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NEW DELHI, SUNDAY APRIL 23, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹ 4



India joins super league with missile interceptor

DRDO, Navy test tech that Russia, US, Israel have to destroy missiles from 3,000 kms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India achieved a major milestone in developing niche technology after the successful test of the naval version of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) that placed the country in the elite league of nations having this capability. The US, Russia and Israel are the other nations to have this BMD shield. The BMD system can take down any incoming hostile missile from more than 3,000 kms away and the national Capital will soon get this cover.

Giving details of the test conducted on Friday, Defence Ministry officials said here on Saturday, that the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and



Indian Navy successfully conducted the maiden flight trial of the sea-based endo-atmospheric interceptor missile off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal.

The purpose of the trial was to engage and neutralise a hostile ballistic missile threat, thereby elevating India into the elite club of nations having Naval BMD capability.

Prior to this, the DRDO had successfully demonstrated a land-based BMD system with the capability to neutralise ballistic missile threats.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the

DRDO, the Navy and the industry involved in the successful demonstration of the ship-based BMD's capabilities.

"The DRDO and the Indian Navy successfully conducted a maiden flight trial of sea-based endo-atmospheric interceptor missile off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal on April 21," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

DRDO Chairman, Samir V Kamat, complimented the teams involved in the design and development of the missile. He said the nation has achieved self-reliance in developing highly-complex network-cen-

tric anti-ballistic missile systems.

The BMD is a multi-layered shield to protect vital and strategic assets and India launched its programme to develop such a system in 2000 after the Kargil War. The BMD programme was undertaken to neutralise any threat from Pakistan and China.

The multi-tier system comprises high-altitude interception and low-altitude neutralisation of any incoming missile and takes down the hostile weapon from 3,000 kms away. The tests started in 2006. The system also includes an overlapping network of early warning and tracking radars, as well as command and control posts.

After the interceptor is launched, it is provided target information from the radar through a datalink. When the interceptor closes onto the target missile, it activates the radar seeker to search for the target missile and guides itself to intercept the target. Multiple interceptors can be launched against a target for high kill probability.



Two kids hug each other as Muslim devotees gather at Old Delhi's historical Jama Masjid to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr in Delhi on Saturday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

India has a free press: US

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

India has a free Press and it really works," said the US and appreciated the role of Indian journalists in supporting democracy. Making this assertion, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, also said he has respect for freedom of Press in India.

He appreciated the role of journalists in supporting democracy in the world's most

populous country. "I know the media market is changing. But I have such respect for the freedom of the Press in India. There is nothing that's kept secret there. You have India as a democracy in part because you have a free Press that really works," Lu told PTI in Washington.

"I can remember going into the Ministry of External Affairs once and seeing a senior person with files stacked up to the ceiling because he was processing a 'Right To Information'

request. And he was complaining bitterly about having to do this and I could only laugh because we have to do the same thing in our bureaucracy where if someone asks for a document, I have to spend several days finding the document for them because that's what democracy does," said US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

According to UN estimates, India has become the most populous country in the world with 142.86 crore people.

Biden to visit India in Sept

Washington: With India all set to host the prestigious G-20 summit comprising Heads of States here, US President Joe Biden is looking forward to travelling to India in September, Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu has said.

Detail report on P 4

CAPSULE

6 DIE OF COVID IN DELHI, 1,515 CASES IN 24 HRS

New Delhi: Delhi on Saturday logged 1,515 Covid-19 infections and six fatalities with a case positivity rate of 26.46, according to data shared by the health department. The death toll from the pandemic rose to 26,595 in Delhi while the case tally is 20,32,424. P2

VIOLENCE IN BENGAL OVER RAPE-MURDER

Kaliaganj: Fresh violence broke out here on Saturday after local citizens protested the alleged rape and killing of a 17-year-old girl a day before, said police officials. A 20-year-old man was arrested on Saturday in connection with the alleged rape and murder. The girl, whose body was found in a canal in Kaliaganj area on Friday, knew the man, Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Sana Akhtar said, identifying him as the prime accused. P2

ISRO PUTS INTO ORBIT SINGAPORE SATELLITES

Sriharikota: ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle on Saturday successfully placed two Singapore satellites into the intended orbit, ISRO said. The satellites are part of the order secured by NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO. Mission Director SR Biju said the "totally dedicated commercial mission" was carried out with "utmost precision". P2

Saudi Arabia evacuates Indians from Sudan

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian nationals among several foreign nationals have been safely evacuated from violence-hit Sudan, according

to reports from Saudi Arabia authorities.

The Saudi foreign ministry in a statement on Saturday said it has so far evacuated 91 stranded foreign nationals.

The evacuation comes days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with his counterparts in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Related report on P 5

Threat to Modi before Kerala trip, probe on

Veracity of letter threatening PM with suicide bomb being ascertained, says intel report

PTI ■ KOCHI

The Kerala Police and Central agencies have launched an investigation into a letter threatening a suicide bomb attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will be visiting the State on April 24 and 25 to take part in various programmes.

The letter in Malayalam, purportedly written by a Kochi resident, was received at the office of the BJP State president K Surendran who in turn had handed it over to the police last week. The news of the threat letter came out on Saturday after a report by ADGP (Intelligence) was telecast in the media. As the news was out,

Surendran met the media and said he had handed over the threat letter a week ago to the State police chief.

"Last week, president, BJP State committee, Kerala had received a letter written in Malayalam threatening the life of Prime Minister of India by using suicide bomber," the Intelligence report read.

The report also said the veracity of the letter and the person behind it were under investigation.

Surendran alleged that the "leak of the Intelligence report" from the Kerala Police was a grave mistake and it should be probed.

The 49-page report gives details of the names of the officials on duty, their roles, the detailed programme chart of the Prime Minister among other matters.

Continued on Page 2

Rahul vacates official house

Paying price for speaking truth, says Cong ex-chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday handed over the keys of the vacated Tughlaq Lane bungalow to officials of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD).

Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi and sister Priyanka Gandhi visited the bungalow in the morning. He shook hands with CPWD officials and thanked them. Rahul has shifted to Sonia Gandhi's residence now.

Rahul said he was paying the price for speaking the truth to power and vowed to continue to raise people's issues. Rahul, who was disqualified from Lok Sabha last month following his conviction in a defamation case, was asked to vacate the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow by April 22.

"I have paid the price for speaking the truth to power, I am ready to pay any price," he



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hands over the keys of 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow to a CPWD official after vacating the bungalow following his disqualification as a Lok Sabha member, in New Delhi, on Saturday

PTI

said, adding he would continue to raise issues of price rise and corruption with double the force.

Rahul moved out all his belongings from the bungalow where he had been staying for almost two decades.

Talking to reporters while leaving the bungalow, Rahul

said, "I have no problem even if it has been snatched away from me. This house was given to me by the people of India. I will stay with the former Congress president (Sonia Gandhi) at 10, Janpath for some time and then find some other way."

Continued on Page 2

Taliban forbid women from taking part in Eid

AGENCIES ■ KABUL

The Taliban have issued instructions prohibiting women from attending Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations in two provinces of Afghanistan — Baghlan and Takhar. The instructions came from the de-facto authorities.

In the Herat region of Afghanistan, the Taliban authorities earlier this month forbade families and women from dining in establishments with gardens and outdoor space, reported Khaama Press. The authorities said that gender mingling and not donning a headscarf (Hijab) were the reasons for the curbs.

Facing decades-long conflict, Afghanistan grapples with numerous challenges, including a food shortage as foreign governments are cutting development funding and imposing sanctions, in large part due to the Taliban's restrictions on



women.

Despite widespread condemnation, there are still restrictions on how many women can work for the UN, including a ban on girls' higher education beyond the sixth grade, the Afghan news agency reported.

Since the Taliban regained power in August 2021, women are not allowed to work in the fields of education with domestic and international organisations, in gyms, or in public spaces.

PM hails those trying to make Earth better

India committed to furthering sustainable development: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the occasion of Earth Day on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised those people who are working to make the planet better and sustainable.

The Prime Minister reiterated India is committed to furthering sustainable development, in line with its culture of living in harmony with nature.

"On Earth Day, I laud all those working to make our planet better. India is committed to furthering sustainable development in line with our culture of living in harmony with nature," Modi said in a tweet. Earth Day is observed



globally to raise awareness about environmental issues.

Earlier on April 12 on the inauguration of the drinking water supply project in Uganda, which was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Modi said the project will not only boost India's friendship with Uganda but also will further sustainable development.

Modi had tweeted, "In addition to boosting friendship with Uganda, this project will further sustainable development"

Satya Pal Malik, Khap leaders protest at Delhi police station

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Former Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik, who has been called by the CBI for a clarification over an alleged insurance scam, and some Khap leaders held a protest at a police station on Saturday after not being allowed to hold a meeting at a south Delhi park as they lacked requisite permission, according to officials, who rejected reports that he was detained.

Sagar Preet Hooda, Special Commissioner of Police (Law & Order-Zone II), however, said 24 people who refused to leave the park were detained, but released around 3 pm.

Malik later posted a photo of him at the RK Puram police station, saying, "I am currently sitting at RK Puram police station in Delhi. The police can take me to the Chhawla police station in some time."

A khap panchayat organ-

ised in support of Malik in R K Puram on Saturday was cancelled after local police and RWA denied permission for the meeting.

The panchayat had been called by leaders of 36 prominent khaps from Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

After that he and his supporters left the place and arrived at the RK Puram police station, the officer added. The Delhi Police issued a statement, saying he had gone to the police station "of his own volition", refuting reports that Malik had been detained.

"We have not detained former governor Satya Pal Malik. He came on his own volition, along with his supporters, to the R K Puram police station and we have informed him that he can leave at his own will," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Manoj C said in a statement.

GI tags for Bihar's tilkut, balu shahi soon

PTI ■ PATNA

Applications seeking geographical indication tag for "khumra", "tilkut" and "balu shahi" — the famous delicacies of Bihar — have been accepted by competent authority after preliminary examinations, an official said on Saturday.

Besides, similar applications for Hajipur's famous "chiniya" variety of banana, Nalanda's popular "bawan buti" sari and Gaya's "Pattharkatti stone craft" have also been accepted by the GI registry, he said.

A GI tag identifies a product as originating from a particular region.

"Applications seeking GI tag for Bhojpur's Udwanthnagar 'khumra', Gaya's 'tilkut', 'balu shahi' of Sitamarhi, Hajipur's famous 'chiniya' banana, Nalanda's popular 'bawan buti' sari and Gaya's 'Pattharkatti stone craft' have been accepted by the GI registry after crucial scrutiny and examination. "These developments are

very positive and encouraging. We are hopeful that all these will soon get the geographical indication tags," NABARD-Bihar chief general manager Sunil Kumar told PTI on Saturday.

Bhojpur's "khumra" is liked by foreigners, while "tilkut", a unique treat made from sesame seeds and jaggery, is quite popular outside the country. "Balu shahi", a

sweet delicacy of Runni Saidpur village of Sitamarhi, is also very popular in the country.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development assisted producers' associations in filing applications for GI tags for these famous delicacies and products of Bihar, he said.



"We also engaged experts for the purpose. The bank is playing an important role in the GI registration process and also for marketing linkages, branding, and promotion of these items," Kumar said.

GI tag for these delicacies and products will help farmers, manufacturers and artisans associated with these items

earn more, he said. Recently, GI tag was awarded to Bihar's famous 'marcha rice' which is famous for its aromatic flavour. Bhagalpur's 'Jardalu mango, Katarni dhaan (paddy)', Nawada's 'Maghai paan' and Muzaffarpur's 'Shahi litchi' have already been protected under GI tag.

ISRO sends 2 Singapore satellites into orbit

PTI ■ RIHARIKOTA

The ISRO on Saturday successfully launched 2 Singapore satellites from its spaceport here and carried out a technical experiment as part of its cost-saving efforts in satellite deployment in orbits, named POEM 2.

ISRO's reliable Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) injected the two Singapore satellites into the intended orbit. The satellites are part of the order secured by NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO.

After the successful deployment of the two Singapore satellites, ISRO scientists undertook a major exercise as they initiated an 'in-orbit scientific experiment' using the fourth stage of the PSLV. At the end of a 22.5-hour countdown, the 44.4 metre tall rocket lift-



ISRO's PSLV-C55 carrying two Singapore satellites after its launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Station, in Sriharikota, on Saturday. The launch vehicle carried with it TeLEOS-2 as primary satellite and Lumelite-4 as a co-passenger satellite that would be deployed into low earth orbit

ed off majestically from the first launch pad at the pre-fixed 2.19 pm at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, located about 135 km from Chennai. ISRO Chief S Somanath said PSLV placed both satellites into the intend-

ed orbit. "The PSLV in its 57th mission has once again demonstrated its high reliability and its suitability for commercial missions of such class," a beaming Somanath said from the Mission Control Center. "In

this mission, we had a core alone configuration of the PSLV which has many specialities and improvements that we made to bring down the cost of the rocket as well as its integration time.

And this is the goal--to have increased production and launches of PSLV in the times to come..." Somanath, also Secretary, Department of Space, added. Mission Director S R Biju said the "totally dedicated commercial mission" was carried out with "utmost precision."

The primary satellite TeLEOS-2 is a synthetic aperture radar satellite developed under a partnership between Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) representing the Government of Singapore and ST Engineering. It would be used to support the satellite image

requirements of various agencies within the Government of Singapore. TeLEOS-2 carries a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) payload. It would be used to provide all-weather day and night coverage and is capable of imaging at one metre full polarimetric resolution for Singapore.

The co-passenger satellite is Lumelite-4, co-developed by the Institute for Infocomm Research and Satellite Technology and Research Centre of the National University of Singapore.

It is an advanced 12U satellite developed for the technological demonstration of the High-Performance Spaceborne VHF data Exchange System (VDES).

The objective of the satellite is to augment Singapore's e-navigation maritime safety and benefit the global shipping

community, ISRO said.

PSLV C55 mission has been adopted with the 'integrate, transfer and launch' concept using the PSLV integration facility at Sriharikota. It is also the 16th mission for ISRO using the PSLV Core Alone configuration. Saturday's mission follows the successful deployment of the TeLEOS-1 satellite in a PSLV-C29 rocket along with five other satellites of Singapore in December 2015.

The space agency also carried out the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-2 (POEM-2) as an orbital platform to carry out scientific experiments through non-separating payloads carried by it. Announcing success of PSLV satellite mission, Somanath also said "POEM is going to write some more poems" with seven payloads.

Rapist-killer of 17-yr-old girl in Bengal arrested

Raiganj/ Kaliaganj: A 20-year-old man was arrested on Saturday in connection with the alleged rape and murder of a teenage girl in West Bengal's North Dinajpur district that triggered violent protests, police said.

The 17-year-old girl, whose body was found in a canal in Kaliaganj police station area on Friday, knew the man, Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Sana Akhtar said, identifying him as the prime accused.

A case has been filed under IPC section 302 (murder) and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act based on the complaint filed by the girl's mother, he said. The preliminary post-mortem report revealed no injury to the body, Akhtar said, adding that

a bottle of poison was found near the body. "We are investigating the case from all angles," he said. Violence rocked Kaliaganj, around 18 km from the Bangladesh border and 430 km north of Kolkata, as locals protested against the incident, prompting the police to use tear gas shells and charge batons to bring the situation under control, officials said.

Several shops and e-rickshaws were set on fire by mob, which demanded the arrest of those behind incident. Roads were also blocked and stones were hurled at the police, they said. The RSS-backed ABVP gheraoed the Kaliaganj police station, while BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar sat on a dharna outside the SP office in Raiganj, demanding justice for the victim's family. PTI

Delhi reports 1,515 Covid cases, 6 deaths

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi on Saturday logged 1,515 COVID-19 infections and six fatalities with a case positivity rate of 26.46, according to data shared by the health department here. With the new fatalities, the death toll from the pandemic rose to 26,595 in the national Capital, while the case tally is 20,32,424.

Covid was the primary cause of death in one of the six fatalities on Saturday, the department said.

Out of 7,974 Covid beds in the city, 385 are occupied, the data showed. The department did not issue a bulletin on Friday.

The city saw three fatalities and 1,603 COVID-19 cases on Thursday with a positivity rate of 26.75. On Wednesday, Delhi reported six deaths along with 1,757 new cases of the disease with a positivity rate of 28.63.

The national capital had recorded 1,537 COVID-19 cases on Tuesday with a positivity rate of 26.54. On Monday, Delhi recorded 1,017 Covid cases with a positivity rate of 32.25, the highest in more than 15 months.

The national capital had recorded a Covid positivity rate of 30.6 on January 14 last year. According to the latest bulletin, the fresh cases emerged out of the 5725 tests conducted the previous day to detect the infection.

The number of COVID-19 cases had dropped to zero on January 16 for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic. However, the city has witnessed a spurt in cases over the past month.

The number of active cases currently stands at 6,271, the data showed. The number of patients in home isolation is 4,395. Mock drills were conducted in Delhi hospitals on April 11 to ascertain their preparedness to tackle Coronavirus pandemic.

Army intensifies search ops; last rites of Poonch martyrs held

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Indian Army on Saturday further intensified its ongoing combing and search operations in the dense forest area of Bhatta Durrian along with NSG commandos in order to capture the perpetrators behind the gruesome attack on an Army truck ferrying ration supplies to their forward base in Poonch.

Northern Command Army Commander, Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi also visited the site of the terrorist attack after reviewing the security in the border area and the ongoing combing operation.

Meanwhile, the last rites of all five bravehearts were performed with full military honours in their native places across Punjab and Orissa. Their mortal remains were dispatched from Rajouri on Friday after paying rich tributes to them by the senior army and civilian officials.

Director General Border Security Force S L Thaosan, and ADGP Mukesh Singh, CRPF officers besides an NSG team also visited the spot at Bhata Dhurian and took stock of the situation.

DG BSF also had security related discussions with DG J&K Police and other CRPF commanders based in Rajouri and Poonch area. DG BSF later visited Army authorities based at Rajouri and held security meetings with them.

The Northern Command said in a tweet that Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi reviewed the operational situation after the attack. He was briefed on the actions undertaken so far and exhorted the troops to be steadfast in their resolve, it added.

So far the ground reports suggested the gruesome attack was carried out by a well entrenched group of at least 4 to 5 terrorists with active participation of local support. It is



suspected a group of well trained foreign terrorists along with local support may have been involved in the ambush. Regular patrolling by the army jawans and presence of quick reaction teams (QRT's) along the Jammu Poonch highway could not prevent the audacious strike.

Preliminary reports also suggested the attack was launched by the group of terrorists after carrying out reconnaissance of the area from different directions.

Official sources believed the attackers had clearly demonstrated that they were well versed with the topography of the area and had picked the spot very carefully after observing the traffic movement along the route.

The involvement of an old group of terrorists is also suspected behind the attack. It is believed the terrorists were camping in the region for a long time and must have carried out a drill to calculate total time needed to execute the attack and later reach their safe hideout. A senior officer in Rajouri claimed local over ground workers, well versed with the topography, had managed to escort the group of terrorists to their safe hideout.

Timeline of Terror attacks on Indian army in Rajouri and Poonch October 11, 2021: Five Army soldiers including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) were martyred in an

encounter with terrorists at Chamrer forests in Surankote tehsil of Poonch district. October 16, 2021: Four soldiers including another JCO lost their lives in gun battle with the same group of terrorists at Bhatta Durrian in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch.

Army searched militants in Pir Panjal forests for about a fortnight but they remained untraced. August 11, 2022: Five Army jawans were killed and two fidayees were eliminated during an attack on an Army camp at Pargal in Darhal area of Rajouri district.

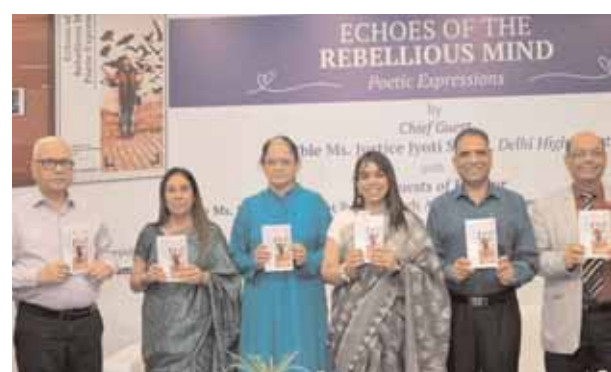
Mental health issues no longer taboo: HC Judge

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora on Saturday said that given the stress people and mankind are living in the current scenario, mental health has become a greater challenge in all spheres. "It (mental health) is no more a taboo and not restricted to elite class only and hence we should start talking about it," Justice Manmeet said at the launch of book -Echoes of the Rebellious Mind: Poetic Expressions - function in the presence of her colleague Justice Jyoti Singh.

In a lighter vein addressing the august audience, Manmeet said that even she gets stressed and has no qualms in confessing it but then when she gets engaged in work then it's minimal. "Even I have a family and there are fights. Weekdays then it's ok as we get less time at home to dissect the arguments but then at weekends it's a challenge since I get 48 hours to cope with it," Justice Manmeet said.

She added that mental stress is a chain as because when she takes to task her peon, he must be sandwiched



Delhi High Court Justice Jyoti Singh and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora on Saturday released a poetic compilation book titled "Echoes of the rebellious mind poetic experience" authored by renowned psychologist Jigyasa Tandon in the presence of top legal luminaries and retired judges of Supreme Court and High Court at India International Centre in Delhi

with similar kind of stress back home. Justice Jyoti Singh who had already read some of the collections in the book informed the gathering that the book is a constellation of poems mirroring the poet's self with regard to life and beyond.

"The words are reflective of the poet's distinctive experiences encountered in her many conversations with people from all walks of life and broadly addresses inherent narratives of

human experience. The detailed imagery offered by the poet will beat inside you like an upbeat pulse. Not all words may rhyme, but they would present pure rhythmic concoctions to tasteful hearts. This collection is about mental health and women, struggle and survival, and most importantly, empowerment and healing," Justice Jyoti said.

Author Jigyasa Tandon who also read out couple of poetic collection spiced by a

piano music on the occasion mentioned if you want to immerse yourself in a book that allows your mind to capture emotions associated with your rebellious echoes, this should be the book for you.

Daughter of well known lawyer Vivek Kumar Tandon, Jigyasa is a trained mental health educator from NIMHANS, Bangalore. She practises as a counselling psychologist with sensitive groups and as an educator in the area of mental health and psychology. She has authored many research papers and articles that have been published in various international and national journals and books.

Belonging to a lineage of top advocates Tandon family, Jigyasa also is a motivational speaker and has facilitated many webinars, workshops, training sessions and support groups over the last several years, especially during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

She has special experience and expertise in working with children in conflict with the law, Tihar jail inmates, prison officials, lawyers, and school children.

Ajit Pawar capable of becoming Maha CM: Raut

PTI ■ JALGAON

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Saturday said Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar was capable of becoming Maharashtra chief minister since he has vast administrative experience, the statement coming days after the two engaged in a verbal tussle.

Notably, amid speculation surrounding his next political move, Ajit Pawar on Friday said he would "100 per cent" like to become the chief minister. He had also said that NCP can stake a claim to the post of chief minister "now also" instead of waiting for



regarding the chief minister's post in the Maha Vikas Aghadi, which includes Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP, and Congress, and the alliance is united and strong. He asserted that the MVA will come back (to power) in 2024 and it "will look into it (the post of chief minister)".

"Who would not like to be chief minister? And Ajit Pawar is capable of becoming chief minister. He has been in politics for so many years now and has been a minister several times. He holds a record for having served as deputy CM the most number of times. Everyone thinks one should become CM," Raut told

reporters. On November 23, 2019, Bharatiya Janata Party leader Devendra Fadnis, and Ajit Pawar, were sworn in as chief minister and deputy CM, respectively, but the government fell without proving its majority on November 28. Ajit Pawar went back to the NCP and was made deputy CM in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government led by Uddhav Thackeray.

During an interview with a media house in Pune, Ajit Pawar on Friday responded to a query on his chief ministerial ambitions by saying "yes, I would 100 per cent like to be (CM)". Queried on this, Raut said, "He (Ajit Pawar) has not

expressed this desire for the first time. So my best wishes to him." These statements come amid intense speculation about Ajit Pawar's next political move, as the mercurial NCP leader cancelled some of his programmes recently, went incommunicado briefly and skipped the party's one-day convention in Mumbai on Friday.

While there is a buzz about his growing proximity with the ruling BJP, Ajit Pawar has said he will be with the NCP till he is alive, and Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekar Bawankule also recently stated the former was not in touch with the saffron party.

Office of the Superintending Engineer
1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora
 Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 1801(I)/Nivida-01/2023-24 Dated : 21/04/2023

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)

E-TENDER NOTICE

The superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 29/04/2023 & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of work (Rupee in lakh)	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Provincial Division PWD Ranikhet Renewal work by PC at Bhujan Chapad Hidam Motor Road in Ranikhet Consistency Under State Sector (PMGSY one Time Maintenance)	₹ 420.25 lakh with GST	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 8.41 Lakh	120 Days	18 Month (including Raining /Winter season)	Registration under State/ Central Govt. in Category "A" & Higher in Road Works
2	Provincial Division PWD Ranikhet Renewal work by PC at Saudhar to Panuwadhokan Motor Road in Sult Consistency Under State Sector (PMGSY one Time Maintenance)	₹ 271.73 lakh with GST	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 5.44 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (including Raining /Winter season)	Registration under State/ Central Govt. in Category "B" & Higher in Road Works
3	Provincial Division PWD Ranikhet Renewal work by PC at Thala Manral Mayari Motor Road in Sult Consistency Under State Sector (PMGSY one Time Maintenance)	₹ 187.13 lakh with GST	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 3.75 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (including Raining /Winter season)	Registration under State/ Central Govt. in Category "B" & Higher in Road Works

PUBLIC NOTICE

BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT MY CLIENT Mrs SHILPI AGGARWAL/ Mr ARPIT AGGARWAL has agreed to purchase 1/2 (half) undivided share of ground floor flat (front portion) measuring approx. 660 SQ. FT. (out of 1300 SQ. FT total area) situated at Road No. 85 Plot No. 6, Punjabi Bagh New Delhi - 110026 vide agreement to sell dated 19th FEBRUARY 2023. From Current legal owner Smt ARCHANA KOHLI W/O late Sh. SANDEEP KOHLI (WHO PASSED AWAY ON 10/02/2003) leaving Mrs ARCHANA KOHLI and their daughter SUKRITI KOHLI only legal heirs of the above property. Mrs ARCHANA KOHLI become legal owner vide relinquishment deed registered dated 27/12/2017 at SR-II PUNJABI BAGH. FURTHER ANY BODY ELSE AS BANKS (any other person having interest claim/in in the said property on the basis of facts or otherwise are required to put forth his/its/her claim with the undersigned within 21 days from the date of publication of the notice failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all sort of (encumbrances registered or unregistered) and my client shall proceed to complete the transaction, and get sale deed registered in her name after paying the amount as per sale agreement to Mrs ARCHANA KOHLI. And no claim whatsoever shall be entertained.

Undersigned:
SUSHIL KUMAR ARORA, H. NO. 6 ROAD NO 85, PUNJABI BAGH NEW DELHI 110026
 MOBILE No: 9810162165, 9811017520
 Email ID: pag.isc@gmail.com

Rahul vacates official house

From Page1

Asked that he could have requested for more time to vacate the bungalow, Rahul Gandhi said, "I do not want to stay in this house." Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said her brother was very courageous and "not scared of anyone and he will continue his struggle". "All this is happening because he spoke the truth about this Government," she said.

The Congress said the Government may "evict" Gandhi from a house but he occupies a place in the hearts and homes of crores of Indians. The party also launched a "MeraGharAapkaGhar" campaign on social media with party leaders offering their homes to Rahul Gandhi. Congress said on its official Twitter handle in Hindi that "this country is the home of Rahul Gandhi. Rahul who resides in the hearts of people."

"Rahul's relation with the public is unbreakable. Some see in him their son, some brother, some their leader... Rahul belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to Rahul. This is the reason why today the country is saying- Rahul ji, my house-your house," the Congress said, using the hashtag "#MeraGharAapkaGhar".

AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said, "They may evict you from a house, but you will always have a place in all our homes and hearts, Rahul ji. We know that such episodes won't deter you from raising the voice of the people and speaking truth to power."

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said Rahul Gandhi is neither worried about the post nor about the Government house. "He did not compromise on his principles even after risking everything," he said. He also took a swipe at former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who continues to be at his official residence allotted to him as the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, saying Rahul Gandhi is not a "Ghulam".

Threat to Modi before Kerala...

From Page1

Union Minister of State V Muraleedharan also slammed the alleged leak of the ADGP (Intelligence) report and said it was a serious matter. "The Chief Minister should explain how a report on the security detail of the Prime Minister was leaked and going viral on WhatsApp. This means the State Home department is in shambles," Muraleedharan alleged.

Meanwhile, Kochi resident N J Johny, whose name and number were there in the alleged threat letter, on Saturday said he was innocent. "Police have questioned me. I have given them all the details. They crosschecked the handwriting and everything," he told the media.

His family said they suspect another person from the locality, who has some issues with them to be behind the letter. As per the report, nearly 2,000 police personnel have been deployed each in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi cities.

6 arrested for murder of BJP Kisan Morcha leader in Dwarka

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested six people, including two juveniles, in connection with the killing of Delhi BJP Kisan Morcha leader Surendra Matiala in Dwarka's Bindapur area. According to police, the accused have been identified as Sachin (25), a resident of Bahadurgarh in Haryana, Arun Chand (19) and Deepak Berwa (19), both residents of Palam Colony in Delhi, Yogesh Kumar (30) of Jhajjar in Haryana, and two boys aged between 16 and 17 years.

One of the two shooters, arrested from Chandigarh, was associated with the Kapil Sangwan gang. Matiala's killing appears to be a desperate act by Sangwan, suspected to be abroad, to assert his presence in the area and revive his dwindling group, they said.



Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) M Harsha Vardhan claimed that Yogesh was among the two shooters who killed Matiala and a weapon has also been seized from him. He was arrested from Chandigarh on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, the police officer said. The Delhi BJP Kisan Morcha leader was shot dead in his office in the Bindapur area on April 14.

During the investigation, police zeroed in on four bikeborne suspects who were at the spot when the crime was being committed.

Two of them fired on Matiala. One of the two motorcycles was stolen from Dwarka the day Matiala was killed, the DCP said.

He claimed that Kapil Sangwan was the main con-

spirator behind this killing. Sangwan and Rohit, a resident of Jhajjar, planned the killing. Rohit roped in his brother Sohit, Kumar and others in the conspiracy and also involved two criminals from Rajasthan in it, the police officer said.

A screenshot of a post on Instagram from an account bearing the name Kapil Sangwan claiming responsibility for the killing and alleging that Matiala had connection with a rival group was circulated on social media, police said, adding the account was created and deactivated the same day.

It, however, could not be ascertained whether it was Sangwan who was using the account and where he had made the post. Both the claims could not be confirmed and Matiala never received any extortion call, police added.

AAP leader sends defamation notice to ED for tarnishing, mutilating image

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh has sent a defamation notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for tarnishing and mutilating his public image and asked officials to apologise within 48 hours or else be ready for legal action.

The notice comes after ED officials made false and malicious statements against the MP in its Excise Policy case complaint. The notice was sent on the MP's behalf by Advocate Maninderjit Singh Bedi. The notice, which has been addressed to Enforcement Directorate's Director Sanjay Kumar Mishra and Additional Director Jogender, states that the officials have knowingly and intentionally made certain untrue, defamatory, and incriminating statements against the MP in the Delhi Excise Policy prosecution com-



plaint. According to the notice, the ED attempted to popularise a perverse, false, motivated, wild, malicious, and baseless campaign to defame him. He further asserted that the statements made by the ED officials were untrue, defamatory, and incriminating.

"You, the addressee (Director and assistant director of ED), and your associates, colleagues, agents, and employees have attempted to tarnish

and mutilate my client's public image, and you and your colleagues, agents, and employees have attempted to otherwise popularise a perverse, false, motivated, wild, malicious, and baseless campaign against my client's alleged involvement in the Delhi Excise Policy," the notice read.

The Rajya Sabha MP claimed that the statement of Dinesh Arora has been 'mischaracterised and misquoted'. "You have intentionally

added the name of the client without any basis with the mala-fide intent to cause disrepute to my client. You and other officers of the Directorate have further circulated and caused to be published the complaint, specifically the portion pertaining to my client," Singh said that it is highly regrettable that an agency like the ED, which is supposed to be impartial, has resorted to such baseless allegations against him.

"Please note that ED is severely liable for such misdeed done with malicious intent. If you fail to comply with the date of receipt of this notice, I have instructions to initiate appropriate civil & criminal proceedings against you before the competent court, and in that event, you shall be fully responsible for the same and related cost and consequences," the notice further says.

Ensure treatment of 95% sewage flowing into Yamuna, LG tells officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena has directed officials to ensure treatment of 95 per cent of sewage water flowing into the Yamuna and tangible improvements in the river's pollution level by June-end.

The LG chaired a meeting of a high-level committee for rejuvenation of the river on Friday, according to an official statement. He also issued directions for treatment of 100 per cent of sewage water draining into the river by December this year.

It was discussed in the meeting that pre-fabricated decentralised sewage treatment plants (DSTPs) will be set up in the city's 81 slum clusters, where laying of sewerage lines



is not feasible, by June with support from the National Mission for Clean Ganga. A total of 263 unauthorised colonies in the City will have sewer lines by June-end, the statement said.

Currently, Delhi generates 768 million gallons per day (MGD) of sewage, of which 75.5 per cent (580 MGD) is treated.

The committee is monitoring processes that will ensure treatment of 727 MGD (95 per cent) of sewage by June. It also aims at achieving total treatment capacity of 814 MGD by December 2023 and 964.5 MGD by June 2024, the statement said.

Saxena, the chairman of the high-level committee set up by the National Green Tribunal,

reviewed the progress of works undertaken for cleaning the Yamuna, including 100 per cent treatment of sewage, trapping of drains, and construction of sewerage networks in unauthorised colonies and slum clusters among others.

The LG underlined that even as works on restoration of floodplains, trapping of drains, desilting of sewerage lines and construction of STPs were going ahead as per schedule, it was essential that all work is undertaken on mission mode with the goal to achieve tangible improvement in the pollution levels in the river by June 2023.

It was informed that ever since efforts to clean the Najafgarh drain began, the biological oxygen demand (BOD) levels in the drain has

shown a consistent decline, it said. The decline was also reflected in the BOD levels in the Yamuna at ISBT, where the Najafgarh drain meets the river.

The levels, however, were fluctuating on a month-to-month basis, and the same needed to be stabilised and brought further down, the LG stressed.

The committee is pushing for construction of three new STPs at Okhla, Delhi Gate and Sonia Vihar, and 40 new DSTPs at various locations, along with rehabilitation of three existing STPs and upgradation of 18 existing STPs.

The allotment of land for the purpose of construction of these plants that had been pending for the past eight years were completed in the last month, with active intervention

of the LG, the statement said. Since the committee started monitoring works, sewerage networks in 102 unauthorised colonies have been installed by March and another 161 colonies will get sewer lines by June 2023, it said.

Further, 71 colonies will get sewer networks by September and 239 colonies by December. Of the 1,799 unauthorised colonies, 1,320 will accordingly have sewer networks by December this year, while 318 are such where works on DSTPs is under progress, the statement said.

The LG was informed in the meeting that 180 registered vehicles carrying septage will now be monitored by a dedicated agency through GPS tracking so as to ensure collection and disposal.

Mayor poll: AAP says LG acting unconstitutionally

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A head of the Mayoral elections, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj on Saturday accused the Lieutenant-Governor (LG) VK Saxena of acting unconstitutionally, including the appointment of a pro-tem Speaker. He urged the LG to accept the Delhi Government's recommendation for the appointment of the pro-tem Speaker without any delay.

Addressing a press conference, Bhardwaj accused that LG had not approved the name of Mukesh Goel in a malicious

manner in the last appointment of pro-tem Speaker, and there is still no FIR against him. He said that it has been a tradition within

the MCD for years that the Delhi Government recommends a name for the pro-tem Mayor. However, this time, the Delhi Government has sent the name of the senior most councillor Goel after due diligence, and the LG should stick to the tradition & precedence.

"The Delhi Government's recommendation is binding on LG, and he has only two options: either accept the recommendation or send it to the President," he added.

Priyanka Kakkar appointed AAP national chief spokesperson



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP appointed senior leader Priyanka Kakkar as its new national chief spokesperson on Saturday. The decision was taken during a meeting of senior party leaders.

AAP national general secretary (Organisation) Sandeep Pathak handed over a certificate of appointment to Kakkar. Kakkar has been associated with the AAP since 2013.

She was the AAP's Telangana observer from 2017 to 2019. She was also the legal head of the South Delhi parliamentary constituency and worked as an advisor to Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh from 2021 to 2023. Kakkar served as the party's legal observer of Uttar Pradesh, where she was also a member of a monitoring committee constituted for the State organisation.

Delhiites celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with fervour



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations began in Delhi on Saturday morning after special prayers were held in mosques and eidgah across the city. A huge congregation offered namaz at the historical Jama Masjid around 6.30 am. The special Eid prayers at the Fatehpuri Masjid, Eidgah and Sunehri Masjid drew large crowds.

People greeted each other after the prayers and took part in the festivities. The main markets of the city, especially those around Jama Masjid and Chandni Chowk, saw brisk shopping for the festival.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal greeted people on the occasion.

"Congratulations to all on this auspicious occasion of Eid ul Fitr. I wish this festival of joy, peace, harmony and blessings brings progress, richness and happiness in the lives of all," Saxena said in a Hindi tweet.

Kejriwal wished for peace, brotherhood and happiness across the country and India becoming the number one country in the world. People visit their neighbours, friends and relatives on Eid and share delicacies like "Sewai".

Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated across the world on different days, based on the sighting of the crescent moon, which is supposed to denote the start of the Shawwal month in the lunar Islamic calendar. It marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Unverified video: Court asks DCP to take remedial action in 2020 riots case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hearing a case related to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, a court here has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) concerned to "take immediate remedial action" regarding an unverified, incriminating video against an accused.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat was hearing the matter fixed for orders on the point of charge against four people — Rahul Kumar, Suraj, Yogender Singh and Naresh — who have been accused of being a part of a riotous mob that committed arson in a place of worship and some shops on its ground floor on February 25, 2020.

The judge took note of the fact that there was a public witness who had identified Kumar, while there was CCTV footage regarding Suraj and Yogender. Besides, there was a video against Naresh, who has been accused of committing arson and raising a flag atop the place of worship.

"However, when the video was sent to the Central Forensic

Science Laboratory (CFSL), the report was received stating that the DVD was found inaccessible in the video analyst's system and hence, no examination was carried out. The FSL report was filed by way of a supplementary chargesheet," the judge said in an order passed last week.

The judge said there was no other witness to identify accused Naresh and it was "inexplicable" how the incriminating video, after being sent to the CFSL, was found "inaccessible." If it was so, the investigating officer (IO) or the station house officer (SHO) or the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) should have again sent the correct and accessible video to the FSL for their opinion and filed the same but instead, the IO has filed the supplementary chargesheet, along with the FSL report of the inaccessible video," the judge said.

Noting that the court has to frame charges on the basis of the evidence available, he said it is "difficult" for the court to frame charges against Naresh based on an "unverified DVD".

Govt has reduced tax on commercial properties to help traders: AAP Min

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the implementation of the fifth Municipal Valuation Committee (MVC-V) from April 1, Delhi Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj on Saturday said that the Arvind Kejriwal Government has reduced property tax on commercial properties. "The Government decision will not only give a big relief to the tax payers of Delhi but also help them to make up for the losses caused to the people in Corona," Bhardwaj said while addressing a Press conference alongwith Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberai.

He explained that the traders had for long been asking that the use factor for rented commercial properties be reduced. It was earlier at 2 — which meant that property tax that they had to pay was two times their base price — and it has now been reduced to 1.25, he said. He added that this will provide great relief to owners of commercial places across the markets in Delhi.

Commending the work of Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP in the MCD since being voted to power by the residents of Delhi,



Bhardwaj said that relief has also been given to the owners of banquet halls, baraat ghars — especially those baraat ghars that are run by non-profit organisations. The minister said that the long-standing demands of the taxpayers have been fulfilled by implementing the recommendations of MVC-V.

Revealing the details of the recommendations of the MVC report, Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberai said that there are 29 parameters and on the basis of that 29 recommendations have been given. Oberai further informed that taxpayers in the city will benefit a great deal from the implementation of these parameters. The various different parameters include use factor, occupational factor, age factor and structure factor. Along with this all the differ-

ent kind of properties, they could be commercial or residential, banquet hall, baraat ghar, guest house, educational institutions, farmhouses, multiplexes and petrol pumps — they will all benefit from the implementation of the new recommendations.

Highlighting the change in use factor — which is the relation between the property tax to be paid and the base price of the property, the Mayor explained that two kinds of changes have taken place. Some of the properties have been put in categories that are different from where they were earlier, while some new categories have been created. For example, old-age homes, baraat ghar, community halls and farmhouses — new categories have been created for these properties.

MCD sterilised 7,000 stray dogs in Jan, Feb; more dogs picked up daily

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) sterilised nearly 7,000 stray dogs in January and February and more dogs are being picked daily for sterilisation and then released back to the same area. There has been an increase in dog bite incidents in the national Capital in the last six months.

An MCD official said the stray dogs are sterilised and immunised against rabies and after sterilisation, they are released back to the same area from where they had been picked up. "A total of 6,904 stray dogs have been sterilised during the two months -- January and February 2023," the official told PTI. He, however, said the data for March and April is "yet to be studied".



Delhi's Sindh Camp area. The incident drew widespread flak and the MCD held several meetings to control the menace of the stray dogs. "We have prepared an action plan. We have divided 12 zones into two groups of six each. Every day dogs are being picked up and sterilised," another official said. The Centre on Tuesday directed local bodies to ensure only recognised organisations carry out animal birth control programme for stray dogs in accordance with the recently notified rules.

The municipal corporations need to implement the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme and anti-rabies programme jointly, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a release.

"On receipt of complaints from the areas, the ferocious or attacking dogs are picked up by the MCD and kept under observation. If their behaviour is found normal, they are released back to the same area from where they had been picked up," he added.

A 14-year-old boy was injured in a stray dog attack in southwest Delhi's Rangpuri area on Monday morning.

Last month, two minor brothers were found dead in separate cases of suspected stray dog attacks in southwest

Nagar gang's sharpshooter held for murder of rival gang member

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old sharp-shooter of Nagar gang has been arrested from west Delhi for allegedly killing a member of Chhenu gang and attempting to kill the kingpin of another rival gang, police said on Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a raid at Bharat Darshan Park in the Punjabi Bagh area and arrested the accused Ashish Verma who was working as a security guard there, a police official said.

During interrogation, Verma confessed to his involvement in the killing of Mayur Chauhan, a member of the Chhenu gang and also targeting Sunder Bhati, a dreaded gangster and the kingpin of a rival gang. Verma was declared a proclaimed offend-



er in both cases, police said.

According to the police, Verma was regularly changing his hideout, spending the nights in shelter homes or footpaths, and never visited his home in Delhi's Laxmi Nagar to evade arrest, they said.

The kingpin of the Nagar gang is Vipin Nagar, who is in jail in the murder case of Mayur Chauhan. Nagar has a conflict with one Irfan Pehlwan of the Chhenu gang and with Chauhan, police said.

In 2021, Chauhan fired at the house of Vipin Nagar in which his elder brother's security guard from the Delhi Police got injured. Since then, Nagar and his gang members were on a hunt for Chauhan, who took shelter in the Sunder Bhati gang and requested him to engage Nagar, they said.

Bhati held Nagar hostage, beat him mercilessly and to the point he was left for dead. Nagar somehow survived and strengthened his gang to take revenge on Bhati and Chauhan, police said.

On February 2, 2022, Nagar and his gang members attacked Bhati at a wedding function but targeted the wrong person and Bhati managed to escape. The same day, Chauhan was killed in Laxmi Nagar and Verma was involved in both incidents, they added.

Man arrested from Punjab for stalking woman online, posting morphed pictures

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a man from Punjab for allegedly posting morphed pictures of a woman on social media and harassing her by stalking her online. Police said the accused has been identified as Kuldeep, a resident of Punjab's Ludhiana.

According to police, a 24-year-old woman lodged a complaint on March 15, alleging that a person was posting morphed pictures of her on Instagram and also stalking her online.

The complainant told that she received a friend request from an unknown person on Instagram under the name of Simran. She accepted the request as there were many

mutual friends, police said. After some time, she found out that the account had used her photograph in the display picture and also posted objectionable morphed photos and comments on Instagram, a senior police officer said.

The alleged person started inducing the complainant for undue favours through Instagram and WhatsApp to harass her. He also started stalking her online, the officer said.

On the basis of technical surveillance, the suspect's location was traced in Ludhiana. A team of Delhi Police along with the local police arrested Kuldeep, Deputy Commissioner of Police (northwest) Jitendra Meena said.

China's footprint in Pak-fuelled proxy war against India expanding

Counter-terror experts say time to break unholy nexus

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Right from the discovery of Chinese footprints in the drones recovered from along the Indo-Pak frontier, to the significant use of Chinese weapons by Pakistani terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Beijing's involvement in the Islamabad-fuelled proxy war in India is expanding in a major way. From pumping small arms and ammunition into J&K's terror arc through the Pakistani Government channels, China is now supplying sophisticated weapons including armour piercing rounds and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones

with improved payloads that are being frequently used by the Pakistani ISI-military complex for gunrunning activities, illicit drugs trade and backing its terror cohorts along its frontiers with India.

Preliminary probe findings suggest Chinese armoured piercing rounds were used in the attack on an army truck in Poonch leading to fatalities of five soldiers last week.

Counter-terrorism experts and geopolitical analysts said the Pakistani politico-military combine has 'successfully' convinced Beijing that the State-sponsored terror groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) are the best bet to secure the Chinese investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in Pakistan. They said that the time is ripe to break the China-Pakistan nexus to disrupt the



possibility of further sophistication and scale of weapons supplies from Beijing to Islamabad like shoulder-fired Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs) which could adversely alter the security situation in the Jammu and Kashmir and potentially escalate the current adversarial relations of New Delhi with Islamabad into a full-fledged

war. The Pakistani security establishment has acquired the capability of fooling the big powers like the United States and China for maintaining its nuisance value as well as extracting financial and defence technological hardware, they said, adding a whole of Government approach led by the top political leadership is required to put

across counter narratives to swing Beijing from such Pakistani machinations against India. The frequent deployment of Chinese drones by Pakistan has blunted India's edge in deployment of surveillance equipment and sensors along the border for real-time detection of human movements. In addition, monitoring drone movement is a challenging task as India has a long border with Pakistan. From recovery of just five Chinese origin weapons in 2018 to 30 such equipment being recovered in 2022 is a clear pointer to the emerging trend in the Valley.

Likewise, the number of drone detections have jumped from 103 in 2021 (after the Galwan attack) to 207 in 2022. The payload capacity of the drones have also improved from just five kg to 80 kg during the period.

The discernible shift from supply of small arms like pistols

and ammunition of Chinese origin to rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), launchers and AK series assault rifles of Chinese make post the June 2020 Galwan Valley attack is likely to further mature to provisions of SAMs and anti-armour equipment to target tanks and helicopters, posing a plausible threat of completely changing the terror dynamics in Jammu and Kashmir. Both Pakistan and China have been on record protesting the abrogation of Article 370 that altered the special status of the erstwhile State permanently.

A variety of high-grade drone components as also other dual tech equipment are manufactured in units at CPEC for which the Chinese companies have trained thousands of local Pakistani people, especially from Quetta and Peshawar. This makes the supply and assembly of drones a handy tool for the Pakistani military to

upgrade its terror tactic against India, especially in Jammu and Kashmir.

In what could further hit the fragile security situation in the region, emergence of an illicit drone market in Pakistan cannot be ruled out.

Counter-terrorism and geopolitical analyst Dr Rituraj Mate said, "Without losing further time, India should adopt an aggressive policy to reverse the Pakistani designs and convince the visiting Chinese ministers during the run up to the G-20 and SCO meeting here on the futility of such moves. New Delhi should shift from acting only after a full-blown crisis and take a concerted bid to remedy the situation and mitigate the threat from the covert Chinese supplies of arms and ammunition to Jammu and Kashmir via the Pakistani establishment."

Emerging counter-terrorism expert from Jammu and Kashmir, Kishmish Sapru told

The Pioneer, "Chinese support to terrorism in India is multifaceted from diplomatic, financial, logistical and moral support to material supplies. Apart from the covert supplies of arms, ammunition and drones, Beijing has also overtly blocked India's bids several times to sanction Pakistani terror groups like JeM and LeT, and their leaders like Maulana Masood Azhar and Abdul Rahman Makki among others."

"Besides the Chinese equipment supplies and diplomatic support to Pakistan by blocking Indian efforts and practically backing Pak-sponsored terror groups and individual terrorists, Beijing has also been providing intelligence inputs and communication facilitation to aid the Pakistani proxy war in India. Containment measures should be initiated by New Delhi in right earnest," said another analyst Anjali Singh.

Muslim quota issue dominates K'taka Assembly poll campaigns

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Karnataka is barely over a fortnight away from Assembly polls, the Muslim quota issue dominates the campaign with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday alleging that Congress provided 4 per cent reservation to Muslims in Karnataka in an "unconstitutional manner" and that the BJP Government in the State had put an end to the practice.

In contrast, the rival Congress promised voters to restore the Muslim quota if they were to form the government in Karnataka.

"The BJP government ended special favour meant for scoring political points," Shah said on the Basavaraj Bommai government's rescission last month to scrap Muslim quota in Karnataka.

Congress State President and a Chief Ministerial aspirant D K Shivakumar announced in his election rallies that his party would restore 4 per cent reservation quota to Muslims if voted to power.

Speaking at a media conclave in Bengaluru Shah said



that the BJP ended the "special favour" meant for "scoring political points" and gave the rights to persons deserving the reservation, the OBCs.

The Home Minister said that the Constitution does not allow reservation on the basis of religion and slammed the Congress party for doing so.

"As far as justice is concerned with the social point of view, the Congress government had given 4 per cent Muslim reservation in an unconstitutional manner in Karnataka. It was unconstitutional because our Constitution does not approve reservation based on religion but it was prevailing in Karnataka," he said.

"The State Government scrapped the 4 per cent reservations for Muslims and increased the reservation for SC, ST, Vokkaliga and Lingayat. We have ended the special favour meant for scoring political points. We brought the Constitution to order and gave the rights to those deserving," Shah said.

Close to the polls the Karnataka Government, last month, decided to scrap the four per cent quota for minorities and add it to the existing quota to Lingayats and Vokkaligas, the two dominant communities of the poll-bound state.

Karnataka is due for elections on May 10.

WHO upgrades XBB.1.16 to Covid-19 'variant of interest'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has upgraded Omicron subvariant XBB.1.16 to a Covid-19 "variant of interest" (VOI) due to its "sustained increase" and "growth advantage" reported from several countries including India.

The move comes amid XBB.1.16 driven rise in Covid cases in India which reported over 12,000 infections on Saturday morning.

A total 12,193 fresh Covid-19 cases were registered in a span of 24 hours, with the number of active cases of the infection going up to 67,556, according to the Union Health Ministry. The death toll due to the viral disease has climbed to 5,31,300 with 42 more fatalities, including 10 reconciled by Kerala. The country has been witnessing a consistent rise in Covid-19 cases since March, with 10,262 cases reported in the week ending April 20. A rise in positivity rate has also been noted across the country, with 5.5 per cent positivity reported in the week ending



April 19 against 4.7 per cent positivity reported in the previous week.

XBB.1.16 is a descendent lineage of XBB, a recombinant of two BA.2 descendent lineages. XBB.1.16 was first reported on January 9, this year and designated a variant under monitoring (VUM) on March 22.

So far, 3,648 sequences of the Omicron XBB.1.16 variant have been reported from 33 countries, including India, on open research platform GISAID, the global health body, said.

"Following a sustained increase in the prevalence of XBB.1.16 and growth advan-

tage reported from several countries, WHO classifies XBB.1.16 as a VOI," said Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead for Covid-19 response at WHO on Friday.

Van Kerkhove noted that XBB.1.16 has shown "growth advantage and immune escape". While "no changes in severity have been reported, it can cause a full range of disease", she said, adding to the need to "be vigilant".

The WHO noted that although there has been a "slight increase" in XBB.1.16-related hospitalisation in India and Indonesia, the levels are "much lower than seen in previous variant waves".

Biofilter crops, trees may help lower impact of air pollution in Eastern Ganga region: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Peepal trees and crops like corn, safflower, pigeon pea which is also known as 'arhar' can act as biofilters and help lower the impact of air pollution in the Eastern Ganga region in Patna and ensure high yield return to farmers, a team of researchers have said.

They found the pollution tolerance index value of these species to be high when compared to the other crops grown in the region. Their study is published in the Current Science.

"The objective of the present study was to assess the impact of air pollutants on the biochemical parameters of 19 tree and crop species from five different locations in Patna in Bihar. Air pollution tolerance index value showed that Ficus religiosa (peepal), Zea mays (corn), Carthamus tinctorius (Safflower) and Cajanus cajan (pigeon pea) were more tolerant compared to the other crops," said the scientists from institutes like ICAR and Amity University.



Air pollution tolerance index (APTI) and anticipated performance index (API) are used to assess the tolerance capacity of tree and crop species against air pollution. This method helps in the identification of trees and crops which are susceptible and/or tolerant to air pollution. The stakeholders can use the information in strategically selecting trees and crops with higher APTI/API to minimize yield loss.

In the current Indian scenario, where increasing air pollution is a serious concern, the conscious selection of less susceptible trees and crops towards air pollution would be an eco-friendly management strategy. Such species also serve to lower and remove pollutants from the atmosphere.



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during an Eid-ul-Fitr function, at Imarat Shariah in Patna on Saturday. PTI

CBI books green lawyer Dutta, LIFE for FCRA violations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR against noted environmental lawyer Ritwik Dutta for alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

The CBI move came following a complaint from the Union Home Ministry alleging that Dutta's organisation, Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), was receiving funds from USA-based Earth Justice (EJ) to litigate against Indian coal projects with the intention of "targeting and stalling them".

The Home Ministry has dubbed such activities by LIFE as a "violation of FCRA".

The complaint dated March 21, which is now part of the FIR registered on April 19, named Dutta, the winner of many reputed awards including Sweden's alternative to the Nobel Prize called the Right Livelihood Award for 2021 for his efforts to protect the environment in India through the use of the law.

The Ministry's complaint alleged that LIFE had received money from EJ disguised as "professional receipts", which were actually intended to fund the targeting and stalling of development projects in India.

The complaint also stressed that Dutta's advocacy group LIFE was not providing legal advice to EJ for financial consideration but allegedly receiving foreign funds to stall development projects here.

Dutta had received Rs. 41 lakh in foreign contributions in the Financial Year 2013-14 from EJ, and had subsequently established LIFE Proprietorship, which had received Rs. 22 crores during Financial Years 2016-21 in the form of professional receipts, the CBI alleged in its FIR.

Biden looking forward to India trip in September for G20 Summit, says US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

With India all set to host the prestigious G-20 summit comprising heads of states here, US President Joe Biden is looking forward to travelling to India in September. Moreover, this year is a "big year" for relationship between the two countries, Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu has said.

He also said India's leadership in the G-20 further broadens its capacity to stand as a force for good in the world. "This is gonna be a big year. Of course, India is hosting the G-20. This year, the United States is hosting APEC. Japan is hosting the G7. We have lots of our QUAD members who are taking on leadership roles. And it provides opportunities for all of us to bring our countries closer together," Lu, told PTI in an interview late Thursday.

"I know our President is looking forward to travelling to India in September. That will be his first trip to India as part of the G-20 Leaders Summit. We're really excited about what's to come in the next few months," he said.

"We're only a little over three months into this year. And we've had a number of really exciting things that happened," he said. This includes the visit of Secretary of State Tony Blinken, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo to India. The India-US Forum in Delhi was attended by several senior administration officials.

India as the president of the G-20 has been taking a lead in advancing a positive agenda for the G-20. "In March Dr Jaishankar hosted his QUAD counterparts for a ministerial meeting and extraordinary



public events at the Raisina Dialogue with all four foreign ministers together. It was the first such public discussion with QUAD foreign ministers and really drove home how our four countries are coming together to support the people of the Indo-Pacific," he said.

"And then lastly, this month, the arrival of our new Ambassador Eric Garcetti. He has already received a really warm welcome from our

Indian and American staff at the US Embassy. Once he presents his credentials, he is looking forward to meeting with the rest of India and I think India will find that he is young, he is enthusiastic, and he's eager to bring our relations to new heights," Lu said.

"We are really thankful for the tremendous work India has done by hosting the G-20 Foreign Ministerial meeting last month, and we look forward to actively participating in the many future G-20 meetings coming up this year, including the New Delhi Leaders Summit in September," he said.

At the foreign ministers' meeting, India created an agenda that allowed them to discuss some of the world's most pressing challenges and deliberate to find concrete solutions.

"We have seen how the G-20 brings together countries for collective action. This meeting in March was no exception. As India has already shown during the first few meetings of its presidency, the G-20 is a powerful forum where the world's leading economies can come together to respond to global challenges: food security, health, energy insecurity, climate change and unsustainable debt," he said.

Most parts of India to have relief from heatwave for next five days, says IMD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department on Saturday said most parts of India will have a sigh of relief for the next five days from the searing heatwave conditions that had rattled people this week.

It said a cyclonic circulation lies over northwest Madhya Pradesh and another over interior Tamil Nadu. A trough of relatively low pressure runs from northwest Madhya Pradesh to south Tamil Nadu across Telangana. Private forecaster Skymet Weather added another trough extends from northeast Bihar to Odisha via Jharkhand. Weather experts say a thorough usually brings cloudy conditions and rain, leading to a drop in temperatures.

According to the IMD, several parts of India had been experiencing heatwave conditions for the past few days. High temperatures in the



northern and central plains had forced the local administrations to either change the timings or shut the schools until the weather improves. Even in the eastern hills, tea growers complained of relatively high temperatures and prolonged dry spell resulting in crop loss during the ongoing flush season.

In Delhi and its neighbouring areas, people were seen using scarves and taking shelter under trees on Saturday. The maximum temperature hovered around 37 degrees Celsius.

In Maharashtra, the government has shut down all schools affiliated with the state board till June 15. For Vidarbha region, the summer vacation extends till June 30.

Earlier this month, the IMD predicted above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts of the country from April to June, barring parts of the northwest and the peninsular regions. The central, east, and northwest parts of the country are expected to experience above-normal heatwave days during this period.

US on track to issue over million visas to Indians in 2023: Donald Lu

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US is on track to issue more than a million visas to Indians this year, a senior official has said, assuring that the Biden administration is committed this summer to make sure it processes all of the student visas for Indians whose school starts this fall.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu also told PTI in an interview this week that they are also prioritising work visas: H-1Bs and L visas, the most sought-after by IT professionals from India. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

"We are on track to issue

more than a million visas this year. This is a record for us along with a record number of student visas and immigrant visas," Donald Lu said. India is now number two in the world in terms of international students going to the United States. "We've also been prioritising work visas: H-1Bs and L visas. Wait times at some of our consular sections in India, for these visas are now below 60 days. We will continue to make sure that we prioritise visas for workers, as this is vital for both the American and the Indian economy," he said.

"For certain petition-based nonimmigrant work of visa categories, we plan to restart domestic visa renewal for applicants who meet certain requirements, including being physically present in the United States. We plan to have a pilot up and running

later this year. This would eliminate the need for these applicants to travel abroad to renew their visas," he added.

"I think part of the answer you can find in a really strong diaspora community in the US. For 30 years or more, our relationship is in part driven by Indian Americans who have lived here for decades, but still keep a very strong tie with India," he explained.

On India-US relationship, the senior official said, "In fact, we now know that over 100,000 Americans are living in India as well. This relationship is very much to weigh and benefits both of us. Yeah. So, I think that's true for political parties as it is for families in the US. Growing up I had many Indian American friends. I think that's just part of the fabric of the United States."

Indians among citizens of 12 nations rescued from Sudan

AP/AFP ■ KHARTOUM/JEDDAH
Some Indian nationals are among 150 citizens and diplomats of 12 nations who have been evacuated from conflict-hit Sudan to Saudi Arabia. A ship carrying Saudi citizens and the other nationals reached Jeddah on Saturday, in the first announced evacuation of civilians since fighting began. "In the implementation of the directives of the Kingdom's Leadership, we are pleased to announce the safe arrival of the evacuated citizens of the Kingdom from Sudan and several nationals of brotherly and friendly countries, including diplomats and international officials," the Saudi foreign ministry tweeted late on Saturday.



Earlier in the day, the Sudanese army had said it was coordinating efforts to evacuate Indian, American, British, Chinese and French citizens and diplomats from Sudan on military aircraft, as the bloody fighting that has engulfed the vast African nation entered its second week.

The military said that its chief, Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, had spoken to leaders of several countries who have requested safe evacuations of their citizens and diplomats from Sudan.

The prospect has vexed officials as most major airports have become battlegrounds and movement out of the capital, Khartoum, has proven intensely dangerous. Burhan "agreed to provide the necessary assistance to secure such evacuations for various countries," the military said.

ment to a Naval base in the tiny Gulf of Aden nation of Djibouti to prepare for the evacuation of U.S. Embassy personnel.

But the White House said Friday it had no plans for a government-coordinated evacuation of an estimated 16,000 American citizens trapped in Sudan. Burhan told Saudi-owned TV station Al-Hadath on Saturday that Khartoum's airport would not handle any evacuations because of the ongoing fighting.

He claimed that the military had regained control over all the other airports in the country, except for one in the southwestern city of Nyala. "We share the international community's concern about foreign nationals," he said. "Living conditions are deteriorating." Even as the warring sides said Friday they'd agreed to a cease-fire for the three-day Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, explosions and gunfire rang out across Khartoum on Saturday. Two cease-fire attempts earlier this week also rapidly collapsed.

The turmoil has dealt a perhaps fatal blow to hopes for the country's transition to a civilian-led democracy and raised concerns the chaos could draw in its neighbours, including Chad, Egypt and Libya.

At least 21 killed as Somalia battles with jihadi fighters in remote area

AP ■ MOGADISHU



China's FM holds talks in Philippines amid strained ties

AP ■ MANILA
China's foreign minister said Saturday his country is willing to work with the Philippines to resolve their differences, as tensions rise over Beijing's behaviour in the disputed South China Sea and Manila's deepening military cooperation with the US.

Foreign Minister Qin Gang held talks in Manila with his Philippine counterpart, Enrique Manalo, and was scheduled to meet with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Just days before he travels to Washington for a meeting with President Joe Biden.

China has warned that a deepening security alliance between the United States and the Philippines should not harm its security and territorial interests and interfere in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Beijing has criticised a recent agreement by the Philippines and the US to grant US forces access to additional local military camps. The deal allows American forces to establish military staging grounds and surveillance outposts in the northern Philippines across the sea from Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory, and in provinces facing the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

"We are willing to work together with Philippines to implement the consensus of both leaders, keep China-Philippine ties in right direction, safeguard overall situation of our bilateral relationship, work together to continue our tradition of friendship, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, and properly resolve our differences in spirit of credibility, consultation, and dialogue," Qin told reporters.

Indian climber's health improving, but still in danger

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Indian climber Anurag Maloo has shown signs of improvement, but is still in critical condition, his brother said on Saturday, days after he was found alive by rescuers on Nepal's Mount Annapurna.

Anurag, 34, a resident of Kishangarh in Rajasthan, went missing on Monday after he fell from around 6,000 meters while descending from Camp III. Mount Annapurna is the 10th highest mountain in the world.

"Anurag is currently in the ICU. His health condition has improved, but is still in critical condition," his brother Ashish Maloo told PTI at a hospital near Kathmandu, where he has been admitted since Thursday.

A team of rescuers located the Indian climber in a deep crevasse between Camp III and Camp II of the world's tenth highest peak, said Thaneswor Guragain, information officer at Seven Summit Treks — the organiser of the expedition.

American apex court allows access to abortion pill for now

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court on Friday preserved women's access to a drug used in the most common method of abortion, rejecting lower-court restrictions while a lawsuit continues.

The justices granted emergency requests from the Biden administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, maker of the drug mifepristone. They are appealing a lower court ruling that would roll back Food and Drug Administration approval of mifepristone.

The drug has been approved for use in the US since 2000 and more than 5 million people have used it. Mifepristone is used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol, in more than half of all abortions in the US.

The court's action Friday almost certainly will leave access to mifepristone unchanged at least into next year, as appeals play out, including a potential appeal to



the high court.

Justices Samuel Alito, the author of last year's decision overturning Roe v. Wade, and Clarence Thomas voted to allow restrictions to take effect. No other justices commented.

President Joe Biden praised the high court for keeping mifepristone available while the court fight continues.

"The stakes could not be higher for women across America. I will continue to fight politically-driven attacks on women's health. But let's be clear — the American people must continue to use their vote as their voice, and elect a Congress who will pass a law restoring the protections of Roe v. Wade," Biden said in a statement.

The justices weighed arguments that allowing restrictions contained in lower-court rulings to take effect would severely disrupt the availability of mifepristone.

The Supreme Court had initially said it would decide by Wednesday whether the restrictions could take effect while the case continues. A one-sentence order signed by Alito on Wednesday gave the justices two additional days, without explanation.

16 apartments evacuated after explosive found in Russian city

AP ■ MOSCOW

Seventeen apartment buildings were evacuated on Saturday in a Russian city near the Ukrainian border after an explosive device was found at the site where a bomb accidentally dropped by a Russian warplane caused a powerful blast this week, authorities said.

The bomb blast late on Thursday rocked part of Belgorod, leaving a large crater and three people injured. The Russian Defense Ministry quickly acknowledged that a weapon accidentally released by one of its own Su-34 bombers caused the explosion.

The ministry said an investigation was underway but did not elaborate on the details of the weapon, which military experts said likely was a powerful 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) bomb.

The governor of Belgorod province, Vyacheslav Gladkov, reported on Saturday that sappers examining the site of Thursday's blast found and decided to detonate what he



called an "explosive object" that was "in the immediate vicinity of residential buildings." The precautionary evacuations ended later in the day, according to Belgorod Mayor Valentin Demidov.

"The bomb was removed from the residential area. Residents are being delivered back to their homes," Demidov wrote on Telegram.

Russian authorities did not say if the detonated device was dropped by accident on Thursday and if so, if it was a remnant of or separate from the bomb that exploded in the city. Belgorod, located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of the

8 killed in tornado near Myanmar's capital Naypyitaw

Bangkok: A tornado that tore through two villages in central Myanmar near the capital Naypyitaw killed eight people and destroyed more than 200 houses, a rescue worker said Saturday. The tornado hit Aung Myin Kone and Tadau villages on Naypyitaw's southern outskirts at around 6:10 p.m. On Friday, Thet Paing Soe, a leading member of the Doh Leve charity organisation, told The Associated Press.

He said local charity organisations had transported 128 people to hospitals, and 232 houses in the two villages were destroyed. "The tornado blew for approximately 40 minutes. Almost all the houses in the villages are quite badly damaged. The restoration will take months," Thet Paing Soe said.

Major tornadoes are rare in Myanmar. However, tornadoes of a size that rarely cause death and serious damage often occur in summer and pre-monsoon periods when temperature rises, said Kyaw Moe Oo, a director-general at Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.



Daunte Wright's killer to be freed

AP ■ MINNEAPOLIS

A white former police officer convicted of manslaughter after mistaking her handgun for a Taser and fatally shooting Black motorist Daunte Wright in suburban Minneapolis in 2021 is set to be released from prison Monday.

Minnesota Department of Corrections spokesman Andy Skoogman announced Friday that former officer Kim Potter was to be released after serving about 16 months of her two-year sentence.

He said the exact timing of her departure Monday from Minnesota Correctional Facility-Shakopee won't be disclosed for security reasons. "Our criminal investigative analysts are working closely with law enforcement to monitor the situation to ensure Kim Potter, like all incarcerated persons, is safe as she leaves

our facility," Skoogman said in a statement. The shooting happened April 2021 as Derek Chauvin was on trial in Minneapolis on murder charges in George Floyd's killing. Wright's death sparked several days of protests.

Judge Regina Chu had said at Potter's sentencing that she would be required to serve two-thirds of her sentence — 16 months — then spend the rest on probation.

Potter, now 50, appears much thinner in a new photo released by the Department of Corrections. Her attorney, Earl Gray, said he had "no idea" why her appearance changed. "It just shows it's rough doing time," Gray said. "I don't know many mug shots that show somebody in a good light." A message left with civil rights attorney Ben Crump, the lawyer for Wright's family, wasn't immediately returned.

Success of climate crisis war will in part depend on India's decisions: US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The success of the world in combating the climate crisis will in part depend on decisions taken by India, a senior US official has said, as he vowed to work with New Delhi and other countries in achieving the ambitious targets.

These remarks were made by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, who in an interview with PTI said that the US is determined to support that effort through technology and through financing.

"I would say none (of the issues) is more important than



the climate crisis. The success of the world in facing the climate crisis will in part depend on decisions taken by India, Lu said. "And we have so much respect for the Prime Minister's pledge to create 500 gigawatts of non-fossil fuel capacity in India by 2030," he said, refer-

ring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious energy transition goal.

"Our teams are working every day on this challenge together and I have great confidence that working together not only between the United States and India, but India and the rest of the world that we will reach these really ambitious targets," he said.

Responding to a question, Lu said the future of the planet in part depends "on the ability of India to lead" the way in green energy. "I love some of the things that leading industrialists in India are saying today, which is that India will

not only produce enough green energy for itself, India wants to be the biggest green energy exporter for the world," he said. "That's something that we should be fully behind as people who care about this climate crisis," Lu said.

India and the US have a strong bilateral partnership in the energy sector. In April 2021, the US and India launched the "US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership," with two tracks i.e. Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP); and Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD).

'8 people, including girl, wounded in 2 shootings'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Two shootings in Washington, D.C., on Friday night resulted in eight people, including a young girl, suffering injuries, the Metropolitan Police Department said. There were no fatalities in the two shootings, which police said could be related because they occurred in the same area of the city in a short time frame.

About 10 P.M. Police responded to reports of shots fired on Lebaum Street and found seven men who suffered gunshot wounds that were not life-threatening. Assistant Chief of Patrol Services South Andre Wright said in a news confer-

ence at the scene. Most of the victims took themselves to hospitals, Wright said. "There was some chaos, obviously, because of the number of victims and the loved ones," he said. While officers were on Lebaum Street, police received a report of a shooting on 2nd Street, where they found a 12-year-old girl who had suffered "a gunshot wound to her lower extremities," Wright said, adding that injury was not life-threatening.

Police were looking for a car described by witnesses on Lebaum Street as a black sedan, possibly a Mercedes, from which shooters "drove through block and indiscriminately fired upon" people.

Explorers find WWII ship sunk with over 1K Allied POWs

AP ■ SYDNEY

A team of explorers announced it found a sunken Japanese ship that was transporting Allied prisoners of war when it was torpedoed off the coast of the Philippines in 1942, resulting in Australia's largest maritime wartime loss with a total of 1,080 lives.

The wreck of the Montevideo Maru was located after a 12-day search at a depth of over 4000 metre (13,120 feet) — deeper than the Titanic

— off Luzon island in the South China Sea, using an autonomous underwater vehicle with in-built sonar.

There will be no efforts to remove artifacts or human remains out of respect for the families of those who died, said a statement Saturday from the Sydney-based Silentworld Foundation, a not-for-profit dedicated to maritime archaeology and history. It took part in the mission together with Dutch deep-sea survey specialists Fugro and Australia's



Defence Department. "The extraordinary effort behind this discovery speaks for the enduring truth of Australia's solemn national promise to always remember and honour those who served our country," Australian Prime Minister

Anthony Albanese said. "This is the heart and the spirit of Let Us Remember."

The Montevideo Maru was transporting prisoners and civilians who were captured after the fall of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea. The ship was not marked as carrying POWs, and on July 1, 1942, the American submarine Sturgeon, after stalking the ship through the night, fired four torpedoes, which found their target, sinking the vessel in less than 10 minutes.

Those killed included 1,080 people from 14 nations, including 979 Australians. "Families waited years for news of their missing loved ones, before learning of the tragic outcome of the sinking," said Silentworld director John Mullen.

"Some never fully came to accept that their loved ones were among the victims. Today, by finding the vessel, we hope to bring closure to the many families devastated by this terrible disaster."

International trade in rupee currency soon: Industry Min

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday expressed hope that traders will soon be able to settle foreign trade in the rupee currency as several banks from different countries are opening special Vostro accounts with Indian banks.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved 60 requests to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) of correspondent banks from 18 countries, including the UK, Singapore, and New Zealand.

The RBI, he said, is in discussion with the central banks of other countries on the matter. "We will soon start seeing operationalisation of this rupee trading in international trade with several countries," Goyal told reporters here. He also said that negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed regions like the European Union, the UK, and



Canada are in "advanced" stages. Groups including European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are also keen to start talks for similar pacts with India. "The whole world wants to have a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with India," the minister said.

On the second phase of the production-linked incentive scheme for the textiles sector, he said that extensive stakeholder discussions have hap-

pened on the subject.

"I am quite confident that very soon we will be able to finalise the contours of the scheme and take it up for approval at the highest level," he added. Goyal said that Indian textile exporters were earlier facing customs duty disadvantages in developed markets vis-a-vis countries like Bangladesh, but as the government is inking trade pacts with regions like the UAE and Australia, domestic exporters would be able to push shipments.

On promoting sustainability in the textiles sector, Goyal said that the textiles ministry has decided to set up an ESG (environmental, social, and governance commitments) task force. The task force will come up with suggestions to make the sector more environment-friendly and sustainable. The textiles ministry has also launched a portal to promote the sale of handicrafts and

handloom products. On the National Textiles Corporation, he said that viability and other issues of its units have been discussed with the Finance Ministry but no final decision has been taken yet. On pink worms affecting cotton crops in certain places, the minister said that they are in discussion with the agri ministry and scientists to develop pink worm-resistant varieties.

On exports, Goyal said expressed confidence that the USD 100-billion target for the textiles sector would be achieved. He also said working with industry would help take the industry's combined domestic and international economic value to USD 250 billion. "It is possible. We will definitely achieve that," he added. Goyal was here as part of the Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam which is being conducted under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' Initiative in Gujarat in Rajkot.

India amongst fastest growing major economies amid uncertainties: Parekh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Against the uncertain global backdrop, India has increasingly been in the spotlight for being amongst the fastest growing major economies helped by a strong consumption story, eminent banker Deepak Parekh said on Saturday.

India is not immune to global disruptions, so some slowdown in growth is inevitable, he said, adding, since India is a domestic, consumption-based economy, India is less dependent on the global economy compared to countries that rely heavily on exports.

"As a country, we are fortunate to see more tailwinds than headwinds. What is working well for India is the fact that we have political stability and I don't see this being disrupted in 2024 either," Parekh, chairman of HDFC Ltd said at the Dainik Bhaskar conclave. Reeling out some of the



advantages, he said, the Indian banking and financial system, which had had its troubles earlier, is now in a much stronger position and is well-capitalised, the non-performing loans are now much lower and the system is strongly regulated.

Besides, he said, the government is pulling all its weight to position the country as a global manufacturing hub, and the country has aligned itself to the goals of decarbonising the Indian economy in an orderly manner. On housing finance,

Parekh said, the runway for it in the country is immense as mortgage-to-GDP ratio in India at 11 per cent which is very low compared to peers like China, Malaysia, Singapore and significantly lower than much of the western world where mortgage-to-GDP ratio is upwards of 60 to 90 per cent.

Observing that urbanisation in India is an irreversible trend, he said, at present 32 per cent of the population reside in cities and this is expected to be 40 per cent by 2030, generating demand for the housing sector as well as the housing finance sector. India still has a huge housing shortage estimated at over 29 million units and a recent estimate forecast that the Indian real estate market is likely to touch USD 1 trillion by 2030, he said.

Speaking about the affordable housing segment, Parekh said withdrawal of the Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) and concessional stamp duties in certain states coinciding

with the uncertainty on the interest rate trajectory had some dampening impact on housing, especially for the low income segments. Pointing out that home loans are generally for a long tenor and over this period, he said, there will be both, upward and downward interest rate cycles.

India is lucky that its mortgages are not underwater like parts of the western world where the mortgage loan in itself is higher than the value of the property, he said, adding, a large percentage of the young population is also in favour of the mortgage market. Besides, he said, adding rising opportunities in Tier II and Tier III cities are pushing demand for housing and housing finance.

"In the services sector, we have already seen this play out well. For instance, the GIFT City in Ahmedabad is gaining traction due to number of government initiatives to attract investments as an international financial centre," he said.

Unsold housing stocks down by 6% in Jan-March in 14 cities: PropEquity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unsold housing stocks fell 6 per cent during January-March to nearly 5.18 lakh units across 14 cities compared to the previous quarter on better sales, according to data analytic firm PropEquity.

Unsold inventories stood at 5,17,879 units during January-March this year against 5,48,217 units in the preceding quarter. During the first quarter of this calendar year, housing sales stood at 1,23,938 units while new launches were 93,600 units.

"The residential market in India saw significant growth in Q1 2023. Market resurrection has been brought about by the recovery trend since last year, with quarterly sales surpassing the new launches in this quarter by 32 per cent," said Samir Jasuja, Founder and Managing Director at PropEquity.

Sales have surpassed new supply in the first quarter, which is a healthy sign for the residential market, he added.

According to the data, unsold stock in Delhi remained flat at 793 units in January-March as against 790 units in the previous quarter. In Faridabad, the unsold inventories fell 17 per cent to 920 units from 1,110 units. Unsold



stocks in Noida dipped 7 per cent to 6,843 units from 7,371 units, while in Ghaziabad fell 8 per cent to 11,542 units from 12,614 units. In Greater Noida, unsold inventories fell 5 per cent to 23,865 units from 25,241 units.

Kolkata saw a decline in unsold stocks by 11 per cent to 18,247 units from 20,566 units.

Unsold housing stocks in Navi Mumbai fell 9 per cent to 31,735 units from 34,883 units, while in Mumbai by 8 per cent to 62,735 units from 68,310 units. In Thane, the unsold inventories fell 4 per cent to 1,09,511 units from 1,13,700 units. Pune saw a dip of 11 per cent in unsold stocks to 69,331 units from 77,961 units.

Unsold housing stock in Bengaluru fell 8 per cent to 49,986 units from 54,143 units while in Hyderabad the stock declined 2 per cent to 95,106 units in January-March 2023 from 97,473 units in the previous quarter.

Pak-Saudi to sign deal for \$2 billion deposits after Eid

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Cash-starved Pakistan is likely to ink a deal for additional deposits of USD 2 billion from Saudi Arabia after Eid, authorities said on Saturday, a move that will help the country secure the much-required bailout from the IMF.

In March, Pakistan sought Saudi Arabia's confirmation for funds to ink an IMF deal. Earlier this month Pakistan got Riyadh's nod for additional funding.

The assistance from Saudi Arabia comes at a crucial time as the IMF programme, signed in 2019, will expire on June 30, 2023, and under the set guidelines, the programme cannot be extended beyond the deadline.

The Washington-based crisis lender has imposed the condition on Pakistan that it should secure USD 3 billion from other countries for the revival of its USD 7 billion bailout package.

A top government official told The News International that the State Bank of Pakistan would sign a deal with the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) soon after Eid for an additional USD 2 billion



deposit. The official added that Saudi Arabia has confirmed the bilateral assistance support to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was also acknowledged by the lender's staff, the report said. This agreement is the follow-up on the confirmation of additional financial support of USD 2 billion and USD 1 billion from the Kingdom and the UAE, the official added.

Official sources clarified that Pakistan neither made any fresh request for more support from Saudi Arabia nor the UAE, except for the already confirmed USD 2 billion and USD 1 billion by these countries, respectively.

Saudi Arabia had already rolled over USD 3 billion in deposits for one year, which matured on December 5, 2022.

IGGL achieves milestone over laying Asia's largest underwater pipeline: CEO

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Asia's largest underwater hydro-carbon pipeline, below the river Brahmaputra connecting Jorhat and Majuli in Assam has been completed by the Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL), the company's CEO Ajit Kumar Thakur said on Saturday.

The challenging task of laying a 24-inch diameter hydrocarbon pipeline beneath the mighty Brahmaputra river by Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) method was completed on Friday, marking the completion of a major milestone in the construction of the North East Gas Grid (NEGG) connecting North East India to the National Gas Grid.

The total length of the pipeline in this single HDD crossing is 4,080 metre across the main water channel of Brahmaputra river. This is the longest river crossing by any hydrocarbon pipeline of size 24-inch diameter and above in Asia and the second longest in the world, he claimed.

This one of a kind HDD river crossing was executed by intersection method, where two HDD rigs simultaneously started drilling from the two sides of Brahmaputra with



intersection of the two drilling heads in the middle at 30 metre beneath the river bed. The laying of 4,080 metre pipeline section was completed by overcoming numerous hurdles faced mainly due to monsoon rains and flood, he said. The total length of HDD crossing across the Brahmaputra river considering all major and minor water channels is 5,780 metre.

The pipeline was laid in three separate HDD sections of length 1000 M, 4080 M and 700 M with the first and the third sections completed earlier. The next step will be tie-in of the three sections at two points, which will be located at 15 M and 8 M below Natural Ground Level (NGL).

"With the completion of Brahmaputra HDD, IGGL has achieved more than 71 per cent physical progress of NEGG Project and will be able to complete Guwahati-Numaligarh section of the project by February 2024", Thakur said.

GST not leviable on transfer of Jaipur Int'l airport biz to Adani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The transfer of Jaipur international airport operations by Airports Authority of India (AAI) to the Adani group is exempt from Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Authority for Advance Ruling has said.

The AAI had approached the Rajasthan-bench of the Authority for Advance Ruling (AAR) seeking ruling on whether transfer of business to M/s Adani Jaipur International Airport Ltd is treated as supply as 'going concern' and whether GST is leviable on transfer of assets.

Transfer of business as a going concern, as a whole, or independent part thereof, is considered as service under GST law and such supplies are exempt from goods and services tax.

In its ruling dated March 20, 2023, the AAR said the business arrangement entered vide concession agreement dated January 16, 2021, between the applicant (AAI) and M/s Adani Jaipur International Airport is a transfer of going concern.

The Adani Group had in October, 2021, taken over the operations, management and development of the Jaipur



International Airport from the AAI. The airport has been leased out to the group by the government of India for a period of 50 years. The Rajasthan bench of the AAR also noted that in 2021 and 2022, the Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh benches of AAR too had ruled that business arrangements between AAI and Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) are covered under transfer of going concern.

However, the invoice raised by AAI for reimbursement of salary /staff cost on M/s Adani Jaipur International Airport Ltd is a supply which falls under the ambit of manpower service and hence taxable at 18 per cent under GST.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said the AAR has ruled that considerations received from transfer of running business of whole airport operations by Airport Authority of India is tax neutral supply.

ICICI Bank Q4 net profit jumps 27%



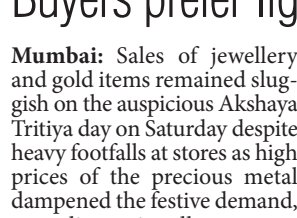
PTI ■ MUMBAI

Private lender ICICI Bank on Saturday reported a 27.64 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to ₹9,852.70 crore for the January-March quarter of 2022-23 compared to the year ago period.

On a standalone basis, the largest private sector lender reported a nearly 30 per cent jump in its net profit for the March quarter at ₹9,121.87 crore. Its total income moved up to ₹36,108.88 crore in reporting quarter, as against ₹27,412.32 crore in year-ago period, while overall expenses moved up to ₹22,282.50 crore from ₹17,119.38 crore in year-ago period.

The share of gross non-performing assets in the overall loans was 2.81 per cent as of March 31, 2023, which is an improvement from 3.60 per cent in the year-ago period and 3.07 per cent in the quarter-ago period. Its overall provisions increased to ₹1,619.80 crore from ₹1,068.95 crore in year-ago period, but were down when compared with December quarter's ₹2,257.44 crore.

Jewellery sales remain slow on Akshaya Tritiya: Jewellers



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai: Sales of jewellery and gold items remained sluggish on the auspicious Akshaya Tritiya day on Saturday despite heavy footfalls at stores as high prices of the precious metal dampened the festive demand, according to jewellers.

Jewellers are expecting a nearly 10 per cent decline in sales volume on Akshaya Tritiya this year compared to last year as gold prices have zoomed around 20 per cent since last year and customers are either making token purchases or going for lightweight jewellery. Akshaya Tritiya day is considered auspicious for buying gold, jewellery and



valuable. However, as the auspicious occasion is spread over two days this year, jewellers are hopeful that sales will revive on Sunday. There have been steady footfalls since morning in jewellery retail stores, however, consumers are mainly going in for lightweight jewellery or 1-2 grams of gold coins as a token

purchase to celebrate the festive occasion, jewellers said. "We have been getting positive responses on consumer footfalls this year. In fact, reports from the southern region have been encouraging and people are mostly going in for lightweight jewellery items ranging from 2-8 grams.

Hallmarking has also been a positive boost to sales," All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) chairman Sayam Mehra told PTI. However, due to the high gold prices, there is likely to be a decline in sales of about 5-7 per cent in terms of volume from last year, he added.

Banga to lead World Bank at a critical juncture: US

Washington: Indian-American business leader Ajay Banga is an exceptional candidate and he is uniquely equipped to lead the World Bank at such a critical moment, the US has said as the bank plans to formally announce his appointment as its president.

In February, President Joe Biden announced that the US would be nominating Banga to lead the World Bank because he is well equipped to lead the global institution at "this critical moment in history."

On March 31, The World Bank closed a month-long window for nominations for its next president, with no alternatives announced to 63-year-old Banga. Banga is only applicant for position of president of the World Bank, the global

financial institution said. "He (Banga) is uniquely equipped to lead the World Bank at such a critical moment, and he's an exceptional candidate," Vedant Patel, State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson, told reporters at his daily news conference on Friday.

"His leadership skills and management experience, his experience in financial sector, will help achieve World's Bank objectives by eliminating extreme poverty, and expanding prosperity, while also doing so in a very evolving and dynamic global playing field, where we're dealing with a lot of new and pressing issues and challenges, like climate change and global health challenges and other things as well," Patel said. PTI

US drawing plan for use of 6G networks

Washington: The US Government is drawing up plans for the eventual use of 6G networks, hoping to give Washington a technological edge in the future amid concerns over Beijing's rapid advances in the telecommunications sector.

The White House met with corporate leaders, technology officials and academic experts to develop strategies for upcoming 6G networks on Friday, senior US officials confirmed to multiple news outlets, RT reported.

The administration seeks to "take the lessons learned from 5G about the importance of early involvement and resilience" and use them to develop a 6G network which



"optimizes performance, accessibility, and security", one government staffer added.

While 6G technology is still in its infancy and is likely years away from use by the general public, it is expected to be significantly faster than the current 5G networks, and to dramatically expand high-speed internet access across the globe, RT reported.

Odisha discusses roadmap to be India's skilling capital

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Skill Conclave today focussed on chalking out a roadmap for Odisha to become a leading skilling hub in the world.

The day two of the event saw sessions on narrowing the gender gap, apprenticeship and internship and importance of diversification of workforce. The day started with the session titled, 'Making India the Skill Capital of the World' that deliberated upon the role of

international facilitators and partners in supporting the creation of an internationally benchmarked Indian workforce and international internships and the role of international Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) providers. Mr Sanjay Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary, Rural Development Department, Government of Odisha said, "Odisha is the rising land of skilling in India, the skill capital of India and aspiring skill capital of the world.

₹2,865 cr revenue loss due to pest attacks: TRA

Kolkata: Amid rising temperatures and prolonged rainless periods due to climate change, large-scale attacks of pests and diseases in tea plantations across the country have become worrisome for planters with an estimated annual crop loss of around 147 million kg, an industry body said on Saturday.

Tea Research Association, in its statement, said the revenue loss due to pest infestation in tea plantations is pegged at Rs 2,865 crore per year. "Pest and diseases were present earlier, but it has aggravated over



the last few years. In north India, the incidence of pest attacks was initially limited to a few areas in Dooars in West Bengal and the south bank of Assam, but has been spreading

rapidly in other tea-growing regions of Cachar, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling and Terai over the last two decades," TRA secretary Joydeep Phukan said. The

major pests prevalent in north Indian tea plantations are tea mosquito bugs and looper caterpillars apart from thrips.

There has been also a growing incidence and spread of termite infestation in north-east India, which is spreading to new areas, the TRA official said. The cost of plant protection in tea plantations in the northern part of West Bengal and the northeast region of the country has increased manifold over the past two decades, reaching as high as Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000 per hectare, the statement said. According to

TRA, this has had a "negative impact on the viability of operations" leading to lower exports and global competitiveness. "Crop loss due to pest infestation in tea is estimated at 147 million kg per year, and in revenue, the loss is around Rs 2,865 crore per year," Phukan said.

The tea industry uses pesticides which are approved by the Central Insecticides Board along with the guidelines issued by the Tea Board India through its Plant Protection Code and Good Agricultural Practices listed by the TRA. PTI

REDS ALIVE IN TOP-4 RACE

AP ■ LONDON

Liverpool kept their outside shot at Champions League football next season alive as Diogo Jota scored twice in a 3-2 win over Nottingham Forest, while Aston Villa's European charge stalled in a 1-1 defeat at Brentford on Saturday.

At the other end of the Premier League table, Leicester came from behind to secure a first win in 11 games by beating Wolves 2-1 to move out of the relegation zone.

Liverpool thrashed Leeds 6-1 on Monday to rekindle their hopes of a late challenge for a top-four finish but made heavy work of overcoming a Forest side that had scored just five away goals all season prior to their visit to Anfield.

Jota had not scored for a year prior to netting twice at Elland Road earlier in the week, but now has four goals in a week.

All of Liverpool's goals came from set-pieces as they exposed some shocking Forest defending.

Jota twice put the Reds in front early in the second half, but Forest hit back through deflected efforts from Neco Williams and Morgan Gibbs-White.

However, the visitors twice conceded within three minutes of getting level as Mohamed Salah swept home Trent Alexander-Arnold's free-kick for the winner 20 minutes from time.

Liverpool move up to seventh and within six points of fourth-placed Newcastle, who host Tottenham on Sunday.

Forest slip to second bottom, one point adrift of safety. Villa are now unbeaten in nine games after coming from behind to salvage a point at Brentford.

Ivan Toney got the better of Ollie Watkins in the battle to be Harry Kane's deputy as England's number nine.



Arsenal's title hopes on rocks

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal staged an incredible late fight-back to rescue a 3-3 draw against Southampton, but the Premier League leaders were still left frustrated by a damaging result that put their title challenge in jeopardy on Friday.

Mikel Arteta's side escaped with a point despite trailing 3-1 with just two minutes of normal time left at the Emirates Stadium.

Martin Odegaard's goal sparked Arsenal's revival and Bukayo Saka snatched the equaliser in stoppage-time.

But, despite the thrilling escape, Arteta finished with his head in hands because the Gunners will travel to second placed Manchester City on Wednesday knowing it is Pep Guardiola's team who control the destiny of the title.

Arsenal are five points clear of City, but the champions have two games in hand due to their involvement in the FA Cup semi-finals against Sheffield United on Saturday.

If City win or draw against Arsenal and then win their remaining matches, they will be crowned champions no matter what the north Londoners do.

After blowing successive two-goal leads in damaging 2-2 draws against West Ham and Liverpool in their previous two matches, Arsenal at least showed tremendous spirit to reverse the trend.

"Obviously unhappy with the result. We made it very difficult again for ourselves," Arteta said.

"If you concede three like we did in a sloppy way it is very difficult to win, but the way we reacted I love my players more than ever.

"This young team reacts in a way that is incredible, when it is against the odds."

Arsenal keeper Aaron Ramsdale had handed Southampton's Carlos Alcaraz the opening goal after just 27 seconds.

In a painful twist, it was former Gunners forward Theo Walcott who doubled bottom of the table Southampton's lead.

Gabriel Martinelli pulled one back for Arsenal before Duje Caleta-Car's headed Southampton's third.

Odegaard and Saka ensured Arsenal avoided a first defeat in 10 league games. But City's six successive league wins put Arsenal under intense pressure and Arteta's young team are in danger of crumbling unless they can win their do-or-die showdown at the Etihad Stadium.

Toney fired home his 20th goal of the season at the back post from Bryan Mbuemo's cross.

But Douglas Luiz equalised three minutes from time to keep Villa in sixth.

FOXES TURNING POINT

Leicester shrugged off the absence of James Maddison through injury to secure a much-needed win in Dean Smith's first home game in charge.

The Foxes had got off to a bad start as Matheus Cunha blasted Wolves into the lead.

But the game and potentially Leicester's season turned when Jamie Vardy was brought down by Jose Sa and Kelechi Iheanacho levelled from the penalty spot eight minutes before half-time.

Timothy Castagne then slotted home Victor Kristiansen's cross on 75 minutes for a priceless three points.

Leicester's win pulled Everton into the relegation zone on goal difference despite the Toffees' 10 men holding on for a 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace.

Mason Holgate was sent-off 10 minutes from the end for two bookable offences, but Palace could not extend Roy Hodgson's winning run since returning to the club to four games.

Leeds are now just one point outside the relegation zone after they were beaten 2-1 at Fulham.

Javi Gracia's decision to keep faith with under fire goalkeeper Illan Meslier backfired as the Frenchman was at fault for both Fulham goals in the second half, scored by Harry Wilson and Andreas Pereira.

By contrast, Leeds had shipped 11 goals in losing their two previous games to Crystal Palace and Liverpool and there was little sign of a revival despite a more competitive scoreline.



Mbappe takes PSG closer to Ligue 1 title

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappe scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain took another step towards securing the Ligue 1 title despite an unconvincing performance in beating bottom club Angers 2-1 on Friday.

Mbappe scored the opener in the ninth minute and added another before the half-hour mark to move clear as the French top flight's leading marksman on 22 goals for the campaign.

It looked like PSG might go on to record a big victory but they eased off in the second half and relegation-bound Angers pulled a goal back late on through Sada Thioub.

PSG are now 11 points clear at the top of the table with six games left, although nearest challengers Marseille can cut the gap when they visit Lyon on Sunday.

A record 11th French crown, and ninth since the Qatari takeover of 2011, is now inevitable with the capital club claiming a third straight win to ease the pressure on embattled coach Christophe Galtier.

However, Galtier was critical of his side's performance after they failed to build on a strong start, just like in last week's 3-1 win over Lens when all their goals came before half-time.

"As much as we were serious and clinical in the first half, like Lens last week we took our foot off the pedal completely in the second half," Galtier told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

"We played without any rhythm and didn't really try to add to our lead. There is frustration for me as a coach. Of course we won and are top of the league but when you are at Paris Saint-Germain you can't settle for only playing for half of the game."

Angers are now 17 points from safety with six games left and could be relegated this weekend depending on other results.

They have managed just three wins all season and need three more points to avoid setting a new record for the fewest points in a French top-flight campaign.

Alcaraz keeps title defence on track in Barcelona Open



AP ■ BARCELONA

Carlos Alcaraz stayed on course to defend his Barcelona Open title on Friday as he defeated Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 to move into the semi-finals. Alcaraz's build-up to the French Open next month has been slowed by hand and back problems which forced him to pull out of Monte Carlo, and the top seed was made to work hard by Davidovich Fokina.

The teenager broke in the first game of the match but Davidovich Fokina hit back for 3-all before Alcaraz soon regained the upper hand.

However, he failed to close out the first set when serving at 5-4 and Davidovich Fokina fought his way to within two points of taking the opener in the tie-break.

Alcaraz though held his nerve as the 38th-ranked Spaniard faltered, with Davidovich Fokina belting a forehand long to eventually

surrender the set.

The US Open champion saved six break points in the third game of the second set and then broke immediately after for a 3-1 advantage.

Davidovich Fokina again responded to get back on serve, and it stayed that way until Alcaraz broke in the final game to seal victory.

"It was really tough for me," said Alcaraz. "I started playing pretty well, serving for the first set. I was not able to win that game. I was going really fast, a lot of things on my mind."

"After the first set I was talking to myself, positive things, trying to play long rallies, trying to be there through the points, trying to feel more comfortable with myself."

Alcaraz will face Dan Evans for a place in the final after the 26th-ranked Briton defeated Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina 2-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Stefanos Tsitsipas eased into the semi-finals earlier in the day, beating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-2.

Bayern suffer shock 1-3 defeat

AP ■ BERLIN

Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich slumped to a 3-1 away defeat at Mainz on Saturday, handing Borussia Dortmund the chance to take top spot.

Dortmund host Eintracht Frankfurt later in the day and can go one point clear with a win, with five league matches remaining this season.

Trailing 1-0 at half-time, thanks to Sadio Mane's first goal since October, Mainz then hit back scoring three goals through Ludovic Ajorque, Leandro Barreiro and Aaron Martin.

Bayern have now won just two from seven since sacking manager Julian Nagelsmann for former Dortmund and Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel in late March.

Bayern came into the match under heavy pressure, with the Bundesliga title the last trophy available after Wednesday's Champions League exit at the hands of Manchester City.

After beginning from the bench against City, Mane and Bayern veteran Thomas Mueller



were named in the starting XI by Tuchel.

Mane had the ball in the net after 14 minutes but the effort was chalked off for offside.

Mane, who sat out Bayern's last Bundesliga match through suspension following an altercation with teammate Leroy Sane, got on the scoresheet shortly after, heading a Joao Cancelo

cross past Robin Zentner for the opener after 29 minutes.

Mainz, who were coached by Tuchel between 2009 and 2014, fought back after the break, Ajorque heading in from close range after Yann Sommer failed to grasp a Lee Jae-sung shot.

A shellshocked Bayern, who had controlled the game until

ened Hertha Berlin's woes with a 4-2 win on home coach Pal Dardai's return to the dugout.

With top scorer Niclas Füllkrug missing through injury, strike partner Ducksch starred, scoring twice in the first half and once in the second to leave Hertha stranded in last place.

Hertha brought back Dardai, who previously saved the club from relegation in 2021, last week but the Hungarian was unable to have an immediate impact.

Cologne went 10 points clear of the relegation places with a dominant 3-1 win away at Hoffenheim.

First-half goals from Florian Grillitsch and Davie Selke put Cologne on course for a crucial win, with both sides adding a goal each in second-half injury time.

Wolfsburg romped to a 5-1 victory at Bochum, thanks to a double from Mattias Svanberg, along with goals from Jakub Kaminski, Patrick Wimmer and Luca Waldschmidt.

Winless in three, Bochum now sit just two points clear of the relegation spots.

Swiatek sets up US Open final rematch with Jabeur

AP ■ STUTTGART

World number one and defending champion Iga Swiatek set-up a US Open final rematch with Ons Jabeur when she battled into the Stuttgart last-four on Friday.

Swiatek defeated 2018 Stuttgart champion Karolina Pliskova 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 while Tunisian world number four Jabeur eased past Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil 6-3, 6-0.

Poland's Swiatek had defeated Pliskova without losing a game when they met on clay in the 2021 Rome final.

However, the Czech took control straightaway on Friday, racing to a 4-0 lead in a little over a quarter of an hour.

Swiatek responded by sweeping the first four games of the second set to level the contest and after breaking for 2-1 in the decider, was never troubled again.



Swiatek holds a 3-2 career lead over Jabeur with their most recent clash coming in the US Open final last year when the Pole won in straight sets for her second major of 2022.

"The good thing maybe, Iga is not at the same level as she was last year," said Jabeur. "I think maybe the key is to be unpredictable with Iga, not knowing which shots I'm going to do. I think that's real-

ly good to disturb her a lot."

World number two Aryna Sabalenka came from a set and a break down to see off Spanish wild card Paula Badosa and reach the semi-finals for the third consecutive year.

The Belarusian won through 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in two hours, 30 minutes and next meets Russian Anastasia Potapova who ousted French fourth seed Caroline Garcia 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Top seed Rune rolls into Munich semis

AP ■ MUNICH

Defending champion Holger Rune coasted into the semi-finals of the ATP tournament in Munich on Friday with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Chilean Cristian Garin.

The 19-year-old Rune is through to his fourth semi-final appearance of the year and will face Australian outsider Christopher O'Connell for a shot at the title.

"Today was tricky, especially in the second set," Rune said.

"There were some nerves as you might have seen, but it was good. I am very happy with the win. I have played a lot of matches, so the body is maybe not ideal."



O'Connell, ranked a lowly 82 in the world, had knocked out third seeded Alexander Zverev in the last 16.

He made the most of opening up the draw by seeing off Italian qualifier and

208th-ranked Flavio Cobolli of Italy 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3.

Former US Open champion and three-time losing Grand Slam finalist Dominic Thiem completed his second-round match earlier on Friday, coming from behind to beat Swiss eighth seed Marc-Andrea Huesler 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

However, his run was then ended later in the day when US second seed Taylor Fritz downed the Austrian 6-3, 6-4.

Fritz, who was also a semi-finalist in Monte Carlo last week, next takes on Dutch fourth seed Botic van de Zandschulp who knocked out Marcos Giron of the United States 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Djokovic pulls out of Madrid Masters

AP ■ MADRID

World number one Novak Djokovic pulled out of the Madrid Masters on Saturday according to the competition's organisers.

"Novak Djokovic is unable to compete at the Madrid Open," the organisers wrote on Instagram ahead of the tournament which starts April 26.

Djokovic's withdrawal, thought to be related to an elbow problem he has been suffering from, is a blow to his preparations for the French Open, which starts at the end of May.

The Serb, 35, suffered a

straight-set defeat by compatriot Dusan Lajovic in the quarter-finals at Banja Luka in Bosnia-Herzegovina on Friday.

Djokovic was beaten by underdog Lorenzo Musetti at the Monte Carlo Masters earlier in April and said ahead of the Srpska Open that his elbow was "not in an ideal condition".

Neither Djokovic or Rafael Nadal, joint record 22-time Grand Slam champions, will take part in Madrid, a key part of the preparation for Roland Garros.

Djokovic missed tournaments earlier this year at Indian Wells and Miami.

TITANS SECURE MIRACLE WIN

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Skipper KL Rahul managed to snatch defeat from jaws of victory with a baffling batting approach as defending champions Gujarat Titans beat Lucknow Super Giants by seven runs in a low-scoring IPL thriller, here on Saturday.

Chasing target of 136 on a sluggish pitch, LSG were cruising along at 105 for 1 after 14 overs with 31 needed off 36 deliveries but ended at 128 for 7 at the end of 20 overs.

Veteran Mohit Sharma (2/17 in 3 overs) required to defend only 12 off the final over and he removed rival captain Rahul (68 off 61 balls) and kept hitting the blockhole length to conceded only five runs in the end with another three wickets lost in the process.

But the entire blame falls on the captain, who got 50 off 33 balls and then consumed another 28 deliveries for his 18. There were two 50 plus stands with Kyle Mayers (24 off 19 balls) and Krunal Pandya (23 off 23 balls) but in the end even the biggest Titans fans would agree that 136 was difficult to defend.

Left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad bowled two brilliant overs to return with figures of 4-0-18-2, while Mohammed Shami's international experience saw him concede just 5 in the penultimate over, leaving Mohit with a tricky assignment which he completed with elan.

LSG lost the game in the last five overs with Noor triggering the turnaround keeping Rahul in check.

With the win, GT reached the fourth spot with 8 points in the IPL standing, while LSG remained at the second spot with same points but with better net run-rate.

Defending the total, Shami bowled a maiden opening over but he erred in his second over and was dispatched by KL Rahul for three successive fours



to amass 14 runs. Mayers too got into the act, smashing Rashid Khan for 16 runs with the help of back-to-back fours and a maximum. LSG raced to 53 for 0 in the first six overs.

Rashid, however, had his man when he knocked over his stumps with a quicker delivery in the 7th over to break the partnership.

Krunal Pandya, who survived an LBW call and was then dropped by Abhinav Manohar off Rashid, build a fine partnership with the duo finding the boundary once every over to keep their chase on track.

However, wrist-spinner Noor Ahmad struck twice, removing Krunal Pandya (23) and Nicholas Pooran (1) and

after a string of dot balls, things became tight for LSG.

Needing 23 off 18, Badoni joined Rahul but Mohit Sharma and Shami conceded just 5 runs each in the next two overs, leaving LSG 13 to get in the last six balls which they failed to get.

Earlier, with the pitch being a tad slow, spinner Krunal Pandya emerged Lucknow's best bowler as he snapped two wickets, giving away just 16 runs after coming to bowl in the second over.

With pacer Naveen-ul-Haq (1/19) and Marcus Stoinis (2/20) also doing their job, Lucknow restricted Gujarat to 135 for six.

Infact, it could have been far worse but Ravi Bishnoi had a forgettable outing, bleeding 49

in his quota of four overs. It was the 19 runs conceded by the spinner in the 18th over that lifted GT in the end.

When GT batted, Wriddhiman Saha made 47 off 37 balls to lay the foundation but Hardik couldn't get going although he somewhat made up for the slow batting with some big hits in the end.

Krunal drew first blood, dismissing Shubhman Gill for a duck in just his second delivery with the opener holding out to Ravi Bishnoi at long-off.

Saha managed to pick up boundaries against each of the bowlers, especially Bishnoi, who was punished twice on the off-side as GT scored 40 for 1 in the Powerplay overs.

Hardik finally broke free,

sending Bishnoi across extra cover to bring up the 50-run partnership and then depositing him over long-off to rack up 14 runs in the 9th over.

After 12 for 1 in his first three overs, Krunal returned to deceive a well-set Saha with his flight and the opener was caught by Deepak Hooda.

Soon it was 77 for 3 as Amit Mishra set up Abhinav Manohar (3) with a loopy ball outside off and Naveen-ul-Haq took a stunning catch at deep cover with a full stretch dive.

Pandya and new man Vijay Shankar couldn't push the score and Naveen-ul-Haq returned to clean up the latter as GT reached 92 for 4 in 15 overs and last five overs yielded 43 runs.



Singh is King for Punjab

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Death overs specialist Arshdeep Singh shattered stumps at will in a tense final over as Punjab Kings were back to winning ways with a 13-run victory over Mumbai Indians in a high-scoring entertainer in IPL, here on Saturday.

After Sam Curran's 29-ball 55 led Punjab Kings to a massive 214 for 8, Mumbai Indians took the game into the final over due to fine counter-attack from Cameron Green (67 off 43 balls) and Suryakumar Yadav (57 off 26 balls). The duo added 75 off only 36 balls.

Arshdeep struck a decisive blow in the 18th over to dismiss an on-song Suryakumar with Mumbai needing another 33 from 15 balls, and bowled an impressive final over while accounting for Tilak Varma (3) and Nehal Wadhwa (0) to return with figures of 4-0-29-4

However the hosts only managed 201 for 6 as Arshdeep broke the middle-stump in back-to-back deliveries to sent NT Tilak Varma and Nehal Wadhwa packing. On a batting belt, Arshdeep again showed why even Indian team depends on him in T20 games to deliver during the end stages of the

game. Mumbai Indians would agree that Jitesh Sharma's 7-ball-25 towards the end did become the difference although 82 runs conceded by MI bowlers between overs 15-18 was another turning point.

MI did fight well after conceding 117 runs in the last seven overs, but their effort with the bat was not enough to avert a defeat in a game where in more than 400 runs scored here at the Wankhede Stadium.

For MI, the biggest gain would be Suryakumar's return to form. It was in January this year that the swashbuckling batter made his last score in excess of 50 - 112 not out against Sri Lanka at Rajkot - and after a rocky period in which he was dismissed for a rare three consecutive first-ball ducks, the right-handed batter delighted a packed Wankhede Stadium with a typical Suryakumar innings. Mumbai were also rocked early by Arshdeep, who had his India teammate Ishan Kishan (1) caught by Matthew Short for his 50th IPL wicket.

Rohit and Green fuelled MI's charge in the remainder of the powerplay, taking them to 54/1 after six overs taking their association to a 76-run stand

for the second wicket, coming off 50 balls.

Rohit looked in imperious form but fell to Liam Livingstone in the 10th over for 44 from 27 balls, studded with four fours and three sixes. Earlier, Curran justified his top billing with a splendid 29-ball-55 as Punjab Kings lifted themselves from a precarious position to post a commendable 214 for 8.

A 92-run stand for the eighth wicket with Harpreet Bhatia (41 off 28 balls) changed the course of the game with 131 runs coming in the back-10. Arjun Tendulkar (1/48 in 3 overs), who had a couple of impressive games first up, had a good opening spell but went for 31 in his third over as 69 runs were yielded between overs 16-18. Jofra Archer and Cameron Green went for 13 and 25 respectively in the 17th and 18th over.

But the hero undoubtedly was Curran, who hit his first fifty of IPL this season and Bhatia made a 28-ball 41 (4x4s, 2x6s) while adding 92 runs from 50 balls for the fifth wicket to power Punjab Kings to a daunting total. This was after MI bowlers strangled their middle-order post a promising start.

Sanju & Co to face RCB today

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Table-toppers Rajasthan Royals need more from their fragile middle-order as they look to return to winning ways against an inconsistent but dangerous Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL match here on Sunday.

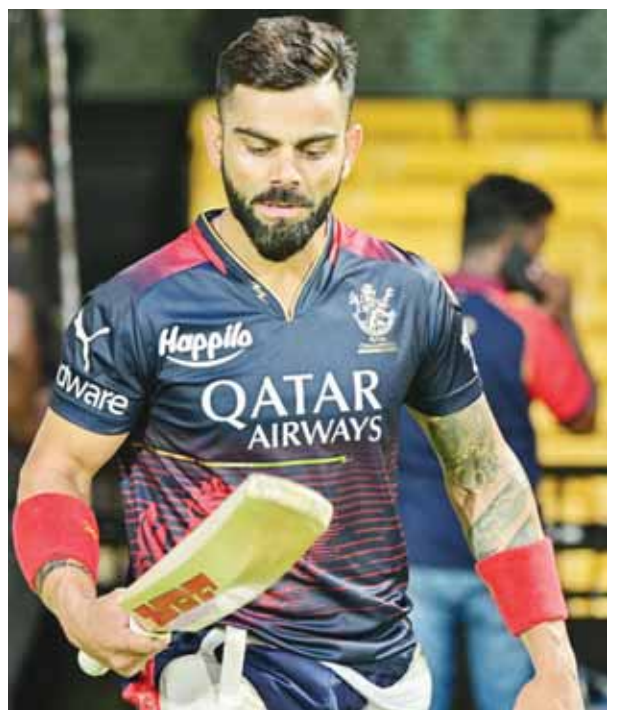
RR are currently leading the standings with eight points after four wins and two losses, while RCB are at the fifth spot with three victories and as many defeats.

In Jaiswal and Buttler, RR probably have the most potent opening pair and the duo has been delivering for the side this season. But it is the performance of the middle-order which has become a worry for RR.

Skipper Sanju Samson and Shimron Hetmyer have scored runs but have not been consistent enough, and the team banks on them to close out games.

To make matters worse, Devdutt Padikkal and Riyan Parag have failed to live up to the expectations.

In the experienced Trent Boult and Sandeep Sharma, RR have good opening bowlers and they will have their task cut out against Faf du Plessis and



Virat Kohli. In the spin department, Ravichandran Ashwin has impressed with his guile and tricks but Yuzvendra Chahal has been a tad expensive, and needs to lift his game.

Just like RR, RCB too boast one of IPL's most fearsome

42 runs against Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals, respectively.

In the process, both du Plessis and Kohli have smashed four half-centuries each. However, Kohli would like to strike at a better rate.

Glenn Maxwell, too, has shown his hitting prowess in the tournament but has not been consistent enough. RCB would also be looking up to the likes of veteran Dinesh Karthik, Mahipal Lomlor, Shahbaz Ahmed and Suyash Prabhudessai in the middle-order.

RCB's bowling attack is in the safe hands of Mohammed Siraj, who has been in sensational form, picking up 12 wickets from six games, including a four for 21 in their last match.

Siraj is being ably supported by Wayne Parnell and Harshal Patel, who have picked up eight wickets apiece from four and six games, respectively. But both these bowlers have been a tad expensive and they would look to address this concern in the coming matches.

RCB's spin department is spearheaded by Sri Lankan Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva, who looked impressive in his three outings so far.

PTI ■ KOLKATA

On a downward spiral, Kolkata Knight Riders would be desperate to press the reset button and snap their three-match losing streak, when they face Chennai Super Kings in the IPL here on Sunday.

The Nitish Rana-led side, which showed a lot of promise with two wins against Royal Challengers Bangalore and Gujarat Titans, suddenly seem to have lost the plot.

KKR (four points in six matches) now find themselves in eighth spot in the standings, with only Sunrisers Hyderabad (4) and Delhi Capitals (2) below them.

KKR's losing streak began at home, going down to SRH before they endured successive away defeats to Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals, to lose all their matches on the road so far this season.

All their losses have come against sides who are struggling this season. SRH had lost two and won once before getting their act together at Eden Gardens, while their old nemesis MI revived their campaign against a misfiring Delhi Capitals and KKR.

Two reverses may have led KKR to press the panic button as they rung in four changes against DC.

As it turned out, Delhi went on to secure their first win

KKR desperate to arrest slide against Chennai



of the season after five losses on the trot. The common thing in all the three losses has been the KKR batters' collective failure, while the bowling unit has performed better.

It will also be the biggest test for KKR's skipper Rana as emotions will sway in favour of

CSK talisman MS Dhoni in what could potentially be his last appearance at the iconic Eden Gardens.

A sea of yellow fans, sporting the signature No. 7 Dhoni jersey, is likely to flood the Eden Gardens on Sunday evening.

Such has been the demand that tickets for this marquee match have been sold out in advance. And the ones available in the black market are being sold at an extremely inflated price.

It has been a typical CSK show by the four-time champions as they are ticking all the boxes after starting off with a loss against Gujarat Titans in the season opener.

The opening duo of Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad have found their chemistry and put together 87 runs from 66 balls to set the tone in their seven-wicket win over SRH in the last match.

The Kiwi batter is adept at tackling spinners and will look to relish the challenge against the likes of Narine and Varun Chakravarthy.

CSK's spin trio of Moeen Ali, Ravindra Jadeja and Maheesh Theekshana are also looking forward to bowl at the Eden. But their X Factor is Sri Lankan pace sensation Matheesha Pathirana, the 20-year-old with a Lasith Malinga-like sling-arm action, as he takes on people like Rinku Singh and Russell.

Tendulkar is not just a cricketing idol for me, he is a life coach: Yuvraj

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sachin Tendulkar is not just a cricketing idol for Yuvraj Singh but a "guardian angel" who would offer incredible solutions and lessons in times of crisis, both on and off field.

One of India's greatest white ball players and hero of two World Cup triumphs, Yuvraj has been one of Tendulkar's closest friends in the Indian dressing room and for him the maestro is a life coach.

"When I played international cricket, we had coaches but if I faced any technical issues with my batting, he was my 'go-to' person. He provided solutions but he wasn't just my cricketing idol," Yuvraj, currently vacationing in the UK, said ahead of the legend's 50th birthday.

"Beyond 22 yards also, he is like a guardian angel for me. Whenever I have faced any personal crisis or dilemmas in life, Paaji would be one of the first persons that I would dial. And he would always have the best life lessons and advice for me," he said.

He remembered how concerned Tendulkar was when he was having sleepless nights and regularly coughing and vomiting during the 2011 World Cup, which he singlehandedly won for India with more than 350 runs and 15 wickets.

"Even I didn't know it was cancer. Sachin would regularly check on me and also during my treatment in the US, he was always concerned about my recovery."

Yuvraj even remembers when he met Tendulkar for the first time and it was the leg-



ONE OF INDIA'S GREATEST WHITE BALL PLAYERS AND HERO OF TWO WORLD CUP TRIUMPHS, YUVRAJ HAS BEEN ONE OF TENDULKAR'S CLOSEST FRIENDS IN THE INDIAN DRESSING ROOM AND FOR HIM THE MAESTRO IS A LIFE COACH

endary Kapil Dev, who introduced the teenager Tendulkar to schoolboy Yuvraj.

"I think Sachin had then just started playing for India and had become a sensation. It was Kapil Paaji, who took me to Sachin and I shook hands with him for the first time," Yuvraj couldn't recollect the series as he was barely 10 years old then.

For the record, Yuvraj's father Yograj Singh and Kapil Dev learnt their cricket together in Chandigarh under the same coach, Dronacharya awardee late Desh Prem Azad.

Ask him about his favourite on-field partnership with Tendulkar and Yuvraj remembers a very "special Test match". "If you look back at the scorebook, Sachin and I haven't had too many long partnerships in ODI cricket as he generally

opened and I batted at No. 6 for better part of my career," Yuvraj said.

"But in Test cricket, we had a 150 plus stand against England in Chennai back in December, 2008. We were chasing 387 and won the game during late afternoon. Sachin scored a hundred and I got 80 odd (85).

"But that Test remains special as it was the first match after 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai. The country was coping with the tragedy and we were all very emotional and overwhelmed with so many innocent lives lost. And that Test happened within a fortnight.

"For Sachin, coming from Mumbai, it was even more deep and personal. That partnership on the fifth day and to chase a near 400 target will

remain special. I was so ecstatic that I lifted Sachin once the chase was complete," Yuvraj said.

In ODIs, Yuvraj remembers his 138 run partnership off only 16.4 overs against a New Zealand attack comprising Tim Southee, Kyle Mills and Jacob Oram.

"We talk about the two knocks in Sharjah and the 98-run innings at Centurion which I believe was his best ODI knock. "But one innings close to my heart would be his 163 at Christchurch in 2009 and he could have easily gotten a double hundred that day but was retired hurt. I also got 80 plus (87) and I think we both at one stage scored 72 off five overs. This hundred isn't much talked about but it was an effort worth remembering."

the pioneer agenda

It can only be true love when you enable your other half to be better, to be the person they're destined to be
— Michelle Yeoh



The two generals vying for control over the vast African nation are also vying for acceptance by foreign powers, and have expressed support for Sudan seeking a transition to civilian rule as the conflict raises concerns across the world

STRIFE IN SUDAN

Fighting in Sudan between forces loyal to two top generals has put that nation at risk of collapse and could have consequences far beyond its borders.

Both sides have tens of thousands of fighters, foreign backers, mineral riches and other resources that could insulate them from sanctions. It's a recipe for the kind of prolonged conflict that has devastated other countries in the Middle East and Africa, from Lebanon and Syria to Libya and Ethiopia.

The fighting, which began as Sudan attempted to transition to democracy, already has killed hundreds of people and left millions trapped in urban areas, sheltering from gunfire, explosions and looters.

A look at what is happening and the impact it could have outside Sudan.

WHO IS FIGHTING?

Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, head of the armed forces, and Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of a paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces that grew out of Darfur's notorious Janjaweed militias, are each seeking to seize control of Sudan. It comes two years after they jointly carried out a military coup and derailed a transition to democracy that had begun after protesters in 2019 helped force the ouster of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir. In recent months, negotiations were underway for a return to the democratic transition.

The victor of the latest fighting is likely to be Sudan's next president, with the loser facing exile, arrest or death. A long-running civil war or partition of the Arab and African country into rival fiefdoms are also possible.

Alex De Waal, a Sudan expert at Tufts University, wrote in a memo to colleagues this week that the conflict should be seen as "the first round of a civil war."

"Unless it is swiftly ended, the conflict will become a multi-level game with regional and some international actors pursuing their interests, using money, arms supplies and possibly their own troops or proxies," he wrote.

WHAT DOES THE FIGHTING MEAN FOR SUDAN'S NEIGHBORS?

Sudan is Africa's third-largest country by area and straddles the Nile River. It uneasily shares its waters with regional heavyweights Egypt and Ethiopia. Egypt relies on the Nile to support its population of over 100 million, and Ethiopia is working on a massive upstream dam that has alarmed both Cairo and Khartoum.

Egypt has close ties to Sudan's military, which it sees as an ally against Ethiopia. Cairo has reached out to both sides in Sudan to press for a cease-fire but is unlikely to stand by if the military faces defeat.

Sudan borders five additional countries: Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, Eritrea and South Sudan, which seceded in 2011 and took 75% of Khartoum's oil resources with it. Nearly all are mired in their own internal conflicts, with various rebel groups operating along the porous borders.

"What happens in Sudan will not stay in Sudan," said Alan Boswell of the International Crisis Group. "Chad and South Sudan look most immediately at risk of potential spillover. But the longer (the fighting) drags on the more likely it is we see major external intervention."

WHAT EXTERNAL POWERS ARE INTERESTED IN SUDAN?

Arab Gulf countries have looked to the Horn of Africa in recent years as they have sought to project power across the region.

The United Arab Emirates, a rising military power that has expanded its presence across the Middle East and East Africa, has close ties to the Rapid Support Forces, which sent thousands of fighters to aid the UAE and Saudi Arabia in their war against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Russia, meanwhile, has long harbored plans to build a naval base capable of hosting up to 300 troops and four ships in Port Sudan, on a crucial Red Sea trading route for energy shipments to Europe.

“THE VIOLENCE HAS ALREADY PUSHED SUDAN'S POPULATION TO THE BRINK AND OPENED A DARK AND TUMULTUOUS CHAPTER IN THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY. FEARS ARE MOUNTING THAT THE CHAOS IN THE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED NATION COULD DRAW IN ITS NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING CHAD, EGYPT AND LIBYA”

Trapped, Sudanese look for ways to survive

For the last three days, Howaida al-Hassan and her family have been hunkered down in the first floor of her home in the Sudanese capital, sleeping on the floor as sounds of airstrikes and gunfire surround them.

For many, food supplies are already dwindling as going out to restock has become too dangerous. So sharing among neighbors has become essential. On social media, posts are appearing giving information on pharmacies and grocery stores that are still open and able to deliver essential goods to those trapped. Others post phone numbers or addresses for their homes, offering to take in anyone caught outside and scrambling for shelter when shooting comes close. Nearly 12 million of Sudan's 46 million population live in the capital area, where most of the fighting is centered.

Al-Hassan, a gynecologist who lives in the al-Fayhaa neighborhood of east Khartoum, said her family avoids approaching windows for fear of being killed or injured in the cross-fire. Outside, forces from both sides roam the streets armed with machine guns and automatic weapons, backed by artillery shelling and airstrikes, she said. "They fight each other in the open. Stray bullets and shelling hit homes," she said.

Al-Hassan's family has not had running water or electricity since the violence started and have had to

charge their phones in their car to keep up with the latest news.

Al-Hassan ventured to a nearby bakery for bread on Monday. "I stood more than three hours in a long queue while the sound of fighting was heard very close," she said. She was eventually able to get her bread.

But she hasn't been able to reach the hospital where she works, though it's only a kilometre (about a half mile) away. She said she gives remote consultations through her phone to women in need. "This is not ideal, but it's the only option we have," she said.

In another Khartoum district, Farah Abbas said his family was fortunate since they had stocked up on food, including flour, rice, oil and other essentials ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"This is an annual tradition," he said. "Every Ramadan, we buy flour, rice, oil and other needs to cover the whole month."

However, the 65-year-old Abbas and his wife have been unable to go to their regular checkups for age-related health complications. He said the streets in his neighborhood of Mamoura are empty, with no one daring to go out amid the sounds of fighting.

"There is no respect to our lives, the lives of the people," he said. "Nobody is able to go out even to bury bodies littered in the streets. It's very risky."

WHAT ROLE DO WESTERN COUNTRIES PLAY?

Sudan became an international pariah when it hosted Osama bin Laden and other militants in the 1990s, when al-Bashir had empowered a hard-line Islamist government.

Its isolation deepened over the conflict in the western Darfur region in the 2000s,

when Sudanese forces and the Janjaweed were accused of carrying out atrocities while suppressing a local rebellion. The International Criminal Court eventually charged al-Bashir with genocide.

The US removed Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism after the government in Khartoum agreed to forge ties with Israel in 2020. But billions of dollars in loans and aid were put on hold after the 2021 military coup. That, along with the war in Ukraine and global inflation, sent the economy into free-fall.

CAN EXTERNAL POWERS DO ANYTHING TO STOP THE FIGHTING?

Sudan's economic woes would seem to provide an opening for Western nations to use economic sanctions to pressure both sides to stand down.

But in Sudan, as in other resource-rich African nations, armed groups have long enriched themselves through the shadowy trade in rare minerals and other natural resources.

Dagalo, a one-time camel herder from Darfur, has vast livestock holdings and gold mining operations. He's also believed to have been well-paid by Gulf countries for the RSF's service in Yemen battling Iran-aligned rebels.

The military controls much of the economy, and can also count on businessmen in Khartoum and along the banks of the Nile who grew rich during al-Bashir's long rule and who view the RSF as crude warriors from the hinterlands.

"Control over political funds will be no less decisive than the battlefield," De Waal said. "(The military) will want to take control of gold mines and smuggling routes. The RSF will want to interrupt major transport arteries including the road from Port Sudan to Khartoum."

Meanwhile, the sheer number of would-be mediators — including the US, the UN, the European Union, Egypt, Gulf countries, the African Union and the eight-nation eastern Africa bloc known as IGAD — could render any peace efforts more complicated than the war itself.

"The external mediators risk becoming a traffic jam with no policeman," De Waal said. AP

DEFEAT A HEATWAVE

A major part of India is reeling under the summer heat, especially the North and the East, with some areas recording 40°C. Much like other natural disasters, heat waves too can be life threatening. Most people fall sick when it is too hot or cold. The old and small children, especially the sick, find it difficult to bear it. The HEALTH PIONEER shares a slew of tips for coping in hot weather

WHY IS A HEATWAVE A PROBLEM?

- Not drinking enough water (dehydration)
- Overheating, which can make symptoms worse for people who already have problems with their heart or breathing.
- Heat exhaustion and heatstroke

WHO'S MOST AT RISK?

A heatwave can affect anyone, but the most vulnerable people are:

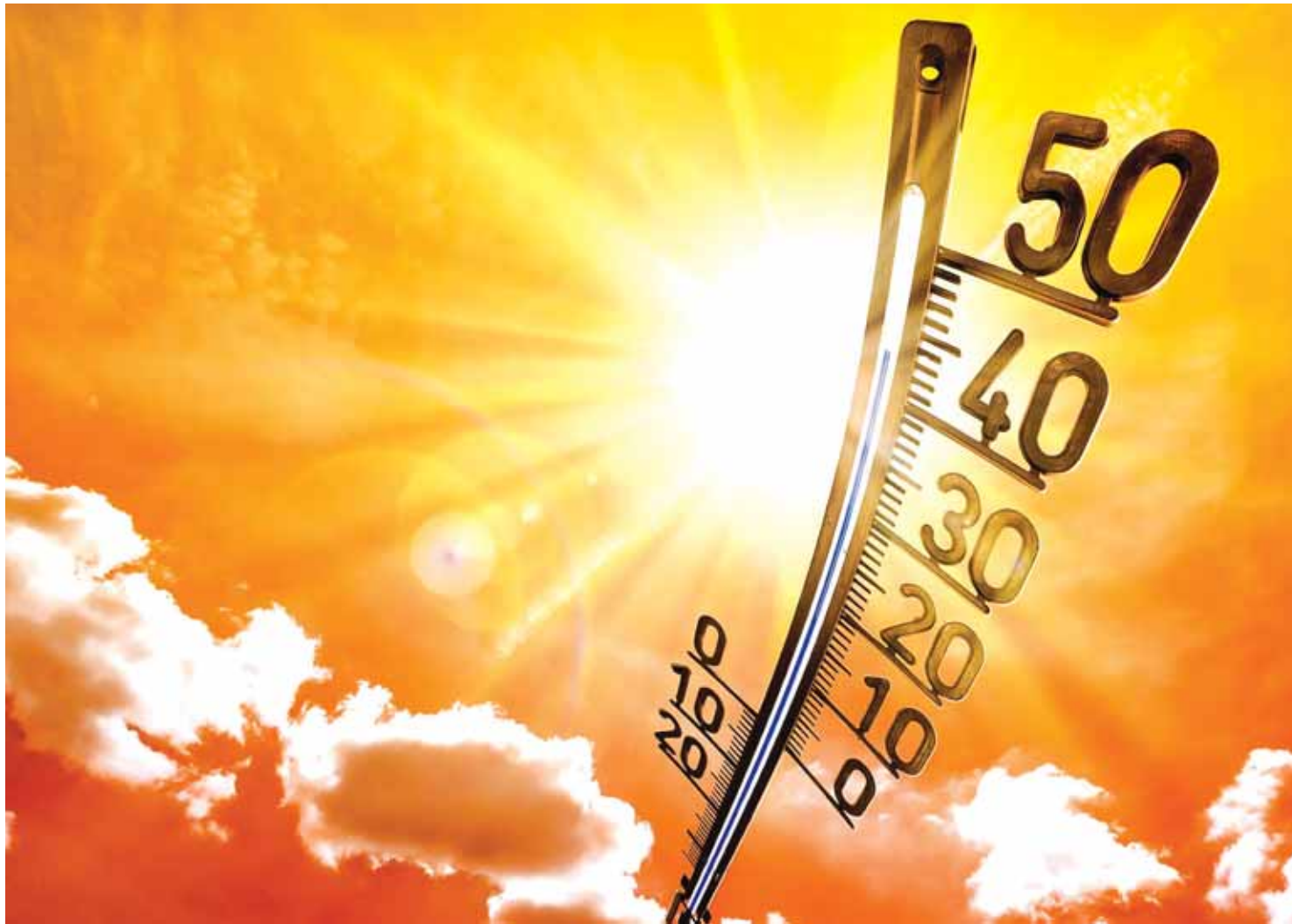
- Older people – especially those over 75 and female
- Those who live on their own or in a care home
- People who have a serious or long-term illness including heart or lung conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, Parkinson's disease or some mental health conditions
- People who are on multiple medicines that may make them more likely to be badly affected by hot weather
- Those who may find it hard to keep cool – babies and the very young, the bed bound, those with drug or alcohol addictions or with Alzheimer's disease
- People who spend a lot of time outside or in hot places – those who live in a top-floor flat, the homeless or those whose jobs are outside
- If you or someone else feels unwell with a high temperature during hot weather, it may be heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke

- Heat exhaustion does not usually need emergency medical help if you can cool down within 30 minutes. If it turns into heatstroke, it needs to be treated as an emergency.

Check for signs of heat exhaustion:

- Tiredness
 - Dizziness
 - Headache
 - Feeling sick or being sick
 - Excessive sweating and skin becoming pale and clammy or getting a heat rash, but a change in skin colour can be harder to see on brown and black skin
 - Cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
 - Fast breathing or heartbeat
 - A high temperature
 - Being very thirsty
 - Weakness
- The symptoms of heat exhaustion



are often the same in adults and children, although children may become irritable too.

If someone is showing signs of heat exhaustion they need to be cooled down and given fluids.

HEAT WAVE: DO'S & DON'T'S

Heat Wave conditions can result in physiological strain, which could even result in death.

To minimise the impact during the heatwave and to prevent serious ailment or death because of heat stroke, you can take the following measures:

- Avoid going out in the sun, especially between 12.00 noon and 3.00 p.m.
- Drink sufficient water and as often as possible, even if not thirsty
- Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, and porous cotton clothes.

Use protective goggles, umbrella/hat, shoes or chappals while going out in the sun.

- Avoid strenuous activities when the outside temperature is high. Avoid working outside between 12 noon and 3 p.m.
- While travelling, carry water with you.
- Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and carbonated soft drinks, which dehydrates the body.
- Avoid high-protein food and do not eat stale food.
- If you work outside, use a hat or an umbrella and also use a damp cloth on your head, neck, face and limbs
- Do not leave children or pets in parked vehicles
- If you feel faint or ill, see a doctor immediately.

Use ORS, homemade drinks like lassi, torani (rice water), lemon water, buttermilk, etc. which helps to re-hydrate the body.

- Keep animals in shade and give them plenty of water to drink.
- Keep your home cool, use curtains, shutters or sunshade and open windows at night.
- Use fans, damp clothing and take bath in cold water frequently.

TIPS FOR TREATMENT OF A PERSON AFFECTED BY A SUNSTROKE:

- Lay the person in a cool place, under a shade. Wipe her/him with a wet cloth/wash the body frequently. Pour normal temperature water on the head. The main thing is to bring down the body temperature.
- Give the person ORS to drink or lemon sharbat/torani or whatever

is useful to rehydrate the body.

- Take the person immediately to the nearest health centre. The patient needs immediate hospitalisation, as heat strokes can be fatal.

ACCLIMATISATION

People at risk are those who have come from a cooler climate to a hot climate. You may have such a person(s) visiting your family during the heatwave season. They should not move about in an open field for a period of one week till the body is acclimatized to heat and should drink plenty of water. Acclimatization is achieved by gradual exposure to the hot environment during heat waves.

Source: NDMA

Combating Antibiotic Resistance Through Diagnostic Stewardship

To address the issue of widespread inappropriate antimicrobial usage, the Delhi Society for Promotion of Rational Use of Drugs (DSPRUD) has developed a first-of-its kind course for medical doctors and healthcare professionals on diagnostic stewardship in fighting against antibiotic resistance in the country.



Dr. Sangeeta Sharma, Professor at Delhi-based Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences (IHBAS) and President DSPRUD who has taken the initiative to frame the course said, "We believe that awareness on diagnostic stewardship is crucial to combat antibiotic resistance. By promoting responsible use of antibiotics, we can ensure that these life-saving drugs remain effective and accessible to those who need them."

The course has been a huge draw among the medical fraternity which is also grappling with diagnostic uncertainties as a crucial factor in the inappropriate use of antibiotics.

Dr Sharma explained that doctors sometimes may prescribe antibiotics as a precautionary measure, known as "just in case" medicine, due to an inability to establish a confirmed diagnosis. "This is often due to suboptimal availability of laboratory support or the misinterpretation of laboratory reports. Microbiology laboratory support is essential to establish infective etiology and initiate correct treatment based on the pathogen's responsiveness to the correct antibiotics. However, there is a shortage of microbiological support throughout the country, coupled with the inappropriate utilization of existing infrastructure due to the unavailability of adequately trained human resources," she added.

Dr Renu Gupta, Secretary DSPRUD said that second batch of the five-day certificate course conducted online from April 10-14 was attended by over 245 doctors of various specialties from across the country joined this course.

Diagnostic stewardship involves ordering the right tests for the right patient at the right time and interpreting the results to provide the right antibiotic in the right dose. This requires a collaborative partnership between clinical laboratories and clinicians, with the availability of 24x7 laboratory support to provide real-time reports for the selection of appropriate antibiotics.

Dr Kim Uhjin, Regional Advisor for Essential Drugs & Medicines at the World Health Organization (WHO), SEARO who inaugurated the diagnostic stewardship program aimed at preventing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) emphasized the global impact of AMR and the need for urgent action to combat it. Dr Girish Tyagi, Registrar of the Delhi Medical Council, felt that AMR is a problem that affects everybody and stressed healthcare providers and the public to come together and take collective responsibility to combat AMR through the responsible use of antibiotics.

Dr. Rajesh Bhatia, Senior Consultant with FAO and Former Advisor WHO SEARO said that "the One Health approach, recognizes the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment, plays a crucial role in this fight against AMR. The emergence and spread of resistant germs are complex and multifactorial, thus require a collaborative and multidisciplinary response."

Dr. Ashok Rattan, Chairman Medical Committee and Quality at Redcliffe Labs, and Dr. Ranga Reddy Burri, President of the Infection Control Academy and Honorary Professor at the University of Hyderabad, spoke about paradoxes in microbiology testing and challenges in reporting microbiological test results.

Dr JN Srivastava, Advisor, Quality Improvement and Patient Safety, National Health Systems Resource Center (NHSRC), dwelled on the initiatives being taken at the national level to build capacity to fulfill the strategic objective of National Action Plan to Combat AMR (NAP-AMR) while a panel of speakers, including Dr Anup Warrier, Dr Kamal Chopra, Dr Shukla Das, Dr Ekta Gupta, Dr NP Singh, Dr Anup Mohta, Dr NV Kamat, Dr KS Sachdeva shared their expertise on various aspects of Diagnostic Stewardship in Fight Against AMR.

HEALTH BRIEFS

CII-UNIONHEALTH MINISTRY DIGITAL HEALTH SUMMIT-2023 HELD AT GOA

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) along with the Union Health Ministry jointly organised the Digital Health Summit 2023 in Goa. The Theme of the event was "Building One Health Together – Improving Health Equity". Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State for Health said that "through a common digital framework, India aims to create and curate Digital Public Goods, enhance access to these tools by nations across the world and promote standards for interoperability, data privacy, and data security".

Highlighting the importance of digital health innovations, she mentioned that digital innovations are powering game changers in exponential medicine, including 3D printing, point-of-care diagnostics, robots, bioinformatics, genomics, and is emerging as an enabler and equaliser. In addition to adoption, she emphasised that "citizen-centric" digital health systems with equitable access to high-quality treatments must remain the aim.

She also talked about various initiatives taken by Government of India such as Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), e-Sanjeevani Teleconsultation service, Ayushman Bharat-Prandhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) as well as CoWIN and their role in strengthening creation of a digital health ecosystem in the country.

Dr Vinod Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog said that the government is working with stakeholders on the validation of digital health devices including wearable devices, AI equipment

in health systems in appropriate settings, and thus, creation of appropriate standards where technologies can be tested. He also urged the private sector to come forward with right thinking, ideas, vision and indeed solutions to use it for various products and possibilities.

INDIAN SCIENTISTS FABRICATE PROTEIN THAT CAN HELP STUDY DISEASES LIKE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Scientists from physical sciences division of the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology, Guwahati have fabricated monolayers of pure myelin basic protein (MBP), a major protein component of myelin sheath, which is a protective membrane that wraps around the axon of nerve cells and acts as a model protein in studying diseases like multiple sclerosis (MS).

MBP helps in compactification of the myelin sheath, and the fabricated tailored monolayers can give an in-depth understanding of the role of MBP in forming multi-lamellar myelin sheath structure as well as preserving the integrity, stability, and compactness of the sheath.

Led by Dr Sarathi Kundu, Associate Professor, along with Raktim J Sarmah, a Senior Research Fellow, they used a technique called the Langmuir-Blodgett (LB) to form monolayers of pure myelin basic protein at the air-water and air-solid interfaces.

This research work was recently published in the journal of Colloids and Surfaces A: Physicochemical and Engineering Aspects under the reputed Elsevier publishers.

Vaping Precursor To Nicotine Addiction

World-wide e-cigarettes are still being marketed as tools to help people break their tobacco habit. However, there is little scientific research to substantiate this claim, rather these are as addictive as heroin

DR H PANDEY



Nicotine is both a stimulant and a sedative, releasing adrenaline in the body and affecting the heart rate, breathing activity, and blood pressure. Nicotine may travel to the brain in just seven seconds of puffing a cigar, or inhaling it through several means such as a hookah, e-cigarette, or traditional lit cigarette.

World-wide e-cigarettes are being marketed as tools to help people break their tobacco habit. However, there is little scientific research to substantiate this claim. E-cigarettes are loaded with just as much, or sometimes much more, addiction-forming nicotine as well as other toxic substances.

The Indian government took a very strong and welcome step to ban all forms of e-cigarettes in the country. The ban covers the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage of e-cigarettes, as well as advertisements.

In a very appreciable policy decision, the Government mandated it would advance tobacco control efforts and contribute to a reduction in tobacco usage. Punishments include up to a year in prison as well. Many other countries, including Mexico, Brazil, Singapore and Thailand, too have banned them due to safety concerns. Alongside our efforts to reduce



tobacco smoking, we must educate the public that vaping products are unsafe, habit forming and precursor to nicotine. It is proven scientifically as no surprise that nicotine

is just as addictive as heroin. Dependence on it is especially dangerous for brain and heart of adolescents, which are still in a developing stage.

It seriously affects the deeper parts of the brain responsible for the ability to focus and learn, make decisions and control impulses. Persistent vaping with nicotine also makes teens more susceptible to other similar addictions and prompt them to pick up smoking traditional cigarettes as well.

Chemically e-cigarettes contain ultrafine particles, which cause lung disease, and cancer-causing chemicals and metals like formaldehyde and lead which can cause significant brain damage once deposited in parts of the body.

Since Nicotine is the most addictive substance and in e-liquids form it is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, it stimulates the release of adrenaline and dopamine hormones. All this affects the "nerve paths" in the brain responsible for pleasure and reward and leads to nicotine use over and over again.

The FDA announcement on April 22 that tobacco products have been found to be responsible for brain damage including seizures. Ditto with e-cigarette use as well. It is a very serious safety issue in India due to largely unregulated sale and cheap counterfeit tobacco brands being available in cities and towns in spite of so much serious efforts being done by the government.

The nicotine in one vape can be as worst as up to 50 cigarettes and depending on the size of vape it can be higher as well causing severe potential of brain and heart injury.

The Indian Government initiative and control by banning e-cigarettes is a strong display of commitment and fairly reflects the concern of ill health and financial burden to its population and huge indirect expense that community has to pay for health.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in fact condemned the use of e-cigarettes as a "style statement" adding that the "habit" of vaping "seems cool" among users. She has been very emphatic in showing her sincere concern to ill-effects of vaping and its gradual ascend to smoking in the long-term. Though the big branded e-cigarette are now out of India, real concern still remains to control locally available, counterfeit or online sales of e-cigarettes menace in India.

Quitting e-cigarettes by yourself is difficult. Because it's an addiction and tobacco companies made it flashier by launches of e cigarettes with stylish shapes and glamour quotient with added smells. Solution requires not only getting over the physical withdrawal symptoms but also changing behaviour patterns and reverse thinking in the way these youth worship and flash their addictions.

Merely putting these children in a structured smoking or tobacco cessation program, which offers individual and group support might just not be sufficient. The resistance to e-cigarettes menace has to continue.

(The author is consultant surgeon and industrial health expert)

Earth's warriors still wrangling about tactics

Young and old, famous and not so well known, there are many people from around the globe who make it their mission to try to save the planet, especially from the ravages of climate change. They find themselves often pitted against powerful forces.

One group is the generations that will live for decades with what Earth will become and are trying to keep it from getting overheated. Another is from a generation partly responsible for what's happened and trying to clean up what they are leaving behind for those younger generations that they helped teach.

Here are some of those planetary warriors as people commemorate Earth Day. Even though 40, 50, 60 and even 70 years separate them, they have something in common: Hope. It keeps them battling.

ERIC NJUGUNA
"I became a climate justice activist out of necessity," the 20-year-old from Kenya says. "Having seen first-hand the impacts of the climate crisis, I joined the youth climate movement."

"As I get older, the impacts of the climate crisis will be even worse," Njuguna says. "I am doing this work because it must be done."

Njuguna admits to getting dejected frequently, pointing to failed efforts to get countries to agree to halting new oil and gas exploration and investment.

When looking at the oldest generation, Njuguna says it's not really about age or blame for those who were in charge before — even though heat-trapping emissions are at their highest. Instead the activist says it is often about richer North countries that caused the pollution and poorer South countries that get hit.

"As the climate crisis gets worse and its impacts become even more devastating, it's hard not to lose hope," Njuguna says. "But I get hope from being in the movement to see young people, Indigenous people who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis lead the fight for justice."

BILL NYE
"I'm so old. I was at the first Earth Day. I grew up in the city of Washington, DC," says engineer-turned science communicator-turned climate activist

Bill Nye, 67. "I rode my Schwinn bicycle to the Washington to the National Mall."

Despite government and industry scientists knowing, predicting and warning about the dangers of human-caused climate change, "we haven't done anything about this problem in 60 years, 50 years. So let's get to work. Yes it's frustrating," Nye says.

"There's certainly plenty of things to be doomy about," Nye says. "I mean just look around at just how lame global efforts have been to address climate change the last few decades."

Nye says he's borrowing a page from the playbook of "conservative media" and "so we made six one-hour things to scare people so that people might do something about things" in a streaming TV series called *The End is Nye*.

Yet Nye says, "you have to be optimistic. If you are not optimistic, you're not going to get anything done. ... When young people are running the show, they're not going to put up with this stuff. They're going to make changes."

DISHA RAVI
"Hope is a sewer rat," says Disha Ravi, a 24-year-old Indian climate activist with Fridays for Future and a vocal proponent of linking various environmental and people's rights issues in India with climate-related activism.

Quoting Ohio-based poet, Caitlin Seida, Ravi says she feels the same. "I don't think hope is some flowery thing. Like the poem, I believe it is a sewer rat that fights against all odds even if it gets ugly." Ravi said, "We are all like sewer rats, fighting for a better world."

Ravi was in the spotlight in 2021 when she was arrested on sedition charges by Indian police but released on bail soon after.

She was purportedly arrested for supporting secessionists, but Ravi asserted that she was helping spread the word about the large-scale protests by farmers in India.

For Ravi, it started with an Instagram post about climate change saying, "Hey, I want to do something. I don't know what to do. Does anyone else want to do something with me?"

Ravi feels Earth Day has



Cracked earth is visible in an area once under the water of Lake Mead at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, on January 27, 2023, near Boulder City, Nevada in the USA AP

become a greenwashing exercise in recent years. "But the positive aspect is that people remember there is something called the Earth and they connect with nature to some degree," she says.

DAVID SUZUKI
For more than half a century, David Suzuki has advocated for Earth, but looking back he fears "the environmental movement has fundamentally failed." And what's worse, he says, "my message at the end of my career is that we've run out of time."

Suzuki, 87, was studying the smallest of things as a professor in 1962: the genetics of fruit flies. Then he read Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and he asked himself, "but what about the bigger picture?"

And that bigger picture is where he says society has gone astray, thinking Earth is there to serve humans instead of people being part of an intricate web of life, where plants, animals, humans, air, water and soil are connected. Suzuki says he and other environmentalists have been too focused on "incremental change that doesn't threaten the system. ... We're all trapped within the system now."

Over the decades, "I've said to my wife 'that's it; forget it; it's too hard; we can't do it,'" Suzuki recalls, but he never quit. "You have no choice. If you have children or grandchildren, you can't ever talk about giving up."

He tells the younger generation that "however despairing the situation, you have no choice but to fight and try. We don't have time to despair. That's a luxury."

VANESSA NAKATE
At 26, Vanessa Nakate of Uganda is one of the older and better known of youth climate activists. She's spoken at international climate negotiations, written a book and won awards.

What really has been the high point of her activism is concrete results she can see. In 2019, she started the Vash Green schools project to bring solar electricity to schools in Africa. She's got installations in 45 schools, helping about 16,000 children.

"For me, seeing the joy of children and teachers and parents being able to study and have access to clean sources of electricity, being able to access clean cooking, I think that is one of the things that is a huge highlight and really a place of transformation," she said.

Nakate said her activism has been compared to prostitution and she has been accused of attention-seeking to

find a husband by "people who carry so much negativity and so much hatred," but then Nakate looks back at the schools. "If that was the price I had to pay to reach more schools with solar and ecofriendly stoves, then I guess it was worth it."

"I really don't care what kind of negativity comes in," Nakate says. "I'm really looking at what I would say is the bigger picture."

MARIA MARSHALL
Environmentalism came naturally to Maria Marshall. She grew up with her grandmother's farm, her mother's garden in Barbados and her parents talked about taking care of the planet and acted accordingly. So Marshall decided to join in. She was 11.

She made a video on recycling and reuse, "Little Thoughts on Big Matters," that became a series, and then she was chosen as a UNICEF youth advocate, the youngest at the time she was appointed. And when two years ago she met Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, herself a force in trying to change the world financial powers deal with climate change, the prime minister gave her what may be one of the highest compliments possible on the island nation. Mottley compared her to

superstar Rihanna.

"When my message is shared with so many people around the world that makes me feel very happy that people are inspired by what I'm doing," Marshall, now 14, says. It's "not like I'm an attention-seeker or anything along those lines, but because I like when good things happen, especially for something as important as our planet and the environment."

"The fact still remains," she says as she gets ready to go, "we still have only one environment we've got to protect."

DOROTHEE HILDEBRANDT
Dorothee Hildebrandt found the inspiration to focus her lifelong activism toward the climate change effort because of the younger generation, and in particular the 20-year-old activist Greta Thunberg.

"She was talking about climate change, and I was thinking she is so right," says the 72-year-old. "We have to care about stopping climate change ... it's not only personal, my children, I'm thinking about the children of the world."

She started by striking on Fridays in the town of Katrineholm in Sweden, where she lives, with just a handful of others.

Since then, Hildebrandt has cycled — only occasionally taking the necessary ferry — to the last two international climate conferences in Scotland and Egypt.

She hopes her cycling journeys can set a good example, believing that she needs "to do all I can, and if I don't do that, I won't have a good conscience."

Younger and older generations carry the climate fight, Hildebrandt says, with middle generations too "occupied by daily life."

Despite a lifetime of activism for various causes, she doesn't have much hope for the future, but she does maintain a bit. "I don't know what I would do" otherwise, she says.

NICKI BECKER
The 22-year-old from Argentina started her journey in climate activism after she was struck by the youth-led movement, Fridays for Future, back in 2019.

She realised then that climate change was not off in the

distance but already affecting her daily life, she says, but very few people in her country were paying attention to the issue.

"A country like Argentina should not be indifferent to it just because it is facing an economic crisis, but rather the opposite. We have fewer resources to deal with a crisis that is already attacking us today," she says.

Becker co-founded Youth for Climate, a movement of over 200 young people from across Argentina who are pushing for laws to combat climate change and support "cartoneros" who gather and recycle waste.

She believes that activism is essential, even when it can be frustrating.

Becker says her generation's activism is not just a fad, and will remain with them as they grow older.

"Many business partners say that young people of my generation, when looking for a job, don't just look for the salary, but also consider many other factors that influence their decision," she says. "They look for companies that are at the forefront of environmentalism."

NAKEEYAT DRAMANI SAM

At just 10 years old, Nakeeyat Dramani Sam made a name for herself when she gave a powerful speech about who pays for climate damages at last year's United Nations climate conference.

She says the experience was "a high point" because "the climate message reached all the world." However, she acknowledges that campaigners' calls sometimes fall on deaf ears.

Now 11, Sam is critical of the older generation, saying that "when they had all the power and authority, they didn't do much to stop global warming," but "at least some of them have listened," she says. In her native Ghana, some have contributed to tree-planting efforts, which is how Sam's climate activism began four years ago.

Sam has written a children's book on trees and has planted "so many trees that I have lost count," she says.

She says the younger generations are "the future leaders and there are others coming after us. We must protect the Earth for them." AP

"I don't think hope is some flowery thing. Like the poem, I believe it is a sewer rat that fights against all odds even if it gets ugly. We are all like sewer rats, fighting for a better world," says Disha Ravi, a 24-year-old Indian climate activist

PERSPECTIVE

Climate change: Americans question their role

According to the AP-NORC poll, a clear majority in the US say they have learned new information in a conversation on the subject, but only 19 per cent of US adults say their minds have been changed because of a conversation about climate change, writes HANNAH FINGERHUT of Associated Press

An overwhelming majority of people in the US say they have recently experienced an extreme weather event, a new poll shows, and most of them attribute that to climate change. But even as people across the country came together to tend to the planet in recognition of Earth Day on April 22, the poll shows relatively few say they feel motivated when they talk about the issue. The new findings from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll echo growing evidence that many individuals question their own role in combating climate change. Still, the poll suggests people are paying attention.

About half of US adults say they have grown more concerned about the changing climate in the last year, and a growing number say they are talking about it.

Adriana Moreno said she feels like she's been talking about climate change for years, but it's only recently that the 22-year-old high school teacher has noticed her older family members bringing up the issue more and more — "almost every time I see them," said Moreno, a Democrat in New York.

Her family on the east coast talks about how the seasons have changed, and her family in El Salvador talks about how poorly some crops on their farm are faring. After years of hearing about Moreno's own interest in the issue, her parents have themselves become more interested. It's not that they didn't believe in climate change before, Moreno said, but it was "out of sight, out of mind."

Overall, about 8 in 10 US adults say that in the past five years they have personally felt the effects of extreme weather, such as extreme heat or drought, according to the new poll. Most of them — 54 per cent of the public overall — say what they experienced was at least partly a result of climate change. And they are not wrong, said the head of the federal agency overseeing weather and climate issues.

"It is a reality that regardless of where you are in the country, where you call home, you've likely experienced a high impact weather event firsthand," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) chief Rick Spinrad said at a meteorological conference earlier this year, noting that the United



Scorched vehicles rest in a clearing as the Mosquito Fire burns along Michigan Bluff Rd. in unincorporated Placer County, California AP file photo

States has the most weather disasters that cost \$1 billion of any nation in the world.

NOAA uses weather disasters that cost \$1 billion as a measure of climate change and it how hits people. Last year there were 18 of those events, costing more than \$165 billion in total and killing 474 people. That included Hurricane Ian and an ongoing drought in the West.

These types of weather events hit the nation on average once every 82 days in the 1980s, but are now smacking the country at a rate of slightly more than once every two weeks, Spinrad said. "With a changing climate, buckle up," Spinrad warned. "More extreme events are expected."

The poll shows about three-quarters of US adults say recent

extreme weather events have had at least some influence on their beliefs about climate change.

After two and a half years living in Agoura Hills, California, Rick Hoelt has noticed extreme weather events that make him concerned about climate change now more than ever before. He hadn't been face-to-face with the same weather whiplash when he lived for decades in Hawaii and Michigan, which he's moving back to this month.

"Hearing about the things like the fires and seeing the hills around here being brown and not getting any rain for three, four, five months in a row ... it's not something I'd ever thought of anywhere else because I've never been in such extreme drought," the 65-year-old Republican retiree said. Then, "when we finally do get rain, it's extreme."

He says his girlfriend, who had lived in California for 45 years, tells him "this isn't normal."

Extreme downpours, like the series of winter storms that flooded California, and large droughts are happening more frequently and with more intensity because of cli-

mate change, studies show. Tornadoes are moving further east and the supercells that spawn them are expected to get more frequent and move even further east as the world warms. Wildfires have been devastating for years, worsened by warming.

Half of US adults say they have spoken with friends and family about climate change in the last year, up from about 4 in 10 who said the same last June.

Still, many say they rarely or never talk about the issue. John Laubacker, a 36-year-old truck driver from Lockport, New York, says climate is an important issue to him personally. But he doesn't find himself talking about it much.

Laubacker, a moderate Republican, says he finds the conversation on climate, like other issues, is dominated by those with extreme views on both sides of the aisle.

The poll finds people don't tend to talk about climate change with people they outright disagree with on the issue. Among those who talk with family and friends, about half say they mostly agree with those they talk to, while most of the

remainder say they tend to equally agree and disagree.

A clear majority say they have learned new information in a conversation on the subject, but only 19 per cent of US adults say their minds have been changed because of a conversation about climate change.

The poll also finds a few feel very hopeful or motivated when they talk about climate change; roughly half feel those at least somewhat. That's true of anxiety and sadness as well.

Anthony Thompson, a 74-year-old retiree and a Democrat, thinks climate change has accelerated, but he picks and chooses who he talks to about it in "ruby red" Jackson, Tennessee. But if it comes up when tornadoes or hailstorms tear through their area, he offers what he's learned as "food for thought."

To Thompson, changes in weather have become more severe — as has his concern.

"I'm more concerned now because I think people kind of take everything for granted and I don't think they really care, to be quite honest," he said. "Hopefully if we concentrate on some of this stuff we can at least slow it down."

I SLEPT AND DREAMT THAT LIFE WAS JOY. I AWOKE AND SAW THAT LIFE WAS SERVICE. I ACTED AND BEHOLD, SERVICE WAS JOY
—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

The work completed in the previous weeks will be analysed and evaluated. You will learn from your mistakes in the past. There is a lot of hard work ahead of you, for which you have invested a lot of energy so far. However, you may feel content and joyful in the middle of the week if a new business opportunity, new task, or new employment offer comes your way out of nowhere. This is the moment to make good money for investment or to start a new business. There will be offers that come and leave your way. You must narrow down the alternatives and select the best one. You must also stick to your budget because there is a risk of overspending. You may plan a pleasure trip or a date with your lover, or a picnic or anything similar.

Lucky number 28
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week your capacity to recover from the most difficult conditions will earn you many fans. Take care of your health, especially your eyes, which require special attention. You may need to schedule an appointment with an eye expert as working long hours on a computer may strain your eyes. On the professional front, some unexpected occurrences at work may push you to pause and reconsider your working style. Be cautious in your dealings with co-workers of the opposite gender. For some, a brief business travel is likely. You are content and satisfied in your personal life. Your emotional needs are treated with great attention.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Tuesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

A healthy and cheerful atmosphere will enhance your charm and attraction. You will grow physically as well as psychologically. This is a great week to relax and pamper yourself with beauty treatments. This week is especially beneficial to students. Make the best of it. Some people might switch jobs. This is not a good week for people looking to form a partnership. Success is greater at home than abroad. You tend to overreact, so keep your finances and restless thinking under control. Money transactions should be handled with extreme caution. In terms of personal relationships, you are likely to find an ambitious partner with a positive impact. You are kind and generous, and you go to great lengths to win your partner's heart.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You require nurturing and healing energy, which you expect from your mother/sister or other feminine assistance. There is a need to love and support oneself, especially if you are dealing with health issues. Think optimistically and put your faith in the universe's healing energy. On the professional front, use your innovative ideas to tip the scales in your favour. Rethink your strategies. If you are seeking for work, this is a good moment. Your efforts are appreciated. Simply keep doing what you are doing. On the personal front, love strikes at your heart. If you travel at this time, you may meet a stranger who attracts your interest and eventually turns into infatuation. This week's love life should be rather fascinating.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

In terms of your health, you should trust your instincts. If a diagnosis, whether positive or negative, does not seem right, or if you are not comfortable with your current physician, seek a second opinion or a different practitioner. This is also an excellent moment to read the world's great spiritual literature. On the job, you are at your most inventive, and your popularity will skyrocket. A promotion or an increase in pay is anticipated at work. Unemployed people will find decent work. Businessmen will prosper. In terms of relationships, individuals looking for love may have to wait or make an incorrect decision. Existing relationships may be at a standstill, face stagnation. You will be able to triumph over your circumstance in style as the week progresses.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Monday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You can turn things around. Sudden discoveries and a sense of immense optimism allow you to let go of previous grievances and feel fantastic about the future once more. On the professional front, now is a time to be on the lookout for fresh chances. A terrific week for journalists and politicians. Medical and engineering students will do well. Those who want to study abroad will be able to do so this week. Lovers will have a fantastic time. If you are committed, this will result in a solid connection that is mutually helpful and supportive. If you are seeking for someone, now is the moment to meet them.

Lucky number 30
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This is a fantastic week for you in terms of health. Health will improve, and those who are awaiting test results will have reason to rejoice. Your optimistic and new attitude on life will help you live a better life. In terms of work, A fresh drive will be sensed in your job, propelling you forward without much effort and paying huge benefits. Opportunities in business, such as new projects or new transactions, will make you optimistic about the future. In terms of relationships, you need some time and distance to appreciate the depth of relationships, particularly love partnerships. If the person you are in love with is demanding and domineering, patience is the key to staying connected.

Lucky number 25
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Sunday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, focus on your health. You can manifest things in a much more organised manner. Things are under control because of prevention. Yoga, Pranayam, and meditation will energise you, and a morning or evening stroll will help to strengthen your fatigued muscles. On the work front, some people are expecting a promotion. Good relationships with seniors will pay off well. Those who enjoy reading and lecturing will have plenty of opportunity to do so. A brief business-related trip will be a learning experience. The timing is ideal for those who intend to study abroad. Singles will receive romantic notes. This is the moment to be pleased and cheerful. Life will be wonderful, and you will have a good reputation with your family.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Stress, and anxiety are certainly hurting your health right now. Balance in exercise, food and water consumption, and enough relaxation is now essential. Surround yourself with individuals who are optimistic. You will soon get the answers you are looking for. Work might be difficult or non-existent, and you may feel stuck. You do not have to stay in a situation that is not healthy or functional for you. You may discover a lot of chaos around you. Change is achievable if you believe in yourself and the Almighty. Things will improve. If you are already in a relationship, this might be a critical time. This is the moment to be very clear about what you want from your relationships and then take action to make it happen.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Friday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week you will be incredibly active and enthusiastic. You are dynamic and motivating to others. You want to spend your time doing something creative. You are overflowing with fresh ideas and concepts. Your curious mind will keep you busy with one or more activities. Exercise often since your muscles are prone to spasms. Work wise, you must make solid career decisions and be timely and assertive in commercial efforts, or you possibly miss out on a fantastic chance. Doctors, engineers, and editors will also have a great week. On a personal level, follow through and provide what you must give your spouse. It is probable that you will have disagreements with the elders.

Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Those who are gaining weight may need to change their eating habits. You will comprehend the worth of money and health, and you will make plans to live in harmony with nature to keep excellent health. Walking, breathing exercises, and prayers for mental and physical health are all on the agenda. This week, other matters will take precedence over career. You either do not have enough time or are sluggish in your job. Last week's hard work and efforts have not been fruitful. This is a passing phase. On the personal front, something special is likely to be celebrated this week. You are emotionally occupied and have found a healthy connection. You have complete trust in your partner. This is a period of tremendous mutual understanding between the two, and the connection is expected to strengthen.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Your health should not be a cause of worry for you. This is an excellent moment to reflect on what you are doing to improve your health and energy. Regular exercise, fibre foods, liquid consumption, and minimizing coffee and tea will undoubtedly help you perform better. A position of prominence is predicted for you. Your previous efforts will be duly rewarded. Estate owners will prosper. You will strike a healthy balance between your business obligations and spending quality time with friends and family. This week may bring about indirect rewards through rivals. With passion in the air, everything will appear to be in order. If you travel at this time, you could meet someone extremely trendy who appeals to you.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Tuesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Mind drives a being



Taking off from the previous issue, it is desirable to figure out how our minds lead us navigate our life in the midst of a complex world we live, with all its enormity and diversity. Only those who have themselves realised such living truths of life qualify to serve as a Guru. So, let us first have a look into how human mind works.

The 'Power of Knowing' facilitated by our mind enables us to explore and deliberate upon various dimensions of the world process. In fact, nothing moves in human life without mind coming into play. All doings on our part originate in mind and are processed there itself before being put into action. Also, how we engage with the world around, or the way we react or respond to external stimuli, is directed by the mind. It is again our mind, which carries forward the Karmic imprints from one life to another, and which sets the terms of one's unique character. Accordingly, mind defines the functional mandate of a being and then steers through the journey of life. Such an important functional organism, in fact, the prime

mover of every being deserves due attention.

Human beings are ordinarily used to look at things, even beyond their dimension of existence, the way it works upon them. So, no wonder, they are naturally tempted to look for a parallel mechanism driving even the cosmos. We are all aware that the cosmic world as a collective organism has been operating as an intelligent mechanism all through its run. All its field players have been doing their rounds in chorus, precisely as mandated. Such a complex organism with all its myriad presents, have been running together in perfect harmony and balance. It can't go about as such, without being driven by an intelligent design. Evidently, the field players of the cosmos would be strictly subscribing to the self-evolved design parameters driving them, without making any exception. Otherwise, the world at large, performing with such precision would not have sustained so long. If the Sun has to rise at some place at a particular point of time, it will show up precisely at that very moment, with no scope for any margin of error, not

even to the scale of a milli second. It would, therefore, be fair to name such a delicate design as being the act of a hypothetical 'Cosmic Mind'.

The human mind, however, comes with a difference. Unlike cosmic players that are bound by their predefined periodical course, human mind enjoys

a certain level of independence. It enjoys the capacity to guide their actions by choice and discrimination. This exclusive human privilege enables a being to define one's functional mandate and pursue it in one's own right. Better we call 'human-mind' as 'unitary-mind', purposely so as to emphasise uniqueness of every individual being, reflecting varying inherent mind-trends. Accordingly, each individual consciously defines and drives one's self-defined path. So is said: "Gods envy the man", as cosmic players do not enjoy the freedom of making choices, as is available to human beings.

The paradox, however, is that it is again none other than human beings, who remain susceptible to pains and sufferings, which is subject to how an individual mind, perceives, reacts or responds to a situation in hand. The question now is: How comes man, armed with such an intelligent unitary mind, virtually empowered to become an architect of one's own destiny, has to suffer? This is a point to ponder.

The answer too, is not far to seek. It is very much there in the making of

unitary mind itself. Ordinarily, mind keeps wandering like a monkey, unthinkingly jumping from one branch of a tree to the other. It keeps breeding thoughts every moment and continues flirting with them. Coming as it may with freedom of making choices, the probability of mind picking up right or wrong lead remains equal, and with obvious consequences. It is therefore important to explore all aspects of the mind – its construct, operational mechanism, chemistry, and its interrelation with the Universal intelligence. Particularly so, because human beings are an inseparable part of a unified organism that the world is. Every being is, thus, in immediate and intimate connect with the cosmic mind. And thereby, each unitary mind is connected to every other mind. Evidently then, what good or bad one does, its influence shall stretch far and wide. So, the danger is that even one individual misconduct could upset societal and environmental balance.

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