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 DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL  
 BHUBANESWAR RANCHI  
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 DEHRADUN HYDERABAD  
 VIJAYWADA

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY JULY 2, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹4



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## UCC, Manipur to raise Monsoon session temp

Session from July 20; Bill to replace Govt of NCT of Delhi ordinance also likely

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, scheduled to commence on July 20, is expected to be stormy as it may witness the introduction of contentious legislative proposals, including the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill and another Bill aimed at replacing the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance.

The situation in Manipur will also come into sharp focus. "Monsoon Session 2023 of Parliament will commence from July 20 and continue till August 11. I urge all parties to contribute towards productive discussions on Legislative Business and other items during the Monsoon Session," said Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Twitter.

"There will be a total of 17 sittings in this session lasting 23 days. I appeal to all parties to contribute constructively to



the legislative and other business of Parliament during the session," said Joshi.

Parliament is convening at a time when Prime Minister Modi has made a strong pitch for a UCC, and the Government is rapidly stepping up consultations on the issue.

A large section of the Opposition, including the Congress and the Left, has opposed it and described the UCC move by the BJP Government as a 'diversionary tactic' close to the 2024 Lok Sabha Poll and called for "wider consultations" on the issue.

The BJP-led Uttarakhand has already completed its report on the UCC and is set to implement it in the State.

Meanwhile, the Congress discussed its parliamentary strategy in a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary

Strategy Group at the residence of UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

The party decided to confront the Modi Government on several matters, including the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the situation in Manipur, and the demand for the dismissal of the Railways Minister following the Balasore Train tragedy.

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh briefed the Press on the meeting, stating, "We held this meeting 20 days prior to the Monsoon Session because there are crucial public issues confronting the nation. We discussed our strategy for addressing these issues in Parliament."

Regarding the issues discussed, Jairam Ramesh highlighted the violence in Manipur as the first concern. He stated, "The Congress will continue to

demand the resignation of the Manipur Chief Minister." Expressing dissatisfaction with the lack of positive outcomes from the Home Minister's visit to Manipur and the Prime Minister's silence on the matter for the past 60 days, he urged Modi to break his silence and address the issue. The Congress intends to seek a debate on the Manipur unrest during the upcoming Parliament session.

The meeting also addressed the issue of Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Parliament. Ramesh provided this update, along with discussing the Odisha train accident that claimed 292 lives.

He called for the resignation of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, emphasising that the Government was not adequately prioritising railway safety.

The Congress leader urged Modi to accord the same importance to railway safety as he does to the inauguration of Vande Bharat trains. The Congress also plans to push for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) investigation into the Adani issue and also raise concerns about the treatment of protesting women wrestlers by the Delhi Police.

*Continued on Page 2*

## 26 charred to death as bus catches fire, exit jammed

Driver among 7 escape death in Maha tragedy

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a gruesome tragedy, as many as 26 people were charred to death, and seven others suffered severe burn wounds when a private sleeper-coach AC luxury bus caught fire off the Pimpalkhuta village along the Samruddhi Expressway between Dusarbid and Sindkedraja in Buldhana district of eastern Maharashtra in the small hours of Saturday.

The worst-ever accident took place on the Samruddhi Expressway, which is becoming increasingly notorious for recurring mishaps, around 1.35 am when the sleeper-coach AC luxury bus (MH 29 BED 1899) owned by Vidarbha Travels was on its way from Nagpur to Pune via Yavatmal and Aurangabad.

There were a total of 33 passengers, including the driver, conductor, and cleaner, on board the bus when the vehicle veered off, rammed into a pole, and then a divider.

The bus later screeched to a halt at a distance from the road, leading to the bursting of the fuel tank. Before long, the

vehicle went up in flames. Built by Ashok Leyland Ltd, the bus had been registered in January 2020 and had a valid permit until 2025. The bus had departed from Nagpur at 5 pm on Friday, and the accident took place at 1.35 am near Sindkedraja in Buldhana district.

Most of the passengers were asleep when the mishap took place. The bodies of all 26 people were recovered from the bus by 7.30 am and sent to the Buldhana district hospital for a post-mortem, while the injured are undergoing treatment in the same hospital.



Rescue workers near the ill-fated bus which caught fire killing 26 passengers on the Samruddhi Expressway, in Buldhana in Maharashtra



PTI

and screeched to a halt, the doors of the bus got jammed, and there was no way for the passengers to get out. "Passengers must have been sleeping at that time. They had very little reaction time. Those who managed to break the windows and came out of the bus survived," an eyewitness to the incident said.

The bodies of those killed in the mishap were so charred that the relatives were finding

it difficult to identify them. "Once the bodies are identified, we will hand over the bodies to the relatives of the deceased," a senior police official said.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis rushed to the mishap site in Buldhana for an on-site assessment of the mishap. They met the injured passengers at the Buldhana Civil Hospital.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Teesta gets SC reprieve for a week after HC ordered surrender at once

Setalvad faced arrest for alleged fabrication of evidence to frame innocents in Gujarat riots cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a dramatic turn of events, the Supreme Court late ON Saturday night granted activist Teesta Setalvad much-needed protection from arrest for a period of one week. The Gujarat High Court had earlier in the day rejected Setalvad's regular bail plea in a case involving allegations of fabricating evidence to frame innocent people in 2002 post-Godhra riot cases. The HC had ordered Setalvad to surrender immediately.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai, AS Bopanna, and Dipankar Datta convened for a special session at 9:15 pm to hear Setalvad's plea. The apex court referred the matter to a regular bench and, in the interim, granted Setalvad bail until a final decision could be reached. Additionally, the Supreme Court issued a stay on the Gujarat High Court's order for a duration of one week, providing a temporary shield for Setalvad.

During the hearing, the Supreme Court sought clarification from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who represented the Gujarat



Government, regarding the urgency behind denying Setalvad a seven-day window to contest the bail decision, especially considering the significant amount of time she had already spent out of custody. Questioning the sudden alarm and urgency demonstrated by the high court, the bench asked, "What dire consequences would ensue if we were to grant interim protection? We find ourselves taken back by the actions of the High Court. What prompts this sense of urgency?"

*Continued on Page 2*

## HDFC Bank 4th most valuable bank in world



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After merging with mortgage lender HDFC, HDFC Bank has achieved the status of the fourth most valuable bank in the world in terms of market capitalisation. Additionally, it has emerged as the second largest company in India.

Bloomberg data indicates that the combined entity will possess a market capitalisation of \$172 billion, making it the highest valued bank after JPMorgan Chase (\$417 billion), Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) (\$228 billion), and Bank of America (\$227 billion).

## 'Be aware of fake guarantees', Modi questions Opp credibility

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi slammed the Opposition parties on Saturday for failing to fulfill their election promises, while cautioning the public about the credibility of their new guarantees and highlighting their lack of credibility.

"Those who have no guarantees of their own are coming to you with new guarantees and schemes." Speaking at an event in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, Modi asked people to be aware of those offering "fake guarantees".

"Those who have no guarantees of their own are coming to you with new guarantees and schemes." Modi cautioned the public to be wary of "fake guarantees" being offered.

Addressing a gathering in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, the Prime Minister took a swipe at the Opposition and urged people to remain cautious of "fake guarantees" propagated by "family-centric" political parties, including the Congress.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the launch of National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission, in Shahdol district, on Saturday. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is also seen

Emphasising the Government's initiatives, Modi announced the distribution of one crore Ayushman Bharat cards in the poll-bound state, highlighting that the card provides a guarantee of free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh, symbolising his commitment.

Drawing a veiled comparison between the BJP and other parties, Modi said, "The BJP guarantees treatment for poor families up to Rs 5 lakh, and Modi delivers it. It is the BJP Government and Modi who are providing free treatment, something unprecedented in the country."

*Continued on Page 2*

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# 26 charred to death: Safety issues on India's longest Greenfield road

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**  
After Saturday's ghastly mishap claimed 26 lives and left seven others injured in Buldhana district along the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway, spotlight once again turned on to the safety issues on the longest Greenfield road in the country, even as Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde admitted that most of the mishaps were because of the human errors.

Minister Narendra Modi on December 11, 2022. The Samruddhi Expressway has earned the notoriety of being a 'killer highway' where there were earlier 30-odd mishaps on the Nagpur-Nashik stretch, involving as many as 95 deaths. It may be recalled that on May 8, 2023, an under-construction bridge along the Mumbai-Nagpur Super Expressway in the Sinnar-Ghoti area in Igatpuri taluka of Nashik district collapsed. However, as no construction work was taking place at that time, no one was injured in the mishap. The earlier mishap had

thrown up questions about the quality, processes and materials used and proper supervision in the road construction being undertaken. While the chief minister attributed Saturday's mishap to a human error, deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis said: "There is no issue with the construction...the accidents have taken place because of human errors or vehicle errors...Smart systems will have to be in place so that such incidents can be prevented". Asking the Maharashtra government to take serious cognisance of the mishap,



NCP chief Sharad Pawar said: "Owing to this unfortunate incident, the need for the speed limit of private vehicles on Samruddhi Corridor has arisen. The state government should take serious note of this and take immediate measures. It was only last week that the statistics of accidents on this expressway was from the department

concerned. Urgent measures were suggested to prevent accidents". Former Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray slammed the Maharashtra government for its failure to take preventive measures to prevent mishap on the Samruddhi Expressway. "The government has not made any arrangements to prevent accidents on the expressway. I expect that the incident will open the eyes of the government."

government must take advice from experts," NCP leader and leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Ajit Pawar said. Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole rooted for registration of a case of culpable homicide against the Shinde-Fadnis government. Mourning the death of 26 innocent passengers, Patole said: "The horrific accident on Samruddhi highway is very unfortunate and heartbreaking. A staggering Rs 54,000 crore has been spent on this killer highway."

opening of this highway, nearly 300 accidents have occurred in the last six months. In every accident there is a death. Today's accident was very terrible, 26 people were killed". The Expressway has become a death trap. Much more needs to be done in terms of safety on this highway. It is necessary to eliminate the errors on this highway. Only if the government conducts a special audit of this road, such unfortunate incidents can be avoided, but the government is only happy to gain credit through publicity," the State Congress chief said.

## Officials in Delhi should have covered ditch: Victim's brother Auto-rickshaw driver falls in ditch, dies

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**  
Authorities should have covered the ditch or at least erected a warning sign by it to prevent people from going near it, said the brother of the auto-rickshaw driver, who drowned in a ditch filled with rainwater near Wazirabad. Ajit Sharma, 51, was returning home after dropping a passenger in east Delhi's Bhajanpura on Friday when his auto got stuck in a ditch filled with water near Harsh Vihar. When he got out of it to push the auto, he fell into the ditch and drowned. It was his father who was informed about the incident by some policemen who visited him home, said 32-year-old

Kuldeep Sharma, Ajit's brother. "When police checked the belongings of my brother, they found he lived in Nand Nagri. They came to our home and told us about the incident. My father went with them to the spot and later to the hospital. I was at my workplace when got to know about his death and immediately rushed to the GTB hospital," Kuldeep said. "My brother had dropped a passenger in Bhajanpura and was returning when the incident happened. We want justice for him and his family. Those who were behind the negligence should be held responsible. Government should have covered the area or put barriers there," he said.

Ajit used to live with his family in the Loni area of Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, Kuldeep said. Ajit's 21-year-old son Dhruv Vashishth said his father had taken up auto-rickshaw driving after getting fired from a factory job in Jhilmil. "My father used to work in a tape factory in Jhilmil industrial area. He lost his job in 2012 and started driving an auto. We are three brothers and even have one sister who got married two years ago," said Dhruv, who works at an auto-parts shop in Karol Bagh. He said his mother also does odd jobs sometimes to support her family. The body's post mortem was conducted on Saturday.



The ditch was dug by the Public Works Department to erect a pillar as part of the construction of a flyover. Monsoon rain which hit the city last week filled the ditch with water. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva and MP Manoj Tiwari met the family members of auto driver Ajit Sharma, a resident of Nand Nagri, and expressed condolences on behalf of the people of Delhi and the BJP. They also presented a cheque of assistance from the BJP to the family members. On this occasion Naveen Shahdara District BJP President Manoj Tyagi, BJP leader Vikram Mittal and other workers were present. Tiwari said the Arvind Kejriwal government has never paid attention to the development of the North East parliamentary constituency in the last nine years and he would try that the education of the children of late auto driver is not be interrupted and demanded that action should be taken against the officials of the Public Works Department responsible for the accident. In a statement, the AAP government said the Delhi Government has taken cognisance of the incident and is dealing with it very seriously.

## 2 die at illegal plastic factory after compressor blast

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**  
Two persons died on Saturday after a compressor exploded in an air compressor tank at a plastic moulding factory in northeast Delhi's Gokalpuri area, police said. A PCR call was received at 3.30 pm regarding the blast. It was reported that three persons were injured in the explosion and two of them were shifted to a hospital, they said. PCR, local police and staff from the fire department immediately reached the spot. They found out that a plastic moulding factory was being run from the house, Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Joy Tirkey said. Inquiry revealed that four persons were injured at the site. While three of them had already been taken to GTB hospital, the fourth one was



found dead at the spot, he said. Later, one of the injured died at the hospital, the DCP said. The blast had taken place in the air compressor tank used in the plastic moulding machine. The factory was being operated in a rented accommodation of around 150 square yards, Tirkey said. Naresh, the owner of the property, had rented the premises to one Yadav, who was running the factory. Efforts are being made to contact both of them. Their mobile phones

## Devotees issued fake permits by travel agents appeal to LG for facilitating Amarnath pilgrimage

**PTI ■ JAMMU**  
Around 300 devotees have been left stranded at the Jammu base camp after they were stopped from proceeding on the Amarnath Yatra due to fake permits issued by their travel agents. Desperate to continue their pilgrimage to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath, these pilgrims have sought assistance from Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, urging him to consider their special circumstances and allow them to proceed with the yatra. "We implore Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene and spare us further hardship. We humbly request their facilitation of our pilgrimage to Amarnath," said Suresh Kumar, a resident of Uttar Pradesh stranded in Jammu due to a fake permit. Over 430 Amarnath pilgrims were found in possession of fake registration permits in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts on Friday. Ramesh Arora, a Delhi resident stuck at the Jammu base camp said, "We have been deceived by travel agents in Delhi who provided us with counterfeit permits for the yatra. While they have put us in this difficult situation, the administration is not permitting us to continue our pilgrimage due to the fake documents." Over the past two days, these stranded pilgrims, including women and children, have been tirelessly seeking help from the authorities concerned. The devotees said their



appeal for assistance has largely gone unanswered, leading to mounting uncertainty and frustration among them. Nevertheless, they have refused to leave without paying obeisance to Lord Shiva at Amarnath. On the lookout for a temporary shelter until they hear from the authorities, hundreds of these pilgrims have taken refuge at the Asaram Babu ashram near the Jammu base camp. "We appeal to the government to approach this issue with compassion. We are at a loss both due to fraudulent travel agents and the administration's refusal to allow us to complete the yatra," said Susheela, another stranded resident of Delhi awaiting help from the authorities. Responding to the situation, a senior official said, "Such pilgrims are not at fault. We are committed to facilitating their pilgrimage and are providing them with assistance in terms of accommodation and meals." Around 300 fake registration permits for the Amarnath Yatra were detected by the district administration in Jammu along with the police on Friday, the officials said.

## Bengal panchayat poll: BJP warns of attempts by TMC to rig elections, loot votes

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**  
Pledging to usher in panchayats "purged of thieves" in the coming rural poll in West Bengal in the event of a win by BJP, the party Saturday expressed apprehensions that there will be attempts at largescale rigging and violence by the ruling TMC on the voting day. BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar releasing the BJP's manifesto said the role of the State Election Commission (SEC), which conducts the rural polls, is not above suspicion as it was not found to be vigilant enough to curb incidents of violence in the run up to the July 8 election. BJP, he said, will gift a 'chor mukto panchayat' system (panchayats purged of thieves) which will stop "siphoning off" of cut money in the implementation of central projects like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, the PM's project for farmers and MGNREGS and usher in a transparent administration. "Wherever BJP is strong, our workers will play the role of central forces," he said referring to reports that the SEC will not deploy central paramilitary forces in different polling booths where there is possibility of violence during votes. He claimed that contrary

to opinion polls telecast by some TV news channels, BJP will get the majority in higher number of zilla parishads, panchayats in both south and north Bengal if there was free and fair poll. Asked to comment on BJP entering into a poll understanding with other opposition parties like the Congress and CPI(M), Majumdar said there is no formal alliance at the state level "though all of them are at the receiving end of TMC atrocities and terror". "We are ideologically apart from the Congress and CPI-M. No alliance has been formally announced but there can be some local level understandings in some pockets to defeat the TMC," he said. Elaborating on the manifesto, Majumdar said BJP will set up skill centers in different zilla parishad areas to train people so that they do not have to migrate to other states in search of jobs and set up krishi kalyan kendras in different blocks for the uplift of farmers. "By one estimate, there are 45 lakh migrant workers in West Bengal as the state government failed to give them employment. The TMC has done nothing to improve their lot. BJP will impart skill training to them at the macro level if it wins in the panchayat polls," Majumdar said.

## Teesta...

**From Page 1**  
Setalvad approached the Supreme Court after the Gujarat High Court rejected her bail plea. Despite it being a non-working day for the judiciary, a special hearing was scheduled at 6:30 pm on Saturday to address the urgent matter. Setalvad has been on interim bail since September. Justices Abhay S Oka and Prashant Kumar Mishra had conflicting views on granting protection to Teesta Setalvad. Justice Oka seemed inclined to grant her interim bail until a detailed hearing on her plea could take place on Tuesday. On the other hand, Justice Mishra appeared hesitant to provide her with interim relief. Setalvad's counsels, C U Singh and Aparna Bhatt requested an immediate hearing, while Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Gujarat government, requested that the hearing be held on Sunday. However, the SC heard the matter at 9.15 PM and granted her one-week protection from arrest. Earlier, Justice Nirzar Desai of the Gujarat High Court had rejected Setalvad's bail plea and instructed her to surrender immediately since she was already out of jail on interim bail. Setalvad, along with co-accused former Director-General of Police R B Sreekumar, was apprehended by the Gujarat Police on June 25 of the previous year. On July 2, they were placed in judicial custody after completing their police remand. Setalvad was released from jail in September 2022 after being granted relief by the Supreme Court.

## 'Be aware of fake guarantees...

**From Page 1**  
Modi also criticised the Opposition parties, highlighting their lack of guarantee for corruption-free governance. He further criticised the recent mega-Opposition meeting in Patna, where former adversaries united despite having a history of conflicts. On the occasion, the Prime Minister launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission in Shahdol, symbolising a significant step towards eradicating sickle cell anaemia, as he distributed sickle cell genetic status cards to the beneficiaries. Alongside, the Prime Minister kickstarted the distribution of approximately 3.57 crore Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards across Madhya Pradesh. The PM paid homage to Rani Durgavati, the esteemed ruler of Gondwana during the mid-16th

century, and highlighted her inspiration behind the initiation of the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission. The PM informed the audience that 1 crore Ayushman Cards were being issued to empower the people of Madhya Pradesh. Addressing the gathering, Modi stressed that the primary beneficiaries of these endeavors were the individuals belonging to Gond, Bhil, and other Adivasi communities. He proclaimed that the nation, from the land of Shahdol, was making a resolute commitment to safeguard the lives of tribal populations, striving for their liberation from sickle cell anaemia and endeavoring to protect the lives of 2.5 lakh affected children and families. Expressing concern, he lamented the lack of attention given to the issue of sickle cell anaemia over the past 70 years, despite India accounting for over 50 per cent of worldwide cases.

cut case of negligence." Official sources said that the prima facie investigations had revealed that the driver, identified as Danish Shaikh, had briefly dozed off while he was behind the wheels. Before he realized it, the vehicle had gone out of his control. The driver, who is undergoing treatment at a local hospital for burn injuries, has been booked under section 304 A (Causing an accident by negligence) of the IPC by the Buldhana police and has been placed under custody. The Maharashtra government announced an ex-gratia of Rs five lakh to the next of kin of each of the deceased, while it announced that it would take care of the medical expenses of the injured passengers. Expressing his deep sorrow over the "devastating bus mishap," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Deeply saddened by the devastating bus mishap in Buldhana, Maharashtra. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives. May the injured recover soon. The local administration is providing all possible assistance to the affected." In addition to the ex-gratia announced by the Maharashtra government, the Prime Minister announced an ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from PMNRF to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the bus mishap in Buldhana, while Rs. 50,000 would be given to those who sustained injuries in the mishap.

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# UCC, Manipur to raise Monsoon session...

**From Page 1**  
Jairam reiterated the party's position on the Uniform Civil Code, stating, "We stand by our statement issued on June 15. Nothing significant has occurred since then." During the session, several significant legislative proposals will be on the agenda. Among them are the eagerly awaited Digital Personal Data Protection Bill and the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill. Additionally, a crucial Bill aimed at replacing the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance will be up for discussion. Of particular importance is the voting on the NCT Bill, which will serve as a litmus test for the recently formed Opposition unity. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has actively engaged with various political parties, seeking their support against the Bill. The stance taken by non-Congress, non-BJP parties on this issue will provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the political landscape. While the ruling BJP holds a commanding majority in the Lok Sabha with its 303 Members of Parliament (MPs), ensuring smooth passage of the NCT Bill in the Lower House, the situation may be more challenging in the Rajya Sabha. The Upper House currently has 238 MPs, and if non-BJP parties join forces, the BJP and its allies' combined strength of 111 MPs, including nominated members, could face significant opposition from the 106-member strong Opposition, excluding the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Yuva Jansamika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and Janasena Dal (Secular) [JD(S)]. These five parties were absent from the recent Patna meeting and have expressed their preference for maintaining an "equidistant" stance from both the BJP and the Opposition front. However, the BJD, YSRCP, and BSP have yet to clearly state their position on the NCT Bill, possibly due to concerns about the implications of the ordinance on State Governments. The BJD and YSRCP hold nine seats each in the Rajya Sabha, making their support pivotal. The AAP has been actively rallying the Opposition to collectively vote against the Bill, as it undermines the principle of federalism by sidelining an elected Government and granting excessive control to the Lieutenant Governor over civil servants. Arvind Kejriwal has engaged in discussions with Opposition leaders, seeking their unequivocal commitment to voting against the Bill. However, Congress has not made any definitive commitment thus far, leaving the outcome uncertain. The voting on the NCT Bill is set to be a significant moment that will shape the political landscape in the lead-up to future elections.

# Power dept maze delayed DERC chief's oath function

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The appointment of Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar as the Chairperson of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has been marred by a series of delays and controversies surrounding the oath-taking ceremony.

The latest developments have raised questions about the coordination within the power department and the compliance with the directions of the Chief Minister.

Besides, the controversy surrounding the appointment of the DERC Chairperson and the subsequent delays in the oath-taking ceremony have also raised questions about the timing of the announcement of to increase in Power Purchase Agreement Cost (PPAC) tariff hike on June 22, by DERC lone member when the Chairman was appointed.

Sources said the Kejriwal government had surrendered power from Dadri power plant to Centre which was cheaper. Notably, an inquiry is pending in APTEL (Appellate Tribunal for Electricity) regarding the



conduct of the Member DERC. The General Administration Department (GAD) of Delhi government forwarded a notification to the Chief Minister and the Secretary to the Minister of Power on June 23, 2023, announcing the appointment of Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar by the President of India.

The Department of Power then requested Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar to provide a convenient date and time for the oath-taking ceremony, to which he responded on June 22, 2023, suggesting June 26 as the preferred date.

However, on June 26, the

Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar had already arrived in Delhi. The Lt. Governor of Delhi also urged the Chief Minister to ensure that the oath was administered without any further delay.

While on June 27 itself, the Chief Minister directed the Power Minister to administer the oath as soon as possible, on June 28, the Minister asked the Power Department to take disciplinary action for unilaterally fixing the time and remained uncertain about the date for the ceremony.

This discrepancy in the response from the Minister and the delay in providing a definite date caused confusion and further fueled the controversy surrounding the appointment.

Finally, on June 30, the Minister of Power proposed two possible dates for the oath-taking ceremony - July 3 at 6 PM or any time in the second half of July 4.

However, this delay and lack of a definite date raised concerns and why the Power Minister did not comply with the Chief Minister's directions.

# Take oath of office on July 3 or 4, Atishi asks Umesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Power Minister Atishi has written to newly appointed Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) Chairman Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar, requesting him to take oath of office on July 3 or 4.

Sources said Kejriwal forwarded the letter to Atishi the same day (June 27) and asked her to administer the oath "as early as possible". In her communication to Justice Kumar, Atishi blamed the Power department for the confusion.

Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena had earlier this week written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, flagging the "unnecessary delay" in administering the oath of office to Justice Kumar and said it should be done without further delay. Justice Kumar was appointed chairman of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) on June 21.

Justice Kumar, a former Allahabad High Court judge, in a letter to the department, had said it was only after he was communicated that the minis-



ter would not be available in the national capital after June 29 that he came to Delhi. He said he had made himself available to take the oath of office between June 26 and June 28 since Atishi was available on those days.

"Unfortunately, Hon'ble Minister, Power, GNCTD, could not find time for the oath in these three days. I am constrained to note that the entire event could have been managed more professionally which would have led to an avoidable to-and-fro travel to Delhi from my base location," he had said.

Replying to Kumar's mail, Atishi said she has asked the power department to take disciplinary action against the officers involved in the miscommunication. "This unfor-

unate situation has arisen because the Power department wrote to you, asking for time for taking of oath without my instructions or without checking my availability. If in fact, the Power department had sought my availability before approaching you, then this unfortunate situation would not have arisen.

"It is extremely shocking that the Power department would write to you without even asking whether I am available on those dates. It is because of this shockingly lax and unprofessional behaviour that someone as senior as you have had to undergo this inconvenience.

Putting such a senior functionary at such an inconvenience is completely unacceptable. I have directed the Power department to take disciplinary action against the officer who is responsible for this," she said.

Taking a dig at Atishi, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that why the power minister delayed five days to finalise the date for administer the oath of newly appointed DERC chairman

despite Kejriwal's order. "Why DERC lone member announced the hike in Power Purchase Agreement Cost despite the fact that the government has appointed Justice (retd) Umesh Kumar as DERC chairman. A disciplinary action should be taken against the power minister for defying the chief minister's order," Bidhuri said.

Atishi had written to Saxena, calling Justice Kumar's appointment "patently illegal and unconstitutional". However, to avoid "constitutional brinkmanship", she will be administering the oath of office to him, the minister had said.

The AAP government had recommended the name of former Madhya Pradesh High Court judge Justice (Retd) RK Srivastava for the position. However, Justice Srivastava expressed his inability to take charge due to "family commitments and requirements".

Later, the city government obtained the consent of Justice (Retd) Sangeet Raj Lodha of the Rajasthan High Court on June 21. The central government, however, notified the name of Justice Kumar that evening.

# Trouble for Delhi Metro commuters landing in Noida with liquor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

Delhi Metro commuters landing in Uttar Pradesh's Noida with sealed liquor bottles may land in trouble, cautioned excise officials on Saturday. The word of caution comes a day after the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) announced permitting commuters to carry up to two sealed bottles of liquor on its network.

Besides Delhi, DMRC's metro rail network expands to nearby cities like Gurugram and Faridabad in Haryana, and Noida and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh.

In Uttar Pradesh, the excise rules ban the import of liquor from outside the State, citing loss to the state government's



revenue.

Officials said the current rule permits import of only one unsealed bottle from adjoining Delhi or Haryana, whether by metro or road. "Although the Delhi Metro has allowed com-



muters to carry two sealed bottles of liquor, but rules of the Uttar Pradesh Excise Department will apply in UP's territories, irrespective of any changes in Delhi," Noida District Excise Officer Subodh

Srivastava said.

The officer added that the excise department will step up vigilance at metro stations and take legal action against those caught with sealed liquor bottles brought from outside UP. "We will also try to raise awareness among people about the excise rules in UP to avoid inconvenience to the commuters," Srivastava said.

Liquor is usually cheaper in Haryana and Delhi as compared to Uttar Pradesh. On several occasions in the past, people bringing sealed liquor bottles from Delhi to Noida via road have been arrested.

An official said in such a situation, action against an offender is taken under Section 63 of the Excise Act (penalty for unlawful import, export, trans-

port, manufacture, possession, sale) which is a non-bailable offence. Carrying of alcohol was banned in the Delhi Metro until recently except on the Airport Express Line and allowing it across the network is a part of the policy to bring in uniformity, the DMRC said on Friday. According to the Delhi Metro, a committee comprising officials from the CISF and the DMRC reviewed the list of items allowed to be carried in trains.

However, the metro operator has requested passengers to maintain proper decorum while travelling and warned that any commuter found behaving in an indecent manner under the influence of alcohol, will face suitable action as per law.

# Mom delivers baby outside ward after hospital denies admission

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A woman was allegedly forced to deliver her baby outside the maternity ward of the civil hospital after being denied admission despite waiting for more than 12 hours, officials said on Saturday.

The woman gave birth to the child outside the ward late Friday night. A social media post over the incident soon went viral, prompting the Principal Medical Officer (PMO) to order an inquiry.

The woman's husband, Narendar Singh, is a native of Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh. He said he works in a company and has been living with his family in Laxman Vihar colony for the past several years.

Singh has filed a complaint against the alleged negligence of a doctor and a nurse of the civil hospital due to which his wife was forced to deliver the baby girl outside the hospital ward.

"I reached the civil hospital around 7 am on Friday with my pregnant wife as she complained of abdominal pain. At the hospital, the nurse present in the maternity ward asked me to come later without examining my wife who was groaning in pain.

"I also met the doctor posted in the ward but the doctor was also not paying any atten-



tion.

In such a situation, till 12 noon, we kept pleading for treatment but to no avail. I got upset and sat in the park of the hospital premises and waited outside the maternity ward at night but my wife was not admitted to the ward," Singh said. After waiting for more than 12 hours, she was forced to deliver outside the maternity ward on the first floor of the hospital late Friday night. She gave birth to a baby girl, he said.

"I soon raised an alarm and only then the staff came running from the maternity ward and took my wife inside the ward on a wheel chair. It is a matter of relief that both my wife and newborn baby are safe. My wife has been pregnant twice earlier, but she could not become a mother but now we

are happy to have a baby girl," the father added.

Sector-9 RWA president Prashant Chauhan took to social media to share a post over the incident. Chauhan said that due to the negligence in the civil hospital, the "life of the child and the mother could have been lost". "Strict action should be taken against the negligent doctors and staff".

"Instructions have been given to change the duty of the staff nurse and guard posted in the maternity ward. Another nurse and guard have been appointed in their place.

The PMO of the hospital has been instructed to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit a report as soon as possible. Action will be taken based on the report," said Virendra Yadav, Civil Surgeon, Gurugram.



# Govt planning to introduce Business Blasters initiative at higher education: Atishi

New Delhi: Delhi Education Minister Atishi visited the Center for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIE.CO) at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad and said her party-led Government was mulling to introduce 'Business Blasters' initiative at higher education as well as technical institutes.

She further said insights gained from IIM Ahmedabad's incubation centre on entrepreneurship will play a vital role in shaping the AAP government's youth entrepreneurship programme. Highlighting the Kejriwal Government's commitment to fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among students, Atishi said, "The government is planning to introduce 'Business Blasters' for students in Higher education institu-

tions and Technical institutes. These initiatives are aimed at empowering young minds to explore their entrepreneurial potential and contribute to India's vibrant start-up ecosystem." She further said that the programme empowered students at Delhi government schools to be job providers instead of job seekers.

"The Business Blasters programme has empowered lakhs of Delhi government school students to be job providers and contribute to nation's economy. Now it is turn of students of Delhi's higher education institutes," the minister added. IIM-A's Center for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship invests in early-age start-ups and offers in-class incubation space for start-ups to collaborate, innovate, and grow. SR

# CM OK's felling of 214 trees with rider for new def facility

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming it in national interest, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday approved a proposal for removing and transplanting 214 trees for the upcoming defence facility.

He has approved the proposal against the condition of the applicant agency taking up plantation of 2,140 new saplings as per the plan. Approving the proposal, the Chief Minister has noted that it will be placed before the LG, and he is bound by the aid and advice of the government on the subject.

"The applicant agency has proposed the construction of a new defence project in Delhi. However, certain patches of trees were obstructing the construction of the site. Thus, through its officials, it had written a letter to the Environment and Forests Department of the Delhi Government seeking approval for removal and transplantation of 214 trees to clear the site," Delhi government said in a statement. As per the proposal approved by the Delhi Government, various species of



trees that suit the soil and climate of Delhi will be planted in lieu of the removal and transplantation of the trees. These include Neem, Amaltas, Pipal, Pilkhan, Gular, Bargad, Desi Kikar and Arjun among other species. These trees will be planted as saplings of 6-8 feet height on non-forest lands.

Given the importance of the modern infrastructure for the defence forces, Kejriwal stated, "The Delhi Government will always uphold national interest and help the forces in any way possible. This approval will help give the forces access to better facilities.

We are actively ensuring that modern developments do not adversely impact Delhi and are mandating 10x compensatory plantation for any tree that gets affected."

Improving city's air quality has been most difficult task, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the Environment Ministry said Delhi registered the highest number of 'good to moderate' air quality days this year since 2016, barring 2020, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said improving air quality in the city has been the most difficult task.

Delhi also experienced the least number of days with 'poor to severe' air quality in the first half-year period (January to June) in 2023, compared to corresponding period since 2016, except for Covid-19 affected 2020.

"This was perhaps most difficult task —improving air quality. But a series of steps taken by Delhiites helped us achieve this seemingly impossible task.

# PWD Min visits 5 subways to check cleanliness

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

PWD Minister Atishi on Saturday inspected five subways across South Delhi including Nehru Place, Lajpat Nagar, Andrews Ganj, Masjid Moth and Lajpat Nagar Metro Station Subway on Saturday. During the inspection, she found that compared to before, the subways were clean and well-maintained.

Sufficient lighting had been arranged to ensure women's safety, security guards had been deployed, and new lights and convex mirrors had been installed. The drainage system had also improved. Atishi also interacted with the people present, who were raising their



voices. During these conversations, people mentioned that the conditions of the subways had improved in recent days. Damage was repaired, and spe-

cial attention was given to cleanliness and maintenance. Women expressed their satisfaction with the measures taken for the cleanliness and securi-

ty of the subways. They appeared happy with the well-lit subways and the presence of security guards, which gave them a sense of safety.

On this occasion, Atishi said the department had been working to improve the conditions of subways across Delhi in recent days, but that there is still room for further improvement. She directed officials to focus on making the current situation of the subways even better.

The PWD Minister had given a one-month ultimatum in the last week of May to the department for cleanliness, maintenance, and improvement of women's safety facilities across all the subways in

Delhi.

Additionally, she had instructed the deployment of guards and the installation of new lights, among other things. She mentioned that the department is giving a new look to all the subways in Delhi under its jurisdiction. Special attention is being given to the cleanliness and maintenance of the subways.

During some inspections in the past month, it was found that some subways lacked adequate lighting, which deterred people from using them. To overcome this, new lights have been installed in all subways to ensure people's comfort. Guards have also been deployed for their safety.

# 297 sqm land approved for Rapid rail at Jangpura

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved allotment of 297 sqm of land at Jangpura for the Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor project.

The allotment of the land, belonging to the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), was "pending for the last two years" and was critical for implementation of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) project.

The semi-high-speed regional rail service RAPIDX on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor will bring down the travel time between Delhi to Meerut significantly. The project is helmed by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC). According to Raj Niwas official, the LG has approved allotment of 297 sqm of land keeping in view the national importance and public interest involved in the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS project.

This land was required for providing connectivity with the stabling yard at Jangpura from the Ring Road at Nehru Nagar for implementation of the 82.15-km semi-high speed rail corridor currently under



construction, he said. In June 2021, the DUSIB had granted working permission for the RRTS on "as is where is" basis, but the transfer of land on permanent basis was pending since then, and therefore, work could not take off freely, the Raj Niwas officials said.

Three other government agencies -- the erstwhile South Delhi Municipal Corporation, the Delhi Jal Board and the housing and urban affairs ministry -- had already transferred their land to the NCRTC, but the DUSIB was yet to transfer its land, they added. There was no immediate reaction from the DUSIB or the Delhi government on this. In March last year, the Delhi urban development minister had observed that the entire land in question belonged to the DUSIB and

hence, "did not require the approval of the LG", the senior official said. Subsequently, the urban development minister and the chief minister "approved the transfer of land", he said.

However, the chief secretary pointed out that the land being a reserved subject, required the approval of the LG, the official said and added that accordingly, the chief secretary submitted the proposal to the LG for approval. But, even as the proposal was "not routed" through the administrative department, that is the urban development department, and was "not forwarded by the minister and the chief minister", the LG noted that the matter was of national significance and public interest, and approved it, the official said.

# Every farmer getting benefit of ₹50,000/year, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is giving Rs 6.5 lakh crore to the agriculture sector every year with each farmer getting a benefit of Rs 50,000 annually in one form or the other, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday while asserting it's "Modi's guarantee" and not just a promise.

In what was seen as a veiled dig at the poll promises made by Congress and other opposition parties in recent times, Modi listed benefits provided to farmers mainly in form of fertiliser subsidy, food-grains procurement and PM-KISAN and said, "This shows what a guarantee looks like and what massive efforts are needed to change the lives of farmers." "The government is making sure that every farmer in the country receives around Rs 50,000 every year in some way or the other. This means, under the BJP government at the Centre, there is a guarantee that every farmer gets Rs 50,000 in various forms," he said while addressing the 17th Indian Cooperative Congress here.

"Ye Modi ki guarantee hai. Aur maine jo kiya hai, woh bata raha hoon, vaade nahi bata raha hoon (This is Modi's guarantee. I am only talking about what I have done and not the promises)," the Prime Minister said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 17th Indian Cooperative Congress at Pragati Maidan, in New Delhi on Saturday

"On an average, the government is spending more than Rs 6.5 lakh crore yearly on agriculture and farmers," Modi said.

In the last nine years, Modi said the government has ensured supply of fertilisers at cheaper rates compared to other countries, bought large quantities of grains at minimum support price (MSP) and paid huge amount directly into bank accounts of farmers under PM-KISAN scheme, thus eliminating middlemen.

Elaborating, the prime minister said Rs 2.5 lakh crore have been transferred in the last four years directly into bank accounts of farmers under the PM KISAN scheme.

Under PM-KISAN, farmers get Rs 6,000 annually.

"You can guess how big this amount is from the fact that the total agricultural budget for the five years before 2014 was less than Rs 90,000 crore," Modi said. The government has also ensured that the impact of rise in global prices of fertilisers does not affect farmers, he said and added that this 'Modi guarantee' has been provided by the BJP-ruled central government.

Modi further highlighted that farmers are getting a bag (45 kg) of urea at around Rs 270, which is much lower than Rs 720 in Bangladesh, Rs 800 in Pakistan, Rs 2,100 in China and more than Rs 3,000 in America.

The government has spent over Rs 10 lakh crore towards the fertilizer subsidy in the last

nine years to ensure that farmers get crop nutrients at a reasonable price, he said, and quipped "isse badi guarantee kya hoti hai? (can there be bigger guarantee than this)?"

Stating that the Centre has been serious about ensuring remunerative price for farmers' produce since 2014, Modi said the government has increased the MSP and also provided more than Rs 15 lakh crore to farmers in the last nine years through procurement of food-grains at MSP.

He also informed about the recent package of Rs 3.7 lakh crore for the fertiliser sector as well as increase in fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane farmers at Rs 315 per quintal.

The prime minister also talked about the role of cooperatives in making India self-reliant and a developed country by 2047.

He called upon cooperatives to become carriers of social and national policy instead of politics. Modi stressed that cooperatives should become a model of transparency and corruption-free governance, and urged them to adopt digital tools in a big way.

He called upon cooperatives to work towards increasing production of oilseeds and pulses, and help the country become self-reliant in cooking oils.

# India, Pakistan exchange lists of prisoners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Pakistan on Saturday exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in their custody. Under the provisions of the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access, such lists are exchanged every year on 1st January and 1st July.

India has shared lists of 343 civilian prisoners and 74 fishermen in its custody, who are Pakistani or are believed to be Pakistani. Similarly, Pakistan has shared lists of 42 civilian prisoners and 266 fishermen in its custody, who are Indian or are believed to be Indian, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here.

The Government has called for early release and repatriation of civilian prisoners, missing Indian defence personnel, and fishermen along with their boats, from Pakistan's custody. In this context, Pakistan was asked to expedite the release and repatriation of 254 Indian fishermen and 04 Indian civilian prisoners, who have completed their sentence, MEA said.

In addition, Pakistan has been asked to provide immediate consular access to the remaining 12 fishermen and 14



civilian prisoners in Pakistan's custody, who are believed to be Indian. Pakistan has been requested to ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indian and believed to be Indian civilian prisoners and fishermen, pending their release and repatriation to India.

India remains committed to addressing, on priority, all humanitarian matters, including those pertaining to prisoners and fishermen in each other's country.

In this context, India has urged Pakistan to expedite necessary action at its end to confirm the nationality status of 62 believed to be Pakistani prisoners, including fishermen, whose repatriation is pending for want of nationality confirmation from Pakistan, MEA said.

As a result of sustained efforts by the government, 2,559 Indian fishermen and 63 Indian civilian prisoners have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2014. This includes 398 Indian fishermen and five Indian civilian prisoners who were repatriated from Pakistan this year, so far.

# NIA files additional chargesheet against 9 ISIS men in K'taka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday said it has filed its first supplementary chargesheet against nine persons in the ISIS conspiracy case of Shivamogga district in Karnataka.

Five charge-sheeted accused have a technical background and had planned to pursue robotics courses to carry out terror attacks.

Of the nine charge-sheeted, Maaz Muneer Ahmed, Syed Yasin, Reeshaan Thajuddin Sheikh, Mazin Abdul Rahman, and Nadeem Ahmed KA have studied mechanical and electrical engineering. They had been tasked by the foreign-based ISIS handler to pursue robotics courses, to pick up skills to carry terrorist attacks in the future in furtherance of the IS agenda for India, the NIA said in a statement.

NIA investigations have revealed that Mohamed Shariq, Maaz Muneer Ahmed, and Syed Yasin had hatched a criminal conspiracy, in connivance with IS operatives based abroad, to promote terror and violence in the direction of IS, a banned terrorist outfit, in the region. The trio had actively radicalized and recruited the co-accused with the intention to disturb the national security, unity, and sovereignty of the country, the NIA said. Their online handler had funded the

accused through cryptocurrencies, as per the NIA investigations in the case. The case was initially registered by the Shivamogga Rural Police on September 19, 2022, and later taken over and re-registered by NIA on November 15, 2022. Maaz Muneer Ahmed and Syed Yasin were charge-sheeted earlier also, in March this year, and have now been charged with offenses.

The accused had conducted a trial IED blast in Shivamogga, besides conducting reconnaissance of multiple places and indulging in the arson of properties and vehicles to spread terror and scare among the people, as part of an Islamic State (ISIS) conspiracy, to carry out incidents of terror and violence in India and wage a war against the country, the NIA said.

The charge-sheeted accused have been identified as Mohamed Shariq (25), Maaz Muneer Ahmed (23), Syed Yasin (22), Reeshaan Thajuddin Sheikh (22), Huzair Farhan Baig (22), Mazin Abdul Rahman (22), Nadeem Ahmed K A (22), Zabiulla (32) and Nadeem Faizal N (27). All these accused persons belong to Karnataka. They have been charged under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Karnataka State Prevention of Destruction and Loss of Property Act.

# Crop residue management guidelines revised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Agriculture has revised the crop residue management guidelines, thus enabling efficient ex-situ management of paddy straw generated in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

As per the revised guidelines, techno-commercial pilot projects for paddy straw supply chain will be established under the bilateral agreement between the beneficiary/aggregator and industries utilising the paddy straw, the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

The beneficiary or aggregator can be farmers, rural entrepreneurs, cooperative



societies of farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and panchayats. According to the ministry, the move will supplement the

efforts of paddy straw management through in-situ options. During the three-year tenure of the interventions, 1.5 million tonnes of surplus

paddy straw are expected to be collected which would otherwise have been burnt in fields. About 333 biomass collection depots of capacity 4,500 tonne will be built in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

Air pollution caused by stubble burning will be considerably reduced. It would also generate employment opportunities of about 9,00,000 man-days. As per the revised guidelines, the government will provide financial assistance on the capital cost of machinery and equipment.

The required working capital may be financed either by the industry and beneficiary jointly or utilising the

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), NABARD, or financial institutions by the beneficiary, it said. The land for storage of the collected paddy straw will be arranged and prepared by the beneficiary as may be guided by the end-use industry.

Project proposal-based financial assistance will be extended for machines and equipment such as higher HP tractors, cutters, tedder, medium to large balers, rakers, loaders, grabbers and tele-handlers which are essentially required for the establishment of paddy straw supply chain.

"State governments shall approve these projects through the project sanctioning com-

mittee," the ministry said. The Centre and state governments will jointly provide financial support of 65 per cent of the project cost, while the industry as primary promoter of the project will contribute 25 per cent. The industry will act as the 'primary consumer' of the feedstock collected and farmers or aggregators will be the direct beneficiary of the project and will contribute the balance 10 per cent, it added.

This intervention will encourage a robust supply chain management of paddy straw which will further help in making paddy straw available for various end-uses e.E power generation, heat generation, and bio-CNG.

# India, Myanmar talk def ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Myanmar discussed the entire gamut of their bilateral defence ties and situation on the border shared by the two countries during Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane's two-day visit there ending Saturday.

Giving details of his schedule, defence ministry officials said the visit provided an opportunity to raise matters relating to India's security with senior leadership of Myanmar.

During the meetings, the two sides discussed issues related to maintenance of tranquility in the border areas, illegal trans-border movements and transnational crimes such as drug trafficking and smug-

gling. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that their respective territories would not be allowed to be used for any activities inimical to the other. India shares an approximately 1,700-km long border with Myanmar. Any developments in that country have a direct impact on India's bordering region.

Aramane called on Chairman, State Administrative Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw, Defence Minister of Myanmar Gen (Retd.) Mya Tun Oo and held meetings with Commander-in-Chief, Myanmar Navy Admiral Moe Aung and Chief of Defence Industries Lt Gen Khan Myint Than.

# India, France carry out naval drill jointly in Bay of Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a boost to their bilateral defence ties, India and France carried out a joint naval drill in the Bay of Bengal on Friday, navy officials said here on Saturday. Indian naval ships INS Rana, a guided missile destroyer, and INS Sumedha, an indigenously built offshore patrol vessel undertook a Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with French Navy ship FS Surcouf.

The Lafayette class frigate Surcouf visited Visakhapatnam from June 26 - 29 June and participated in a variety of activities with Indian Navy ships which included professional and social interactions, sports fixtures and cross deck visits, officials said. On departure from Visakhapatnam, FS Surcouf undertook various exercises with Indian warships INS Rana and Sumedha, which



INS Rana during a Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with French Navy ship FS Surcouf, in the Bay of Bengal, on Friday

included tactical manoeuvres, replenishment at sea (RAS) approaches, air defence against fighter aircraft and cross deck helicopter operations. The MPX culminated with a customary farewell steam party between the ships reaffirming the close friendship between the two navies. The visit of FS Surcouf to India signifies the

strong navy-to-navy links, interoperability and strong bonds between Indian Navy and French Navy. Earlier, this year, FS La Fayette, a frigate and FS Dixmude, a Mistral-class amphibious assault class ship had participated in an MPX with INS Sahyadri, a guided missile frigate from 10 - 11 March.

# ED raids 5 places in ₹191.54 crore Ponzi Scheme case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has carried out search operations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) at five locations of Bengaluru/Mandya (Karnataka) belonging to Hindustan Infracon India Ltd and related persons in a Ponzi scheme fraud case.

Earlier, ED had recorded a case of money laundering on the basis of an FIR registered by the Vijayanagar police station, Bengaluru City under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), against Hindustan Infracon India Ltd and its promoters/directors for cheating the investors/common public to the tune of Rs 191.54 crore.

"Investigation by ED revealed that the promoters/directors of Hindustan Infracon India Ltd lured prospective investors by

offering high interest rates on different schemes for their investment. However, the said company did not return the deposit and interest due to the investors, thereby cheating the investors," the ED said in a statement.

The said company has collected Rs 389 crore approximately from about 7.18 lakh investors. However, the said company failed to return the amount to the tune of Rs 199 crore to the investors and cheated them of their hard-earned money, it said.

The search operations resulted in the seizure of incriminating documents and records of cash transactions. The diversion of proceeds of crime into the purchase of various immovable properties was detected and the related documents were seized, it added.

# Co-ops role in backing small farmers highlighted



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an address at the 17th Indian, Cooperative Congress held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday highlighted the significant role of cooperatives in supporting small farmers across the country.

Taking a dig at the Congress party's poll guarantees, Prime Minister Modi emphasised that his government is delivering concrete results rather than mere promises.

Under the theme 'Amrit Kaal: Prosperity through Cooperation for a Vibrant India', Prime Minister Modi discussed the various measures taken in recent years to boost the cooperative sector in different states. He inaugurated the e-portals of an e-Commerce website for Cooperative Marketing and the Cooperative Extension and Advisory Services Portal during the event. Addressing the audience, Modi emphasised the nation's commitment to achieving a "Viksit and Atmanirbhar Bharat" (developed and self-reliant India).

He stressed the need for collective efforts, where cooperation plays a pivotal role in realising these goals. The Prime Minister acknowledged the remarkable contributions of dairy cooperatives in making India the world's leading milk producer, as well as the role of cooperatives in positioning India among the top sugar-producing countries globally. He highlighted that cooperatives have become a vital support system for small farmers in various parts of the country.

Furthermore, Modi highlighted the significant involvement of women in the dairy sector, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of the workforce. Consequently, the government has prioritised strengthening the cooperative sector to promote the development of a prosperous India. Modi informed the gathering that a separate ministry was established for cooperatives, accompanied by a dedicated budget. This has allowed cooperatives to be presented with a platform equivalent to the corporate sector.

He also outlined measures taken to strengthen cooperative societies, including the reduction of tax rates. In addition, he discussed efforts to strengthen cooperative banks and provided examples of increased flexibility in opening new branches and offering doorstep banking services.

Modi also addressed the issue of increasing global fertilizer prices and the burden they impose on farmers. He compared the price of a bag of urea in India, which is ₹270, with prices in Bangladesh (₹720), Pakistan (₹800), China (₹2,100), and the USA (₹3,000). This comparison underscored the Government's commitment to alleviating farmers' financial burden and the extensive efforts required to bring about positive change in their lives.

During the event, Union Home Minister Amit Shah commended Modi's dedication to uplifting the cooperative sector. He expressed optimism that, under the Prime Minister's leadership, cooperatives would make greater contributions in the next 25 years than they had in the past century.

# India surfaces as major player in Middle East: US magazine

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An article in Foreign Policy, a noted US magazine focused on global affairs, has cited the emergence of India as a "major player" in the Middle East as one of the most interesting geopolitical developments in the region in years.

The write-up highlighted New Delhi's deep and growing ties with major countries in the region, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to assert that the evolution of India's place reflects the changing international order and the willingness — perhaps even eagerness — of these nations to



benefit from the new multipolarity. There is little that the United States can do about this development and may even in a paradoxical way benefit from it, its author Steven A Cook has argued.

"If the United States' Middle Eastern partners are looking for an alternative to Washington, it is better that

New Delhi is among the choices." The US may no longer be the undisputed big dog in the region, but as long as India expands its presence in the Middle East, neither Russia nor China can assume that role," he asserted.

The author recalled his visit to India around a decade ago to state what had struck him then that Indians did not want to play a larger role in the Middle East. In the 10 years since his trip, however, things have changed, he said.

"While US officials and analysts are obsessed with every diplomatic move Beijing makes and eye Chinese invest-

ment in the Middle East with suspicion, Washington is overlooking one of the most interesting geopolitical developments in the region in years: the emergence of India as a major player in the Middle East," Cook wrote. When it comes to the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are aggressively seeking ways to expand relations with India, the article said.

It is a significant shift because both countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have long aligned with Pakistan, it says, noting that the pivot to India stems in part from a common interest in containing

Islamist extremism but much of the pull is economic. It highlighted the growing economic ties between India and the two countries to make the point. On India's strong ties with Israel, it said they are perhaps the most well-developed of New Delhi's relations in the region.

These ties have rapidly developed in a variety of fields, notably high tech and defence after Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Indian head of government to visit Israel in 2017 and his counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu returned the honour a year later.

WORLD BRIEFS

BIDEN TO HOST SWEDEN'S PM AT WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden will host Sweden's prime minister at the White House on Wednesday in a show of solidarity as the United States presses for the Nordic nation's entry into NATO, a bid stalled by objections from two members of the Western military alliance.

SIX TERRORISTS KILLED IN PAKISTAN: ISPR
PESHAWAR: Pakistani security forces killed at least six terrorists in two districts of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the military's media wing said.

WEBB SPACE CAPTURES GLOWING SATURN RINGS
CAPE CANAVERAL: Saturn has a fresh new look thanks to NASA's Webb Space Telescope. The gas giant is dark in the latest photo by Webb, released on Friday, but its rings are glowing.

7 KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP IN PAK'S SINDH PROVINCE
KARACHI: At least seven persons were killed and 20 injured after two overspeeding buses collided in Pakistan's Sindh province, officials said.

51 KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN KENYA
NAIROBI: A truck rammed into several other vehicles and market traders in western Kenya killing at least 51 people, police said.

16 KIDNAPPED COPS RELEASED IN MEXICO
TAPACHULA: After three days of captivity, 16 police employees kidnapped in southern Mexico have been released.

STRONG EARTHQUAKE SHAKES INDONESIA
YOYAKARTA: A strong undersea earthquake shook parts of Indonesia's densely populated main island of Java, causing panic as it killed at least one person, injured two others and damaged dozens of houses.

INDIAN GETS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD
LONDON: Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla presented the coveted Elephant Family environmental award to Indian conservationists -- filmmaker Kartiki Gonsalves behind Oscar-winning documentary 'The Elephant Whisperers' and the Real Elephant Collective (TREC) of 70 Adivasi artists -- at a ceremony here.

France arrests over 1,300 after riots

AP ■ PARIS

Rioting and looting raged in cities around France for a fourth night despite a huge police deployment and 1,311 arrests, as family and friends prepared on Saturday to bury the 17-year-old whose killing by police unleashed the unrest and forced the French president to cancel an important trip abroad.

France's Interior Ministry announced the new figure for arrests around the country, where 45,000 police officers fanned out in a so-far unsuccessful bid to quell days of violence that was triggered after the teen's death on Tuesday.

The violence in France was taking a toll on Macron's international commitments. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's office said that Macron phoned on Saturday to request a postponement of what would have been the first state visit by a French president to Germany in 23 years.

The trip, supposed to officially start on Monday, would have seen Macron travel to Berlin and two other German cities. Macron's office said he spoke with Steinmeier and, given the internal security situation, the president (Macron) said he wishes to stay in France over the coming days.

Given the importance of the French-German relationship on the European political scene, the scrapping of the official trip was a clear sign of the gravity of France's unrest.

Rituals to bid farewell to the teen, identified only as Nahel, who was killed in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, began on Saturday with a viewing of the open coffin by family and friends.

Later, at the entrance to a cemetery on a quiet hill in Nanterre with central Paris in the distance, dozens of people from all walks of life stood along the road, waiting for the teen's body to arrive.



measures. Since the unrest began on Tuesday night, police have made a total of 2,400 arrests — more than half of those in the fourth night of violence.

Still, the damage was widespread, from Paris to Marseille and Lyon and even far away, in the French territories overseas, where a 54-year-old died after being hit by a stray bullet in French Guiana.

including 79 overnight, but authorities haven't released injury tallies for protesters. The reaction to the killing was a potent reminder of the persistent poverty, discrimination, unemployment and other lack of opportunity in neighbourhoods around France where many residents trace their roots to former French colonies -- like where Nahel grew up.

"Nahel's story is the lighter that ignited the gas. Hopeless young people were waiting for it. We lack housing and jobs, and when we have (jobs), our wages are too low," said Samba Seck, a 39-year-old transportation worker in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois.

Clichy was the birthplace of weeks of riots in 2005 that shook France, prompted by the deaths of two teenagers electrocuted in a power substation while fleeing from police. One of the boys lived in the same housing project as Seck.

Like many Clichy residents, he lamented the violence targeting his town, where the remains of a burned car stands beneath his apartment building, and the town hall entrance was set alight in rioting this week.

Referring to possible peace talks, the Spanish leader said that "only Ukraine can set the terms and times for peace negotiations. Other countries and regions are proposing peace plans.

Their involvement is much appreciated, but, at the same time, we can't accept them entirely.

3 killed, 17 wounded in Russian attacks amid Spain's support to Kyiv

Kyiv (AP): Ukrainian officials on Saturday morning reported more civilian casualties from Russian shelling in the country's east and south, as a visit by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez began in Kyiv as a show of continuing support from Madrid and the European Union for Ukraine's fight to dislodge invading Russian forces from its territory.

In an address to Ukraine's parliament that received several standing ovations, Sánchez said, "We'll be with you as long as it takes."

took over the six-month rotating presidency of the 27-nation EU. Sánchez will meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with the two set to give a joint news conference on Saturday afternoon.

has massed troops and attempted to advance. In the latest of regular social media updates, the General Staff named the outskirts of three cities — Bakhmut, Lyman and Marinka — as front-line hot spots, and said that Russia over the previous day staged unsuccessful assault attempts there.

unleashed by the collapse earlier this month of a major Dnipro river dam. In the northeastern Kharkiv region, Russian shelling over the previous day wounded a 57-year-old civilian man, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said that same morning.

Referring to possible peace talks, the Spanish leader said that "only Ukraine can set the terms and times for peace negotiations. Other countries and regions are proposing peace plans.

Belarus building army camp for Wagner fighters

Minsk (AP): Satellite images analysed by the Associated Press on Saturday showed what appeared to be a newly built military-style camp in Belarus, with statements from a Belarusian guerrilla group and officials suggesting it may be used to house fighters from the Wagner mercenary group.

The images provided by Planet Labs PLC suggest that dozens of tents have been erected within the past two weeks at a former military base outside Osipovichi, a town 230 kilometres (142 miles) north of the Ukrainian border. A satellite photo taken on Jun. 15 shows no sign of the rows of white and green structures that are clearly visible in a later image, dated Jun. 30.

16 KIDNAPPED COPS RELEASED IN MEXICO
TAPACHULA: After three days of captivity, 16 police employees kidnapped in southern Mexico have been released.

INDIAN GETS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD
LONDON: Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla presented the coveted Elephant Family environmental award to Indian conservationists -- filmmaker Kartiki Gonsalves behind Oscar-winning documentary 'The Elephant Whisperers' and the Real Elephant Collective (TREC) of 70 Adivasi artists -- at a ceremony here.

King apologises for Dutch role in slavery

AP ■ AMSTERDAM

Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologised on Saturday for his country's role in slavery and asked for forgiveness in a historic speech greeted by cheers and whoops at an event to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery.

The king's speech followed Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's apology late last year for the country's role in the slave trade and slavery. It is part of a wider reckoning with colonial histories in the West that have been spurred in recent years by the Black Lives Matter movement.

"But today, on this day of remembrance, I ask forgiveness for the clear failure to act in the face of this crime against humanity," he added.

Research published last month showed that the king's ancestors earned the modern-day equivalent of 545 million euros (USD 595 million) from slavery, including profits from shares that were effectively given to them as gifts.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Sushila Nagpal W/o Late Mr. Krishna Lal Nagpal is intending to sell Left Side Portion of Built-up Property Bearing No. E-4/...

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mr. Rajesh Kumar Goyal & Mr. Rakesh Kumar Goyal are the owner of Plot No. 7471 to 7476, having land area measuring 404 Sq. Yards, i.e., 337.75 Sq. Mtrs., situated at Teliwalli, Ram Nagar, Bahadur Ganj, New Delhi-110055...

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Charan Kaur W/o Mr. Sarwan Singh, was the owner of Built-up Property Bearing No. 101, area measuring 171 sq. yd. (143.05 sq. mtr.) out of Rect. No. 52, Kirti Ngr. No. 15, (57/15) Situated in the Kirti Nagar, Gurgaon, Haryana...

UK press watchdog: Tabloid column on Meghan sexist

AP ■ LONDON

A column in The Sun tabloid that fantasised about seeing Prince Harry's wife, Meghan, being pelted with feces as she was paraded naked through the streets was sexist, Britain's press watchdog found.

The column by TV personality Jeremy Clarkson in December described how he hated the Duchess of Sussex "on a cellular level." He said she used "vivid bedroom promises" to turn Harry into a "warrior of woke" and controlled him like a sock puppet.

tion, which most UK newspapers, magazines and digital news outlets voluntarily commit to be regulated by, found that multiple "pejorative and prejudicial" references to Meghan's sex breached its editors' code.

"Stereotypes about women using their sexuality to exert influence... implied that it was the duchess's sexuality -- rather than any other attribute or accomplishment -- which was the source of her power," the findings said.

SL gets parl nod for domestic debt restructuring plan

Colombo (PTI): A special session of Sri Lanka's Parliament on Saturday overwhelmingly approved the cash-strapped government's domestic debt restructuring (DDR) plan, a vital element in the bankrupt nation's bid for recovery from the worst economic crisis.

PUBLIC NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of the Borrower/Co-Borrower/ Guarantor, Property Address of Secured Asset, Date of Notice, NPA Date. Row 1: Amit Choudhary/ Priyanka, A/c No. LBHIS00005229885 W 12 R-87 D D A Market Camp No.5 Jawalapur, West Delhi, New Delhi

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of the Borrower/ Account Number, Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession, Date of Demand Notice, Name of Branch. Row 1: Lal Mohan Yadav/ Dulari Devi/ LBDEL00004331432, Plot No-370, Sector 42, Urban Estate, Gurgaon/ June 28, 2023

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Shal Tower, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road Karol Bagh New Delhi-110005.

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of the Borrower/ Number (Loan Account Number (DHFL Old LAN & ICICI New LAN)), Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession, Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.), Name of Branch. Row 1: Neeraj Ahuja/ Anu Ahuja/ 9200001681/QZZRH00005064374/ Property No. E-15A, First Floor, East Uttar Nagar, Khasra No.1640, Village Bindapur, New Delhi/ June 28, 2023

# PSBs profit tripled to ₹1.04 lakh in 9 yrs; need to continue momentum to fuel economy: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the public sector banks' profit in the last nine years has tripled to Rs 1.04 lakh crore due to initiatives taken by the government and underlined the need for continuing the momentum to fuel economy.

The net profit of public sector banks (PSBs) has almost tripled to Rs 1.04 lakh crore in FY23 from Rs 36,270 crore in FY2014.

Inaugurating the corporate office of Punjab and Sind Bank here, the minister said that banks need to "build on laurels" by following the best corporate governance principles.

"Banks should not sit back and revel in success. They should follow best corporate governance practices, adhere to regulatory norms, ensure prudent liquidity management and continue to focus on having robust asset-liability and risk management," she said, stress-



ing that the Indian economy has moved away from the 'twin balance sheet problem' to 'twin balance sheet advantage'.

The finance minister said that there was a time when the Indian economy faced the problem of twin balance sheets -- stress on the balance sheets of banks and corporate at the same time.

Before the Modi government came to power in 2014, difficulty in the Indian banking system actually started because of irrational 'Phone Banking', which happened during the tenure of the UPA govern-

ment, she said. Back then, Sitharaman said, the priority in lending was given to not-so-worthy customers in an unprofessional manner. As a result, they became NPAs.

"As a result (of various initiatives of the government), I'm glad to say the problems of twin balance sheets have gone away," she said, adding that as per the Reserve Bank, it is a twin balance sheet advantage that is benefiting the Indian economy.

Observing that combined profits of the public sector banks tripled to Rs 1.04 lakh

crore in 2022-23 against Rs 36,270 crore in FY14, Sitharaman said the banks "need to build on laurels".

"At this stage, it is our duty towards the people of India to ensure that the banks can build on the strength and not lose this momentum that we have achieved," the minister noted.

She said that the performance of the public sector banks has improved on account of various initiatives taken by the Modi government since 2014.

There was an improvement in all critical parameters like return on asset, net interest margin and provisioning coverage ratio, she added.

The 4R strategy followed by the Modi government to revitalise the state-owned banks has yielded results, she said. The 4R strategy refers to recognising the problem of non-performing assets, recapitalising the banks, resolving their problems, and reforming them.

Sitharaman further said the banks should endeavour to adopt a proactive approach in reaching out to people to achieve optimum utilisation of financial inclusion schemes.

There should be a focus on credit outreach in states where the credit uptake is lower than the national average, particularly in the northeast and eastern parts of the country, she said, adding they must aim to increase brick-and-mortar banking presence in border areas, particularly in the those covered in the Vibrant Village Programme.

The minister also recalled the story of the Punjab and Sind Bank, which had suffered due to partition in 1947. Only two of the ten branches remained in India, while the rest went to Pakistan.

Starting from just two branches in 1947, the Punjab and Sind Bank has 1,553 branches, and the 1,554th at Karimganj in Assam was inaugurated remotely by the minister on Saturday.

# GST mop-up rises 12% to over ₹1.61 lakh cr in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections rose 12 per cent to over Rs 1.61 lakh crore in June, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday.

The gross GST collection has crossed Rs 1.60 lakh crore mark for the fourth time since the roll-out of the indirect tax regime six years ago on July 1, 2017.

The average monthly gross GST collection for the first (April-June) quarter of the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 are Rs 1.10 lakh crore, Rs 1.51 lakh crore and Rs 1.69 lakh crore, respectively, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of June 2023 is Rs 1,61,497 crore of which Central GST is Rs 31,013 crore, State GST is Rs 38,292 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 80,292 crore (including Rs 39,035 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs



11,900 crore (including Rs 1,028 crore collected on import of goods)," the statement said.

The revenues for June 2023 are 12 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year. During the month, the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 18 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year.

The revenues had touched a record high of Rs 1.87 lakh crore in April. In May, it was Rs 1.57 lakh crore.

# Govt revises crop residue management guidelines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said it has revised the crop residue management guidelines, thus enabling efficient exit-management of paddy straw generated in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

As per the revised guidelines, techno-commercial pilot projects for paddy straw supply chain will be established under the bilateral agreement between the beneficiary/aggregator and industries utilising the paddy straw, the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

The beneficiary or aggregator can be farmers, rural entrepreneurs, cooperative societies of farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and panchayats, it said.

According to the ministry, the move will supplement the efforts of paddy straw management through in-situ options.

During the three-year tenure of the interventions, 1.5 million tonne of surplus paddy straw are expected to be collected which would otherwise have been burnt in fields.

# 500-Special Report on non-Govt firms

New Delhi: Burgundy Private, Axis Bank, and Hurun India released the 'Burgundy Private Hurun India 500-Special Report, featuring the top 500 valuable non-state-owned companies in India. The report covers changes in their value from October 30, 2022, to April 30, 2023, with a slight 6.4 per cent decrease from INR 227 lakh crore to INR 212 lakh crore. To be listed, companies required a value of INR 5,500 crores. However, the listed companies performed worse than SENSEX and NASDAQ, with NASDAQ showing an impressive 11 per cent increase in the same period.



growth in coal production, NTPC has implemented a range of strategies and technologies. These include the adoption of rigorous safety measures, improved mine planning, equipment automation, workforce training and implementation of continuous monitoring and analysis systems.

NTPC Ltd, under the power ministry, is India's largest integrated power utility, contributing 1/4th of the country's energy requirement.

# Aim to double every four years: HDFC Bank MD after merger

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Having successfully executed the merger with parent HDFC, HDFC Bank's managing director and chief executive Sashidhar Jagdishan on Saturday said the country's largest lender aims to double every four years.

In a letter to the over 4,000 employees from HDFC who joined the bank's rolls on Saturday, Jagdishan said the future is bright, and the work on realising the potential of the merger starts now.

"The runway for financial services and mortgage, which are so underserved and under penetrated, is going to be very large. HDFC Bank - the combined entity - with a large and growing distribution and customer franchise, more than adequate capital, healthy asset quality and profitability, will be best positioned to capture growth. The pace at which we aim to grow - we could be creating a new HDFC Bank every 4 years," he said.

HDFC Bank began the day one after the merger with a rebranding exercise, wherein it is putting up its colours at all the over 500 branches and offices of HDFC Ltd.

The erstwhile HDFC's corporate headquarters at Ramon House already sports the HDFC Bank branding, and officials estimated that the entire exercise will be over in the next 24 hours.

It can be noted that dedicated teams have been put in place to make the merger as seamless as possible, right since its announcement on April 4 last year. As part of the USD 40 billion all-share deal, the biggest in Indian corporate history, HDFC Bank had committed to absorb all the over 4,000 employees of its parent.

"Our work starts from today, in realising the potential of what this merger holds for us," Jagdishan wrote.



To realise its growth aims, Jagdishan said the bank will be adding about 1,500 branches every year for some years to better serve the middle class and upper segment of the country.

It will continue investments on the digital front as well which, Jagdishan said, will make HDFC Bank into a 'technology company into banking', and added that the same will get unveiled over the next three years.

The bank will be assessing its people on the basis of how they conduct governance and compliance, teamwork and their ability to delight customers, he said.

The canvas being offered to the HDFC Ltd employees is large -- both professionally and personally, the email said, adding that an external expert was appointed to arrive at the right formula for inducting people into the bank and deciding their role in the hierarchy.

Jagdishan said the cost-revenue ratio of HDFC at 0.04 per cent was the lowest for any mortgage company in the world, and thanked its leadership, including Deepak Parekh, Keki Mistry and Renu Karnad, for creating such an institution.

He said from a customer perspective, the home loan is a very emotional product which establishes a great bond between the financier and borrower and added that HDFC Bank would like to harness the same bond.

"The penetration levels of the home loan product in its (HDFC Bank's) customer base and the extent the distribution

has been leveraged, is quite low. This is an opportunity! The runway for growth is going to be large and for a long time to come," Jagdishan said.

HDFC Bank will move from sales management to a relationship management model because of the opportunity to cross-sell that exists within the franchise after the addition of mortgage finance, insurance and asset management subsidiaries, Jagdishan said. "The velocity of product sales and the reduced touch points to serve the customer will be a game changer with this 'power of bundling,'" he added.

# HDFC Bank starts rebranding HDFC offices, branches

PTI ■ MUMBAI

HDFC Bank started rebranding offices of erstwhile HDFC Ltd with its colours on Saturday, on the first day of operations as a merged entity. Branding at all over the 500 offices and branches of the home loan major started getting the HDFC Bank look from Saturday morning onwards, officials said.

The entire exercise of changing the look at HDFC Ltd's offices and branches is slated to take about 24 hours, they said, adding that HDFC Ltd's corporate headquarters at Ramon House is among the places where the branding has already been changed.

# Indian economy has moved away from twin-balance sheet problem, says FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that the Indian economy has moved away from the twin-balance sheet problem of banks and corporates to twin-balance sheet advantage because of the concerted efforts of the Modi government.

Profit of public sector banks increased to Rs 1.04 lakh crore in 2022-23, tripling from what it was in 2014, the minister said while inaugurating the corporate office of Punjab & Sind Bank here.

The twin-balance sheet problem refers to deterioration in financial health of banks and corporates at the same time.

"As a result (of various

initiatives of the government) I'm glad to say the problems of twin-balance sheets have gone away like the Reserve Bank observing it is a twin-balance sheet advantage that the Indian economy is benefiting from," Sitharaman said.

The minister said the term twin-balance sheet was heard after a long time and according to the Reserve Bank, the Indian economy is now benefiting from the twin-balance sheet advantage.

She said performance of public sector banks have improved on account of various initiatives taken by the Modi government since 2014. There was an improvement in all critical parameters like return on asset, net interest margin and provisioning coverage ratio, she added.

# MSCS amendment bill to come up in Monsoon session: Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said a bill that seeks to amend the law on Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) to bring ease of doing business will come in the Monsoon session of Parliament, starting July 20.

Speaking at the 17th Indian Cooperative Congress here on the occasion of International Day of Cooperatives, Shah said 26 states and Union territories have adopted the draft model by-laws for Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), which means there will be uniform by-laws in a major part of the country from September.

He also said the government wants to frame a new cooperative law that will help in expanding the sector in the next 25 years. It is also planning to set up a cooperative university for which inter-minister-



al discussions have been initiated.

After the formation of a separate cooperation ministry on July 6, 2021, the minister said, many changes have become possible in the field of cooperatives, and changes will continue to happen in the future.

First of all, within the constitutional framework, the government has tried to bring uniformity in the Cooperative Law without disturbing the rights of states and the Centre, he said.

"With the initiative of

(Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji, the work of amendment in the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act has been done by the Parliamentary Committee with consensus. This law is going to come up within this session itself," Shah said.

The 2022 amendment bill seeks to amend the Act to align with certain provisions of the Constitution and address concerns with the functioning and governance of cooperative societies.

The Bill was referred to a Joint Committee on December 20, 2022, and the committee submitted its report on March 15, 2023, agreeing with most of the provisions of the bill.

That apart, the minister said PACS have different by-laws in the country. To bring uniformity, the Cooperation Ministry came out with model by-laws.

"I am happy to share that

26 states/UTs have adopted the model by-laws on PACS. About 85 per cent of PACS will follow single by-laws from September onwards," he said.

Stating that the scope of work of PACS has been widened now, the minister said they can work in different areas like dairy and fishery and this will enable them to expand easily. Many areas of work have been linked with PACS. For example, common seva kendra will not only make PACS viable but become the soul of rural India. PACs at the village level are being involved in the formation of grain storage projects, he said.

The government is also creating a database of cooperatives in the country and 90 per cent of this work has been completed now. With the click of a button, a registrar or officer in the ministry will be able to know about the details of the cooperatives, he said.

The database will not only help in identifying the location of each cooperative but also help in designing a strategy for expansion work, he said.

"Currently, there are 55,000 PACS in the country. Our target is to set up 3 lakh PACS in the next three years. There will be one PACS in each panchayat. Then only the foundation of cooperative will strengthen," Shah noted.

Listing out other initiatives, the minister said cooperatives are allowed to become LPG and fertiliser distributors, petrol pumps and Janaushadhi Kendra operators. They are also on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

When it comes to taxes, he said cooperatives were not treated at par with private companies. However, the Modi government has removed the differences and brought them on par with the cooperates.

# GST officers bust 304 syndicates involving ₹25K cr fake ITC claims

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST officers have busted 304 syndicates involving 9,000 fake GSTINs and input tax credit (ITC) claims of Rs 25,000 crore in the ongoing drive against bogus firms, CBIC chairman Vivek Johri said on Saturday.

The chief of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) flagged that only 40 per cent of the corporate income taxpayer base is registered under Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Currently, 1.39 lakh businesses are registered under GST, launched 6 years ago on July 1, 2017. Speaking at the GST Day 2023 event here, Johri appealed to the business to get registered under GST and said the department is conducting an outreach programme to make business-

es aware of the benefits of GST.

The Centre and state tax officers are conducting a special two-month drive to identify fake businesses registered under GST for the purpose of claiming ITC fraudulently and defrauding the exchequer.

In the ongoing drive, officers have identified 304 syndicates involving 9,000 fake GSTINs (GST identification numbers) and bogus ITC claims of Rs 25,000 crore, Johri said.

He said the department is using advanced data analytics, and adopting a non-intrusive approach to nab evaders. "I warn those who continue to do this that we come at them with very heavy hand...We want a larger but clean taxpayer base so that honest taxpayers are protected," Johri said.

# National Conference on 'Role of Vaishnavism in Growth of Tamil'

PNS ■ KATTANKULATHUR

The great, ancient language of Tamil was not only a repository of knowledge, but it has always been intertwined with spirituality, devotion and bhakti literature, speakers said at the National Conference on Role of Vaishnavism in growth of Tamil at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur on Thursday.

The National Conference was organised by Thamizh Perayam, established by Dr. T.R. Paarivendhar, MP, Founder and Chancellor, SRM Group of Institutions and SRM Institute of Science and Technology. Thamizh Perayam, established in 2010, is an initiative of Dr. Paarivendhar to popularise and develop Tamil globally and to create awareness among people all over the world about the richness, uniqueness, and greatness of Tamil - the world's classical and most ancient lan-



guage.

As a part of this endeavour, the National Conference on Role of Vaishnavism in Tamil was organised, which brought together seers, academicians, Tamil language scholars, educationists, and students together in a single platform.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Paarivendhar said SRM IST was synonymous with world-class and quality higher education in engineering, technology, medicine, management, and science. As they wanted their

students to be equipped with the knowledge of other important aspects like culture, history, and heritage, they started Thamizh Perayam in 2010, and in the past 13 years, they have been honouring people who had made rich contribution to the Tamil language. As there was a suggestion that Thamizh Perayam should also touch upon spirituality, they had been organising events and activities as part of their service to religion and the growth of spiritual literature.

# Financial services co Eureka Group acquires four stock broking firms, in talks with 2-3 entities

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Financial services company Eureka Group has acquired four stock broking firms and is in talks with two-three such entities as the brokerage industry is experiencing "consolidation" with rising compliance costs and shrinking margins, an official said.

Any broker with less than 5,000-7,000 active clients will find their business unviable, he said.

"The brokerage industry is facing a number of challenges, including shrinking margins and rising compliance costs. These challenges are making it difficult for discount brokers and small ones to survive. Consolidation is taking place. Already four brokers have merged with us and another 2-3 brokers are in the pipeline," Eureka Group Executive Director Rakesh



Somani told PTI.

Smaller firms are often unable to generate enough revenue to cover their costs, while large brokers have the resources to comply with regulations and invest in technology, he said.

He was speaking on the sidelines of Financial Conclave 2023 on Friday evening, where Kotak AMC MD and Group President Nilesh Shah, NSE Chief Business Development

Officer Sriram Krishnan, NSDL Executive VP Prasant Vagal, Kedia Securities promoter Vijay Kedi were present.

"Things have been really tough for firms which have failed to invest heavily in technology and are not able to bring in other financial services under a single roof to acquire clients," a promoter of a broking firm who merged with Eureka said on condition of anonymity.

# NEERAJ NOT TO COMPETE BEFORE WORLD C'SHIPS IN BUDAPEST BEGINNING AUG 19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will straightaway compete in the World Athletics Championships in Budapest starting August 19, without participating in any other meet after his exploits in the Diamond League in Lausanne.

The 25-year-old Chopra, who returned to action after a one-month injury lay-off, won his second consecutive Diamond League title in Switzerland on Friday night with a throw of 87.66m. He had also won the season-opening Diamond League meet in Doha on May 5.

"The next competition, Budapest, will be a big one for me," Chopra said in Lausanne after winning the men's javelin throw event.

"I wanted to win so I'm super happy with the results but I also want to go back to training and fix some of the things that I noticed and those are going to make me stronger."

He termed Lausanne as a lucky city for him.

"Lausanne always treats me well. Last year, I won and this year too, so I look forward to coming again next year and win again," said Chopra, referring to the win last year, which was his maiden Diamond League title.

Chopra's coach Dr Klaus Bartonietz confirmed to PTI that his ward will now straightaway go to the World Championships (August 19-27) in Budapest.

"Yes, Chopra meant to say World Championships," Bartonietz said.

The men's javelin throw qualification round of the Budapest World Championships is scheduled for August



25, which is more than 50 days from now. This would mean that Chopra will be going to the World Championships after taking part in just two top competitions — Doha and Lausanne legs of Diamond League.

A top official of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) told PTI that Chopra has fully recovered from the muscle strain he had sustained last month, which led him to skip three top events — all World Athletics Continental Tour gold label competitions.

"He is fully fit. I think he will not compete (before World Championships). Maybe, he wants to concentrate more on World Championships," the official said.

Chopra had won a silver in the 2022 World Championships in Eugene, USA, last year behind Anderson Peters of Grenada and he would be aiming for a gold this time.

The Indian superstar, who has a personal best of 89.94m, will miss the July 21 Monaco leg of the Diamond League where javelin throw will be in the roster.

But, since he has cemented his top spot in the Diamond League standings with 16 points after winning Lausanne leg on Friday, there should not be any problem in qualifying for the grand finale on September 16-17 in Eugene, USA where the top eight will compete for the coveted trophy.

Just after the World Championships, there is the Zurich leg of the Diamond League on August 31 where Chopra can compete.

He is the reigning Diamond League champion, having won the trophy in the 2022 grand finale in Zurich in September last.



## Rabindra finishes P5 & P8 in Round 3 of European GT4 Series

PTI ■ SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS (BELGIUM)

Bengaluru-born Akhil Rabin-Bdra, the only Asian on the European GT4 Series Grid, made a P5 & P8 finish in the third round in the Pro-AM category.

This is the second season that Akhil is representing the Racing Spirit of Lemans along with his Belgian teammate Rodrigue Gillion as he drives the Aston Martin Vantage AMR.

Akhil began the round with P8 in Qualification 1 where he finished two laps with a timing of 2:31.348, while his teammate Gillion managed to secure P11 in Qualifying 2 with a timing of 2:35.008, finishing three laps.

In the main races of the series, Akhil started Race 1 at P8 in the Pro-AM category and 27th overall in the grid and Gillion finished the race on an impressive P5 in the Pro-AM category.

The duo started Race 2 in the grid at P11 in the Pro-AM category. Post Gillion's start in race 2, Akhil managed to climb up places and finish at P8 in the Pro-AM category with a timing of 1:02:25.058.

"We are happy with our progress this weekend, we got our best ever result of P5 in category," Akhil said in a release.

"Race two was a bit trickier with the wet conditions and we might have left a couple of positions on the table. Misano is a track we both like and we are looking forward to an even stronger result." Akhil currently is on 8th position in the Pro-AM driver's classification table with 38 points.

Akhil has had a spectacular domestic season, winning the Drivers' Championship in the inaugural edition of Indian Racing League. He will be back on the grid for Round 4 of the European GT4 at Misano circuit in Italy which will take place from July 14 to 16.



## Avinash to compete in Stockholm Diamond League 3000m steeplechase

PTI ■ STOCKHOLM

India's top 3000m steeplechase runner Avinash Sable will compete in his second Diamond League of the season at the Stockholm leg on Sunday, where he would look to better his own performance from last event.

The 28-year-old Sable had finished 10th, clocking a below-par 8:17.18 seconds, at the Diamond League meeting in Rabat, Morocco on May 28 in his only 3000m steeplechase race of the year so far. He would be aiming to improve his timing here.

The 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medallist Sable, who has been training abroad to prepare for the August 19 to 27 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, has clocked a personal best time of 8:11.20, which is also the national record.

Olympic and world champion Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco will be targeting more Diamond League success following his win on home turf in Rabat with the season's second best time of 7:56.68.

Other medal contenders could be 2019 Diamond League champion Getnet Wale of Ethiopia, the third best this season with a time of 8:05.15, and 2022 Commonwealth Games champion Abraham Kibiwot of Kenya (SB: 8:05.51), who had finished third in Rabat Diamond League. Sable was given exemption from taking part in the National Inter-State Championships in Bhubaneswar last month to prepare for the World Championships.

He was also not named in the Indian team for the Asian Championships (July 12-16) in Thailand. He will train in Switzerland in August before the World Championships.

## Indian boxers finish campaign with five medals at Elorda Cup



PTI ■ ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)

India ended their campaign at the Elorda Cup boxing tournament with five medals after Vijay Kumar, Sushma, Keisham Sanjit Singh, Neema and Sumit clinched a bronze each in their respective categories here on Saturday.

Despite a spirited performance, Vijay Kumar (60kg) went down fighting 1-4 against Beknur Ozhanov of Kazakhstan in the semifinal bout to sign off with a bronze medal.

In the 81kg category, Sushma fought valiantly against the 2023 World Championships bronze medallist Fariza Sholtay of Kazakhstan but had to endure a 0-5 defeat by unanimous decision and conclude her campaign with a bronze.

The other pugilists to secure medals for India at the tournament were Keisham (48kg), Neema (63kg) and Sumit (86kg) — all signing off with bronze.

The bronze medallists will be awarded with a prize money of USD 200.

## Iniesta says farewell to Japanese soccer with rare start for Kobe

AP ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

Andres Iniesta said goodbye to Japanese soccer on Saturday with his first league start of the season as title-chasing Vissel Kobe had to settle for a 1-1 draw at home to Consadole Sapporo.

The 39-year-old midfielder joined Kobe from Barcelona in 2018 but has found playing time increasingly hard to come by with the latest appearance taking his total minutes on the field after 18 games this season to just 94. A sell-out crowd of 30,000 at Noevir Stadium gave Iniesta an affectionate send-off, organizing a tifo display which showed the player wearing Kobe's No. 8 shirt and holding banners that read "Gracias Andres."

Iniesta was a peripheral figure in the first half as Sapporo took control and the lead after 22 minutes of the J-League game. Thailand's Supachok Sarachat reacted quickly to score from close range after goalkeeper Daiya Maekawa failed to deal with a cross from the right. By the time Matheus Thuler headed home a late goal to earn Kobe a point, Iniesta was watching from the bench.

He left the field in the 56th minute, taking off the captain's armband, shaking hands with teammates and coaching staff and bowing to the fans who gave him a standing ovation. It was his last action in what has been a mixed 5 1/2 years.

"I'm grateful for the love and respect the fans have shown me. I want to provide a situation they can enjoy and get excited about," Iniesta said in a pre-game interview. "There was difficulty in not being picked to play after putting my heart into training. I've experienced a lot of things over these five years, which is

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a long time."

While injuries had an impact, Iniesta, who scored the only goal of the 2010 World Cup final as Spain beat the Netherlands, was unable to help Kobe to achieve its ambition of becoming the No. 1 club in Asia. The highest league finish for the team with Iniesta was third in 2021, with the team midtable in the other seasons. He did, however, help the Kansai club to a first-ever trophy, winning the Emperor's Cup in 2019.

The club's best season since Iniesta arrived is the current campaign in which the veteran has played a limited part. Kobe would have moved into first place with a victory over Sapporo but stayed in third following the draw.

Iniesta's next destination has yet to be confirmed and he has been linked with clubs in Europe as well as South America.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Kuwait had to stretch their last sinew before eking out a nervy 1-0 win over Bangladesh to enter the SAFF Championship final here on Saturday.

Abdullah Al Bloushi scored the winner for Kuwait in the dying minutes of the first half of extra time. They will face either India or Lebanon in the summit clash on July 4. Before the goal, the match saw both the sides frittering away chances with abandon. It started in the second minute of the first half itself when Bangladesh's Shekh Morsalin only had Kuwait goalkeeper Anisur Rahman to beat but shot the ball straight into the latter's hands.

Kuwait were not far behind either. Mobarak Al Faneeni

## Kuwait beat Bangladesh 1-0 to enter SAFF Championship final

made a header into an open goal but there was no real power in it as a Bangladesh defender cleared the ball near the line.

As the match progressed, the tussle for superiority intensified without a clear winner emerging. Even amid that clash of equals, Bangladesh's veteran striker Rakib Hossain shone brightly with his quick invasions of the rival box.

Rakib was very close to putting Bangladesh ahead as well. He had made blazing shots twice in the beginning of the sec-



ond half and in the 61st minute. But Kuwait custodian Abdul Rahman and the crossbar denied him on both the occasions. Just as the match seemed to be heading towards a shootout, Ahmad Al Dhefeery freed Al Bloushi with a clever pass. Al Bloushi did not fail to find the net this time, breaking Bangladesh hearts.

Bangladesh tried gamely in the second half that saw some heated moments involving players and match officials. But Kuwait managed to hang on.

## Verstappen qualifies in first place for Austrian Grand Prix sprint race

AP ■ SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA)

Defending Formula One champion Max Verstappen continued his dominant form when he qualified in first place for the sprint race which takes place later Saturday at the Austrian Grand Prix.

The runaway championship leader, who had already secured pole position for Sunday's GP, was 49 seconds quicker than his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez and .57 ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris. Nico Hulkenberg qualified in fourth place ahead of Ferrari duo Carlos Sainz Jr. and Charles Leclerc.

"It was good, the track was drying up," Verstappen said. "I think we did well. We got the car in the right window."

The shortened qualifying format — known in F1 as the "sprint shootout" — set the grid for a 17-lap sprint race later, where seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton starts from 18th place after being knocked out of the first part of sprint qualifying. Hamilton looked pensive as he

walked back through the paddock to rejoin his team's garage.

Charles Leclerc just squeezed into Q2, where Mercedes' bad day continued. Mechanics frantically worked on George Russell's steering rack due to a hydraulic problem, but could not get the car ready in time. He will start from 15th in the sprint race, if his car is repaired in time.

The Austrian GP is the second of six F1 events with a format featuring a sprint race on the Saturday, where the winner gets eight points, and the second driver gets seven, down to one point for the eighth-place finisher. Perez won the sprint race in Azerbaijan, with Verstappen finishing third.

Verstappen and other drivers were annoyed with the race stewards on Friday for being too strict about staying within track limits during qualifying for Sunday's race, where Verstappen starts from the pole position for the fourth straight race, sixth time this season and 26th overall.

He will start ahead of Leclerc and Sainz on Sunday.



FERNLEY TRIBUTES

F1 president Stefano Domenicali has paid tribute to Bob Fernley, the former deputy team principal of Force India, who died at the age of 70. His death was announced by F1 on Friday night. No further details were given.

"He was such an important part of Formula 1 and his love and passion for the sport will live forever," Domenicali said.

Fernley worked briefly with McLaren as president of its Indianapolis 500 return project until he was fired in 2019 when Fernando Alonso failed to qualify. He replaced Domenicali as chairman of the FIA's single-seater Commission from 2020 to 2022.

Alpine driver Esteban Ocon, who joined Force India in 2017, called Fernley "a great person and leader" on Twitter.

Fernley left the team when it was sold to the Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll in August 2018.

## NCA: State unit trainers appear for Australian S&C Level 1 exam to upgrade themselves

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 114 strength and conditioning coaches from the BCCI's affiliated units recently appeared for a Level 1 test conducted by the National Cricket Academy, in collaboration with Australian Strength & Conditioning Association (ASCA), in their bid to upgrade themselves. BCCI secretary Jay Shah had recently mentioned that NCA's Sports Science team headed by Nitin Patel is trying to formulate a uniform training (S&C) module to be followed by states, which in turn would help the national team.

It is understood that going into the future, BCCI would like all the state to employ those S&C coaches who have been certified by the NCA. The name of the program is 'BCCI ASCA Cricket Specific Strength & Conditioning Course'.

While it is learnt that almost



everyone passed the Level 1 Test, only those with 75 per cent marks will be eligible to appear for the Level 2 examination. Most of these trainers are already associated with various first-class teams and one of the 15, who got high percentage is Delhi & District Cricket Association's (DDCA) trainer Yuvraj Salvi.

Some of the other names, who got 75 per cent marks include Himachal Pradesh CA's Rajesh Mehta and Jarnal Singh, CAB's Sanjib Das, Tanuja Lele of MCA, Shyla Alam of Nagaland and Kavita Patel of Railways.

The NCA has summoned two men and one woman S&C coach associated with each state unit for this up-skill initiative. Going forward, the state level

trainers should also be able to implement the S&C module of national team," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. It started with a three-day workshop for 25-30 participants, each in four different batches, spread across two weeks. Each presenter from the ASCA as well as from the NCA described scientific principals and it's transferability into cricket.

Topics like Fitness Testing, Periodisation, Program Design, Needs Analysis, Return to Play etc. Were discussed keeping in mind the modern day cricketing demands. After the workshop, each mentor was assigned approximately 20 mentees, who would then go on to give tasks and assignments on various topics each month throughout the year. At the end it was coincided by a theory and practical exam at Alur Cricket Stadium in the month of June.

# England takes 3 wickets but Oz leads by 313 on fourth morning

AP ■ LONDON

England repaid Australia with short-ball bowling and snared three wickets to rein in the visitors on the fourth morning of the second Ashes test at Lord's on Saturday.

Overnight batters Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith, followed by Travis Head, were dismissed in a half-hour period after drinks. By lunch, Australia was 222-5 in its second innings and leading by a solid 313 runs.

But England hopes were revived. The bowlers resorted to the short ball to try and break up Khawaja and Smith, who were cruising and unconcerned. They took Australia from 130-2 overnight to 187.

England set the trap with six fielders behind square. The batters resisted the temptation to pull and hook until the first over after drinks, also Stuart Broad's first over of the day. Khawaja top-edged Broad to substitute fielder Matthew Potts at fine leg. Khawaja's 188-ball stay ended with him on 77.

Head came in and was dropped, first ball, by James Anderson at gully. Anderson dropped a catch off a Josh Tongue delivery for the second time in the innings.

But on the next ball, Smith steered Tongue straight to Zak Crawley at deep backward square. Smith doubled over before the catch, knowing he'd made a bad choice on 34.



Head then fended off a Broad bumper and Joe Root, at short leg, made a brilliant one-handed catch low to his left. Head was gone for 7.

The catch gave Root the most in England's test history. His 176th catch left behind a tie with Alastair Cook. Cameron

Green took 15 balls to get off the mark and he hit the last two balls before lunch to the boundary by Broad to go to the break on 15. Alex Carey had 10. Compared to the second hour, the first hour at Lord's had all the tension of a village cricket match.

Determined and focused,

Khawaja and Smith were given nothing to be scared of, and England wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow returned to his untidy habits from Edgbaston.

Smith hit Anderson out of the attack with three boundaries in one over; two cover drives and a cut behind point. He even tried

to clobber Ollie Robinson with a tennis-type smash that put him on his back. Khawaja anchored a third straight 60s partnership.

Tired of making nothing happen, the English changed to short-pitched bowling, which Australia used to unravel their first innings.



## Former World Champions West Indies fail to qualify for 2023 World Cup in India

PTI ■ HARARE

Two-time champions West Indies on Saturday crashed out of the race to qualify for the upcoming 2023 50-over World Cup in India, after Scotland shocked them by seven wickets in a Super Six match of the qualifier, here on Saturday.

The champions of 1975 and 1979 editions, this is the first time in the 48 years of tournament history that West Indies won't feature among the top 10 teams in limited overs cricket.

On Saturday, the West Indies once again produced a dismal show with the bat - 181 all-out in 43.5 overs - and Scotland showed no qualms in knocking off the target to win with seven wickets in hand and 6.3 overs to spare and pile up further ignominy on the two-time world champions.

Matt Cross (74 not out off

107 balls) and Brendon McMullen (69 off 106 balls) added 125 for the second wicket to seal the victory.

Having lost a crucial encounter in Super Over eliminator to the Netherlands in a Group A match, which followed a loss to Zimbabwe, the West Indies entered the Super Six round with no points and a net run rate which was inferior to the other teams.

West Indies were always dependent on the outcome of other matches.

West Indies did have four points having earlier beaten the USA (by 35 runs) and Nepal (101 runs), but the wheels came off rapidly owing to poor cricket across departments. But since they lost to both Zimbabwe and the Netherlands — who both qualified for the Super Six from Group A — the West Indies carried no points further.

## ODI WC: Pak to send security team to India for inspecting WC venues



PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan is set to send a security delegation to India for inspecting the venues before giving clearance for the national team's travel to the neighbouring country for this year's ICC ODI World Cup.

An official source in the Inter-Provincial Coordination (Sports) Ministry said that the government, including the foreign and interior ministry would decide when to send the security delegation to India once the new chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board was elected after the Eid holidays.

"The security delegation will go with representation from the PCB to inspect the venues where Pakistan will play and also the security and other arrangements made for them in the World Cup," he said.

He said the delegation would visit Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Ahmedabad, the venue for the marquee India-Pakistan match on October 15.

"Before any tour to India it is standard practice for the cricket board to seek permission from the government which normally sends a delegation to India," the official said.

"The delegation will interact with the officials there and discuss and inspect with them the security and other arrangements for our players, officials, fans and media, who will go for the tournament," he said.

He said if the delegation feels it would be better for Pakistan to play at some other venue instead of a designated one, it will mention that in its report.

"The PCB will share the report with the ICC and BCCI if the delegation has any concerns," he added.

A source in the PCB confirmed that when last time Pakistan went to India for the T20 World Cup, the government had sent a joint delegation to the inspect venues.

"It was on the recommendation of the delegation that Pakistan's match at Dharamsala against India was moved to Kolkata."

The source maintained that Pakistan's final confirmation of participation in the World Cup would only be announced when the government gives clearance to the PCB.

"This is not unusual and it is standard procedure for all tours to India. Even in other sports the respective national federations have to get clearance from the government to send their teams to India for any competition."

Pakistan Hockey Federation is awaiting clearance to send its team for the Asian Champions Trophy in Chennai in August, while recently the national football team played in the SAFF Championship in Bengaluru only after getting last minute NOC from the government bodies.

The ODI World Cup will be played across 10 Indian cities from October 5 to November 19.



## Manu, Divyansh, Aishwary among shooters picked for Worlds, Asian Games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympians Manu Bhaker, Divyansh Singh Panwar and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar were among the shooters named in the Indian squads for the upcoming ISSF World Championships and Asian Games.

The 2018 Asian Games gold medalist and former Youth Olympic champion Saurabh Chaudhary missed out of the teams for the two big tournaments, which were announced here on Saturday.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), the governing body of the sport in the country, announced the Indian rifle and pistol squad for the upcoming World Championships in August in Baku, Azerbaijan and the Hangzhou Asian Games in China in September.

The shotgun squad had been announced earlier.

A 22-member rifle and pistol squad will travel to Baku to vie for as many as 32 Paris Olympic quota places up for grabs there while a 21-member

team will make the trip to Hangzhou.

Reigning men's 10m air rifle world champion Rudranksh Patil has been included in the Asian Games squad on the basis of the selection criteria for Paris quota winners.

Ashi Chouksey replaced Tilottama Sen in the women's air rifle squad in Hangzhou. She will be shooting both the women's rifle events, given none of the top three women's air rifle shooters shot the three positions (3P) event and the Asian Games allows for only five entries each in men's and women's rifle events.

Ashi got the nod as the highest ranked air rifle shooter in the women's 3P squad.

The rest of the selection followed the rankings post the national selection trials 5 and 6 for Group A rifle and pistol shooters which concluded at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range here on Friday.

Chaudhary, who was looking to make a comeback to the Indian squad after a long lay-off, was part of the trials but could not make the cut.

## Triveni Continental Kings first team to qualify for Global Chess League finals

PTI ■ DUBAI

Triveni Continental Kings beat Ganges Grandmasters, led by five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, 11-6 to become the first team to qualify for the finals of the inaugural edition of the Global Chess League here on Saturday.

In the other match of the day, Chingari Gulf Titans defeated SG Alpine Warriors 8-7.

Triveni needed a win to remain in contention, while a draw would have been enough for Ganges.

In the first game, Levon Aronian and Anand played out a draw.

In the Caro-Kann defence, Aronian gained more initiative and posed serious threats to Anand. Unfazed, the Indian

Grandmaster got his knight and rook to the bottom of the board and found a perpetual check to hold a draw.

Sara Khadem scored a huge victory for Triveni as she defeated Bella Khotenashvili in a sharp game. By this point, the Triveni team was dominating on three of the four remaining boards.

Wei Yi struck on board three against Leinier Dominguez. Despite being in a weaker position, Kateryna Lagno managed to draw the game with Hou Yifan.

But Yu Yangyi of Triveni lost to Rapport despite dominating the game from the beginning. Triveni were leading 8-5.

Espenko then lost to Jonas Bjerrre to hand a 11-6 win to Triveni.



Triveni took the top spot with 18 match points to become the first team to reach the finals.

In the other match, the Warriors started with white pieces.

Magnus Carlsen won his game after Jan-Krzysztof Duda misplayed a prophetic endgame, overlooking a piece.

Chingari struck back on board two when Shakhriyar Mamedyarov got the upper hand against Gukesh D in the endgame.

An unusual game took place between Irina Krush and Titans' former women's world champion Alexandra Kosteniuk.

While Kosteniuk got more initiative in the opening, she

committed mistake in the mid-game, allowing white to take the advantage.

In a game which saw a lot of twists and turns, Kosteniuk managed to get a significant material advantage, but Krush found a way for a perpetual check and settled for a draw.

Everything was hanging on the last remaining game between Warriors' Elisabeth Paetz and Titans' Polina Shuvalova. In the end, the game ended in a draw.

Having the world's highest rated player in the team isn't always enough for victory. Despite winning the last three games, Magnus Carlsen's team lost the last three matches.

Chingari Gulf Titans, with 13 points, are still holding on in the race for the top, while SG Alpine Warriors remain on 15.

AP ■ STEVENS POINT (US)

Bernhard Langer has been able to avoid most of the trouble at SentryWorld in the U.S. Senior Open. He still was far from unscathed Friday in a 3-under 68 that gave him the second-round lead.

"Believe it or not, I had two three-putts and a hit a sand wedge from the middle of the fairway into the water hazard, which is painful when you think about that from 100 yards," the 65-year-old German star said after his morning round.

Langer had six birdies and three bogeys a day after having a birdie and a bogey in an opening 71. On Friday, he hit 12 of 14 fairways on the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed course with thick rough and tricky,

inconsistent greens. At 3-under 139, Langer was one of only five players under par. The scoring average Friday was 76.54, down from 77.34 on Thursday.

"The course is tough, but it's fair, and it's a great setup," Langer said. "I'm fortunate to be playing well and look forward to the weekend."

The 2010 U.S. Senior Open winner at Sahalee in Washington, Langer won the Chubb Classic in Florida in February to tie Hale Irwin for the PGA Tour Champions' career victory record of 45. First-round leader



Rod Pampling was a stroke back, following an opening 68 with a 72. The 53-year-old Australian had a birdie and two bogeys in the afternoon session.

"The putter didn't cooperate as well as it did yesterday," Pampling said. "Nothing to stress about." Home-state favorite Jerry Kelly (70) was 1 under with two-time U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen (71) and Dicky Pride (69). "Greens were — I couldn't really tell," Kelly said. "Some fast putts weren't fast. Some slow putts were fast."

Goosen played alongside Langer. "It played just the same as yesterday," Goosen said. "Very tricky, tough. Miss the fairway, you pray for a half-decent lie."

Kelly and 2019 champion Steve Stricker — both from Madison, about 100 miles to the south — will be paired together Saturday. Stricker shot a 70 to join two-time U.S. Open champion Ernie Els (71) at even par.

Sticker won the first two senior majors of the year and took the Madison event three weeks ago for his fourth victory of the season. "I'm right in there," Stricker said. "The scores aren't going anywhere. It's very challenging. It's very tough. If you don't hit the fairway, you're scrambling."

## New pro women's hockey league set to launch in Jan with 6 teams in North America

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Organizers announced plans to launch a new women's professional hockey league in January that they hope will provide a stable, economically sustainable home for the sport's top players for years to come.

The North American league is expected to start with six teams — three in the U.S. and three in Canada — according to a person with knowledge of the league's plans. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the details were not made public.

There are still unanswered questions — where exactly teams will play, will the economic model work after earlier leagues fell short, will there be a broadcast deal — but an initial framework is in place as the new league prepares to join a crowded sports landscape.

The effort also has deep pockets behind it: Los Angeles Dodgers co-owner Mark Walter and wife Kimbra, team President Stan Kasten and tennis legend Billie Jean King will help run the league.

"I don't think there's a more significant moment for the game since women's ice hockey became an Olympic sport in 1998," Professional Hockey Federation Commissioner Reagan Carey said.

"I think it will forever change the landscape of our sport — and certainly for the better."

The agreement ends a long standoff between the seven-team PHL and the Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association. The latter group includes Kendall Coyne Schofield, Sarah Nurse, Hilary Knight and many other U.S. and Canadian national team players who were unwilling to

join the PHL, whose assets were purchased by Walter's firm.

"We're not celebrating dissolving a league," said Nurse, who helped Canada win Olympic gold last year.

"We're excited that we can continue forward together with a league that women's hockey has really never seen before. There's been so much hard work and time that has been put into this project, so we're excited that it is paying off."

The deal also could bring the National Hockey League to the table, perhaps in a way similar to how the NBA supports the WNBA. Commissioner Gary Bettman said the NHL did not want to get involved in a dispute between leagues and would throw weight behind one, once it was formed.

"The National Hockey League congratulates the Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association and the



Premier Hockey Federation on their agreement," the NHL said.

"We already have initiated discussions with representatives of this unified group regarding how we can work together to continue to grow the women's game."

Kasten said he called Bettman to deliver the news,

which was greeted with satisfaction and excitement.

"He offered all the help he could give us," Kasten said.

"We are going to take him up on that. It's going to help make our runway a little smoother because we're playing in January and I have a lot to do between now and January. I

don't even have a name for this league yet."

The PWHPA had been working with the Mark Walter Group and Billie Jean King Enterprises over the past 14 months on the new venture. King in a statement called it "an extraordinary opportunity to advance women's sports."

The new league is expected to bring together North America's most accomplished female players as well as players from Europe and Asia who have played in the PHL. Carey and PWHPA chief Jayna Hefford are expected to have leadership roles.

"This is exactly what we envisioned — maybe better," Hefford said. "It's been hard work to get here and challenging at times, but I'm so happy for the players who stuck it out and really made this happen."

The PWHPA, which was certified as a union this spring,

has completed negotiations on a collective bargaining agreement. A 62-page CBA was presented to PWHPA members on Thursday night, and they have until Sunday night to ratify it and the new league's constitution, according to a person familiar with the details who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity before the deal was announced.

If approved, the deal will run through 2031 and features a salary range of \$35,000 to \$80,000 for players on active rosters, the person said Friday. Rosters are expected to include 23 players.

Among the many issues that need to be sorted out is where the six teams will play. The PHL, which had recently doubled each team's salary cap to \$1.5 million, had seven — in Boston, Toronto and Montreal, along with East Rutherford, New Jersey; Hartford,

Connecticut; Buffalo, New York; and Richfield, Minnesota.

The top sites being considered for the new league are Washington, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and London, Ontario, according to one of the people who spoke to AP.

Kasten said the league was waiting at least a month before releasing details — many of which are still being worked out.

"We're going to pick a name soon, we're going to get a logo, we're going to land on our cities, we're going to pick our venues, we're going to come out with our schedule," Kasten said.

In the meantime, existing PHL player contracts have been voided, though an agreement is in place to pay those under contract a portion of their salary through September, two people with knowledge of the information told AP.



"You learn to rise above a lot of bad things that happen in your life. And you have to keep going"  
— Lauren Bacall



# UCC—A POLITICAL PANDORA BOX

If the government obtained parliamentary nod for the UCC, it is likely to position it as a central issue in the upcoming state elections, with the hope of capitalizing on it in the next year's Lok Sabha polls, writes NAVIN UPADHYAY

The ongoing debate surrounding the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has gained momentum with the Modi government's vigorous push for its implementation. The timing of this push, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, is seen as a strategic move to consolidate support among the Hindu electorate. With the impending inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the previous abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a strong narrative to reinforce its commitment to fulfilling its promises to the nation.

The government's expectation is that opposition parties will reject the UCC, both within and outside the parliament, thereby potentially consolidating Hindu votes in favor of the BJP. Notably, most major opposition parties in India are against the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code. They argue that such a code would infringe upon the freedom of religion for minority communities and contend that the existing system of personal laws is effective in addressing matters of personal and family affairs.

The opposition's concern is rooted in the fear that the UCC might be used as a tool by the ruling party to promote Hindu majoritarianism, which goes against the principles of secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Parties such as the Congress, Trinamool Congress, JD(U), RJD, SP, CPI(M), and CPI have accused the Modi government of exploiting the UCC as a political ploy to appeal to the majority Hindu population ahead of the upcoming elections. On the other hand, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has expressed conditional support for the UCC, emphasizing the importance of building a broad consensus through consultation with all stakeholders.

The concerns raised by the Akali Dal, a former ally of the BJP, are particularly significant. The Sikh community, known for its strong religious identity, is wary of any attempts to impose laws that could potentially infringe upon their religious practices. Akali Dal spokesperson Daljit Singh Cheema has argued that civil laws, influenced by faith, belief, caste, and customs, should be retained to protect the social fabric and uphold the principle of unity in diversity.

Even the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, a pro-Hindutva party, has refrained from openly endorsing the UCC. In an editorial published in its mouthpiece 'Saamna', the Shiv Sena

emphasized that the basis for the Uniform Civil Code should not be solely opposition to Muslim Sharia law. They stressed the need for equality in law and justice as the fundamental principles underlying the UCC, transcending religious affiliations.

The Uniform UCC has been a subject of contentious debate in India for several decades. It pertains to the idea of formulating a common set of personal laws that would apply to all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation. The UCC aims to promote gender equality, secularism, and social harmony by replacing the existing separate personal laws for different religious communities. However, the implementation of a uniform civil code has faced significant opposition and continues to be a topic of intense discussion within the country.

India, with its diverse religious and cultural mosaic, inherited a system of personal laws from its colonial past. These personal laws govern various aspects of citizens' lives, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The country currently has separate sets of personal laws for different religious communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others. The idea of a uniform civil code was enshrined in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, which called for its eventual implementation.

The debate surrounding the implementation of a uniform civil code can be traced back to the colonial era when the British introduced separate personal laws for different religious communities. These laws were aimed at maintaining religious and cultural identities but also created disparities in terms of gender rights and social practices.

Proponents of the UCC argue that a common set of laws would promote equality and justice for all citizens. They contend that the existing personal laws, which often differ significantly across religious communities, can perpetuate gender discrimination. For instance, some argue that certain provisions in Muslim personal law, such as those related to divorce and inheritance, are biased against women. Implementing a uniform civil code is seen as a step towards ensuring gender equality and eliminating discrimination.

Supporters of the UCC argue that it would reinforce the principles of a secular state. By having different personal laws based on religious affiliations, critics argue that the state is inadvertently interfering in religious matters. Implementing a uniform civil code would align the legal framework

INDIA, WITH ITS DIVERSE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL MOSAIC, INHERITED A SYSTEM OF PERSONAL LAWS FROM ITS COLONIAL PAST. THESE PERSONAL LAWS GOVERN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CITIZENS' LIVES, SUCH AS MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, INHERITANCE, AND ADOPTION. THE COUNTRY CURRENTLY HAS SEPARATE SETS OF PERSONAL LAWS FOR DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING HINDUS, MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS, AND OTHERS. THE IDEA OF A UNIFORM CIVIL CODE WAS ENSHRINED IN ARTICLE 44 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION, WHICH CALLED FOR ITS EVENTUAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Parties opposing or seeking wide consultation on the UCC: Congress CPI, CPI(M) Trinamool Congress DMK RJD, NCP, BSP, Samajwadi Party, JDS, Shiromani Akali Dal, Indian Union Muslim League, AIMIM, PDP NDPP, National Conference.
- Parties in favour of UCC: BJP, AAP, Shiv Sena (Shinde group), AIADMK, TDP.
- Parties undecided: Shiv Sena (UBT), YSRCP, JJP, BJD, BRS.

with the principles of secularism, treating all citizens equally, irrespective of their religious background, they argue.

Advocates for the UCC also emphasize that it would foster a sense of national unity and social cohesion. They argue that a uniform civil code would transcend religious boundaries and create a common platform for all citizens, strengthening the bonds of a diverse society. It would promote a shared understanding of rights and responsibilities, thereby contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive nation.

However, opponents of the UCC express concerns about potential infringement upon religious freedoms and cultural diversity. They argue that personal laws are deeply rooted in religious beliefs and practices, and any attempt to impose a uniform code would undermine the autonomy of religious communities. Critics contend that personal laws provide a sense of identity, community, and continuity for religious minorities, and any attempt to change them would be seen as an encroachment on their religious rights.

One of the primary concerns raised by opponents of the UCC is that it may dilute the cultural diversity of India. The country prides itself on its rich heritage and the coexistence of multiple religious and cultural traditions. The proponents of diversity argue that personal laws reflect the distinct identities and practices of different communities, and any move towards uniformity would erode the uniqueness and plurality of Indian society.

Another significant concern is that the implementation of a uniform civil code may disrupt the delicate balance between religious communities in a pluralistic society like India. The country's secular fabric relies on the principle of respecting and accommodating religious differences. Critics argue that enforcing a uniform code may lead to communal tensions and hinder social cohesion. They contend that personal

## THE GOA UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has been a subject of debate in India for many years. However, in the small state of Goa, a unique and progressive Uniform Civil Code has been in place for decades. The Goa Civil Code, also known as the Goa Family Law, applies to all residents of Goa, irrespective of their religious affiliation. It is often regarded as a model for a pluralistic society, providing a framework that promotes gender equality and safeguards individual rights while respecting the diversity of religious customs and traditions.

Goa's legal system underwent significant transformations throughout history. Before its liberation from Portuguese colonial rule in 1961, Goa followed the Portuguese Civil Code, which incorporated elements of both Roman and Canon Law. When Goa became a part of the Indian Union, a decision was made to retain certain aspects of the Portuguese Civil Code while integrating reforms to align with the principles of the Indian Constitution.

### KEY FEATURES:

**Gender Equality:** One of the defining features of the Goa Uniform Civil Code is its emphasis on gender equality. It grants women the right to inherit property equally, irrespective of their religious affiliation. This provision challenges the discriminatory practices prevalent in personal laws of many

other communities in India. The Goa Civil Code also ensures equal rights in matters of divorce, alimony, and child custody, striving to create a more equitable legal framework for women.

**Customary Practices and Religious Freedom:** The Goa Uniform Civil Code recognizes the significance of customary practices and religious freedom. It allows individuals to follow their respective religious rituals and traditions in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance, as long as they do not violate the principles of gender equality and fundamental rights. This approach strikes a balance between preserving religious diversity and upholding constitutional values.

**Codification and Simplification:** The Goa Civil Code also stands out for its codification and simplification of laws. It consolidates various legal provisions into a comprehensive and accessible code, making it easier for individuals to understand and navigate the legal system. This simplification has contributed to greater legal awareness and empowerment among the residents of Goa.

Others question the feasibility of implementing a similar code at the national level. The diversity of India, both in terms of religion and culture, poses challenges in creating a uniform code that accommodates the complexities and sensitivities of each community.

laws have evolved over centuries, shaped by the customs, traditions, and religious scriptures of each community, and any attempt to replace them with a uniform code would disregard these deeply ingrained practices.

Opponents also argue that personal laws provide certain protections and safeguards for marginalized sections of society within specific religious communities. They fear that a uniform civil code may overlook these protective provisions and leave vulnerable groups without adequate legal recourse. For example, Muslim personal law contains provisions for maintenance and the welfare of divorced women, which may not be adequately addressed under a uniform civil code.

The potential implementation of the Uniform Civil Code by the government holds significant

implications for the upcoming elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh. If the government obtained parliamentary nod for the UCC, it is likely to position it as a central issue in these state elections, with the hope of capitalizing on it in the subsequent Lok Sabha polls.

On the other hand, the opposition parties face a delicate balancing act. This is especially crucial as the UCC is being portrayed in media and political debates as something that would primarily affect Muslims. To avoid alienating Hindu voters, the opposition parties will have to articulate their concerns about the UCC without being perceived as practicing the policy of "appeasement".

(The writer is Executive Editor of The Pioneer)

# REDEMPTION!

On National Doctor's Day on July 1, The HEALTH PIONEER expresses its gratitude and appreciation towards doctors for their selfless dedication and tireless efforts in treating patients and saving lives. This year's theme is "Celebrating Resilience and Healing Hands"

## EVERGREEN QUOTES



"The two best physicians of them all - Dr. Laughter and Dr. Sleep."  
—Gregory Dean Jr

"Medicines cure diseases, but only doctors can cure patients."  
—Carl Jung

"Health is hearty, health is harmony, health is happiness."  
—Amit Kalantri

"The best doctor gives the least medicine."  
—Benjamin Franklin

"Whenever a doctor cannot do good, he must be kept from doing harm."  
—Hippocrates

"Health is hearty, health is harmony, health is happiness."  
—Amit Kalantri

"Our profession is the only one which works unceasingly to annihilate itself."  
—Martin H. Fischer

"People pay the doctor for his trouble; for his kindness, they still remain in his debt."  
—Seneca

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease."  
—Thomas Edison

"Whenever a doctor cannot do good, he must be kept from doing harm."  
—Hippocrates

## Unique initiative to transform disability education in healthcare launched

With an aim to achieve better healthcare for persons with disabilities, a group of doctors from India in collaboration with the University of Chicago on Saturday launched a groundbreaking project that aims to train health professional educators teaching about disability competencies using methods from medical humanities.

Dr. Satendra Singh, a physician with a disability, and one of the key members of this group said that this transformative initiative, which builds on earlier work to draft competencies on disability inclusive healthcare now integrated into India's national medical curriculum, seeks to empower healthcare professionals with the tools to provide inclusive and equitable care for all.

The project is titled Disability Inclusive Compassionate Care 2.0.

According to the WHO's 2022 global report on health equity, approximately one in six persons has some form of disability. This highlights the urgent need to address the impact of disabilities and ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality care to this population, he said.

Despite the National Medical Commission mandating the teaching of disability in medical education, implementation has been slow due to a lack of proper training and resources. This project aims to fill that gap by providing comprehensive training to health professional educators, enabling them to effectively teach disability competencies to future healthcare professionals, said Dr. Singh.

The project will create a cohort of health professional



educators who will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and teaching methods to effectively impart disability-related education. These educators will then serve as pioneers, piloting the innovative teaching methods in their respective health professional colleges, spreading the impact of the project far and wide.

The project will use the power of storytelling and creative approaches to enhance healthcare education. The project team believes that traditional methods like lectures and slides are not enough to teach empathy, inclusivity, and sensitivity. Instead, they are incorporating methods such as theatre of the oppressed, poetry, disability ethics, and graphic medicine. These innovative approaches create engaging and immersive experiences that challenge societal norms and foster empathy and understanding among healthcare professionals.

By training health professional educators in these creative methods, the project seeks to promote a more inclusive and patient-centric approach to healthcare. The goal is to equip healthcare professionals with the skills and knowledge to understand the experiences, challenges, and needs of individuals with disabilities, leading to more equi-

table and effective care. The project will culminate with a national conference where the findings, experiences, and best practices from the project will be shared with a wider audience. Additionally, a comprehensive teaching guide will be developed, encompassing the innovative methods used in the project. This teaching guide will be made freely available to educators across the country, ensuring its accessibility and promoting widespread adoption of disability-inclusive teaching practices.

The project is a collaboration between premier institutions including the University of Chicago, Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Sangath, University College of Medical Sciences, and Kasturba Medical College, Manipal. Thus, bringing experts from different fields under the umbrella of the initiative for Health Equity Advocacy and Research (iHEAR) to create positive change in healthcare education.

Drawing from personal experiences, Dr. Singh advocated for a healthcare system that recognizes and addresses the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their full participation in society.

Dr. Singh expressed his optimism about the project.

"To counter ableism and health disparities among people with disabilities, we advocate the use of humanistic tools to impart disability competencies. Our goal is to make health professions education, training, and practice disability-inclusive, accessible, and equitable. This aligns with the recent WHO mandate and disability legislation of training all healthcare workforce in disability competencies"

Dr. Kamala Cotts from University of Chicago, said "As health professionals we have a collective, moral and ethical imperative to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. We must strive to respect the inherent dignity, beauty and strength in diversity."

Vice Chancellor of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences Lt Gen (Retd) Madhuri Kaniitkar said "The significant work of the collaborating institutions and teams in Disability Inclusive Compassionate Care over the past few years has helped the cause gain the much-needed attention of national stakeholders, resulting in path-breaking action steps. This success needs to be translated into mass awareness and action."

## NATIONAL DOCTOR'S DAY WISHES



Happy Doctor's Day to our dearest doctor who is always an inspiration for all staff members. Keep motivating us and helping us grow!

This world has become a better and healthier place to live in with doctors bringing the joy of health and goodness to our lives. Happy Doctor's Day!

I thank you for your service to humanity. Wish you a very Happy Doctor's Day!

"Only a doctor is blessed with the magical powers to treat a life, sending warm wishes to you on Doctor's Day 2023."

Only a doctor is blessed with the magical powers to treat a life, to bring health into our lives, and to be there with us when we have lost all our hopes. Happy Doctors' Day!

Thank to the doctors for letting us have the opportunity to lead a healthy and risk-free life! Our society owes them a lot. Happy Doctors' Day!

This world has become a better and healthier place to live in with doctors bringing the joy of health and goodness to our lives. Happy Doctor's Day!

This National Doctor's Day, share our best collection of Doctor's Day quotes with your friends, family, and all the doctors out there.

You are more than just a doctor, you are a friend and a guide too. So here's a special wish coming your way. Happy National Doctor's Day!

"Happy Doctor's Day to all the doctors. Thank you for all your efforts and contribution."

"Thank you, doctors, for always putting your patients first and giving them the gift of health"

## INFERTILITY NOT ALL IS LOST

Infertility can be a challenging and emotional experience, but it's important to remember that there are many treatment options available, says Dr RITU SETHI, DIRECTOR, AURA SPECIALITY CLINIC, GURUGRAM

Infertility is a common problem affecting both men and women, with approximately one in six couples experiencing difficulties in conceiving. It is defined as the inability to conceive after one year of regular, unprotected intercourse. There are many reasons why infertility occurs, but fortunately, there are also numerous treatment options available to help couples overcome this challenge.



### REASONS FOR INFERTILITY

Infertility can be caused by a range of factors, including hormonal imbalances, structural problems, genetic abnormalities, lifestyle factors, and certain medical conditions. In women, some of the most common causes of infertility include ovulation disorders, blocked fallopian tubes, and uterine abnormalities. Age can also play a significant role, as a woman's fertility typically declines after the age of 35. In men, low sperm count, poor sperm motility, or structural abnormalities in the reproductive system can be the reason for infertility.

In addition to these physical factors, certain lifestyle choices can also impact fertility. These include smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and being overweight or obese. Environmental factors, such as exposure to toxins and pollutants, may also play a role.

### TREATMENT FOR INFERTILITY

The treatment for infertility will depend on the underlying cause of the problem. In some cases, lifestyle changes may be enough to improve fertility. For example, quitting smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and maintaining a healthy weight can all improve fertility in both men and women.

If infertility is caused by a medical condition, such as polycystic ovary syndrome

(PCOS) or endometriosis, medication may be prescribed to help regulate hormones or improve ovulation. In cases where structural abnormalities are the cause, surgery may be necessary to repair damaged fallopian tubes, remove fibroids or polyps, or address other issues.

Assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), may also be used to help couples conceive. These techniques involve fertilizing eggs with sperm outside of the body and then transferring the resulting embryos back into the uterus. Other ART options include intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) and intrauterine insemination (IUI).

In some cases, infertility may be irreversible, and adoption or the use of a surrogate may be considered. It's important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to infertility, and every couple's situation is unique.

Infertility can be a challenging and emotional experience, but it's important to remember that there are many treatment options available. If you're struggling to conceive, speak with your doctor to determine the underlying cause of the problem and develop a treatment plan that's right for you. With the right support and resources, many couples are able to overcome infertility and build the family they've always dreamed of.

## India's 1st DBS surgery to treat schizophrenia at Gurugram hospital

A team of doctors from a hospital in Haryana's Gurugram has successfully performed Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery for schizophrenia on a Kenyan national recently.

Schizophrenia is a serious mental health illness in which patients interpret reality abnormally. The disease is characterised by hallucinations, delusions, anxiety and disorganised behaviour. DBS is an evolving surgical technique that involves the implantation of electrodes into specific areas of the brain. These electrodes deliver electrical impulses to regulate abnormal brain activity.

Dr Himanshu Champaneri, senior consultant neurosurgeon said, while the patient (28), felt up to 50-60% improvement in his symptoms, there was a reduction of up to 80% in his hallucinations, delusions and anxiety.

DBS surgery is also performed on patients with movement disorders such as Parkinson's disease, its potential in treating mental disorders, including schizophrenia, appears promising. As the Kenyan patient's case was also categorised as 'treatment-resistant schizophrenia' it was fit for the DBS surgery.

To date, there are only 14 recorded cases globally in which the procedure was performed on individuals suffering from schizophrenia.

Champaneri added, "The advantages of DBS surgery lie in its ability to offer a personalised approach to treatment. By targeting specific regions of the brain, DBS can potentially alleviate symptoms and improve the patient's quality of life when traditional methods of treatment are insufficient."

The patient on whom the surgery was performed had schizophrenia for the last 15 years and the symptoms were so debilitating that he had almost no life outside his room, the neurosurgeon said.

According to Champaneri, "The advantages of DBS surgery lie in its ability to offer a personalised approach to treatment. By targeting specific regions of the brain, DBS can potentially alleviate symptoms and improve the patient's quality of life when traditional methods of treatment are insufficient."

"The target chosen in schizophrenia is called nucleus accumbens, which is responsible for the patient's symptoms like hallucinations and delusions," he added.

The patient on whom the surgery was performed had schizophrenia for the last 15 years and the symptoms were so debilitating that he had almost no life outside his room, the neurosurgeon said.

Approval for this psychosurgery was sought from the Haryana State Mental Health Authority in accordance with the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.

## SKIN BANK AT AIIMS DELHI

# A Ray Of Hope For Burn Patients

This is the second skin bank opened within a week in Delhi, the first being at Safdarjung Hospital.

India records around 70 lakh burn injury cases annually. Amongst these are acid victims, dowry victims, accident victims and others whose skin has been badly burnt. Out of these 1.5 lakh people lose their lives.

The reason for which is infection. There is a possibility of infection between one to three weeks after the skin is scorched. In this case, the patient needs to apply skin. With the help of skin bank, the number of people dying in these cases can be reduced by up to 50 percent.

So far, AIIMS, Delhi has been procuring skin from skin banks in hospitals in Mumbai and Indore or Southern States like Chennai. But now the country's premier healthcare institution can boast of having its own highly-technologically advanced machine equipped bank which was inaugurated recently with an aim to help save the lives of severe burn patients. This is the second skin bank in Delhi and North India, the first one being at Safdarjung Hospital in the national capital.

Professor and Head of the Burn and Plastic Surgery Block Dr Maneesh Singhal said that the bank will strengthen the toolkit of burn surgeons by adding technical expertise and training in order to save the lives of patients with severe burns.

The Rotary Club of Delhi-The Rotary Club of Delhi-West donated the equipment for the skin bank. Ashok Kantoor from the Rotary Club said that they will encourage their large battery of members to take a pledge for skin donation.

"This bank will add to the armamentarium of burn surgeons to save the lives of patients with major burns," he said.

Dr. Manish Singhal, head of the Department of Burn and Plastic



Surgery, said that although the skin of any dead person can be donated, but the skin of children below 18 years of age and elders above 80 years will not be taken. Within six hours of a person's death, the outer layer of their skin can be lifted and stored in a cool and dry place at a specific temperature.

Any person devoid of HIV, Hepatitis B or C, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), Septicemia, skin cancers or skin diseases can also donate skin.

The skin of any dead person is taken from the back, thigh and feet. Whenever the skin is cut, no blood comes out of it. Also, before giving the dead body to the relatives, those parts are covered well with the help of bandages.

Using cadaveric skin for cover will help salvage many patients. These skin grafts reduce fluid loss from the body surface, keep the wound from getting dried out, and prevent bacterial

infections from the damage. The injury hurts more minor, and it heals faster.

He also mentioned that it might be quite challenging to save patients whose skin has been burned because it becomes damaged and takes two to three weeks for new skin to grow back.

"This skin can be applied until the new skin comes so that the wound can be protected from infection, and when the new skin comes on the patient's wound, then this skin is removed by itself," he added.

Skin donation from one person can save the life of at least one burn victim and more than one burn child.

Dr Singhal said that in order to open this bank successfully and for skin to be donated here to be used for other people, we now need to encourage and educate people to donate skin.

"Anyone who can donate their eyes can also donate skin, so there is no need to panic in this situation. After six hours following a person's passing, skin can

be given and preserved here at a temperature of five degrees for five years," he added.

We are mostly aware of blood, organ, cadaver and eye donations but lack awareness of skin donation. By donating skin, it provides a better quality of life for people suffering from severe burns and injuries. The donated skin is processed and stored in a skin bank before transplantation. An awareness about skin donation is the need of the hour in order to resolve one of the most perilous issues in medical science, he emphasised.

A person's average build allows for the harvesting of up to 3000 sq cm of skin. Therefore, 1000 to 1500 sq cm of graft will be needed for a 30 per cent TBSA raw area.

Assistant Professor of Plastic, Reconstructive, and Burns Surgery, Shivangi Saha emphasised that despite the finest care and efforts, patients with burns that are more than 60 per cent

TBSA frequently pass away from infections.

"Despite the best skills and efforts, patients with more than 60 per cent TBSA burns often succumb due to infections," said the AIIMS Assistant Professor. In his inaugural speech, the Director of AIIMS M Srinivas stated that AIIMS is dedicated to offering burn care of the highest standards.

"AIIMS aims to compete with the world's top burn centres with this facility," he said.

### FACTS ON SKIN DONATION

- You don't have to pay anything to the Skin Donation Team, selling & buying organs is illegal.
- Anyone's skin can be transplanted on any one, there is no blood matching, no color matching, no age matching required.
- You need to produce the Death Certificate and its photocopy which will be evaluated by the Team Doctor before starting the procedure.
- There is no bleeding or disfigurement at the site where skin is harvested and the area is properly bandaged.
- Within six hours of a person's death, the outer layer of their skin can be lifted and stored in a cool and dry place at a specific temperature.
- Currently there are skin banks in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore.
- If there is no facility in your city for Skin Doctors to come home to retrieve the tissue, it can be done at a hospital.
- In the event of your passing on, your family members may be approached with after-life decisions pertaining to donation. If your family members are unsure whether you would have liked to donate, it may potentially cause them more distress.

# Kim's uncertain future amid global concerns

North Korea under Kim Jong-un is a threat to himself only. It's a decaying nation. No one except its mythical ruler and cronies knows the future of the country. Its ruling family has been trying to hoodwink the North Koreans for decades now. Additionally, hereditary rule is the norm in this Asian nation, and no one dares to contest the rule of the Kims.

Last year, North Korea fired a record number of missiles than ever before. The dictator and his military bosses are proud of the country's nuclear arsenal and military might. However, for years, its people have been encountering poverty, mismanagement, and extreme suppression of basic rights, as international human rights agencies say.

Thae Yong-ho, former Deputy Ambassador at the North Korean Embassy in the UK and now a prominent defector, predicted that the Kim dynasty might fall due to an influx of capitalist culture and a swelling desire for capitalist goods. He believes this might hasten the pariah state's entry into the international community. It is clear that Kim has no plan to give up nuclear weapons or undertake reforms in his elusive kingdom.

Why build an advanced military when it is not threatened by its immediate neighbour South Korea? But then Kim has his own justification for flexing his military muscles. The saddest part is that he is doing so at the expense of his own people.

Kim is Kim. He is not going to change himself for the world. He needs to be handled carefully. Instead of pushing an impoverished Asian nation further into chaos, the international community must realise that peace and stability are more desirable in Asia than a mad race to power or supremacy.

Ostensibly, the Kim regime should have fallen by now despite several crises in the



recent past. So far, multiple government failures have not been able to push back the Kim dynasty from power.

Seemingly against all odds, Kim survives, and his family rule is considered a boon for the people of North Korea. However, insistence on hereditary succession seems to be the biggest disadvantage for Kim and his people. But much more than that, his craze for nuclear weapons and a show of strength through them has been seen as his sole mistake over the years.

The Kims have been at the helm for more than seven decades in North Korea. Since

the country gained independence from Japanese rule, the family has been ruling the poor nation. However, the common people of the country do not have the might either to launch a movement or to wipe out the family rule of the Kims.

Ruling without rules is the only rule for Kim. He displays senselessness everywhere, from managing polity to the economy. The only source of sustenance is China. With Xi at the top next door in Beijing, Kim is assured that his rule will not fall, even if the West desires it. This is because the thumb rule for Xi, the life President of China at the moment, is sta-

bility and economic prosperity. At no point in time can he simply allow the Kim Government to derail and face a slew of millions of poor North Korean migrants in his country. Its 870-mile-long border with North Korea could turn out to be a volatile pass once the Kim rule fails there. So he wants the Kim dynasty to survive unless there is any other guarantee of stability in the neighbouring nation. In fact, China's support for North Korea dates back to the historic Korean War (1950-53) when the Red Army flooded the Korean Peninsula to aid its Communist ally against capi-

alist and democratic South Korea. Since the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948, China's successive leaders have been lending political and economic support to the country. The country has so far only had three leaders: Kim Il Sung (1948-1994), Kim Jong-il (1994-2011), and then the current Kim Jong-un (2011-present).

Today, China has become the biggest trade partner of North Korea and has the strongest leverage of Xi since his coming to power in 2012. But then, the thaw in the bilateral relationship surfaced in

2006 when Pyongyang tested a nuclear weapon. China quickly backed UN Security Resolution no. 1718, which directly imposed sanctions on North Korea. China called on North Korea to reduce actions that might create tensions in the Korean Peninsula.

Now the question is, can the Kim regime survive anymore? Yes, it will, for sure. China certainly condemns the nuclear menace of Kim but always fails to stop its support for the regime. Truly, China wants stability in North Korea. It looks for more allies than enemies in its long and arduous race to the top of the

global governance system.

Pyongyang's constant nuclear tests and missile launches have complicated its relationship with Beijing. Thus, Xi has also advocated for the resumption of six-party talks (North and South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the US), the multiparty framework that aimed at denuclearising North Korea. However, this disjointed nuclear peace process has been stalled by constant provocations from North Korea over the years.

The solution lies in Kim addressing his domestic issues, especially the decadent economy of his country. Instead of bolstering nuclear arsenals to the world, he must focus on his own people and their endless plight. Whether he projects his daughter or sister, the family rule continues in this poor Asian nation. Its people will not get any respite from the atrocities of a madman and his family. No one knows the future of millions of people in North Korea. It is uncertain when they will be free from the Kim family.

It seems no one is serious about the mess in North Korea, except South Korea and Japan. For China, it's a good bargaining point for negotiating with the West. In the name of socialism, the current government in North Korea is a "Socialist Skeleton". It does not augur well, not only for the people of his country but also for the rest of Asia. The Rodong Sinmun, the North Korean media, says that an imperialist strike will not be able to destroy the DPRK. These are all the worst tactics that the government is playing to continue the Kim regime. But there is no immediate threat to regime change in North Korea for now. Kim goes on. But be aware that your time is running out.

(The writer is currently the Head of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Geeta University, Panipat. Views expressed here are personal)

**While China's support secures the Kim dynasty, North Korea, under the Kim Jong-un regime, suffers from poverty and rights suppression. Despite military pride and nuclear ambitions, citizens' needs are neglected. The regime's downfall may come from desire for capitalism, but Kim resists change. Tragically the international community lacks commitment to resolving the uncertain future of North Koreans**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# Gigs-led paradigm shift in Indian labour market

**India's Gig Economy thrives due to youth, smartphones, and platforms like Uber. Gig work offers flexibility, skill growth, and entrepreneurship. Challenges include financial insecurity and lack of social security. The government addresses this through schemes for benefits and forms unions. Tailored healthcare coverage is essential for Gig workers' support**



PRATAP MOHANTY

The rapid development of the Gig Economy has revolutionised the economy as a whole. India is the next frontier of this revolution due to its demographic dividend of a half-billion workforce, coupled with the world's youngest population, broad use of smartphones, and related technology. The term "Gig" refers to short-term work (ILO, 2018).

With the emergence of technology platforms such as Uber, Zomato, Swiggy, Ola, Dunzo, Blinkit, and others, the Gig economy has experienced tremendous growth on a global scale during the past ten years. Digitalisation has also played a significant role in job creation in the economy.

This mainly tries to capture how the changing paradigm of workers differs from that of traditional workers. The Digital India programme of the Government has played a crucial role in boosting the economy as a whole, especially the Gig economy. As per the trends in 2021, it was found that there were 8 million Gig jobs in India, which could increase up to 90 million jobs in the non-farming sector in about 8-10 years (ASSOCHAM, 2021). 64 per cent of the Gig workers belong to the age group of 24-38 years. As per data from the Online Labour Index (OLI), "There was a 12 per cent increase in employment for freelancers from pre-COVID eras. Also, when the second wave of COVID-19 began and cases increased in March 2021, there was a 32 per cent increase in Gig employment from March to June." This captures the growing trend of Gig work-

ers in the economy.

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and digital platforms across various industries. This shift opened up new possibilities for Gig workers to offer their services remotely, expanding their potential client base beyond their local area. Gig work often offers flexibility in terms of working hours and location. With many traditional jobs transitioning to remote work, more people started to appreciate the benefits of a flexible work schedule. Gig work allowed individuals to balance their personal responsibilities, such as childcare or caregiving, with their work commitments.

The Gig economy has helped people unleash their hidden potential and leverage their skills to generate a regular flow of income by engaging in various task-based jobs throughout the day. Contrary to the specialised nature of many traditional jobs, Gig work encourages individuals to cultivate a diverse skill set. Gig workers frequently engage in multiple projects across various domains, necessitating adaptability and versatility. This exposure to diverse work experiences not only enhances workers' employability but also stimulates continuous learning and personal growth. By embracing the Gig economy, workers become adept at navigating dynamic professional landscapes, expanding their horizons, and augmenting their value in the labour market.

In traditional employment structures, workers often find themselves confined within predefined roles and responsibilities. However, the Gig econ-



omy serves as a breeding ground for innovation and entrepreneurship. Gig workers are empowered to build their personal brands, shape their professional identities, and establish their own businesses. This newfound agency propels creativity and enables workers to harness their entrepreneurial spirit, ultimately leading to enhanced job satisfaction and personal fulfillment.

However, due to the very nature of their job, Gig workers face problems in getting financial aid such as loans due to a lack of a regular source of income. Banks refrain from

lending them money even when they are paid highly, as they are unsure about the contract workers. Gig workers face problems while shifting from one job to another because they work on a contract basis and play a very insignificant role in any company, which does not give them proper recognition in the job market. This raises the need for social security measures to bring them at par with traditional workers. Unlike traditional workers, Gig workers face a problem of having little savings and high exposure to relevant income streams.

As there is irregularity of income, Gig workers also face difficulty at the time of uncertainties from medical expenses. There is also a lack of protection against disability, work accidents, and death in service benefits, which are primarily available to the labourers in the formal market. Other than that, Gig workers also face difficulty in saving up money for retirement through regular saving plans because of their erratic income stream. The current pension systems in many nations are built around formal, regular employment structures and do not effec-

tively account for the rising number of Gig workers who operate outside of these arrangements.

The Government of India has recognised the challenges faced by Gig workers and has taken several steps to address their issues. The Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana (2019) and the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (2021) are a few of the schemes that are directed to provide pension and unemployment insurance benefits to unorganised sector workers, including Gig workers.

The Pradhan Mantri

Kaushal Vikas Yojana (3.0) scheme targets to deliver short-term skills that are conducted by reputed industries offering placement opportunities and innovative projects through creative market-based entrepreneurship. The Social Security Code (2020) amends existing social security laws to include Gig workers. The Government has initiated the creation of a comprehensive database of unorganised workers, including Gig workers, to facilitate the delivery of social security benefits and targeted welfare schemes.

Gig workers are accountable to pay both the employer and employee divisions of social security and Medicare taxes, known as self-employment taxes. Therefore, it is important for Gig workers to be aware of this and plan their expenses accordingly. Certain schemes can be incorporated to provide support to Gig workers as they have to undertake both employer and employee taxes. The condition can be improved further through schemes that should be sponsored by the government, tailored specifically for Gig workers, ensuring they have access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare coverage. Gig worker unions can be formed to provide them a voice and to enable collective bargaining, represent worker interests, and engage in social dialogue with platforms and policymakers.

(Pratap C Mohanty is Associate Professor, IIT Roorkee; Bengaluru's Christ University scholars Akanksha Khemka and Kumar Priyanshu contributed to this article)

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

Look for the spark of divinity within yourself that you could not recognise before. You will have faith in both your own and greater forces. Within yourself, you sense divine inspiration and strength. On the spiritual level, you are given true freedom and authority. So, it is preferable to let go of old ways of thinking and be gifted with new eyes. This is the time when your inner voice will become active in your life, and your buried goals and ambitions will have a chance to come true. There are signs of a new connection beginning, one that is full of potential and may eventually lead to genuine love and happiness. Allow the power of love to flow from your heart. So, relax and enjoy the bliss.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Indigo  
Lucky day Wednesday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week will witness a dramatic shift. A pay raise, promotion, or other form of recognition is on the horizon. Your goals are clear, and you go forward in life with targeted objectives. This is the time to maximise the impact of your efforts. There is an abundance of prosperity by mid-week, and you feel enthusiastic, creative, compassionate, and generous. You will be concerned about others. You like helping others. Though there is enough financial bliss, you are also looking for spiritual fulfilment. Those in business must communicate more effectively with their colleagues and partners. Those working in private organisations will be allowed to advance and transfer to desired positions. This is the moment to recognise and capitalise on your abilities.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Pink  
Lucky day Friday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, the number 7 is significant in your life. This number will have a positive impact on several aspects of life. There is a possibility of a relationship breakdown. You are afraid of failing. But by addressing your anxieties and using them to your advantage, you will become even stronger and more prepared to meet the next challenge that comes your way. Now is the moment to move on with your dreams, toss aside your fears, and allow nothing to stand in your way. If you feel you have not done your best or if what you have accomplished is not as spectacular as you planned, reconsider your ideas, and try something new. By the end of the week, you may have more money, more income, or a lucrative offer.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Peach  
Lucky day Tuesday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

You are so preoccupied with what you desire that you have no time to think about your life. When you look at the other side of your life, you will notice that there is a lot of love in it. But if you are not careful, it might slip away. Most of the disappointments in life come from those who desire more yet already have all they need. The answer to overcoming disappointment is simply to see all the wonderful things that currently exist in your life and to thank God for them every day. By midweek, you will notice significant deviations from the normal order of your life. There is the potential for two different beings to unite to function as one. It might be a relationship, friendship, or partnership, with all kinds of compromises.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour White  
Lucky day Wednesday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

There is a mental fight to solve the challenge. You are worried about your children this week, or you are concerned about their progress. You may be concerned about your children's future schooling or marriage. The results are delayed. Someone in the family's health, such as your mother's, may disturb you. She wants attention. The cards imply hormonal or psychological issues for women. So, for mental balance, it is best to participate in yoga courses or meditate. It not only increases your mental power but also gives you the courage to tackle the problem. The end of the week marks the start of a new era in your life. You finish the emotional dharma and make some wise life decisions.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Green  
Lucky day Sunday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, the most essential manifestation of your personality is desire with purity. You confront your innermost desires and most irrational anxieties, and instead of rejecting them, you elegantly integrate them into yourself and become stronger. You are confident in your abilities and skills to achieve the desired results. With your abilities, you have control over everything: theory and practise, logic, emotion, thought and action. Your objectives are clear, and you remind others that a wish alone will not alter anything, but a determination may. A desire to create is meaningless without being accompanied by the skill to achieve it. So go out into the world, focus your attention on whatever objective you want to achieve, and then step back and watch as everything falls back into place under your leadership.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Parrot Green  
Lucky day Saturday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

The week is favourable for financial gains. Be prepared since there will be business and professional travel. There may be some obstacles in your path; this could be a delay in booking and reservation or a financial constraint. You oversee the situation. There will be new possibilities to advance your career. You will feel gloomy this week and will need to recharge. You may receive a love proposal or even a marriage proposal. Married couples should be more concerned about each other. There will be attraction, and they will have a happy relationship. You must review your spending at the end of the week.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Brown  
Lucky day Saturday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you will live a king-size life. You care about the family and go out of your way to make them happy. There is joy in the family, and the children will cooperate with you. Many family concerns will be discussed, and your part will be critical. You are emotionally satisfied. Lady Luck will be on your side. There will be a substantial income, and you intend to build a house or develop your business. Children may study abroad or be invited to an interview for a career. However, towards the end of the week, you must be cautious of your rivals. There is a possibility they will plan against you. It is all because of envy. It is best to avoid illegal and controversial issues.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Sky Blue  
Lucky day Tuesday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

When things do not go your way, there is always a ray of hope. This week brings rejection, misery, loneliness, and betrayal. As horrible as it may sound, if there is no suffering, there is no challenge, and life is meaningless. Such difficulties often provide opportunities to learn from your mistakes and become stronger. By mid-week, you strive to find the solution on your own, to rise above your desires and emotions, which are no longer useful in your trip. If someone has deceived you and you believe you can ever love again, confront that entirely. Expect your heart to emerge from the darkness even more capable of loving than before. Behind every cloud is a sun waiting to be revealed to all.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Wednesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

You will get preoccupied with attending to their visitors and hospitalising them. Your siblings and friends will demand your attention and time this week. You will be full of creative energy and will appreciate this phase of your life. You will be content by mid-week. At home, there is peace and harmony; the children are doing well; the health is good; and the finances are in better shape. The environment is filled with good energy. However, the end of the week is not so great. There might be some bad energy affecting your relationship with your partner. Your health may suffer as a result. So be cautious; prevention is better than cure.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Orange  
Lucky day Tuesday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you are gifted with your natural strength. Your objectives are clear, and you are motivated to attain them. You are well known for your communication abilities, which you will excel at this week. Because of your established strength, you will feel confident and energised. Those in business will earn significantly. There will be substantial financial returns and timely payments. This week brings pleasant partnerships and friendships, as well as assistance from your family. Destiny will be on your side. Lovers must be patient. Introspection is the subject for you, but you do not need to be secretive or repress your feelings; rather, open yourself to new situations and behave more maturely.

Lucky number 23 | Lucky colour Turquoise  
Lucky day Monday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

You need some rest and relaxation. Enjoy your newfound strength and tranquility. Some of you may need to heal your body and mind after an illness or accident. You may also be placed in a circumstance in which an answer and the truth will be revealed. Such impasses are difficult to resolve and might result in a prolonged period of uncertainty and stagnation. However, the week will conclude on a very favourable note. You are likely to explore a new project that demands speed and courage. It will be time to act and realise your goals. Seize the opportunity and channel its energy to your benefit.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Yellow  
Lucky day Thursday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



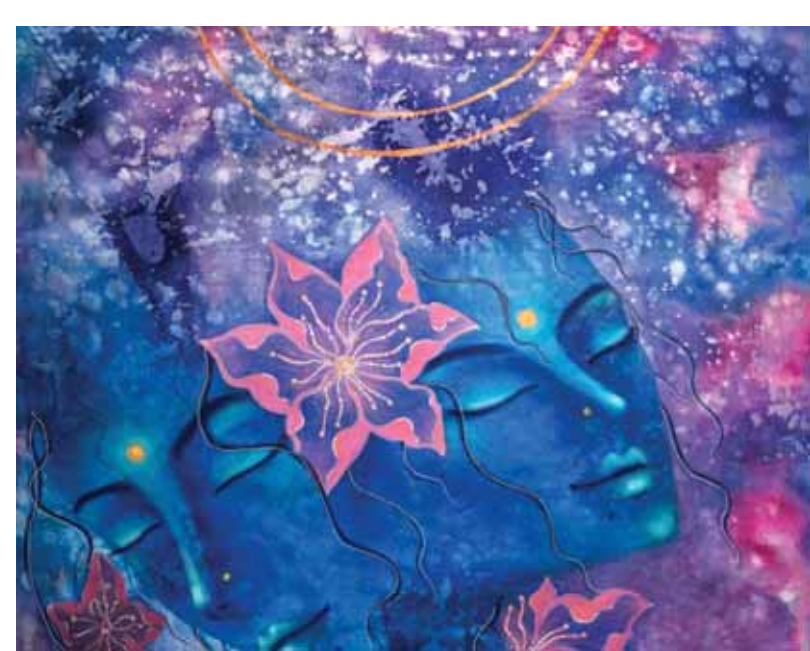
# Sense of duality clouds even sata tendency

Look at few case studies will make us understand how mind play affect us in real terms. Long back, an aspiring youth in utter frustration came seeking guidance on how to improve his performance. Despite regular study he could not score at the examination. His astrological pointers suggested that he had a restive mind. So, he lacked focus. Repeated under performance had induced a sense of fear also. So, even though he spent long hours studying, he could not absorb his lessons. He was given a lesson in how to temporarily drive away all such indwelling imprints in his mind that distracted his attention from within before he took up his studies. Following the instructions, he could remain focused for two hours at a stretch. So, his learning began getting registered well in his mind. No wonder, at the very next examination, he could recall the relevant answers, and so scored well.

In another case, an over ambitious young man got into a business venture. He put in his best and registered quick success. Encouraged thus, he began dreaming of making it big, and that too fast. He then opened many branches spread across the whole state. He could not pay due attention to all his branches as much as he gave to his maiden venture. So, his business collapsed soon after. Stressed thus, he came running, asking for what lied in store of his destiny. He was told that he could not blame his destiny. He had tried to spread his wings beyond manageable limits, which caused the fall, leaving him distraught and depressed. And now with sense of insecurity driving his mind, he was not able to fight back.

Our inherent habits and attitudes do also have bearing on our performance. They influence our day-to-day behaviour. And habits die hard. So, ordinarily, it is difficult to get over them, unless one consciously and continuously works towards that end. Those carrying good habits will obviously be marked for their civility and reasoned conduct, of course relatively. Yet, it will be limiting, unless one has risen above the sense of duality, which in practical terms implies transcending the sense of relative perception.

For those not having overcome the



sense of relative perception, what we term as Sata tendencies (good habits) often bring in a sense of superiority, which is nothing but reflection of ego. They often become judgmental, measure others by one's own self-set standards, compare and discriminate, often end up underrating them. Some of

them, instead of enlightening others, would be keen to impose their will on them. This often creates compatibility issues as they are not able accommodate well with others. For, they dwell on few fault-lines of others, rather than their positives that may be much more. So, they fail to capitalise on collective worth of the group existence, vital to suffice our existential and productive concerns. As a related fallout, societal peace and harmony gets vitiated. So, they fail to contribute what would be expected out of them.

A well-meaning gentleman carrying a perfectionist attitude was keen to pursue self-defined value system. He wished to behave always right, and would follow a self-set discipline, not realising that even he was not perfect. He expected from others to remain true to his expectations. If ever they did not come up to his expectations, he could not digest. He then used to become loud, and rough up his kith and kin on day-to-day basis. He would become overcritical of them, keep harping on their fault-lines by his self-defined measures. He never took note of their positives that were much more than their few weaknesses. So, he could not get along with his family members. Evidently, his domestic atmosphere was in shambles. And the fact that all of them were involved in the same business, the performance was going down day-by-day.

The ignorant lot of people, who form majority, are not able to appreciate what Sata driven people mean, and so they won't take them kindly. They continue posing all sorts of challenges to them often unnerving the Sata driven people. Stuck in the struggle to prove themselves, often the Sata oriented people are short of time and space needed to explore beyond, for further evolution. In the process, often they miss out on greater treasure trove lying ahead, which could have otherwise enlightened them enough to deal with others on even terms, transcending their limitations. To sum up, even Sata oriented tendencies could be limiting if one doesn't get over the sense of duality.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com