X.

A MiG-29 fighter aircraft of the IAF had crashed in Rajasthan's Barmer on September 2 due to a "critical" technical snag. The pilot had ejected safely and no loss of life was reported. (PTI)

Ekta Mall to be completed in 2025, says Himanta Biswa

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 4: The state government's flagship project to build a unit mall (Ekta Mall) in Guwahati will be completed by next year, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

This project was undertaken by the government a year ago.

Sarma said, "The #EktaMall in Guwahati is taking shape and is expected to be completed by 2025. This ₹278cr project spread over 38,713 sq mts will house products from all districts of Assam and all States of the country. Once ready, it will stand as a hallmark of national integration."

The Assam government decided to build the Unity Mall with the goals of promoting national unification, carrying forward the "Make in India" philosophy, and promoting



"One District One Product."

The decision was taken during the state cabinet meeting that was presided over by the chief minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, last year.

The Unity Mall, which will have 35 showrooms for all states and

Fifth edition of VINBAX 2024 India-Vietnam joint military exercise gets underway in Ambala



to enhance joint military capability of both sides in employment and deployment of Engineer Company and Medical Teams to undertake engineering tasks as part of a United Nations contingent in peacekeeping operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The Indian Army contingent comprising 47 personnel is being represented by a regiment of the Corps of Engineers along with personnel from other arms and services. The Vietnamese contingent comprising of similar strength will

be represented by the troops of the Vietnam People's Army, it said.

The conduct of 'VINBAX 2024' as a field training exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, and interoperability and enable sharing of best practices between the Indian Army and Vietnam People's Army, the statement said.

A 48-hour validation exercise with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief demonstration and equipment display is also part of the schedule to assess the standards achieved by both contingents while executing technical military operations under similar scenarios in UN missions.

"The joint exercise will also provide an opportunity to the troops of both the contingents to learn about the social and cultural heritage of each other," the ministry said. (PTI)

Canada temple 'attack': Indian consulate's request for security 'intentionally' ignored, says VHP

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Monday said the "attack" on a Hindu temple in Canada was a cause of concern and alleged that the Indian consulate's prior request to the Canadian administration for providing security was "intentionally" ignored.

Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at Brampton's Hindu Sabha Temple on Sunday, prompting the High Commission of India in Ottawa to issue a strong statement, condemning the attack by the "anti-India" elements.

Reacting to the incident, VHP international president Alok Kumar said the attack was a cause of concern, more so because a consular camp had been organised by the Indian consulate at the temple.

The Indian consulate had informed the police about the event three days ago and had specifically



said that in view of the security environment in Canada, adequate protection was required for the camp and the temple, he said.

"The request was ignored," Kumar said, adding that it was not

tacked, he said.

"We had seen a statement by Prime Minister Trudeau on Deepawali. He noted that the Indo Canadians form the biggest migrant groups in Canada. He also said that they had become the greatest contributors to the life of Canada. And had assured them safety, and security. That has not happened," Kumar said.

"We do believe that this may be rather intentional," he said, adding, "We condemn the attack".

The VHP chief criticised Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and hoped that his government would take "firm and determined action" to stop the incidents of attack on Hindu temples in the country. "We remind the Hindus there that the right to defend themselves is given to them by law," he added.

On Sunday, Peel Regional Police said a protest occurred at the

Hindu Sabha Temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with flagpoles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the temple, the report added.

Taking to X, Trudeau thanked the local authorities for the swift response to protect the community.

"The acts of violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today are unacceptable. Every Canadian has the right to practice their faith freely and safely.

Thank you to the Peel Regional Police for swiftly responding to protect the community and investigate this incident," Trudeau said on Monday. (PTI)

Jammu: Rashtriya Bajrang Dal holds protests against Farooq Abdullah for remarks on terrorists



JAMMU, Nov 4: The Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD) held a protest march here on Monday against the National Conference (NC) over the recent remarks by ruling party president Farooq Abdullah.

The Dal also protested against the increasing terror incidents and also against Pakistan for aiding and abetting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Abdullah had recently stirred a political controversy by suggesting that terrorists should be captured rather than killed in order to uncover the masterminds behind the recent surge in terror attacks across JK.

The RBD demanded strict action against Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and the locals allegedly supporting them in the Union Territory (UT).

Led by RBD president Rakesh Kumar, scores of Dal members rallied in Jammu city, condemning Pakistan's role in fostering terrorism and Abdullah's comments.

Carrying an effigy of Abdullah, they raised slogans against Pakistan, NC and Abdullah.

The protesters burnt Abdullah's effigy and demanded strict action against him for allegedly supporting terrorists.

"Farooq Abdullah recently said that terrorists should not be killed. We condemn his pro-terrorism statement. We ask him, should we offer prayers to them?" Kumar

told reporters.

Criticising Abdullah for "sowing confusion" with his statements, Kumar argued that the NC chief should face consequences for his remarks.

He accused the NC and the Abdullah family of promoting anti-India forces in Kashmir, alleging that terrorism was at its peak during the tenures of both Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah previously.

"Cases were withdrawn against those involved in law and order issues and other activities. This promoted terrorism to benefit the interests of the regional politicians," he said.

The RBD chief alleged that terror incidents have increased several times after the formation of the NC government in JK. Everyone is watching this, he added.

The Dal is protesting Abdullah's remarks regarding the terrorists.

"If they (terrorists) are caught, then we will find out who is behind this. They should not be killed; they should be captured and questioned about who is backing them.

"We should investigate if an agency is trying to destabilise Omar Abdullah," Abdullah said.

The NC further said, "How is it that this government has come in and these attacks are happening? I suspect that those who want to destabilise the government might be responsible." (PTI)

the first time that a Hindu temple in Canada had been attacked.

Earlier, Hindu temples were attacked in Greater Toronto and British Columbia. The BAPS temple in Edmonton was also at-

Maharashtra woman held by Goa cops for railway job fraud

PANAJI, Nov 4: A woman hailing from Maharashtra's Kolhapur district was arrested by Goa police on Monday for allegedly duping a person of ₹ 20 lakh on the pretext of providing railway jobs to her children, an official said.

Priya Ajay Yadav from Kolhapur's Phulewadi was allegedly helped by constable Rohan Venji, who was suspended earlier and his bank accounts frozen, said Deputy Superintendent of Police (Bicholim) Jivba Dalvi.

"The complaint was lodged at Bicholim police station on August 22. The duo took ₹ 20.70 lakh from the complainant by claiming she had a plot near Kolhapur station, which had been taken over by the authorities and in return she was given the option of getting 10 people employed in the railways," Dalvi said. "The complainant was



even shown a random plot near Kolhapur station to convince her. The complainant paid ₹ 10 lakh initially to the duo for jobs for her children. Yadav then took another ₹ 6 lakh and finally managed to dupe her of ₹ 20.70 lakh," the deputy SP said.

A probe has found Yadav has

duped several persons in Bicholim of at least ₹ 1 crore with this modus operandi, he added.

Yadav, who was on the run for two months, was finally held from Phulewadi in neighbouring Maharashtra due to technical surveillance and intelligence inputs, Dalvi said. (PTI)

Need green spaces for kids: SC junks plea against order saying no transfer of sports complex land

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea of the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), challenging a Bombay High Court order against the Maharashtra government's move to reallocate the land meant for a sports complex to private builders in Navi Mumbai. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra emphasised the importance of preserving green spaces in urban areas like Navi Mumbai.

"We need some green spaces for our children, especially in cities like Mumbai," remarked the CJI while underscoring the diminishing availability of open areas amid urban sprawls. The CJI went on to add, "These are some of the few remaining green lungs left, and we must preserve them. Let's not say much about the CIDCO."

Green areas had been given to builders for constructing malls and residential complexes, he pointed out.

The CJI noted that the children of Navi Mumbai were not supposed to travel several kilometres to the neighbouring Raigad district to play sports after returning from schools. The state government had also de-

clined to shift the sports complex to Mangon in Raigad district which was 115 kilometre away from the existing site.

The bench had previously stressed on the preservation of the few remaining green lungs in cities like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai that were only witnessing a vertical growth.

The land in Navi Mumbai was earmarked for the sports complex in 2003 and in 2016, but the planning authority had allotted a portion of it to a private developer for residential and commercial purposes.

"It is a much-known practice. The government creeps into whatever green spaces are left and gives them to the builders," the top court had said during a brief hearing.

The CJI further said, "There are a very few green lungs left in cities like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. These cities have vertical growth.... You have to preserve them and not give to builders to build, build, build and build..."

The bench was prima facie astonished to learn that the land, meant for the state-level sports complex, was being allotted to development and the proposed facilities were to be shifted to the Raigad district. (PTI)

SC relaxes Kerala journalist Kappan's bail rider, says no need to report to UP police



NEW DELHI, Nov 4: The Supreme Court on Monday relaxed the bail condition imposed on Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan in a UAPA case saying he doesn't have to report to a Uttar Pradesh police station every week.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimhan and Sandeep Mehta relaxed the condition imposed by the top court on Kappan at the time of his bail in September, 2022.

"The order dated September 9, 2022, is modified and it shall not be necessary for the petitioner to report to the local police station. The other prayers made in the present application can be agitated independently," said the bench.

Kappan was arrested in October, 2020 while on his way to UP's Hathras, where a Dalit woman had died after allegedly being sexually assaulted by a group of men.

While granting bail to Kappan, the court had directed him to report to the police station concerned every week.

The top court had on September 17 asked the state government to file its reply on Kappan's plea. The top court granted him bail after he had spent almost two years in prison and observed every person had the right to free expression.

Kappan was then saddled with several bail conditions, including the one directing him to remain in Delhi for the following six weeks after his release from prison and reporting to the Nizamuddin police station every Monday.

"The appellant shall be taken to the trial court within three days and

shall be released on bail on conditions as deemed fit by the trial court," the bench had said.

The court had, however, allowed him to travel to Malappuram in Kerala, his home state, after six months maintaining that he would have to report to the local police station and mark his presence there every Monday.

Kappan was directed not to leave Delhi's jurisdiction without the permission of the court besides being ordered to attend the trial court every day either personally or through his lawyer.

"The appellant shall deposit his passport with the investigative machinery," added the top court.

The case was registered against Kappan and three others under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly having links with the Popular Front of India (PFI).

The PFI had been accused in the past of funding protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act across the country and the police claimed that the accused persons had attempted to vitiate the law and order situation in Hathras.

The woman in question had died at a Delhi hospital a fortnight after her alleged rape by four men from her village on September 14, 2020.

She was cremated in the middle of the night at her village but the family claimed that her last rites were performed without their consent and they were not allowed to being her mortal remains home one last time. (PTI)

Two Bandhavgarh reserve officials suspended after death of 10 elephants

BHOPAL, Nov 4: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has suspended two senior officials of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) for lapses after a high-level probe team submitted its reports in connection with the death of 10 elephants in the park.

The initial report doesn't point to any pesticide (in the food consumed by the elephants) or the role of "another side", the CM on Sunday said, adding the autopsy report will come in two or three days.

BTR director Gaurav Choudhary and in-charge assistant conservator of forests Fateh Singh Ninama were placed under suspension. The reserve has drawn national attention following the deaths of the jumbos in 72 hours.

"The high-level team has submitted its report. Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve director has been suspended for switching off his phone, not returning to work after leave and other reasons. ACF Fateh Singh Ninama has also been suspended," the CM told PTI.

Both have been suspended for showing laxity in performing their duties, he added.

Calling the jumbo deaths "very painful", the CM said the government took the matter seriously and sent the forest minister and senior officials to the reserve for a probe into the

matter. Officials had earlier talked about toxicity along with huge quantities of kodo millets in the stomachs of the 10 elephants that died in the reserve. The CM on Friday night called an emergency meeting and sent a team comprising MP forest junior minister Pradeep Ahirwar, additional chief secretary Ashok Baranwal and head of Forest Force Aseem Shrivastava to the reserve to probe the elephant deaths and submit a report. The team returned to Bhopal on Sunday evening.

On October 29, four wild elephants were found dead in Sankhani and Bakeli under the Khalil range of the BTR in Umaria district, while four died on October 30 and two on October 31. On Saturday, two persons were killed and one injured in an elephant attack in the area.

CM Yadav also underlined the need for an elephant task force, radio tracking and a long term plan with the help of wildlife experts to avoid a repeat of jumbo deaths and attacks on humans.

"The elephants coming from other states, including Chhattisgarh, are not turning back due to the good environs and management of our parks. They have become an integral part of MP forest activities. Keeping this in mind, we have to look for a lasting plan for them," Yadav said. (PTI)

Public buildings facing Ganga ghats in Patna lit up in blue for Chhath

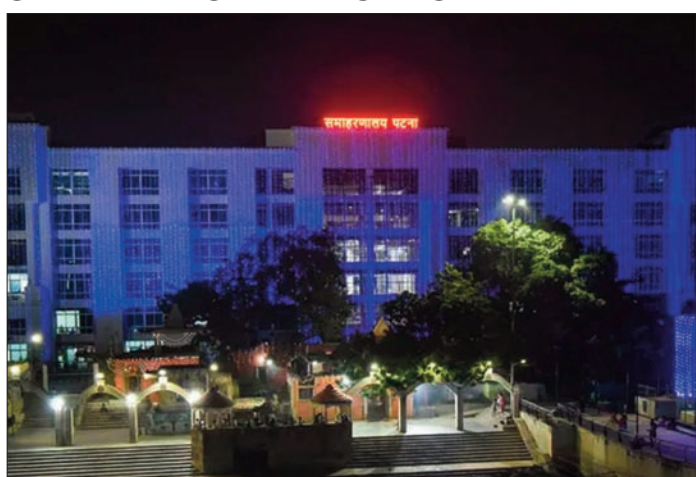
PATNA, Nov 4: The historic Darbhanga House, the newly-built complex of the district collectorate and 'Sabhaya Dwar' are among the several public buildings located along the banks of Ganga in Patna which have been illuminated in blue hue ahead of the Chhath festival.

The night-time illumination of these structures, some of which face popular old ghats in the city such as the Collectorate Ghat and Kali Ghat, have been done as part of a 'Go Blue' campaign of the Patna district administration.

"Recently, we issued a public appeal to individuals and private entities who have properties located along the ghats of Ganga, to also illuminate those buildings with blue-colour lights, the theme for illumination during the Bihar Diwas celebrations here every year, to mark Chhath festivities," a senior official told PTI.

The four-day Chhath festival, celebrated as a 'Mahaparv' in Bihar, will be held this year from November 5-8. On the last two days, devotees offer 'arghya', first to the setting sun and the next day to the rising sun.

On Sunday, after dark, the over 120-year-old Darbhanga House, a palace built by the erstwhile Darbhanga Raj estate that currently houses the PG department of the Patna University, stood out on the



city skyline.

The palatial building, known for its iconic architecture and aesthetic grandeur, faces the Kali Ghat along the river, which draws huge number of devotees during the Chhath celebrations. The building also houses an old Kali temple.

Traditionally, people gather along the banks of Ganga to observe this ancient festival, but due to impact of rapid urbanisation on the river and other constraints, many now prefer to either do rituals in nearby water bodies or on rooftops using makeshift arrangements.

The Collectorate Ghat is one such example where the river

water has receded, but only to come back during the monsoon season.

The new high-rise complex which is expected to be inaugurated soon after the Chhath Puja, has been decorated with blue lights and commuted using the Ganga Drive built along the riverfront can catch a glimpse of the illumination. A huge neon signage 'Samharanaley Patna' mounted on its rooftop, glows in vibrant red at night, adding to its aura.

"This illumination of the new Collectorate complex began around Diwali," the official said.

The old Collectorate was a cluster of heritage buildings from Dutch era and British period,

which were demolished in the second half of 2022 to make way for the new complex, despite protests from several quarters.

Till recent years, devotees from far-off places in the state used to gather in the old Collectorate campus and some used to even camp there for four days to observe Chhath as the eponymous ghat is located right next to the site.

The buildings of the old Collectorate were part of the collective consciousness of the people living in the city, as multiple generations have visited it for official work and the Collectorate Ghat during the Chhath Puja, thus creating an emotional bond.

The demolition of its heritage buildings "severed that cultural link", many heritage experts had argued after the historic structures were razed as part of the Patna Collectorate redevelopment project, considered a pet project of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

The Patna district administration is currently working in full swing to make all arrangements for the Chhath Puja when lakhs of people will throng the ghats from Digha to Deedarganj.

In its appeal notice, which was also shared on its social media platforms, the district administration has said that the 'Go Blue' campaign was launched in view of

the link of 'Chhath Mahaparv' with historic legacy and cultural heritage of Bihar, and to celebrate it with safety and communal harmony.

This year, it has been decided to deck up ghats and pathways leading to them with blue lights, as done during Bihar Diwas celebrations, the notice in Hindi reads.

The riverside face of the 'Sabhaya Dwar', a modern ceremonial gateway built in old style and located on the rear side of the Gyan Bhawan complex near Gandhi Maidan, has also been decorated with blue lights.

Some of the high-rise under-construction buildings of the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) -- which is also undergoing a drastic transformation as part of a phase-wise redevelopment project -- located in the vicinity of the Darbhanga House, among other buildings, have also been dressed up with few strands of blue lights.

The building of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Cardiology, located next to the PMCH, also wears a blue hue after dark thanks to the illumination.

Besides, buildings located along the ghats, some of the buildings in the main city, such as Biscomaun Bhawan facing Gandhi Maidan has also been thematically lit up. (PTI)

Crackdown on criminals in west Delhi, 253 arrested in October

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: In a special drive during the festival season, police arrested 253 criminals, including 33 robbers and 34 snatchers, wanted for alleged involvement in street crimes this October in west Delhi.

According to the police, there was 39 per cent reduction in snatching-related PCR calls and 24 per cent robbery calls till October this year as compared to the same corresponding period in last year.

"The West District police launched a crackdown on street criminals and nuisance mongers during the festive season in October 2024," an official said.

With the arrest of 33 robbers, 21 cases were solved along with the recovery of one mobile phone, three gold chains and other gold items, three knives and cash.

Police arrested 34 snatchers solving 30 cases, besides recovering four mobile phones, one gold chain, two two-wheelers and cash. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Vichitra Veer said.

Similarly, 12 burglars were arrested and seven cases of burglary were solved along with the recovery of mobile phones, two-wheelers and other items. Police also nabbed 174 thieves and solved 209 cases of theft. A total of 44 mobile phones, 56 two-wheelers, six cars, one e-rickshaw cash etc. were re-

covered, the DCP said.

It was a comprehensive and unwavering campaign across all fronts to curb crime, the official said.

A total of 1,442 PCR calls of snatching were reported till October 2023, while 875 such calls were reported till October this year, which is a reduction of over 39 per cent, police said.

A total of 785 PCR calls of robbery were reported till October 2023, while 592 PCR calls of robbery were reported till October 2024, which is reduction of over 24 per cent.

Further, there is an overall reduction of over 12 per cent in the cases reported under motor vehicle theft, Veer said.

During the festive season in October, intensive checking through bomb disposal squads (BDS) and dog squads was done in markets and areas of high footfall, officials said.

Police stated that 36 cases were registered under the Arms Act in which 36 people have been arrested with recovery of four country made pistols, 32 knives and seven live rounds.

A total of 39 cases of Excise Act were registered in which 46 people have been arrested with a recovery of 8,028 quarters of illicit liquor and 617 beers. (PTI)

'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3', 'Singham Again' cross ₹ 100 crore-mark in opening weekend



NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Action drama "Singham Again" and horror comedy "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3", both highly anticipated Hindi films which hit the screens on November 1, have raised over ₹ 100 crore at the box office in the first weekend of their release. The two star-studded movies were showcased in over 6,000 screens in cinemas nationwide during the Diwali weekend. "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3", directed by Anees Bazmee, saw Kartik Aaryan reprise his role as Rooth Baba from 2022's "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2". Vidya Balan, who played Avni/Manjulika in the original 2007 film by Priyadarshan, returns to the franchise, with Madhuri Dixit Nene and Triptii Dimri joining as new additions. Aaryan shared the film's box office update on his Instagram account.

"ROOH BABA ON CLOUD 100. ONE OF THE FASTEST 100 CRORES IN JUST 3 DAYS !! Thank you Janta Janardhan for the blockbuster love !! #BhoolBhulaiyaa3 in Theatres," he wrote. According to a poster shared by the actor, "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3" clocked Rs 110.2 crore net in India within the first three days of its release. It is produced by T-Series Films and Cine1 Studios, and distributed by AA Films. Rohit Shetty's "Singham Again", the third instalment in the "Singham" franchise, features Ajay Devgn, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Ranveer Singh, Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone, Tiger Shroff, and Arjun Kapoor.

According to trade website Sacnilk, the movie minted ₹ 121.75 crore (India net collection) by Sunday. "Singham Again" is presented by Jio Studios in association with Rohit Shetty Picturez and Devgn Films. (PTI)

Spanish Prez Pedro Sanchez seeks close ties with Indian film industry

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Spanish President Pedro Sanchez met a delegation of the Producers Guild of India (PGI) during his two-day official visit to India last week in which he expressed his government's keen interest in strengthening ties with the Indian film industry.

The delegation of the guild comprised Shibashish Sarkar, president of PGI and Group CEO of Reliance Entertainment, Aashish Singh (Red Chillies Entertainment), Ankur Garg of Luv Films, Shiv Chanana (T-Series), Nitin Tej Ahuja, CEO of PGI, and Akshaye Widhani of Yash Raj Films.

The meeting, which took place in Mumbai on October 29, was also attended by First Lady of Spain Begona Gomez, Minister for Industry and Tourism Jordi Hereu Boher, and Minister for Transportation and Sustainable Mobility Oscar Puente as well as Dinesh Patnaik, Indian Ambassador to Spain.

Sanchez said the meeting marks "the beginning of a process of closer collaboration between the two filmmaking communities", according to a press release issued by the guild.

Sarkar shared insights into the "scale and multilingual nature" of the Indian film industry, as well as the factors influencing Indian producers' choices when selecting international locations for film shoots, it stated. (PTI)



SHAH RUKH KHAN SAYS HE HAS QUIT SMOKING

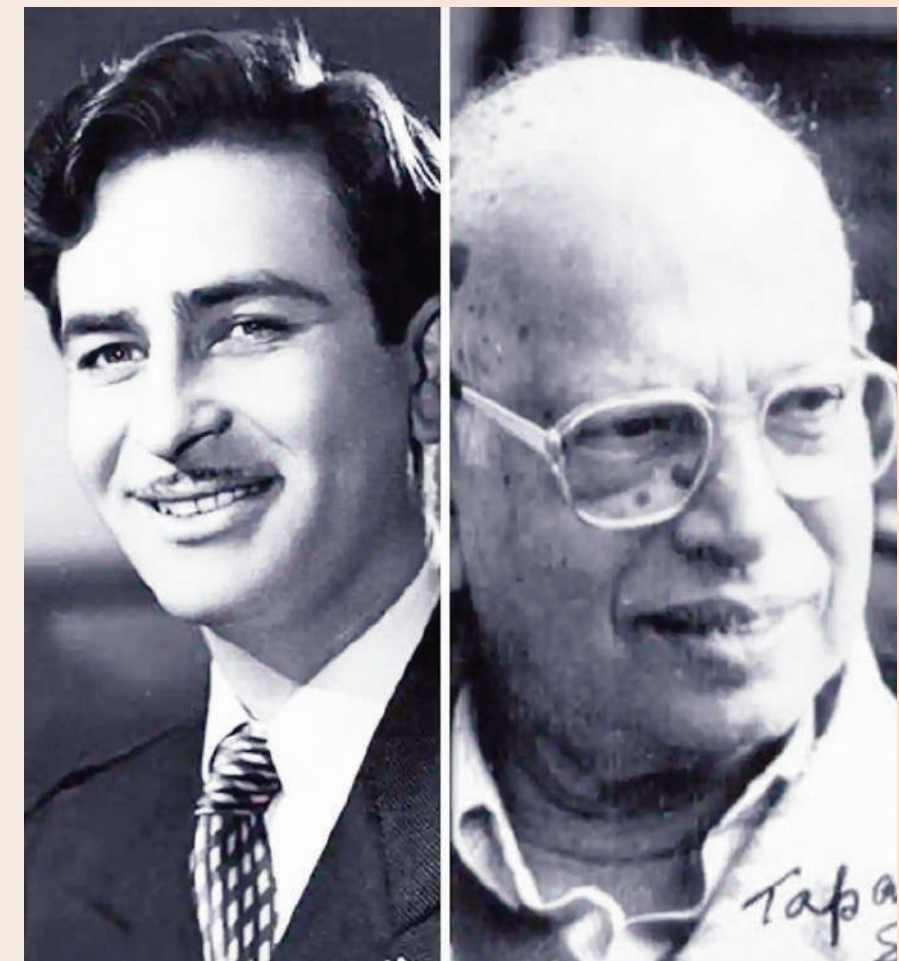


NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan, who used to be a heavy smoker, has revealed that he has finally kicked the habit. The actor shared the health update with his admirers who gathered to celebrate his 59th birthday on Saturday at an auditorium in Mumbai. In a video from the event shared by his fan club on X, Shah Rukh can be heard saying: "There's a good thing - I'm not smoking anymore, guys. I thought I won't feel so breathless after quitting smoking, but I still feel it (the side-effects). Inshallah, that will also get ok." In 2012, the actor drew flak for smoking in public during an IPL match between his team Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals, but escaped with a paltry fine of Rs 100 after he pleaded guilty before a court in Jaipur.

At a media event in 2017, Shah Rukh said he was planning to quit smoking and drinking for the sake of his children Aryan, Suhana, and AbRam. At Saturday's fan event, Shah Rukh also promised fans to entertain them for at least next 10 years.

"I want to make special films for the next 10 years. I really want to entertain all of you happily," he said. (PTI)

IFFI to celebrate centenaries of Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha, ANR, and Mohd Rafi



NEW DELHI, Nov 4: The International Film Festival of India will mark the centenary of four icons of Indian cinema Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and Mohammed Rafi at its upcoming 55th edition, the organisers said on Monday.

The gala, which will be held in Goa, will also present restored versions of their timeless classics during its nine-day run.

The opening ceremony of IFFI, set to take place on November 20, will pay tribute to these legends, accompanied by an audiovisual presentation bringing their cinematic journeys to life.

"The 55th IFFI's centenary celebrations are an homage to the enduring influence of Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and Mohammed Rafi on Indian cinema.

"By bringing together art, history, and interactive experiences, IFFI seeks to inspire future generations through the legacies of these luminaries. Join us as we celebrate the spirit of Indian cinema and honor the legends who continue to inspire audiences and creators worldwide," a press release stated.

Sinha, one of the most prominent Bengali cinema directors in the 1970s and 1980s forming a quartet with Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen, will be honoured with the presentation of his 1976 classic "Harmonium". His centenary was observed on October 2.

IFFI will showcase a digitally restored "Awaara", headlined and directed by Kapoor, known as the Showman of Indian Cinema. Rafi will be celebrated for his songs in the 1961 film "Hum Dono", which will be screened in its enhanced audio and visual restoration.

The birth centenaries of Kapoor and Rafi will be commemorated officially on December 14 and December 24, respectively.

During its course, the festival will hold in-depth panel discussions and in-conversation sessions with esteemed guests and family members who will provide unique insights into the lives and legacies of the four cinema legends.

In a special tribute, IFFI will unveil a unique 'My Stamp' dedicated to these luminaries, along with a 'Caravan of Songs', a musical journey featuring 150 songs by Kapoor and Rafi, and 75 songs associated with Sinha and ANR.

A curated exhibition, featuring rare memorabilia, photographs, and artifacts from the lives of ANR, Kapoor, Sinha, and Rafi, will also be open to audiences.

On the days dedicated to each personality, there will be thematic activities, including quizzes, planned throughout the Entertainment Arena.

A sand art illustration by renowned artist Sudarshan Pattnaik as a tribute to the legendary artistes will be on display as part of the centenary celebrations. IFFI will come to a close on November 28. (PTI)

STRONG REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT DIFF 2024: FESTIVAL CO-FOUNDER

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Twenty four out of 45 films to be screened at the 13th edition of the Dharamshala International Film Festival are directed by female filmmakers, says festival co-founder Ritu Sarin, who believes it's essential to celebrate voices of women in cinema.

The gala, which will run through November 7-10 in Dharamshala, will present more than 80 films from over 28 countries around the world, spanning narrative features, documentaries, and short films, alongside powerful stories from South Asia.

Cannes Grand Prix winning-film "All We Imagine As Light", directed by Payal Kapadia, will open the festival.

"I am incredibly proud to see such a strong representation of

women in this year's festival, with 24 out of 45 feature films being directed by women - 13 of them by Indian filmmakers - along with 19 short and mid-length films directed by women.

"As a filmmaker myself, I believe it's essential to uplift and celebrate the voices of women in cinema. Their stories are vital, and this year's lineup is a testament to the creativity and talent within our community," Sarin said in a statement.

This year's festival will also feature special programmes, including panel discussions, Q&A sessions and masterclasses with national and international filmmakers.

Director Dibakar Banerjee, whose unreleased film "Teens" will be screened at the festival, will

also conduct a masterclass at DIFF.

DIFF co-founder Tenzing Sonam said the gala has always been about more than just watching films.

"It's a space for filmmakers and audiences to engage deeply with cinema and the stories that shape our world," Sonam added.

Another highlight at the gala would be a conversation between actor Shahana Goswami and DIFF programming director Bina Paul.

Some of the movies which are part of the line-up are: "Separated", "The Room Next Door", "MA - Cry of Silence", "Agent of Happiness", "Second Chance", "Girls Will Be Girls", "Marching in the Dark", "Nocturnes", "A Fly on the Wall", and "Village Rockstars 2".

Continuing their collaboration with the festival, the Film Critics Guild will present the Juried Gender Sensitivity Award, established in 2019 to honour filmmakers addressing gender issues and to promote discourse around gender equality in cinema.

DIFF, with the support of PictureTime, the festival's technical partners, will run a full programme of films across four theatres - two auditoriums on site and two of PictureTime's patented portable digital theatres.

In addition, DIFF Online will enable audiences worldwide to access a curated selection of films remotely, after the physical festival.

"Pooja, Sir" by Deepak Rauniyar will bring down the curtain on DIFF 2024. (PTI)



Man U makes its worst league start in almost 40 years after 1-1 draw with Chelsea

MANCHESTER, Nov 4: A tumultuous week for Manchester United ended with a 1-1 draw against Chelsea and the unwanted statistic that the club has made its worst league start for almost 40 years.

Moises Caicedo's stunning long-range volley secured a point for Chelsea and left United on 12 points which Opta, the Premier League's stats supplier, said was its lowest after 10 games since the 1986-87 season.

That was the year Alex Ferguson was hired and went on to lead the club to a period of unprecedented success, winning 13 Premier League titles and two Champions Leagues.

United fans will have to hope that is a good omen after Erik ten Hag was fired this week and replaced by Ruben Amorim.

"Whenever you see a manager go you have to take some of the blame on yourself, it is because the team is not doing so well," United captain Bruno Fernandes said Sunday. "I spoke to the manager (Ten Hag) and apologized to him. I was disappointed he has gone and I tried to help him."

Fernandes fired United ahead from the penalty spot in the 70th minute against Chelsea as interim head coach Ruud van Nistelrooy looked to win back-to-back games during his temporary reign, having beaten Leicester 5-2 in the League Cup on Wednesday.

But in front of the watching Olivia Rodrigo, Caicedo's strike from the edge of the box four minutes later ensured the points were shared.

"I think we did the most difficult thing in this stadium against this team ... we were down and we came back immediately," Chelsea head coach Enzo Maresca said.

Chelsea moved up to fourth in the standings, ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, while United is six points behind in 13th and playing catchup in the race for Champions



League qualification.

Tottenham beat Aston Villa 4-1 earlier in the day.

Ten Hag was fired on Monday and while Amorim has been confirmed as his replacement, he does not take charge until Nov. 11.

Van Nistelrooy is holding the reins until then and for a short while was making top-flight management look relatively simple.

Fernandes' penalty put United in sight of a win that would have moved it to within four points of the top four. That was until Caicedo's strike.

"I am disappointed we didn't win, we had the better of the chances in the game but overall the performance was fantastic. They left their all out there on the

pitch," Van Nistelrooy said.

The Dutchman's future is unclear once Amorim takes over. But he has two games - against PAOK Salonika in the Europa League and Leicester in the league - until he hands over to the new head coach.

"We'll be backing him (Amorim) and helping them to get Manchester United to where we want it to be," Van Nistelrooy said.

Dominic Solanke scored twice as Tottenham thrashed Aston Villa 4-1. The forward struck two goals in the space of four second-half minutes at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium after Villa had led at the break. Solanke scored in the 75th and 79th as Spurs produced a stunning second-half performance to

follow up its victory against Manchester City in the League Cup on Wednesday. Morgan Rogers had given Champions League-chasing Villa the lead in the 32nd minute, but Brennan Johnson leveled the game four minutes after the break.

Solanke's double put Spurs 3-1 ahead and James Maddison curled a free kick into the top corner in the sixth minute of added time. Solanke is now on five goals for the season.

Tottenham is up to seventh in the standings, while sixth-place Villa missed out on the chance to move into the top three.

AFC Wimbledon beat MK Dons 2-0 in the first round of the FA Cup and took bragging rights in one of English soccer's fiercest

grudge matches.

Matty Stevens and Omar Bugiel scored either side of halftime at Stadium MK in a competition that holds deep ties for fans of both clubs.

Wimbledon was a shock winner of the Cup in 1988 when beating the mighty Liverpool 1-0. The team relocated to Milton Keynes in 2002 and was renamed MK Dons, which prompted disgruntled fans to create a phoenix club called AFC Wimbledon.

And it was the traveling AFC Wimbledon fans who were left celebrating Sunday after securing its place in the next round of the Cup. There will be no Cup run for Wrexham this season after losing 1-0 at Harrogate Town. (AP)

I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well: Will Young

MUMBAI, Nov 4: Replacing a player of Kane Williamson's stature can be a daunting task but Will Young, who played a pivotal role in New Zealand's historic 3-0 Test series win in India, saw it as an opportunity to create his own mark after "running the drinks" as a reserve batter for four years.

If New Zealand's batting appeared thin with Williamson not making it to India for the first Test in Bengaluru due to injury, the 31-year-old Young banished any such doubts with his unbeaten 48 as the Kiwis hammered the hosts by eight wickets.

As it became evident that Williamson would not make it to India in time to help New Zealand clear trials by spin at Pune and Mumbai, Young had given enough indications that he was ready for the challenge.

"Since my debut about four years ago, I've been in and out through form (or) through selection.

"I've been a reserve batter for a number of years now so I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well," Young told media here after New Zealand's historic win, insinuating that he was always ready.

"When I do get an opportunity to play, I'm more excited to go out and do my own thing in my own way and not try to replace Kane or whoever it might be, just play my own game and see it as a great opportunity rather than big boots to fill," he added.

Young acknowledged the role Williamson played in New Zealand's training camps back home and also during his presence on the earlier assignments in the Indian subcontinent.

"Unfortunately Kane's not here and if he was, he'd be a

great person to lean into and to ask what he thinks in certain situations. We also had three really good camps leading into the series back home and he was at those camps.

"But it's great at the moment because we've got fantastic batters all throughout our line-up and they've all got slightly different methods and on the day you've just got to pick what method you think will work and you've got to have the courage to back that and show your skills.

"Yeah, I try not to bat like Kane, I try to bat like me and do it my own way," he added.

For New Zealand to beat India at their own game on spinning wickets was as special as their series win in this part of the world, and Young conceded scoring runs on turning tracks in Pune and Mumbai was more satisfying.

"If you look at all three matches, there was different challenges in each. In Bangalore, a lot of wickets fell to spin and then (in) Pune and Mumbai it was a lot more challenging against spin."

"As a New Zealander coming over here and playing in Indian conditions, it's always going to be slightly more satisfaction of scoring runs against spin, so I'd suppose scoring runs in Pune or Mumbai felt more special," said Young, who ended the series as the third highest run-getter.

With 244 runs at 48.80 across three Tests, Young finished behind India's Rishabh Pant (261 runs) and compatriot Rachin Ravindra (256 runs).

However, his biggest contributions came in the third Test at Mumbai when Young's 71 and 51 across the two innings helped New Zealand become the first team ever to beat India 3-0 in their own backyard. (PTI)

Dani Olmo leads Barcelona to city derby win over Espanyol

MADRID, Nov 4: Dani Olmo made the most out of his return as a starter with Barcelona, scoring twice to lead the Catalan club to a 3-1 win over Espanyol in the city derby on Sunday in the Spanish league. Raphinha also scored for Barcelona, which a week ago had routed Real Madrid 4-0 in the clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Barcelona is now nine points ahead of Madrid, whose game at Valencia on Saturday was postponed because of the deadly floods that killed more than 200 people in southern Spain last week. The game between Villarreal and Rayo Vallecano also was postponed, as were three second-division games scheduled to be played in the region this weekend.

The victory extended Barcelona's 27-match unbeaten streak against Espanyol in the league. Espanyol, sitting in 17th place, has lost six of its last seven league matches.

Olmo scored his double in his return as a starter after hurting his right hamstring on Sept. 15 against Girona. He had come off the bench in the team's wins against Bayern Munich in the Champions League and Madrid

in the Spanish league.

"I was excited about coming back," Olmo said. "I'm feeling well. It was important to keep winning." He put Barcelona ahead in the 12th minute from close range after a neat cross by Lamine Yamal with the outside of his left foot. Olmo's second goal came with a strike from outside the area in the 31st.

In his first season with Barcelona, Olmo now has five goals in five matches.

Raphinha added to the lead in the 23rd by redirecting the ball into the net with one touch after Marc Casado's long cross into the area. Barcelona has outscored its league opponents 40-11 in 12 matches. Madrid has the second-best attack with 21 goals scored.

"We are a team that can score a lot, not only with our strikers but also with the players in the second line," Olmo said. "We play very direct and create many opportunities." Espanyol thought it had moved closer in the 27th but Jofre Carrera's goal was called off after video review because of offside. It also had a goal by Alvaro Tejero disallowed for offside in the 58th, then Javi Puado finally scored a goal that counted in the 63rd.

Barcelona also had a goal called off in stoppage time.

Before the match, Barcelona honored those who received awards at the Ballon d'Or ceremony last week, including Yamal, who earned the Kopa Trophy award for best Under-21 player, and Aitana Bonmati, who won the award for the world's best woman soccer player. Barcelona also won the best women's team prize.

There was also a moment of silence in honor of the flood victims, which has taken place at all league matches this weekend.

Giuliano Simeone, son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone, scored his first goal with the club in the team's 2-0 win against Las Palmas.

The goal came more than 20 years after Simeone's last league goal with the club as a player.

Alexander Sorloth netted Atletico's second goal on Sunday, helping move the club back to third place, 10 points behind Barcelona.

Sixth-place Athletic Bilbao drew 1-1 against Real Betis, while 10th-place Real Sociedad won 2-0 at Sevilla with goals from Takefusa Kubo and Mikel Oyarzabal. (AP)

Women's FTP 2025-29: India to host England, Australia in marquee home series



DUBAI, Nov 4: India will host Australia and England in high-profile home series as the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday gave significance to Test matches and bilateral rubbers while announcing women's cricket Future Tours Programme (FTP) for the 2025-29 cycle.

Apart from the storied rivals, India will also face Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, who was unveiled as the 11th member of the FTP, at home during the four-year period.

The Women in Blue will also travel to New Zealand, West Indies, Ireland and South Africa in

this phase as each member nations are scheduled to play four series at home and abroad.

Apart from this, India will also feature in a tri-series in England ahead of the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup, the third team being reigning champions New Zealand.

England will host the 2026 Women's T20 World Cup.

Members have also penciled in more Test matches this time, with Australia, England, India, South Africa and the West Indies all agreeing to play multi-format series that include ODIs and T20Is," said Wasim Khan, ICC

General Manager of Cricket, in a media release.

"Australia will play the maximum such series - two each against England, India and South Africa and one against the West Indies," he said.

The members have scheduled, by mutual agreement, tri-series as preparation for ICC events in this cycle.

"Ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026, England will host India and New Zealand for such a three-team T20I tournament while Ireland will host Pakistan and the West Indies. Sri Lanka and the West Indies are among other Members scheduled to host tri-series, in 2027 and 2028, respectively," Khan added.

The FTP also outlined the fixtures for the fourth edition of the ICC Women's Championship.

The 2025-29 cycle, set to shape the lineup for the 2029 Women's Cricket World Cup, will expand to feature 11 teams - with one more than the current 10 - with Zimbabwe joining the full member sides.

"Notably, Zimbabwe will make their debut in the tournament, marking a significant step toward broader global representation in women's cricket," he said. (PTI)

HIL: Delhi SG Pipers sign Australian Olympian Jacob Whetton

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Delhi SG Pipers on Monday announced the signing of three-time Olympian Jacob 'Jake' Whetton of Australia for the upcoming Hockey India League season.

The 33-year-old midfielder will be replacing Dutchman Jorrit Croon, who has pulled out due to an ankle injury.

"It's never easy to replace a player of Jorrit Croon's calibre. Unfortunately, his recovery from the ankle injury isn't progressing as hoped, which has led us to make this difficult decision," Delhi's head coach Graham Reid stated in a release.

"On a brighter note, I am thrilled to welcome Jacob Whetton to the SG Delhi Pipers for the 2024 season. Jacob's experience and skill set will be invaluable in filling the void left by Jorrit.

"His ability to control the midfield aligns perfectly with our game strategy, and I have known Jacob since 2009, so he is well-acquainted with my coaching style. I'm excited about the energy and expertise he will bring to our team."

Whetton has a wealth of experience with him, featuring in 253 games for the Kookaburras, netting 75 goals, and also helping the side win the silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Besides, the Queenslander also won the World Cup in 2014 and helped his team finish third four years later.

He also helped his side win gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014, Gold Coast 2018 and Birmingham 2022.

Whetton has also won Champions Trophy twice (2012 and 2018) and a bronze in 2014. He also has four Oceania Cup titles and an FIH Pro League gold (2019).

The HIL is returning after a seven-year hiatus and will run from December 28-February 1. (PTI)

International Calendar packed but seniors also need to show 'intent' for Ranji Trophy

NEW DELHI, Nov 4: The grueling Test tour of South Africa had finished in early January of 2007 and towards the end of that month, India were playing West Indies in a bilateral ODI series as a tune-up to the 50-over World Cup set to be played in the Caribbean in a month and a half's time. India played four ODIs on January 21, 24, 27 and 31 at Nagpur, Chennai, Cuttack and Vadodara.

On February 1, four members of that team -- Sachin Tendulkar, Zaheer Khan, Ajit Agarkar and Sourav Ganguly were all taking a flight from Vadodara to Mumbai. Reason? Mumbai was playing Ranji Trophy final against Bengal from February 2-6 and none of them wanted to miss the prestige battle. Tendulkar scored a hundred, Ganguly scored 90

and Zaheer took a bagful of wickets.

Within 48 hours of that Ranji Trophy final, Tendulkar, Ganguly, and Zaheer had to play an ODI international series against Sri Lanka. "Workload management" was yet to become a talking point at that time.

The Indian team that was blanked 0-3 by New Zealand at home on Sunday had seniors who were exempted from playing Duleep Trophy despite having a decent break after the the T20 World Cup with only a three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka in the interim.

Save Jasprit Bumrah, whose injury-prone body and exceptional skills demand workload management, questions are no being raised as to why the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, R



Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja opted out of Duleep Trophy.

"In gruelling heat of second week of April, in the year 2000, he played Ranji Trophy semifinal for Mumbai against Tamil Nadu and scored a double hundred in a first innings chase of

nearly 500," former India opener Devang Gandhi, who had been a national selector between 2017 to 2021, recalled while talking to PTI. "In another three days, he was playing the Ranji final against Hyderabad team which had Mohammed Azharuddin and

VVS Laxman and scored a fifty and a hundred. Tendulkar played Ranji semi-final and final in a space of two weeks in April after playing ODIs till end of March," added the former player.

For the record, the last Ranji Trophy game that Kohli played was in Ghaziabad against Uttar Pradesh in 2013, a match that also featured Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Ashish Nehra, Ishant Sharma, Suresh Raina, Mohammed Kaif and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Perhaps one of the last star-studded games ever played in Ranji Trophy.

Rohit's last Ranji Trophy match for Mumbai was in 2015.

After that, both have played one first-class game each -- Kohli for India A before a tour of Sri Lanka (2017) and Rohit for India A before a home series against

South Africa (2019) when he was set to open in Tests.

Tendulkar played 310 first-class games including his 200 Tests. So, the maestro played 110 first-class matches, including four games, in 24 years despite his hectic international schedule.

In comparison, Kohli has played 32 first-class games and Rohit fairs a shade better with 61 matches in 18 years of first-class cricket since 2006.

But to be fair, the Tendulkars, Laxmans, Dravids and Ganguly, in their prime, didn't have two months of IPL and T20 Internationals engagements which the current generation plays. Rohit has played 448 career T20 games while Kohli is one short of 400.

"Obviously workload is important and so is rest," Gandhi said. (PTI)

Saha announces retirement from cricket after this year's Ranji Trophy



NEW DELHI, Nov 4: Spectacular with the big gloves, quietly assured with the willow and yet happy to be in the shadows, Wriddhiman Saha, in his 40 Test matches for India, has certainly been more than the sum total of all his parts.

But having been out of India reckoning for over three years now, the 40-year-old has decided to call it quits from the game at the end of his team Bengal's ongoing Ranji Trophy campaign. The announcement was made on his social media page late last night.

"After a cherished journey in cricket, this season will be my last. I am honoured to represent Bengal one final time, playing only in the Ranji Trophy before I retire," Saha said.

"Let's make this season one to remember," he added in a post that went up late on Sunday night, typically unambiguous from the unassuming player.

He never had the aura of a Mahendra Singh Dhoni or the insane daredevilry of a talented Rishabh Pant but Saha, with his hands as safe as a house, was more than a mere hyphen between the two powerhouse performers of Indian cricket. The 104 dismissals behind the stumps, including 92 catches in Tests,

some of them absolutely splendid, Saha's three centuries and six fifties aren't always spoken about for their effectiveness. Neither the eight six-laden century in a losing cause for erstwhile Kings XI Punjab in the 2014 IPL final.

But Saha, for the better part of the 17 years since his Ranji debut in 2007, was happy to stay out of the spotlight.

Patience came easy to him as he had to wait nearly two years between his debut and second Test and nearly three years between his second and third Tests.

He was always that ever present understudy to Dhoni, knowing well that he will have to wait till the great man called time in whites.

Saha was an old fashioned Indian keeper like Syed Kirmani or Nayan Mongia -- brilliant behind the stumps and a safe batter, who could be used as a floater in the middle order.

Whether keeping up to R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja on perennially under-prepared Indian tracks or gauging the wobbly seam movement of Ishant Sharma's deliveries, between 2015 and 2018, Saha was undoubtedly one of the world's best glovemen at work.

And one can say that with assurance despite his contemporaries being Matthew Wade, BJ Watling, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Jonny Bairstow.

There were moments behind the stumps that one simply cannot forget.

A flying catch to pouch South Africa's Faf du Plessis off Ashwin's delivery in front of silly point, which earned him the moniker of 'Superman WriddhiMan', was a moment of sheer brilliance. His keeping was so exceptional that despite an IPL hundred, three Test tons and a brilliant Irani Cup double ton in a tricky chase, his batting never got the due it deserved.

And when Pant burst into the scene with his 'X-factor' batting, he was again confined to being the second keeper.

Once Gabba happened, the writing was on the wall for Saha and Rahul Dravid, the new coach, in a frank discussion during the tour of South Africa decided to show him the mirror that at 38, it makes no sense to be a second keeper behind a 20-something.

Having scored a fifty (vs New Zealand) in a preceding series and probably misunderstanding former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly's generic encouragement as an assurance, his impregnable patient "defence" was breached as he fired some verbal salvos.

A spat with a Cricket Association of Bengal office-bearer saw him leave for Tripura for a couple of years before coming back home for a final hurrah.

His attitude towards life remained the same.

From the time he was a 16-year-old, who came from North Bengal's Siliguri and stayed at a dingy PG in central Kolkata's Koley Market area, to the time he became a known figure with a posh South Kolkata apartment and a luxury car, all he wanted to do was complete his tasks and answer only in mono-syllables.

Trust Virat Kohli to find that enduring.

"You particularly feel happy when a team-man like Saha does well. Such a nice person, never cribs about anything, does not have a bad word to say about anybody, ready to bat at Nos 8, 9, or 10," the skipper had once said about his teammate. (PTI)

Series defeat against NZ will impact India's performance against Aussies: Gilchrist, Warner



SYDNEY, Nov 4: Australian legends Adam Gilchrist and David Warner have little doubt that Indian players' psyche would have been scarred after the recent whitewash at home by New Zealand, but they said it will be naive to consider Rohit Sharma's side "easy beats" in the five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy, beginning at Perth from November 22.

The Tom Latham-led Kiwis blanked India 3-0, marking one of the lowest points in their Test history, also denting the chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) final next year.

"It does (series defeat has an impact), more for the Indian players and the Indian team internally. They have to be asking themselves pretty hard questions," former wicket-keeper batter Gilchrist told Fox Sports.

"But I'm not expecting them to come out and be easy beats, but I do think on the back of that loss and the fact that it was a clean sweep -- I cannot remember when that's happened to them, just losing a series, let alone a clean sweep -- I think that will raise some questions internally.

"The pressure and the expectation and the desire from a passionate cricketing nation to see that change around, that'll ride heavily on those shoulders of all those players." Gilchrist said India has the wherewithal to regroup after the heavy setback.

"There are a few ageing players (with the Indian team) who may start to even second guess themselves a little bit. There're some

high-class cricketers in that Indian squad. It's going to be fascinating to see how they rebound from that challenge," he added.

Former opener Warner said the series defeat against the Black Caps will certainly be playing in Indian cricketers' minds.

"It (the series defeat) helps the Australian guys. They're coming here after being beaten at home 3-0 for five Tests against the Australian boys, (who have) three world class quicks and a world class spin bowler, and I'd be nervous if I'm in their batting order. I would be nervous," said Warner.

The left-hander felt that counter-attacking pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj would be key to Australia's success in the upcoming series.

"The Australian top order needs to make runs against Bumrah and Siraj who are their spearheads. I think if Australia can get through those two gentlemen, there could be some big runs put on the board.

"But we're going to have to come out with our chest out against India. We have lost our last two series here against India (and) they have got a lot to play for."

Warner also did not read too much into the modest form of Indian veterans like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

"You have got Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ashwin, Jadeja. You got these guys there who are in the back end of their careers. So, there's a lot to play for there, and whether or not they finish their careers this year or next year, they will want to finish on a high. (PTI)

Shami's return to competitive cricket delayed; not to play for Bengal against Karnataka, MP

BENGALURU, Nov 4: Mohammed Shami's return to competitive cricket has been further pushed back after the veteran pacer was not named in the Bengal squad for the next two rounds of the Ranji Trophy against Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

Bengal will take on Karnataka at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here from Wednesday, before travelling to Indore to take on MP from November 13.

Shami was expected to play the fixture against Karnataka to test his fitness in a real-match situation as he bowled at full tilt at nets after India's recent Test match against New Zealand here, though with bandage on his operated leg.

On that occasion, he was also monitored by India's bowling coach Morne Morkel.

Later Shami said during a promotional event that he was feeling "100%" at nets.

"I had been bowling with half a run-up on and off since I can't put too much stress on my body. So, we decided that I would bowl properly, and I gave my 100%."

"It felt great, and the results are good. Hopefully, I'll be back on track soon," he had said.

India skipper Rohit Sharma had also opined against taking an undercooked Shami to Australia.

"We don't want to bring undercooked Shami to Australia. We are keeping our fingers crossed," Rohit had said in Bengaluru recently.

Other than Shami, Bengal will also miss the services of prolific opener Abhimanyu Easwaran, wicket-keeper batter Abhishek Porel and pacer Mukesh Kumar, who are with India A squad in Australia.

Pacer Akash Deep, who was part of the Indian team for the recent series against New Zealand, was also not named in the state squad.

However, veteran wicketkeeper batter Wriddhiman Saha, who has announced his retirement from cricket after the ongoing domestic season, has been named for the two matches.

Bengal squad against Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh: Anustup Majumdar (capt), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Sudip Chatterjee, Sudip Gharami, Shahbaz Ahmed, Wriddhiman Saha, Avil Ghosh, Shuvam Dey, Shakir Habib Gandhi, Pradipta Pramanik, Aamir Gani, Ishan Porel, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, Mohammed Kaif, Rohit Kumar, Rishav Vivek. (PTI)



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অসম চৰকাৰ

সুধাকণ্ঠে শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

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