

## WORLD 5

RUSSIAN ATTACKS CONTINUE AFTER ICC'S ARREST WARRANT

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# Sunday pioneer

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## Some hurt by success of India's democracy: Modi

'That's why they are attacking it'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the success of India's democracy and its institutions is hurting some people and that is why they are attacking it, in an apparent swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his criticism of the state of democracy in the country.

"When the country is full of confidence and resolve, and intellectuals of the world are optimistic about India, talk of pessimism, showing the country in poor light and hurting the morale of the country also takes place, he said at the India Today Conclave.

"When something auspicious is happening, there is a tradition to apply 'kaala tika', so when so many auspicious things are happening, some people have taken the responsibility to apply this 'kaala tika,'" Modi said, without naming anyone.

His remarks come amid a political slugfest over Gandhi's



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented a shawl by an elderly farmer during the 'Global Millets Conference' in Pusa, in New Delhi, on Saturday (Report on Page 4)

the headlines earlier but now the "corrupt" joining hands over action against them is making news.

The world is stating that this is India's moment and this has been made possible because of the change of promise and performance in the country, Modi said.

The PM said all Governments worked according to their abilities and got results accordingly, but his Government wanted new results and worked on a different speed and scale.

"Today India is the fastest growing economy in the world, it is the number one in smartphone data consumers, it is the second biggest mobile manufacturer and has the third biggest startup ecosystem," he said.

Leading economists, analysts and thinkers of the world are saying in one voice that it is India's moment, the prime minister said.

remarks during his recent visit to the UK, with the BJP accusing him of maligning India on foreign soil and seeking foreign intervention. Modi said India has shown the world democracy can deliver.

Modi said he is confident that despite such attacks, the country will move forward to meet its objectives.

Targeting the Opposition, Modi said scams used to make

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Leading economists, analysts and thinkers of the world are saying in one voice that it is India's moment, the prime minister said.

## Khalistani Amritpal gives cops slip after long chase

PNS/PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Government on Saturday launched a major crackdown against radical Sikh preacher and Khalistani sympathiser Amritpal Singh, with police arresting 78 members of an outfit headed by him, officials said.

The elusive preacher himself, however, gave the police a slip after an hour-long chase when his cavalcade was intercepted in Jalandhar district, even as authorities stepped up security at several places and suspended internet services in the state till Sunday noon.

The police said it has launched a "massive State-wide cordon and search operations (CASO)" in the State against elements of "Waris Punjab De" (WPD), headed by Singh, against whom several criminal cases had been registered.

During the operation, a total of 78 persons have been arrested so far, while, several others have been detained for questioning, it said.

Amritpal Singh and others are on the run and a massive manhunt has been launched to nab them, a police spokesperson said.



Some supporters of the Waris Punjab De chief shared some videos on social media claiming that policemen were chasing them.

The police spokesperson informed that the WPD elements are involved in four criminal cases relating to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duties of public servants.

An FIR dated February 24



Police detain supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan during a search operation in the Khan's residence, in Lahore on Saturday AP

stands registered against WPD elements for the attack on Ajnala Police Station, he added. Last month, Amritpal and his supporters, some of them brandishing swords and guns, broke through barricades and barged into the Ajnala Police Station on the outskirts of the Amritsar city, and clashed with police for the release of one of Amritpal's aides. After the incident, in which six policemen, including a Superintendent of Police rank officer had suffered injuries, the AAP Government in the State had faced severe flak and was accused of kowtowing to extremists.

A heavy deployment of security forces had been made near village Jallupur Khera in Amritsar, the native place of Amritpal Singh, for the operation.

Dubai-returned Amritpal Singh was last year anointed the head of 'Waris Punjab De', which was founded by actor and activist Deep Sidhu who died in a road accident in February last year.

Officials said Amritpal Singh has been maintaining close links with Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and terrorist groups based in foreign countries.

Amritpal Singh, who had even issued a veiled threat to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has been trying to destabilise the situation in Punjab by indoctrinating and attracting Sikh youths into the fold of his outfit "Waris Punjab De", sources said.

**CAPSULE**

**No compromise on JPC demand, Rahul won't say sorry: Jairam**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said he does not see a "middle path" to end the logjam in Parliament as the Opposition's demand for a JPC probe into the Adani issue was "non-negotiable" and the question of an apology over Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the UK does not arise.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said the Government is rattled by 16 Opposition parties coming together to demand a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani issue and is resorting to a "3D orchestrated campaign — distort, defame and divert".

Incidentally, Jaishankar on Saturday tweeted a picture with Rahul Gandhi and some other Opposition MPs. They were briefed in the Parliament consultative committee meeting by the Minister on India's G-20 presidency.

He also took a dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and quipped when "panda lovers try to be China hawks, it does not fly". Both of them are engaged in a war of words regarding ties with China in the last few weeks.

Bilateral ties had entered a "challenging and abnormal phase" due to the heightened tensions at the Himalayan border and along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, the external affairs minister said.

Recalling his recent meetings with his Chinese counterparts, Jaishankar said, "When I met Wang Yi, we came to an understanding on how to resolve the border crisis. Now I've met with the new foreign minister Qin Gang. I have made it clear that we cannot have a breach of peace then continue the rest of the relationship like nothing happened."

Some other MPs including Shatrughan Sinha (TMC), Shashi Tharoor (Congress) and Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena) attended the meeting here.

On the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Jaishankar said in the India Today conclave, though India and China have made substantial progress in disengaging from friction points, situation

Continued on Page 2

**India's daily Covid tally crosses 800 after 4 mnths**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's single-day tally of Covid-19 cases crossed 800 after 126 days on Saturday, while the number of active cases climbed to 5,389, according to Union Health Ministry data. With 843 fresh infections, the country's caseload increased to 4.46 crore (4,46,94,349). The death toll rose to 5,30,799 with four fatalities, the date updated at 8 am stated. Experts have attributed the recent rise in Covid cases to XBB.1.16 variant.

A total of 76 samples of XBB.1.16 variant have been found, according to INSACOG data.

The variant has been found across Karnataka (30), Maharashtra (29), Puducherry (7), Delhi (5), Telangana (2), Gujarat (1), Himachal Pradesh (1) and Odisha (1), the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) data showed.

The XBB.1.16 variant was first found in January when two samples tested positive for the variant while in February a total of 59 samples were found.

In March, till now 15 samples of the XBB.1.16 variant have been found, the INSACOG said.

Continued on Page 2



Police detain supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan during a search operation in the Khan's residence, in Lahore on Saturday AP

**Police storm Imran house**

Court cancels arrest warrant

PTI ■ LAHORE

Over 10,000 armed Punjab police personnel stormed Imran Khan's residence here on Saturday and arrested dozens of his party workers after the former Pakistan prime minister left for Islamabad to attend a court hearing in a corruption case against him.

Meanwhile a Pakistani judge on Saturday cancelled Imran's arrest warrants in the Toshakhana corruption case and allowed him to go home without indicting him. "The situation as it is, the hearing

and appearance cannot proceed that is why all those who have gathered here should disperse after marking attendance. There is no need for shelling or pelting, the hearing cannot be held today," the judge was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

The police personnel, using a power shovel, removed the barricades and tents at the entrance of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief's Zaman Park residence and evicted hundreds of his supporters camping there to prevent Khan's arrest in the Toshakhana case.

They conducted a search at the house after demolishing its main gate and walls.

Continued on Page 2

**Collegium best system for selection of judges: CJI**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Not every system is perfect but this is the best system available, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said on Saturday while defending the Collegium system of judges appointing judges, a major bone of contention between the Government and judiciary.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave, 2023, the CJI said judiciary has to be protected from outside influences if it has to be independent.

"Not every system is perfect but this is the best system we have developed. But the object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value. We have to insulate the judiciary from outside influences if the judiciary has to be independent," Chandrachud said.

Chandrachud said on Saturday while defending the Collegium system of judges appointing judges, a major bone of contention between the Government and judiciary.

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"Not every system is perfect but this is the best system we have developed. But the object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value."

Rijiju also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks in London on democracy in India, saying the person who speaks the most says he is not allowed to speak.

"Anti-India forces in India and outside India, they use the same language — democracy is in danger, human rights are non-existent in India. What this anti-India gang says, the same language is used by Rahul," the Law Minister alleged.

Continued on Page 2

## Unseasonal rain casts shadow over harvesting season

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As unseasonal rain and hail are expected in the next few days due to western disturbances, India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday advised farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh to postpone harvesting of wheat and other rabi crops.

Also, rain and hailstorm lashed parts of Delhi on Saturday, bringing some respite from the warm weather.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 18.2 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal.

The relative humidity at 8:30 am was 89 per cent. Strong winds and hail might damage plantations, horticulture and standing crops.

Hail may injure people and cattle in open places, strong



A man rides his bike on a road near Akshardham amid rainfall, in New Delhi, on Saturday PTI

winds may damage vulnerable structures and kuccha houses, walls and huts, the IMD warned.

It advised people to stay indoors, close windows and doors and avoid travel if pos-

sible.

In case of matured crops, the IMD has advised farmers to harvest crops like mustard and chickpea in some States at the earliest and store them at safe places. Farmers have also been

The likely strong wind/hail

may damage standing crops, injure people and cattle at open places, and partial damage to vulnerable structures due to strong winds, it said.

In this likely scenario, the IMD advised farmers to "postpone harvesting of crops in Punjab, Haryana and West Madhya Pradesh; if already harvested, store at safe places to avoid losses."

Farmers have also been advised to withhold irrigation to wheat crop to avoid lodging. Rajasthan farmers have been advised to carry out harvesting of matured mustard and chickpea at the earliest and store them in a safe place.

Similarly, east Madhya Pradesh farmers have been asked to harvest mustard, chickpea and wheat immediately and store them in a safe place. In Maharashtra, farmers

have been asked to harvest wheat, pulses and grapes immediately.

"Postpone harvesting of crops in Marathwada. Use the skirting bags or aluminium-coated paper for grape bunches to protect from rains. Use hail nets to protect orchards," the IMD added.

Speaking to PTI, Rajbir Yadav, wheat breeder at Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), said the current unseasonal rains, hailstorms and gusty wind are not good for the standing wheat crop and could impact its yields.

Wheat is a main rabi (winter) crop and harvesting has already started in some parts of the country.

The Government has projected a record wheat output at 112.2 million tonne for the 2022-23 crop year (July-June).

**Some retd judges want judiciary to play Opp role: Rijiju**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday claimed that a few retired judges and some activists who are "part of the anti-India gang" are trying to make the Indian judiciary play the role of the Opposition party. He again criticised the Collegium system to appoint judges, saying it is a result of the "misadventure" of the Congress party.

The Minister was speaking at the India Today Conclave, where Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud later defended the Collegium system, saying "not every system is perfect but this is the best system we have

developed" and the "object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value".

Rijiju also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks in London on democracy in India, saying the person who speaks the most says he is not allowed to speak.

"Anti-India forces in India and outside India, they use the same language — democracy is in danger, human rights are non-existent in India. What this anti-India gang says, the same language is used by Rahul," the Law Minister alleged.

Continued on Page 2



# Rain, hailstorm lash parts of Capital

## Waterlogging in several areas

STAFF REPORTER ■

NEW DELHI

Rain and hailstorm lashed parts of Delhi on Saturday, bringing the maximum temperature five notches below the season's average to 25.3 degrees Celsius, the lowest so far this month, officials said.

The observatory at Aya Nagar recorded the maximum rainfall at 8.4 mm, followed by Palam at 3.3 mm and Lodhi Road at 3 mm, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The minimum tempera-

ture was recorded at 18.2 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal.

The national capital also witnessed waterlogging in several areas, including Burari.

The Delhi Traffic Police received three calls regarding waterlogging near the Tikri border, Bagga Link roundabout in Karol Bagh and the Loni Road roundabout, officials said.

Commuters also complained about traffic in some areas, including Bhikaji Cama Place, Jain Nagar and along the route from Khajoori to Bhajanpura.

Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said, "An active western disturbance will start affecting the region from Khajoori to Bhajanpura.

region and hailstorm in some areas. Another western disturbance will start affecting the region (from) Sunday... gen-



erally cloudy skies and on-and-off rain will continue over northwest India till March 20-21.

"The precipitation activity is predicted to peak on March 20. The wet spell will keep the mercury in check. Hailstorm is

predicted in parts of northwest India, including Delhi-NCR, on March 20."

Strong winds and hailstorms might damage plantations, horticulture and standing crops. Hail may also injure people and cattle in open places while strong winds can damage vulnerable structures and 'kuccha' houses, walls and huts, the IMD warned.

It has advised people to stay indoors and not take shelter under trees, lie on concrete floors or lean against concrete walls. It has also urged people to keep away from water bodies.

At 6 pm, Delhi's air quality index (AQI) was recorded in the 'moderate' category at 170.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and

100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

The Met office has predicted generally cloudy skies with light rain on Sunday. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to settle around 27 and 17 degrees Celsius, respectively.

On Friday, the minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded a notch above the season's average at 17.2 degrees Celsius while the day temperature settled at 30.4 degrees.

The highest rainfall in the Delhi-NCR region was recorded in Gurugram at 38.5 mm, the IMD said. Several areas also witnessed hailstorms.

The intermittent rain caused waterlogging and traf-

fic snarls across the city. Commuters also complained about waterlogging on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway and large swathes of Sohna Road, New Gurugram and the Old City.

Most of the waterlogging in the city occurs on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway service lanes near Narsinghpur. On Saturday, water from the service lanes seeped into the main carriage-way, leading to snarls despite the low traffic volume, officials said.

In several colonies, water accumulated up to three feet, forcing teams from the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) and the civic body to begin drainage work. Electricity connections were also snapped in many areas.

## BJP trying to topple Govt, alleges AAP

Saffron party issuing threats to MLAs: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■

NEW DELHI



added.

The budget session of the Delhi Assembly began on Friday. Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri has said the BJP will bring a no-confidence motion against the AAP government over its involvement in "corruption".

Chadha also slammed the BJP-led Centre for allegedly using investigating agencies against the AAP and former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is currently in jail in connection with a case related to the now-scraped excise policy for the national capital for 2021-22.

"BJP worker Kiran Patel lives in Kashmir as an additional director of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He moves with 'Z-plus' security, two jammer vehicles, 50 gunmen, stays in a five-star hotel. Investigation agencies do not investigate him because he is a BJP worker. But they have put Sisodia in jail," Chadha said.

"The BJP has been losing election after election in Delhi and now, our MLAs are getting threats that 'if we can do it with the deputy chief minister, you are just an MLA'. The BJP should stop its nefarious efforts. They tried many times, but could not lure our MLAs," he

## AAP leaders making 'baseless' charges out of 'frustration': BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday claimed that AAP leaders were "making baseless allegations out of frustration" as the Arvind Kejriwal government's "scams" were being exposed one after another.

Earlier in the day, AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha accused the BJP of trying to topple the Kejriwal government by threatening them with ED and CBI raids if they don't join the saffron party.

The BJP has mounted a sustained attack on the AAP and the Arvind Kejriwal government over a number of alleged "scams", most prominently the one related to the Delhi Excise Policy for 2021-22.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said, "Every time Arvind Kejriwal's scams are uncovered, rather than giving answers to questions he starts the AAP leaders to start crying that their government is facing threat and their MLAs are being poached."



MLAs were being "threatened with ED and CBI cases" if they don't join the saffron party.

The BJP wants to topple the AAP government in Delhi under the garb of a no-confidence motion and our legislators are being sent offers by the BJP high command," he charged.

The AAP has 62 MLAs in the 70-member-strong Delhi Assembly and the BJP has eight. Yet, its leaders think they will be able to snatch power by buying out MLAs, Chadha said.

Bidhuri, however, claimed even after having 62 seats, Arvind Kejriwal is not confident about his MLAs.

"This is because Kejriwal has been the mastermind of all the scams in the Delhi government. He made the ministers do all corruption and grabbed all the money, and later sacrificed them," Bidhuri alleged.

Chadha alleged the BJP was planning 'Operation Lotus 2.0' in Delhi and the AAP

Kejriwal does this to "divert attention" from the investigations being conducted by different probe agencies, Bidhuri said.

He claimed that AAP leaders have levelled "baseless and fabricated" allegations against the BJP out of frustration.

"Two AAP ministers are in jail for corruption which was masterminded by Arvind Kejriwal. He made the ministers do all corruption and grabbed all the money, and later sacrificed them," Bidhuri alleged.

Chadha alleged the BJP was planning 'Operation Lotus 2.0' in Delhi and the AAP

## Delhi Budget to focus on cleaning of Yamuna river

### Removal of landfill garbage



Yamuna, the government will increase the quantity of sewage being treated in Delhi to 890 mgd next year. The sewage treatment capacity in the city was 370 mgd in 2015.

The number of colonies with sewer connection will almost be doubled from 747 to 1,317. The scheme of free household sewer connections will continue, they said.

Delhi government with Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will pool in resources to get rid of the three garbage mountains, the city's "shame", in the next two years, sources added.

## Dismembered human body parts found

STAFF REPORTER ■

NEW DELHI



stages of decomposition and a bunch of hair, he said.

The crime scene was inspected and the remains transferred to AIIMS Trauma Centre. Efforts are being made to ascertain the identity of the victim, the official said.

An investigation was started after registering a case under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code, the police said.

Upon reaching the spot, the police found dismembered human body parts in various

## Court orders framing of arson, attempt to murder charges against 19

### 2020 Delhi riots



properties of a particular community and also robbed valuable items from the school.

"I find that (all) accused persons...are liable to be tried for offences punishable under sections 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code read with sections 147 (rioting) 148 (rioting, armed with a deadly weapon) 302 (murder) 153A (punishment for promoting enmity between different groups on the ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc.), 395 (dacoity)...of the IPC," Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala said in an order passed on Friday.

Charges are to be framed against them also under sections 427 (punishment for committing mischief and thereby causing loss or dam-

age to the amount of Rs fifty or upwards), 435 (Mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage to an amount of 100 rupees or upwards), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with

intent to destroy house, etc.) and 450 (house-trespass in order to the committing of any offence punishable with imprisonment for life) of the IPC, the judge said.

All accused except for

Faroq were also liable to be tried under sections 147, 148, 153 A, 395, 427, 435, 436, 450, 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC read with sections 120 B, 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the IPC, the judge added.

Faisal Farooq is also liable to be tried for offence punishable under sections 147, 148, 307, 395, 427, 435, 436, 450 of the IPC read with 120 B of the IPC, and for the offence punishable under sections 153A and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of the IPC, the judge said.

ASJ Pramachala also put on trial Mohd. Ansar under

the provisions of the Arms Act.

Regarding the identification of the accused persons as members of the riotous mob, the judge said the rule of prudence can be applied only after trial, at the time of assessment of the evidence on the parameters of credibility.

Rejecting the arguments for the discharge of the accused, such as call details record (CDR) locations and the delay in registration of FIR and recording statement of witnesses, the judge said, "I have considered all these contentions, but I do not find the discharge of any accused being made out on the basis of these contentions, in view of the evidence of identification of all the accused persons as part of the riotous mob."

## Two delivery agents thrashed over not having loose change

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

## DUSIB razed night shelters for homeless sans Govt's permission: Bharadwaj

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has criticised the national Capital's urban shelter improvement board for the recent demolition of eight night shelters for the homeless, saying that the "inhumane" action was taken without permission from the government.

In a letter to the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) on Thursday, the minister referred to its director's reported remark that the demolition was carried out on the orders of the Delhi government and sought to know who from the government gave the order and whether it was written or verbal.

"I have come to know from the media report that eight homeless night shelters at Jawahar Shramik Sthal, Yamuna Pushta near KG (Kashmere Gate) ISBT have been demolished," Bharadwaj noted.

1 held for duping people on pretext of making investments in medical sector

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man has been arrested here for allegedly duping people on the pretext of making investments in the medical sector, police said on Saturday.

According to police, they received a complaint regarding an online fraud of more than Rs 6.38 lakh perpetrated by unidentified people, who posed as Japanese investors and told the complainant that they would like to invest in the medical sector in India.

They approached the complainant to negotiate the price of raw material required in the sector from a firm named Krishana Enterprises and told the latter that he would get a commission if he got a sufficient quantity of the material for a lower price, a senior police officer said.

Gurugram woman accuses live-in partner of rape, shooting videos

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A 26-year-old Delhi woman here has accused her live-in partner of raping her several times and shooting her private photos and videos without her consent, police said on Saturday.

The accused also kept her legal documents with him and refused to give them back, they said.

The victim moved to police when the accused sent her private photos to her parents. According to her complaint, the woman said she was living with Amul Thakur, the accused, in a live-in relationship, having met him first in May 2022. After a few months, she returned home.

"He made my objectionable photos and videos without my consent while having sex saying he will marry me soon. When I left his house, he threatened me to come back to him. When I refused, he sent my objectionable photos to my parents and threatened them too. He also threatened to shoot me," the woman said in her complaint.

Following the complaint, an FIR was registered against Thakur under sections 376 (2) N (raping repeatedly the same woman), 406 (criminal breach of trust), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC and sections 67 and 67 A of the IT Act at Sector 40 Police Station on Friday.

"He made my objectionable photos and videos without my consent while having sex saying he will marry me soon. When I left his house, he threatened me to come back to

Start work on retrofitting of buildings to make them quake resistant, officials told

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Delhi LG VK Saxena, at a meeting of the DDMA on Saturday, asked officials to work on the retrofitting of all schools, hospitals, police stations and other critical offices and vulnerable buildings in the city to prevent damage in case of earthquakes.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) meeting, chaired by the lieutenant governor and attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, was held in the wake of recent disastrous earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, as the national capital falls in the "High Damage Risk Zone IV" on India's seismic map.

The prevalent situation of H3N2 flu, H1N1 flu and COVID-19 were also discussed at the meeting.

The National Disaster Management Authority representative said while all other states have put in place their state disaster response forces (SDRFs) to work in tandem with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Delhi is yet to be available was also flagged at the meeting and a decision taken to address the same in a time-bound manner, the statement said.

The chief minister stressed the need to compile and tabulate all reports and recommendations of different committees formed with regard to mitigation of disasters.



# Russian attacks continue after ICC's warrant against Putin

AP ■ KYIV

Widespread Russian attacks continued in Ukraine following the International Criminal Court's decision to issue an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's commissioner for children's rights.

Meanwhile, Putin has travelled to Crimea to mark the ninth anniversary of the Black Sea peninsula's annexation from Ukraine.

Putin visited an art school and a children's centre on Saturday.

Ukraine was attacked by 16 Russian drones on Friday night, the Ukrainian Air Force said in the early hours of Saturday.

Writing on Telegram, the air force command said that 11 out of 16 drones were shot down "in the central, western and eastern regions." Among areas targeted were the capital, Kyiv, and the western Lviv province.

The head of the Kyiv city administration, Serhiy Popko, said Ukrainian air defences shot down all drones heading for the Ukrainian capital, while Lviv regional Gov Maksym Kozitskyi said on Saturday that three of six drones were shot down, with the other three hitting a district bordering Poland. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, the



People inspect a damaged restaurant after Russian shelling hit in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Saturday

attacks were carried out from the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov and Russia's Bryansk province, which borders Ukraine.

The Ukrainian military additionally said in its regular update on Saturday morning that Russian forces over the previous 24 hours launched 34 airstrikes, one missile strike and 57 rounds of anti-aircraft fire.

The Facebook update said that falling debris hit the southern Kherson province, damaging seven houses and a kindergarten.

According to the Ukrainian statement, Russia is

continuing to concentrate its efforts on offensive operations in Ukraine's industrial east, focusing attacks on Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Marinka and Shakhtarsk in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province. Pavlo Kyrylenko, regional Gov of the Donetsk province, said one person was killed and three wounded when 11 towns and villages in the province were shelled on Friday.

Further west, Russian rockets hit a residential area overnight Friday in the city of Zaporizhzhia, the regional capital of the partially occupied province of the same name.

No casualties were reported, but houses were damaged and a catering establishment destroyed, Anatoliy Kurtev of the Zaporizhzhia City Council said. It is the first time the global court has issued a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The move was immediately dismissed by Moscow — and welcomed by Ukraine as a major breakthrough.

Its practical implications, however, could be limited as the chances of Putin facing trial at the ICC are highly unlikely because Moscow does not recognise the court's jurisdiction or extradite its nationals.

UK military officials said Saturday that Russia is likely to widen conscription. In its latest intelligence update, the UK defense ministry said that deputies in the Russian Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, introduced a bill on Monday to change the conscription age for men to 21-30, from the current 18-27.

The ministry said that, at the moment, many men aged 18-21 claim exemption from military service because they are in higher education. The change would mean that they would eventually still have to serve. It said the law will likely be passed and come into force in January 2024.

## Vatican closes embassy in Nicaragua

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

The Vatican said on Saturday it had closed its embassy in Nicaragua after the country's government proposed suspending diplomatic relations, the latest episode in a years-long crackdown on the Catholic Church by the administration of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

The Vatican's representative to Managua, Monsignor Marcel Diouf, also left the country on Friday, bound for Costa Rica, a Vatican official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Vatican action came a week after the Nicaraguan government proposed suspending relations with the Holy See, and a year after Nicaragua forced the papal ambassador at the time to leave. It's not clear what more the proposed suspension would entail in diplomatic terms.

Relations between the church and Ortega's government have been deteriorating since 2018, when Nicaraguan authorities violently repressed anti-government protests.

Some Catholic leaders gave protesters shelter in their churches, and the church later tried to act as a mediator between the government and the political opposition.

## Trump anticipates arrest

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump said in a social media post that he expects to be arrested on Tuesday as a New York prosecutor is eyeing charges in a case examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with the former president.

Trump said in a post on his Truth Social network early on Saturday that "illegal leaks" from the Manhattan district attorney's office indicate that "The far & away leading republican candidate & former president of the United States of America, will be arrested on Tuesday of next week."

Messages left on Saturday with the district attorney's office were not immediately returned. Representatives for Trump did not immediately respond to calls for comment.

Trump did not provide any details on social media about how he knew about the expected arrest. In his postings, he repeated his lies that the 2020 presidential election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden was stolen and he urged his followers to "Protest, take our nation back!" That language evoked the message from the then-president that preceded the riot at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Law enforcement officials in New York have been making security preparations for the possibility that Trump could be indicted.

There has been no public



announcement of any time frame for the grand jury's secret work in the case, including any potential vote on whether to indict the ex-president.

Daniels and at least two former Trump aides — one-time political adviser Kellyanne Conway and former spokesperson Hope Hicks — are among witnesses who have met with prosecutors in recent weeks.

Cohen has said that at Trump's direction, he arranged payments totaling USD 280,000 to porn actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal. According to Cohen, the payouts were to buy their silence about Trump, who was then in the thick of his first presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, law enforcement officials in New York are making security preparations for the possibility that former President Donald Trump could be indicted in the coming weeks and appear in a Manhattan courtroom in an investigation examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with him, four law enforcement officials said Friday.

The grand jury in Manhattan has been hearing from witnesses, including former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen, who says he orchestrated payments in 2016 to two women to silence them about sexual encounters they said they had with Trump a decade earlier.

Trump denies the encounters occurred, says he did nothing wrong and has cast the investigation as a "witch hunt" by a Democratic prosecutor bent on sabotaging the Republican's 2024 presidential campaign.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office has apparently been examining whether any state laws were

## FIIDS: Time running out for laid off H-1B workers

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Time is running out for laid off H-1B professionals as under the existing laws they need to leave the country within 60 days of losing their employment status, giving sleepless nights to the thousands of Indian tech workers and their family members.

"This has a humanitarian impact on them as their families, including their US-born children are uprooted abruptly, and those who were laid off in the earlier

months are now running out of time," the Foundation For India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), which took up their cases with lawmakers and federal administration said in a statement on Friday.

While the US Citizenship and Immigration Services is considering their request to extend the existing time window to 180 days, the process is likely to take up some time, leaving no other option for these professionals other than to leave the country.

FIIDS appeals to the USCIS, and

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consider a request to expedite the extension of grace period. FIIDS also appeals to the elected officials, tech executives, and community leaders to emphasise the need and urgency to increase the grace period," the foundation said in a media statement.

Since last year, more than 2,50,000 such professionals have been laid off in the United States. This number continues to grow with companies like Meta announcing another set of tens of thousands of layoffs, FIIDS said.

## Ex-Air Force officer sentenced for Capitol attack

Washington (AP)

A retired Air Force officer who stormed the US Capitol dressed in combat gear and carried zip-tie handcuffs into the Senate gallery was sentenced on Friday to two years in prison.

Larry Brock, 55, of Grapevine, Texas, joined other rioters on the Senate floor only minutes after then-Vice President Mike Pence, senators and their staff evacuated the

chamber to escape the mob attacking the building on January 6, 2021.

US District Judge John Bates also sentenced Brock to two years of supervised release after his prison term and ordered him to perform 100 hours of community service.

Brock, who declined to speak in court before the judge imposed his sentence, remains free until he must report to prison at a

date to be determined. Prosecutors had recommended a sentence of five years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Bates convicted Brock in November after a trial without a jury. Brock waived his right to a jury trial. The judge said Brock expressed "very troubling" and violent rhetoric before the January 6 riot. The judge read aloud several of Brock's social media postings

calling it "really pretty astounding" that a former high-ranking military officer expressed those words. "That's chilling stuff, and it does reflect a purpose to stop the certification of the election," Bates said.

Brock believed baseless conspiracy theories that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Republican incumbent Donald Trump, prosecutors said.

## Japan, German leaders agree to strengthen ties



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, second left, and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, centre, pose for a family picture at prime minister's official residence in Tokyo on Saturday

AP ■ TOKYO

They discussed deepening economic and national security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as China's assertiveness in pressing its maritime territorial claims and its closer ties with Russia.

Germany has similar "government consultation" framework with several countries.

In Tokyo, the two leaders again condemned Russia's war on Ukraine and agreed to continue tough sanctions against Moscow and strong support for Ukraine, Kishida said.

Russia's nuclear threat has made atomic weapons disarmament even more difficult and divided the international community, Kishida said, adding that it's crucial to get China, Russia and other nuclear states to resolve discussions on disarmament.

Scholtz said the government consultations will "further advance our strategic cooperation, and they're a very important part of giving a new drive to this close cooperation we want to achieve together," German news agency dpa reported.

## Violence in France over retirement age push

AP ■ PARIS



They lobbed fireworks and paving stones at police in a standoff.

On Thursday night, security forces charged and used water cannons to evacuate the area, and small groups then set street fires in chic neighbourhoods nearby. French Interior

Minister Gérald Darmanin told radio station RTL that 310 people were arrested overnight, most of them in Paris.

Mostly small, scattered protests were held in cities around France, from a march in Bordeaux to a rally in Toulouse. Port officers in Calais temporarily stopped ferries from crossing the English Channel to Dover. Some university campuses in Paris were blocked and protesters occupied a high-traffic ring road around the French capital.

Paris garbage collectors extended their strike for a 12th day, with piles of foul-smelling rubbish growing daily in the French capital. Striking sanitation workers continued to block Europe's largest incineration site and two other sites that treat Paris garbage.

Surrey Police said the 49-year-old, of South Asian origin, was found guilty of two counts of possessing an article for the purpose of terrorism, contrary to Section 57 of the UK's Terrorism Act 2000.

He was also found guilty of three counts of making or possessing an explosive substance under suspicious circumstances contrary to Section 4 of the UK's Explosive Substances Act at the Old Bailey court in London on Friday.

Bhatti remains in custody and will be sentenced for the crimes at the same court on April 25.

"The case against Bhatti was strong, I am glad the jury found him guilty today," said Detective Chief Superintendent Olly Wright, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) in Surrey.

"There was clear evidence of his extreme Islamist ideology and the danger he posed. He clearly hated those whom he considers do not follow his version of Islam, and he made a range of derogatory comments towards those he considers to be 'unbelievers,' he said.

## Indians organise Young Minds Conference in London

London (PTI): Youth 20 (Y20), the official consultation forum for youth from across the G20 member countries to be able to dialogue with each other during India's presidency, found resonance here with a special Y20 India Young Minds Conference.

Attended by Y20 India representative Falit Sijeria, the two-day conference was organised at University College London on Friday by the student group Young India Dialogue in association with Y20 India.

"Many kinds of programmes are being organised in India regarding Y20 and this is the first program to be held outside India," Sijeria said.

"It is our endeavour to get ideas from as many youths as possible so that there can be a good discussion about solutions on the international platform of Y20. It is a matter of pride for me that in the presidency of India, I have been able to participate in a consultation programme organised abroad," he added.

India assumed the Presidency of the G20 for one year from December 1, 2022, to 30 November 2023.

Y20 UK representatives, James Frater and Riturik Singh joined in the day's deliberations and were supported by the Indian National Students Association (INSA) UK.

## Braverman in Rwanda to assess illegal migration

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Indian-origin Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, arrived in Rwanda on Saturday on a tour of facilities being built as part of a bilateral migration pact that will see hundreds of illegal migrants deported from the UK to the central African nation.

The UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership, which was signed by Braverman's predecessor Priti Patel on April last year, is designed to house migrants in Rwanda while their asylum claims are assessed.

The controversial plan remains caught up in legal wrangles, but Braverman said her visit is an effort to reinforce the government's commitment to the partnership.

"Our partnership is a groundbreaking approach that will act as

a powerful deterrent against dangerous and illegal journeys, such as small boat crossings," said Braverman in a statement on the eve of her visit to Rwanda.

"While in Rwanda we will discuss all the aspects of the partnership and I will be visiting some of the initiatives that we have supported," she said.

According to the UK Home Office, the minister is scheduled to meet refugees who have rebuilt their lives in Kigali, people leading on accommodation projects and a range of entrepreneurs who have helped build employment opportunities for people in Rwanda.

She will also meet with Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Vincent Biruta during the two-day official visit this weekend.

## Be transparent in sharing Covid data for origin study, WHO tells China

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA

in late 2019 and then to the rest of the world.

"Every piece of data relating to studying the origins of COVID-19 needs to be shared with the international community immediately. These data could have — and should have — been shared three years ago," World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in Geneva on Friday.

"We continue to call on China to be transparent in sharing data and to conduct the necessary investiga-

tions and share the results. Understanding how the pandemic began remains both a moral and scientific imperative," he said.

Ghebreyesus said that last Sunday, the global health agency was made aware of data published on the GISAID database in late January, and taken down again recently.

"The data, from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, relates to samples taken at the Huanan market in Wuhan, in 2020," he said.

Ghebreyesus said while the data was online, scientists from a number of countries downloaded the data and analysed it.

"As soon as we became aware of this data, we contacted the Chinese CDC and urged them to share it with WHO and the international scientific community so it can be analysed," he said, adding that WHO also convened the Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens, or SAGO, which met on Tuesday.

"We asked researchers from the

Chinese CDC and the international group of scientists to present their analyses of the data to SAGO. These data do not provide a definitive answer to the question of how the pandemic began, but every piece of data is important in moving us closer to that answer," he said.

In report Thursday, the New York Times said that an international team of virus experts said they had "found genetic data from a market in Wuhan, China, linking the coronavirus with raccoon dogs for sale there."

The NYT report said that the genetic data was drawn from swabs taken from in and around the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market starting in January 2020, "shortly after the Chinese authorities had shut down the market because of suspicions that it was linked to the outbreak of a new virus."

While the animals had been cleared out from the market, researchers took swabs from the walls, floors,

# Forex kitty down by \$2.39 bn to \$560 bn

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's forex reserves fell by \$2.39 billion to a three-month low of \$560.003 billion for the week to March 10, the Reserve Bank said in its latest weekly data release. In the week to March 3, the reserves rose by \$1.46 billion and stood at \$562.40 billion.

On an annualised basis, the RBI said, the reserves are down by \$47.31 billion during the week under review while on a fiscal year basis, the same plunged by \$62.23 billion.

With this erosion, the forex kitty is at the lowest since early-December, according to the weekly statistical supplement released by the RBI on Friday.

The loss in the reserves is due to the revaluation of the foreign currency assets, which are the largest component of the forex kitty, to the tune of



\$2.2 billion to \$494.86 billion for the week to March 10. On a year-on-year basis, the value of foreign currency assets fell by \$45.86 billion and from a fiscal year perspective, they lost \$59.49 billion.

Expressed in dollar terms, foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of the non-US units like the euro, the pound and the yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. The reserve losses are primarily due to the RBI selling dollars to stem the rupee volatility in the spot and forwards market to prevent runaway moves in the exchange rate.

Last week, the rupee stood

ground and lost just 10 basis points against the dollar and the currency traded in the 81.61-82.29 range. The rupee ended at 82.55 on Friday. The

country's gold reserves and SDR holdings too saw a reduction in the week under review with both reserves falling \$110 million and \$53 million, respectively. The gold reserves and SDR holdings stand at \$41.92 billion and \$18.12 billion, respectively.

The country's reserve position in the IMF also fell by \$11 million, taking it to \$5.1 billion.

The reserves have been falling from the peak as the rupee has been under pressure and the monetary authority has been taking measures to defend the rupee from extreme volatility. In 2022, the cost of defending a falling rupee was over USD 115 billion of the reserves.

The worst drop was in the week to February 10 when reserves plunged by a steep \$8.32 billion to USD 566.95 billion. In October 2021, the forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion.

# 'Packaging industry growing at 15-17%'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The packaging industry is growing at 15-17 per cent and the sector has the potential to create employment opportunities in the country, industry experts said.

The experts also called for the promotion of domestic players and setting up the packaging industry in every district on the lines of the one district one product' initiative to create jobs at the local level.

"Presently, the demand for packaging of all things has increased a lot and there is a lot of scope for employment in this sector," Prof Tanveer Alam, Director of the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) Delhi, said at the Asian Packaging Congress here on Saturday.

The event was organised by the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, a release said. The packaging business in the world is worth USD 79 billion



The packaging industry is growing at 15-17 per cent and the sector has the potential to create employment opportunities in the country, industry experts said in New Delhi

PTI photo

and has a growth rate of 15-17 per cent, Alam said. Industry experts opined that to boost the industry, packaging units should be set up in every district on the lines of one district one product scheme so that employment can be generated, a statement said. Different types of packaging like glass, metal, paper and others are being adopted for each type of

product, the expert said. Recently, an MoU has also been signed with the Government of Uttar Pradesh and this product has already been launched in 15 districts of UP, IIP said. Experts said that the packaging industry can also help bring agricultural products to market which will increase farmers' income and cut farm production losses.

Online gaming can make India \$1 tn economy: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The online gaming sector is a rapidly growing industry that has potential of contributing significantly to the country's goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion digital economy, generating substantial employment, and fostering innovation, a report said.

Regulation of online gaming will not only open up economic opportunities but also address various social issues, a report titled 'Online Gaming in India: The Taxation Quandary' by Primus Partners said. Announcements in Union Budget 2023-24 are positive for the sector as it has addressed the persistent ask to incorporate the offset of losses in the calculation of gains from online games for income tax, it said.

A pertinent issue relating to the implementation mechanism proposed in the Union Budget for TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) on online games has been highlighted in the report.

# Gig economy in limbo after food deliveries slow down

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

With a spurt in online food and grocery delivery, especially in the pandemic years, India saw a meteoric rise in the gig economy, giving millions of people job opportunities.

However, delivering hot and piping food at customers' doorsteps has become a nightmare for many of them as the food delivery business turns out to be a losing game while more and more delivery partners report unfair work conditions, pay disparity, and harassment.

India is likely to see its gig workforce add 9-11 million jobs by 2025, which has been one of the most pivotal economic shifts in a long time.

In terms of job roles, door delivery is the most prevalent gig role employers are hiring for currently — 22 per cent for food and 26 per cent for other deliveries, according to a recent study by leading job portal Indeed. According to reports, a typical delivery boy's salary is



Rs 15,000 per month. Delivery Boy salaries at Zomato and Swiggy can range from Rs 4,804-Rs 30,555 per month depending on which area they are working in.

Gig workers are freelancers or contractors who work independently, typically on a short-term basis for multiple clients. Their work may be project-based, hourly, or part-time.

However, when it comes to fair work for gig workers among the digital platform economy in India, Zomato, Swiggy, and quick-grocery delivery providers Dunzo and Zepto are among the worst per-

formers across parameters related to the working conditions of gig workers, according to the latest 'Fairwork India Ratings 2022 Report'.

According to professor Balaji Parthasarathy, one of the principal investigators of the team, these findings are alarming for all stakeholders -- government, consumers and platform owners -- and they should come together to help gig workers get the best working conditions.

"We would like the government and other stakeholders like consumers and digital labour platform owners to take

note of these findings and ensure a better work environment for millions of gig workers in 2023," Parthasarathy said.

The Fairwork India team was spearheaded by the Centre for IT and Public Policy (CITAPP), International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B), in association with Oxford University in the UK.

Even with workers and worker groups repeatedly emphasising the importance of a stable income for platform workers, platforms have been reluctant to publicly commit to, and operationalise, a minimum wage policy.

"Secondly, while workers have engaged in various forms of collective action to voice their concerns in the platform economy, platforms have been uncompromisingly unwilling to recognise or negotiate with any collective body representing workers," the findings showed. According to the report, the promise of flexibility of the digital platform econ-

omy raises as many questions about livelihoods as it offers opportunities.

"We hope the report provides the basis for an interpretation of flexibility that allows for not merely the adaptability that platforms seek, but also the income and social security that workers lack," said Parthasarathy and Janaki Srinivasan, the Principal Investigators of the team.

The biggest barriers for gig workers are lack of access to job information (62 per cent), not knowing English (32 per cent), and not knowing the local language (10 per cent) for workers who have shifted outside of their home town for work.

Challenges in language also result in other difficulties with 14 per cent of the gig workforce respondents reporting a lack of awareness of their job's skills and abilities, according to Indeed study. Nearly three out of five gig workers (59 per cent) find their jobs uncomfortable (46 per cent), if not hard and risky (13 per cent).

# Five million food dispatches daily in Mumbai, yet delivery guys struggling

IANS ■ MUMBAI

One of the greatest blessings of the Smartphone Internet era is the ease of ordering snacks, food and desserts from anywhere in the city/town or the district, for self, family, parties, social or corporate events.

Through one or more of the hundreds of Apps, one can place the most outrageous orders, ranging from the humble 'Vada-Pav' to 'Shawarmas' — and every possible dish in between.

Once the App accepts the order, a series of precision processes are triggered right from inside the kitchens to the delivery boys/girls who pick it up, and finally ring your doorbell - all within 30-60 minutes - for that joyous, drooling smile...! Simple as it may sound, the delivery business is actually bizarre and complex, involving a lot of human elements,



the critical being the delivery boys-girls who serve as the 'last-mile' link between the food outlets and the hungry customer.

One such delivery boy cum Area Manager attached to an app-based company, G. V. Kishore, 35, of Borivali, shares some insights into the low-profile business that quietly 'delivers' with clockwork precision and an efficiency that could merit a top Sigma rating. There are an estimated 500,000 car-

riers (delivery boys/girls) in Mumbai alone who effect an average of around 10 deliveries daily, coming to more than 50,000 parcels being rushed from one place to another for nearly 18 hours daily, with the weekend numbers bulging by at least 25 percent. "Besides, there are corporate food deliveries that would account for another 25-30 lakh parcels on weekdays but crashes on weekends."

After Covid-19 pandemic, most companies have discontinued their in-house canteens barring beverages and now allow employees to order food online with discounted corporate coupons," said Kishore.

Another deliverer from Ghatkopar, Sanjay Chauhan, 31, serving through various Apps, haunts corporate offices with big and small food packets daily, and supplements his income with weekend home deliveries.

# iPhone 15 Pro Max may feature thinnest screen bezels to date

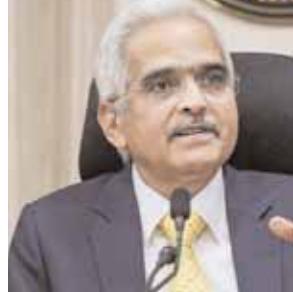
**San Francisco:** Tech giant Apple's upcoming iPhone 15 Pro Max smartphone will reportedly "break record" of the thinnest screen bezels to date. Tipster Ice Universe tweeted on Friday: "iPhone 15 Pro Max will break the record of 1.81mm bezel black edge held by Xiaomi 13, and we measure that its cover plate black bezel width is only 1.55 mm iS22 and S23—1.95mm iCEiPhone 14 Pro 2.17mm."

Last week, the front glass videos of the iPhone 15 Pro and iPhone 15 Pro Max smartphones had leaked online which revealed that they will feature ultra-thin bezels around the display.

Also, the tech giant is expected to limit its display features — Always-On and ProMotion — to upcoming iPhone 15 Pro and iPhone 15 Pro Max smartphone models. It was also rumoured that the iPhone maker will bring support for Wi-Fi 6E network to only iPhone 15 Pro models.

# India needs to promote e-payment items globally: Das

PTI ■ KOCHI



Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday underlined the need for using the G20 presidency to present India's e-payment story to the global audience and seize the opportunity to internationalise payment products like UPI and RuPay.

India's home-grown payment products like UPI and RuPay network are increasing their global footprint and will make cross-border payments easier, Das said while inaugurating the Payment System Operators (PSO) Conference here.

"Under Reserve Bank's Payments Vision 2025, we stand committed to the core theme of 'E-Payments for Everyone, Everywhere, Everytime' (4Es). We must seize every opportunity to internationalise our payment products. This will open up a new world of opportunities for our country. This is the year of the Indian Presidency of the G20. Let us present the India story to the global audience," he said.

The governor further said with the Indian economy getting increasingly integrated with the global system, cross-border payments have assumed greater significance.

"Our home-grown payment products, UPI and RuPay network, are enhancing their global footprint," he said and added launch of UPI linkage with Singapore's PayNow is a major step forward.

In future, Das added such linkages with other countries will make crossborder payments simple, affordable and real-time. QR code-based merchant payments through UPI apps are already enabled in

Cabinet okays exemption to NTPC to invest in NTPC Green Energy

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Friday granted exemption to NTPC Ltd for making investment in NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL), its wholly-owned subsidiary.

The CCEA also exempted NGEL's investment in NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd (NREL) and its other joint ventures and subsidiaries, subject to a ceiling of 15 per cent of its net worth beyond the monetary ceiling of Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 7,500 crore, towards achieving a target of 60 GW renewable energy (RE) capacity by NTPC Ltd, official sources said.

The exemption given to NTPC will help in improving India's global image as a green economy. It will also decrease India's dependency on conventional sources of energy by diversifying India's energy generation and will also decrease the country's coal import bills.

"This is something all market participants must recognise and constantly remind themselves. Every failed transaction, every fraud attempted or actually carried out, every complaint addressed should be a cause of concern and must invite a detailed root cause analysis.

"It would do well to remember that like the batsman on the cricket field, you are only as good as the last ball faced.

"We must together make sure that no one in the country is left behind in the digital payments journey," he said.

The launch of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in 2016 has revolutionised the payments ecosystem with about 803 crore transactions worth Rs 13 lakh crore processed in January 2023 alone.

# Startup failure gradually reducing in India; awareness needed: STPI DG

PTI ■ PANAJI

Asserting that the rate of failure of startups in the country is slowly declining, Director General of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Arvind Kumar said there is a need to create more awareness about what the government is doing to promote startups. Talking to PTI, Kumar said awareness campaign is very much required amongst the youth about startups.

"I go to a number of engineering colleges, they don't know anything about startups, they don't know about STPI, they don't know anything about what the country and government is doing," he commented.

The STPI DG was in Goa to address the Future Tech Leadership Forum Goa 2023 on Saturday organised by the stakeholders in the state's IT industry. Kumar said there should be a subject on entrepreneurship for students in 12th standard where the product cycle should be explained and they should be made job

producers and not job seekers. He said STPI's directors are going to various colleges and giving lectures to youngsters about startups and also how to get funds for that. "I think awareness is happening but it has to be accelerated," Kumar added.

He said though they have not done any study on the failure of startups, there are studies which claim that the rate in India is one against ten. "Failure is a part of startup ecosystem not just in India but also in the developed part of the world. Our country has just started the journey of startups, so naturally we will fail more,

compared to those countries which have started ten years back," he said. Talking about Centres of Entrepreneurship (COE) created by STPI, Kumar said such initiatives are working to reduce the failure rate.

"COEs have chief mentors who are authority on the particular subject. They guide startups in COEs and do handholding.

When something (startup idea) is ready, we call Venture Capitalists, Fund Managers who see the product and see if they can invest in it," he said. "Failure of startups is also reducing with the passage of time."

MG Motor India to supply 100 vehicles to WTiCabs India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

MG Motor India on Saturday said it has bagged an order to supply 100 units of its various models to WTiCabs India. The fleet of 100 vehicles, including Hector and ZS EV, will be used for the rent-a-car division of WTiCabs India.

"Our partnership will further make MG vehicles more accessible to SUV and EV enthusiasts in India. We are deeply grateful to WTiCabs for having chosen the MG Hector and ZS EV as their choice of vehicle for their business," MG Motor India Senior Director Sales Rakesh Sidana said in a statement.

WTiCabs CEO Ashok Vashist said company values partnership and looks forward to continued sales and services support from MG Motor India. "In our constant endeavour to provide sustainable mobility, we will keep adding EVs into our fleet. Our endeavour is to provide sustainable and robust mobility solutions to our corporate clients," he added.

iPhone 15 Pro Max may feature thinnest screen bezels to date

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Number of flyers benefitting from RCS-UDAN falls in 2022-

# TREESA-GAYATRI LOSE IN SEMIS

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand's sensational run came to an end as the Indian pair signed off with a second successive semifinal finish at the All England Championships here on Saturday.

The two young shuttlers found the going tough against Korean world number 20 duo of Baek Na Ha and Lee So Hee, losing 10-21 10-21 in a 46-minute women's doubles contest at the Utilita arena.

"We learnt a lot from this match. The difference was they didn't leave a shuttle and we did panic a little bit," Gayatri said after the match.

Treesa added: "When we played against them, their defence was good, it was better than yesterday. We were just panicking and didn't play well, we just kept attacking."

Gayatri's father Pullela Gopichand, the chief national coach, was the last Indian to win the All England crown, in 2001, the first being the legendary Prakash Padukone in 1980.

Gayatri, 20, and Treesa, 19, had a big opportunity to reach the finals but it ended in anticlimax as they played into the hands of the Koreans.

"I was nervous. There was pressure," said Gayatri.

The world number 17 pair was pitted against Baek and Lee, the latter being an experienced player with two world championships medals with former partner Shin Seung-chan.

In fact, Lee and Shin had faced defeat against the Indian pair in the last edition but the



fresh combination of Lee and Baek have been relentless this week with wins over second and eighth seeds, and looked in supreme touch as they came up with a tactical masterclass.

The Koreans turned into a retrieving machine as they defended seamlessly and extend-

ed the rallies with their high toses and lifts to not allow the Indians to play their short flat rally game.

As a result, Gayatri and Treesa failed to make a good start like they did earlier this week, falling behind 0-4 early on.

Lee and Baek frustrated the

Indians with longer rallies, waiting patiently for their opponents to make errors. It worked perfectly as the Koreans grabbed a 11-5 lead.

Briefly the Indians made it 9-13 but it was a one-way traffic from 14-10, with the Koreans drawing the first blood with

seven straight points, including the last which went long from Gayatri.

The Koreans didn't kill the shots at the nets and kept playing more high lifts, with the Indians sticking with their smashes from the back court.

Gayatri and Treesa couldn't

change their tactics and went wide and long too many times as Lee and Baek zoomed to a massive 11-2 lead at the mid-game interval of the second game.

Gayatri had her moment of brilliance, when she mixed body shots with a drop to grab a point to move to 5-11 after resumption, but such instances were too few.

The Indians managed just five more points before Treesa hit the net to hand 10 match points to the Koreans, who sealed their place in the final after another long rally.

Despite the loss, it was a good week for the young Indians, who started playing together only in 2021 and had surprised all by reaching the semifinals in the last edition after being promoted to the main draw from the reserve list.

This time, Gayatri and Treesa had come into the tournament with a Commonwealth Games bronze medal and wins over higher-ranked pairs such as world No. 7 Tan Pearly and Thinnah Muralitharan at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship in February.

Gayatri and Treesa accounted for some big scalps such as the seventh seeded Thai pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Ravindra Prajongjai and Japan's former world number ones Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota in the early rounds this week.

"We played against some good players, the confidence was there. So we are looking to the next tournaments. We have a lot more to learn. We will come back stronger," Treesa signed off.



**We believe to seal place in next season's Champions League: Isak**

AP ■ NOTTINGHAM

goalkeeper Nick Pope was intercepted by Emmanuel Dennis, who produced a stunning chip-ped finish for just his second Forest goal.

The crossbar came to the home side's rescue again when Sean Longstaff's deflected strike from the edge of the box came back off the woodwork.

Newcastle finally got their reward in first half stoppage time when the club's record signing Isak acrobatically flicked in Joe Willock's cross off the post.

"We believe and we know that we have it in our own hands and have a good chance," said Isak after Newcastle signed off for the international break with back-to-back wins.

"It is important we have gone into this break with a good feeling with two wins from two games."

Defeat was Forest's first at home in the league since September and leaves Steve Cooper's men still two points above the relegation zone.

"It's always the worst way to lose, in the last couple of minutes, having fought in the game," said Cooper. "We made some poor football decisions around the build-up to the goals and that's something we can only blame ourselves for."

"Obviously that wasn't serious, but mobility could be important, not having a fixed reference point. Speaking generally, against a forward that's another problem for a defence."

"Vini will play on the left, with more mobility."

Xavi also looked forward to the battle between Araujo and Vinicius.

"Araujo is very physically strong, he's quick, fast, and understands the movements of his opponents," Xavi told reporters Saturday.

"He's responsible, and a leader. He's a world class defender, one of the best in the world. Having Ronald in the team, is a guarantee, an advantage."

"Usually when he takes on Vinicius, he comes out as the winner of the battle, but Vinicius can make a big difference."

"It's not just Ronald, it's (everyone) looking out, and collectively, we've been very good against Madrid."

However, the goal was controversially disallowed after a VAR check for offside against Longstaff in the build-up despite the ball breaking to the midfielder off a Forest player.

Just when Forest looked set to hold out for a precious point in their battle to beat the drop, Moussa Niakhate needlessly put his hand up to block Isak's tame header.

The Swedish international's debut season in England has been blighted by injury, but he showed his class by keeping his head to slot past Navas and spark wild scenes of celebration among the away support.

"It's a massive win and I thought we deserved it," said Howe.

"To come back is always a great way to win and the character shown in the group is very pleasing."

**Atalanta beat Empoli 2-1 to boost CL hopes**

**Ancelotti backs Vinicius to escape Araujo shackles**

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti backed winger Vinicius Junior to escape Ronald Araujo's shackles when Los Blancos face Barcelona on Sunday in the Clasico in La Liga.

The Brazilian winger, key for Madrid this season, has been shut down by Barca defender Araujo in recent clashes with the Catalans, with coach Xavi Hernandez deploying the centre-back on the right to directly confront him.

Vinicius has scored twice in 12 games against Barcelona, both times before Araujo started at right-back.

No player has scored from open play against leaders Barca at Camp Nou in La Liga this season, giving champions Madrid a formidable task as they try to eat into their nine-point deficit.

"He's had more difficulties than in other games, but Vini is always Vini, his mobility can help him get the best (from himself) in tomorrow's game," Ancelotti told a news conference Saturday.

"I'm thinking of putting him on the right, let's see. He can play on the right,



Vinicius."

Ancelotti later said he was joking about using Vinicius on the right flank, but reiterated that the forward could be given more liberty to drift from the left.

"Obviously that wasn't serious, but mobility could be important, not having a fixed reference point. Speaking generally, against a forward that's another problem for a defence."

"Vini will play on the left, with more mobility."

Xavi also looked forward to the battle between Araujo and Vinicius.

"Araujo is very physically strong, he's quick, fast, and understands the movements of his opponents," Xavi told reporters Saturday.

"He's responsible, and a leader. He's a world class defender, one of the best in the world. Having Ronald in the team, is a guarantee, an advantage."

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"It's not just Ronald, it's (everyone) looking out, and collectively, we've been very good against Madrid."

**RYBAKINA TO FACE SABALENKA IN INDIAN WELLS FINAL**

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Elena Rybakina again proved too much for world number one Iga Swiatek, denying the defending champion a return to the Indian Wells final with an emphatic 6-2, 6-2 semi-final victory on Friday.

Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion who stunned top-seeded Swiatek in the fourth round of the Australian Open on the way to the final, will now get a chance to turn the tables on Aryna Sabalenka, who beat her in Melbourne to capture a first Grand Slam title.

World number two Sabalenka advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over seventh-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece.

Rybalkina, ranked 10th in the world, was all over Swiatek from the opening game, painting the lines with her punishing ground strokes and serving with pinpoint precision.

Swiatek, winner of the French and US Opens last year in a campaign that included eight titles in all, simply had no answer and surrendered the first set with a double-fault on her first set point.

It was more of the same in the second as Rybakina raced to a 5-0 lead. Swiatek, who revealed after the match she was dealing with "discomfort" in her ribcage, finally managed a hold for 5-1, and pounced to break as Rybakina suddenly struggled with her first serve in the next game.

Rybalkina still managed to muster two match points at 40-15, but Swiatek saved one with an overhead and another with a blistering return of a second serve, winning two more points to complete the break for 5-2.



**Sabalenka 'feels bad' for Ukrainian players**

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to stir tension in the tennis world, and Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka on Friday said that it's not only Ukrainian players who are feeling the strain.

"Of course it's a lot of tension between us," Australian Open champion Sabalenka said after beating Maria Sakkari to reach the final of the combined WTA and ATP Masters 1000 in the California desert.

But, she added, "I still have this belief that I did nothing bad to Ukrainians — not me, not Russian athletes."

The WTA and ATP tours have barred players from Russia and its ally Belarus from competing under their national flags, but insist that individual athletes have a right to compete.

"Honestly, I feel like it's more me and kind of my mistakes," she said. "I'm also not feeling 100% physically. I have a little discomfort in my rib, and we're going to consult with medical team."

Swiatek said she still planned to defend her title at the Miami Open that starts next week.

"For now I'm preparing to play, but we'll see what (the) next days are going to tell us," she said. "I don't know yet."

"She said she hadn't had



**Boxing World C'ships: Nitu, Preeti, Manju enter pre-quarters**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

wasn't able to connect her jabs.

The boxers then went into a frenzy as they punched each other with both hands. Soon, Kang got the first standing count. With Nitu continuing her onslaught, the Korean got her second standing count 20 seconds later with referee Luca Vadilonga of Italy ruling in the Indian's favour, much to the joy of the partisan crowd at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall.

Having won her opening bout by an RSC verdict, Preeti had to work hard for her second win in the tournament.

"I had prepared a lot for this bout, she had won a silver last time. I want to prove to myself that I'm less than no one," said Preeti.

"I was trying to understand her game in the beginning. In the last round I changed my strategy. She was attacking and getting unbalanced."

Both boxers looked to keep a distance in the first few seconds. Preeti was caught unawares by a Perijoc straight jab but the Haryana pugilist recovered soon.

The 2022 Asian Championships bronze medalist then landed two punches on her Romanian opponent and led 3-2 at the end of the first round.

In the second round, both boxers tried to sidestep each other as Perijoc resorted to body blows.

Preeti danced around the ring, using her nimble feet, as she tried to avoid the Romanian. She landed some accurate punches but lost the round 2-3.

**Rib injury threatens Iga's Miami Open defense**

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Iga Swiatek's Indian Wells title defense ground to a halt in a straight sets semi-final loss to Elena Rybakina on Friday, the world number one later revealing she is battling a rib injury.

"For sure, Elena played great tennis today, and I feel like against her I have to play better," Swiatek said after falling 6-2, 6-2 to the Wimbledon champion — who also shocked her in the Australian Open fourth round.

"Honestly, I feel like it's more me and kind of my mistakes," she said. "I'm also not feeling 100% physically. I have a little discomfort in my rib, and we're going to consult with medical team."

Swiatek said she still planned to defend her title at the Miami Open that starts next week.

"For now I'm preparing to play, but we'll see what (the) next days are going to tell us," she said. "I don't know yet."

"She said she hadn't had

much experience of playing through injury, the only example she recalled coming at the 2019 French Open.

"It's a new situation for me, for sure," the 21-year-old said. "For sure now it's a totally different level. So I feel like going on (for) matches you have to be 100% fit."

"I have been playing, so there has been some fatigue all the time," she said. "I would say it's kind of constant, but I'm pretty sure that tomorrow or day after will help in recovery."

In the opening minute, she used her hook and left cross but

# INDIA AIM TO SEAL SERIES

PTI ■ VISHAKHAPATNAM

The spotlight will once again be on KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja when India take on Australia in the second ODI here on Sunday, with regular captain Rohit Sharma returning to lead the side after missing the opening game in Mumbai.

India defeated Australia by five wickets in a low-scoring game at the Wankhede Stadium, with Rahul, who struggled to find form during the Border-Gavaskar series leading to him being dropped for the third and fourth Tests, scoring a patient unbeaten 75 as the hosts cantered home.

Jadeja, playing ODI cricket after nearly eight months due to a knee injury and subsequent surgery, scored an unbeaten 45 in the chase of 188 on Friday. He also bowled a tight spell and returned figures of 2/46 to be declared Player of the Match.

With the ODI World Cup being hosted by India later this year, an in-form Rahul and a fully-fit Jadeja will be an asset, and the three-match series will help the selectors assess the duo's progress. India would look to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series and also try to make amends with the bat, after they were in a spot of bother at 4/39, and later 5/83, before Rahul and Jadeja came together at the crease to guide the hosts to victory with 61 balls to spare.

Rohit Sharma's return to captaincy duties will certainly give solidity to the top order, which crumbled to the pace and variations of Australian quick Mitchell Starc.

The lanky left-arm pacer's



three-wicket burst at the start put India under tremendous pressure, with Virat Kohli (4), Suryakumar Yadav (0) and Shubman Gill (20) departing in quick succession after Marcus Stoinis had made an early dent by dismissing Ishan Kishan for three runs. Indian batters have occasionally looked tentative against quality left-arm pacers, and facing Starc in the remaining two games should give them

good practice in home conditions, with efforts focused towards making preparations for the World Cup in October-November.

With Sharma set to open, Kishan will likely make way for the regular captain. While not much should be read into Kohli and Gill's below-par scores in the first ODI, Suryakumar Yadav not being able to find his mojo in the 50-over format is a reason

for concern.

A marauder with the bat in T20Is, Suryakumar is evidently still finding his feet in ODIs. He has gone without a fifty in all five ODIs this year. Surya has now played 15 ODIs (13 innings) without a score exceeding 50.

However, with no timeline set for Shreyas Iyer's return, India will keep auditioning Suryakumar for the role at No. 4. India's bowling did a tremen-

dous job in Mumbai with pacers Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj flourishing on a pace-friendly Wankhede pitch. But wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav could not make a strong impression.

However, the team management is not expected to tinker with the bowling line-up, with Pandya playing the role of a third seamer to perfection in Mumbai.

The weather forecast for

## Important we recover properly to perform better: Shami

PTI ■ MUMBAI

ace pacer Mohammed Shami has stressed on the importance of recovery after bowling India to a five-wicket win against Australia in the first ODI at the Wankhede stadium here.

The right-arm quick returned with figures of 6-2-17-3 on Friday as India restricted Australia to 188 in 35.4 overs and then returned to overhaul the target in 39.5 overs.

"The plan was to keep it simple. We had discussed in team meeting as well to make a good start, to keep the ball in good areas and stick to our line and length," he said in conversation with fellow pacer Mohammed Siraj in a video posted on BCCI.Tv.

"The heat was also an issue. When we bowled the first spell it was hot but later it got a bit better to bowl when the wind started blowing." The 32-year-old had missed the training for the first ODI to recover from the fourth and final Test against Australia in Ahmedabad.

"After 40 overs of the Ahmedabad Test, I needed 1-2 days to recover. I completed that recovery and came here for the match," he said.

"The management accepted that I needed recovery. We have played so many matches that we know our skills and ability. So it is impor-



tant that we recover properly to perform better."

Siraj also claimed three wickets for 29 runs to play a huge role in India's win.

"When I get the new ball, I try to bowl inswing. Like when there is a left-hander, I try to bowl inswing. I wanted to take as many wickets in the powerplay. I got one wicket," he said.

"But when I went to fine leg when you were bowling, I was thinking what is happening. I was wondering if the umpire has given you the new ball or what?"

"Then when I came to bowl, the ball was moving off the wicket nicely. So, I also looked to bowl consistently in one area. I also got tips from you and we enjoyed the bowling in Wankhede."

the second ODI is of scattered thunderstorms at least in the first half, which also means that pacers from either side can swing the ball if the conditions are windy. Australia want to try out different combinations during the series. On Friday, they went in with four all-rounders — Mitchell Marsh, Cameron Green, Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell — and still couldn't trouble India much,

which would be a concern for captain Steve Smith.

As a makeshift opener in the absence of Warner, Marsh provided a rapid start with a 65-ball 81 but Australia lost the way in the middle overs, crashing from 129/2 to 188 all out against quality pace in Mumbai. Smith and Labuschagne may have encountered 'difficult' pitches in the Test series but the wickets for ODIs in India are usually batter-

friendly, and both the Aussie mainstays will be expected to do more. Smith has not crossed the 50-run mark so far on this India tour. For someone who has a mountain of runs against India, the Australian stand-in skipper will look to end the drought. Australia's fast bowling looked terrific in Mumbai, with Abbott keeping a lid on the Indians with tight lines and Green, Stoinis also chipping in.

## UPW end Mumbai Indians' winning run in WPL

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

UP Warriorz snapped formidable Mumbai Indians' winning run in the Women's Premier League with a five-wicket victory, after the Uttar Pradesh side extricated more out of a tricky pitch here on Saturday.

On a surface where the ball turned a lot and was also holding up, England's star left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone (3/15) led the way with her excellent bowling as UP Warriorz bundled out Mumbai Indians for 127.

When MI batted, as many as 18 of the 20 overs were bowled by spinners, a WPL record.

In reply, UPW faced some obstacles before competing the task with three balls to spare. Grace Harris (39) and Tahilia McGrath (38) were the main contributors with the bat for UPW, while Deepti Sharma (13 not out) and player of the match Ecclestone (16 not out) also played vital knocks.

UPW lost Devika Vaidya with just one run on the board at the start of the second over. While the successful bowler was Hayley Matthews, most of the credit for the dismissal must go to Harmanpreet Kaur, who pulled off a sensational catch at first slip after the batter got a thick outside edge.

Issy Wong picked up the big wicket of UPW captain Alyssa Healy (8), trapping her in front of the wicket. The on-field umpire was not convinced despite the huge appeal and MI's move to go for a referral proved to be the right call, leaving



the Australian star with no option but to walk back into the dugout.

Defending a small but tricky total on this surface, MI found another reason to celebrate when Yastika Bhatia completed a fantastic one-handed diving catch behind the wicket off the bowling of Nat Sciver-Brunt to send back Kiran Navgire for 12, for which she consumed 16 balls.

UPW were in a spot of bother at 27 for 3 in the beginning of seventh over, when Grace Harris got off the mark with a boundary.

Even as MI picked up three wickets quickly but they were also guilty of dropping three catches, which proved to be crucial in the end.

In the company of Harris, Tahilia McGrath stroked her way to a 25-ball 38 before Amelia Kerr had her caught and bowled. But Harris hit two successive fours on three occasions, after McGrath's dismissal, to reduce the gap.

There was another twist after Kerr dismissed Harris at a crucial juncture, but UPW held their nerves to emerge winners.

Earlier, had it not been for Issy Wong's 19-ball 32, MI would have ended with much less than what they eventually got.

After their skipper Alyssa Healy opted to field first, the UP Warriorz bowlers did a commendable job to keep things tight and take wickets at regular intervals against the strong Mumbai batting line-up.

MI were 56 for two at the end of the 10th over with Hayley Matthews (35) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (25) looking to build a partnership after the departure of Yastika Bhatia (5) and Nat Sciver-Brunt (7).

However, both Hayley and Kaur got out after getting starts, the India captain falling to compatriot Deepi Sharma after the former was done in by the seasoned Ecclestone.

## RCB to retire jersey numbers worn by ABD, Gayle

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) will retire the jersey numbers worn by AB de Villiers and Chris Gayle when the two cricketing legends are inducted into the Indian Premier League (IPL) side's Hall of Fame on March 26.

Jersey numbers 17 and 33 will be retired forever as a tribute to @ABdeVilliers17 and @henrygayle, when we induct

the legends of RCB into the Hall of Fame," RCB tweeted.

Jersey No. 17 had become synonymous with de Villiers, who played 11 seasons (2010-2021) for RCB and scored 4,491 runs in 156 matches for the franchise.

The charismatic South African cricketer also slammed 37 half-tons and two centuries for RCB, with a highest score of 133 not out in 2015.

De Villiers, who announced

his retirement from all forms of cricket in November 2021, had a strike rate touching 152 for RCB.

With Virat Kohli, de Villiers posted five 100-plus partnerships for RCB and two 200-plus stands, the only pair in the world to post two such partnerships.

West Indian hard hitter Gayle played for RCB for seven seasons (2011-2017) and his jersey No. 33 became the

most feared among opposing teams.

During the 2013 IPL season, the Jamaican smashed a mindboggling 708 runs in 16 matches for RCB, including an unbeaten 175.

Gayle began his stint with Kolkata Knight Riders in 2009, before moving to RCB, where he served the longest stint with an IPL franchise. He was bought by Punjab Kings in 2018, where he played four seasons.

## Bracewell joins RCB as Jacks replacement

PTI ■ BENGALURU

New Zealand allrounder Michael Bracewell will replace injured England batter Will Jacks in the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) squad for the upcoming edition of the IPL.

Jacks, who was bought by RCB for Rs 3.2 crore at the player auction in December last year, suffered a muscle injury while fielding during England's second ODI against Bangladesh in Mirpur earlier this month.

Bracewell didn't find any takers in the IPL auction after entering with a base price of Rs 1 crore. He has never played in the IPL. RCB will open their campaign against Mumbai Indians on April 2.

Meanwhile, Bracewell has been released from New Zealand's white-ball squad for the series against Sri Lanka so that he can join RCB's preparatory camp. Allrounder Rachin Ravindra has replaced him.

## Williamson, Nicholls double tons put NZ on top

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Aggressive double centuries for Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls powered New Zealand's dominance in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Wellington on Saturday.

The Black Caps declared their first innings at an imposing 580-4 before reducing Sri Lanka to 26-2 at stumps on day two, leaving the tourists with a very slim prospect of squaring the two-match series.

The in-form Williamson scored 215 and Nicholls posted a career-best 200 not out, with the pair's third-wicket stand of 363 virtually batting Sri Lanka out of the contest.

Their partnership was the fifth-highest by any New Zealand combination and they became the country's first batters to reach 200 in the same innings.

Sri Lankan captain Dimuth Karunaratne will resume on Sunday and nightwatchman Prabath Jayasuriya remains on four, with the deficit a daunting



rate. Nicholls marched on from his overnight 18 to reach three figures before pushing past his previous-best score of 174. His aggressive 240-ball knock, which featured four sixes, represented a remarkable return

before. It hasn't happened as much as I'd like in the last period.

"Now the challenge is doing it again knowing that the blueprint is there."

Nicholls compared the partnership with a 369-run stand with Williamson against Pakistan in Christchurch two years ago.

"The way Kane's playing, he's in a real zone out there. It was nice to make that partnership into another really big one."

Kasun Rajitha, who was off the field for a period nursing a shoulder injury, lodged the best bowling figures of 2-126.

Matt Henry removed opener Oshada Fernando for six before fellow seamer Doug Bracewell dismissed Kusal Mendis without scoring via a spectacular catch at point from Devon Conway.

It came from Bracewell's third ball of the match in what is his first Test appearance for more than six years.

Bracewell has signed New Zealand's Michael Bracewell as a replacement for England batter Will Jacks for the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023," said an IPL statement on Saturday. "Jacks, who was ruled out of the tournament due to an injury, was bought by the franchise for Rs 3.2 crore. His replacement, Bracewell, has played 16 T20Is, scored 113 runs and picked up 21 wickets. He will join RCB at his base price of Rs 1 crore," the statement added.

Bracewell didn't find any takers in the IPL auction after entering with a base price of Rs 1 crore. He has never played in the IPL. RCB will open their campaign against Mumbai Indians on April 2.

# the pioneer agenda

'There was not one true thing said in this video'  
— Bella Hadid denies anonymous TikTok claims about drug use



## TIKTOK

# FEAR AND RISKS

More and more countries are banning TikTok citing data security risks. Should users be worried that the app will be wiped off their phones, writes HALELUYA HADERO

TikTok is once again fending off claims that its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, would share user data from its popular video-sharing app with the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

China's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday accused the United States itself of spreading disinformation about TikTok's potential security risks following a report in the Wall Street Journal that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US — part of the Treasury Department — was threatening a US ban on the app unless its Chinese owners divest their stake.

So are the data security risks real? And should users be worried that the TikTok app will be wiped off their phones?

### WHAT ARE THE CONCERN ABOUT TIKTOK?

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share TikTok user data — such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers — with China's authoritarian government.

A law implemented by China in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country's national security. There's no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it, like other social media companies, collects.

Concerns around TikTok were heightened in December when ByteDance said it fired four employees who accessed data on two journalists from Buzzfeed News and The Financial Times while attempting to track down the source of a leaked report about the company.

### HOW IS THE US RESPONDING?

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby declined to comment when asked Thursday to address the Chinese foreign ministry's comments about

TikTok, citing the review being conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment.

Kirby also could not confirm that the administration sent TikTok a letter warning that the US government may ban the application if its Chinese owners don't sell its stake but added, "we have legitimate national security concerns with respect to data integrity that we need to observe."

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump and his administration sought to force ByteDance to sell off its US assets and ban TikTok from app stores. Courts blocked the effort, and President Joe Biden rescinded Trump's orders but ordered an in-depth study of the issue. A planned sale of TikTok's US assets was also shelved as the Biden administration negotiated a deal with TikTok that would address some of the national security concerns.

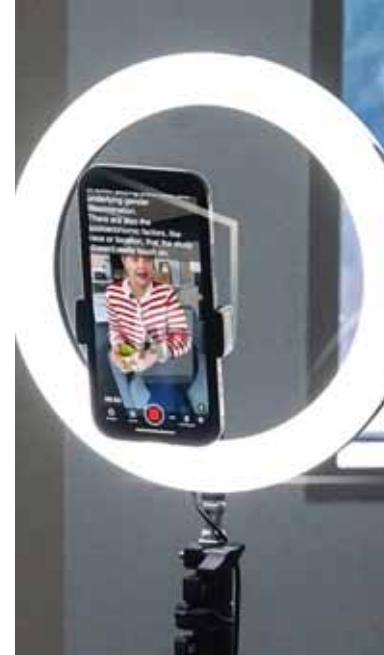
In Congress, US Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Jerry Moran, a Democrat and a Republican, wrote a letter in February to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urging the Committee on Foreign Investment panel, which she chairs, to "swiftly conclude its investigation and impose strict structural restrictions" between TikTok's American operations and ByteDance, including potentially separating the companies.

At the same time, lawmakers have introduced measures that would expand the Biden administration's authority to enact a national ban on TikTok. The White House has already backed a Senate proposal that has bipartisan support.

### HOW HAS TIKTOK ALREADY BEEN RESTRICTED?

On Thursday, British authorities said they are banning TikTok on government-issued phones on security grounds, following similar moves by the European Union's executive branch, which temporarily banned TikTok from employee phones. Denmark and Canada have also announced efforts to block it on government-issued phones.

Last month, the White House said



THERE'S NO EVIDENCE THAT TIKTOK HAS TURNED OVER SUCH DATA, BUT FEARS ABOUND DUE TO THE VAST AMOUNT OF USER DATA IT, LIKE OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES, COLLECTS.

it would give US federal agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices. Congress, the US armed forces and more than half of US states had already banned the app.

### WHAT DOES TIKTOK SAY?

TikTok spokesperson Maureen Shanahan said the company was already answering security concerns through "transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification."

In June, TikTok said it would route all data from US users to servers controlled by Oracle, the Silicon Valley company it chose as its US tech partner in 2020 in an effort to avoid a nationwide ban. But it is storing backups of the data in its own servers in the US and Singapore. The company said it expects to delete US user data from its own servers, but it has not provided a timeline as to when that would occur.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is set to testify next week before the House Energy and Commerce Committee about the company's privacy and data-security practices, as well as its relationship with the Chinese government.

Meanwhile, TikTok's parent company ByteDance has been trying to position itself as more of an international company — and less of a Chinese company that was founded in Beijing in 2012 by its current chief executive Liang Rubo and others.

Theo Bertram, TikTok's vice president of policy in Europe, said in a Tweet Thursday that ByteDance "is not a Chinese company." Bertram said its ownership consists of 60% by global investors, 20% employees and 20% founders. Its leaders are based in cities like Singapore, New York, Beijing and other metropolitan areas.

### ARE THE SECURITY RISKS LEGITIMATE?

It depends on who you ask. Some tech privacy advocates say

while the potential abuse of privacy by the Chinese government is concerning, other tech companies have data-harvesting business practices that also exploit user information.

"If policy makers want to protect Americans from surveillance, they should advocate for a basic privacy law that bans all companies from collecting so much sensitive data about us in the first place, rather than engaging in what amounts to xenophobic showboating that does exactly nothing to protect anyone," said Evan Greer, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Fight for the Future.

Karim Farhat, a researcher with the Internet Governance Project at Georgia Tech, said a TikTok sale would be "completely irrelevant to any of the alleged 'national security' threats" and go against "every free market principle and norm" of the state department's internet freedom principles.

Others say there is legitimate reason for concern.

People who use TikTok might think they're not doing anything that would be of interest to a foreign government, but that's not always the case, said Anton Dahbura, executive director of the Johns Hopkins University Information Security Institute. Important information about the United States is not strictly limited to nuclear power plants or military facilities; it extends to other sectors, such as food processing, the finance industry and universities, Dahbura said.

### IS THERE PRECEDENCE FOR BANNING TECH COMPANIES?

Last year, the US banned the sale of communications equipment made by Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE, citing risks to national security. But banning the sale of items could be more easily done than banning an app, which is accessed through the web.

Such a move might also go to the courts on grounds that it might violate the First Amendment as some civil liberties groups have argued.

Associated Press

### China appeals for fair treatment

China appealed Friday to other governments to treat its companies fairly after Britain and New Zealand joined the United States in restricting use of TikTok due to fears the Chinese-owned short video service might be a security risk.

Governments are worried TikTok's owner, ByteDance, might give browsing history or other data about users to China's government or promote propaganda and disinformation.

"We call on the countries concerned to recognize the objective facts, effectively respect the market economy" and provide "a non-discriminatory environment" for all companies, said foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

TikTok is one focus of conflicts between China and other governments over technology and security that are disrupting processor chip, smartphone and other industries.

Legislators and employees in New Zealand's Parliament will be prohibited from having TikTok's app on phones, the government said Friday. Britain announced a ban Thursday on TikTok on all government phones.

India has banned TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including the WeChat message service, on security and privacy grounds.

The United States also has imposed restrictions on access by Chinese companies to processor chip and other technology on security and human rights grounds.

The Chinese government accused Washington of spreading false information about TikTok following a report by The Wall Street Journal that US authorities were considering a ban if ByteDance doesn't sell the company.

The ruling Communist Party blocks most internet users in China from seeing TikTok and thousands of social media and other websites. ByteDance operates a sister short-video service, Douyin, that can be seen in China.

HE WHO HAS HEALTH HAS HOPE;  
AND HE WHO HAS HOPE,  
HAS EVERYTHING  
— THOMAS CARLYLE

## GOING AYURVEDA WAY



DR RP PARASHER  
CMO (Ayurveda), MCD

# H3N2: PRECAUTION IS THE KEY

Amid a spurt in cases of the H3N2 virus in the country, one more death has been reported, this time from Gurugram in Haryana. This takes the total number of fatalities to three. Adequate rest, simple home-cooked fresh food, and proper hydration are advised for recuperation at home, doctors tell **THE HEALTH PIONEER**

The health experts said that the first sign of influenza virus is usually a high fever, which begins about four to five days after exposure to the virus and lasts 10 to 15 days. A runny nose, a cough, red and watery eyes, and facial swelling can develop in the initial stage. They added that people at higher risk of developing complications include children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant people, and people with certain long-term health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neuro-developmental problems.

Dr Jugal Kishore Director Professor and Head of Department of Community at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi said that precaution is a key word. It is crucial to avoid crowded places, travel only if necessary, practice good hand and respiratory hygiene, and seek medical advice if symptoms persist for more than two days.

"There is a surge of H3N2 cases in the region now, but the severity of such cases is less.



Some people with co-morbidities are getting hospitalised as they are in the high-risk zone. People need to wear masks and take precaution," Dr Rajiva Gupta, a consultant at the internal medicine department of CK Birla Hospital said.

The World Health Organisation, too, recommends that the most effective way to prevent infection with any virus is to get vaccinated and follow prevention measures: "Maintaining at least a 1-metre distance from others, wearing a well-fitted mask when keeping your distance is not possible, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated places and settings, opening windows and doors to keep rooms well ventilated and cleaning your hands frequently." It also advises that people should follow the advice "of your local authorities on getting influenza and Covid-19 vaccines".

Dr. Raman Kumar, physician from Noida said that H3N2 influenza is a respiratory virus which transmits in the same fashion as the Covid virus. The precautions are also the same and should be diligently followed.

## WHAT/HOW/CAUSES/SYMPOTMS/MANAGEMENT OF H3N2

**What is the H3N2 virus?** According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. There are 4 types of seasonal influenza viruses, types A, B, C and D. Influenza A and B viruses circulate and cause seasonal epidemics of disease. Influenza A viruses are further classified into subtypes according to the combinations of the hemagglutinin (HA) and the neuraminidase (NA), the proteins on the surface of the virus.

**How Does The Virus Transmit?** H3N2 Influenza virus transmitted mainly through infected droplets created when infected pigs

cough or sneeze. If these droplets land in your nose or mouth, or you inhale them, you can be infected. After this when an infected person sneezes or coughs, the respiratory droplets can travel in the air and reach the nose, and mouth of another individual, making him/her catch the virus and fall sick.

**Common Symptoms of H3N2 virus:** Cough and runny nose/ Body aches/Coughing/Fever/Vomiting/Nausea/Diarrhea and Chills among few others.

**Tips for Patients infected with H3N2:** In

symptomatic cases, patients should wash hands with soap and water, wear masks and avoid crowded places, cover mouth and nose while sneezing and coughing, avoid touching eyes and nose, take plenty of fluids and take paracetamol for fever and bodyache.

**Who is More at Risk?** Following is a list of all the health and age factors that are known to increase a person's risk of getting serious flu complications, according to US body Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

or CDC

■ Although all children younger than 5 years old are considered at higher risk of serious flu complications, the highest risk is for those younger than 2 years old, with the highest hospitalization and death rates among infants younger than 6 months old.

■ Adults 65 years and older/Asthma/Neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions/Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)/Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and

cystic fibrosis)/Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)/Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)/Kidney diseases/Liver disorders/Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)/Obese people with a body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher/People younger than 19 years old on long-term aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications/People with a weakened immune system/People who have had a stroke/ Pregnant women and those up to 2 weeks after the end of pregnancy/ People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

## HEALTH BRIEFS



**GURU NANAK EYE CENTRE CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY:** Delhi-based Guru Nanak Eye Centre celebrated its 37th Foundation Day on.... On the occasion, it released a souvenir, "The glorious history and journey of Guru Nanak Eye Centre," compiled by the staff of GNEC team. It was released by Lt Gen Dr Daljit Singh, Dir. Gen. Medical Services (Army), Prof Poonam Narang (Dir. Prof. Radiology, Dean).

Dr Kirti Singh, Director of the hospital, said, the surgical expertise and clinical acumen of the doctors meets the best among their peers, a fact that is reflected in the annual footfall of 3-4 lakh patients requiring eye care.

**AIIMS, DELHI MOOTS 5G ROUTE:** AIIMS, Delhi is embarking on an installation of a smart fifth-generation cellular network in its premises by June 30, capitalizing on 5G's fast speeds to enhance access to care and improve efficiency.

A five-member panel headed by Prof Vivek Tandon, Department of Neurosurgery has been set up to expedite the process. An office memorandum issued by AIIMS director M Srinivas stated, "To enable maximum utilisation of modern communication technology for patient care, teaching, research, good governance, and for optimal deployment of integrated medical university information system (IMUIS), it is desirable that the entire campus has good strength of 5G mobile network to enable a robust mobile and data connectivity inside the buildings."

He also said that strong 5G connectivity will help the institution stay in touch with its main and outreach campuses like NCI Jhajjar which will enable senior faculty members to provide their expert advice during off-duty hours.

The other members of committee include Dr Vivek Gupta (computer facility) and superin-

tending engineer Jitendra Saxena. Dr Vikas from telecommunications will be member secretary of the committee and Sunita Cherodath, senior deputy director general, department of telecommunications, will be a special invitee.



**BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS BHUMI UNDP'S SDGS AMBASSADOR:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has announced Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar as their first national advocate for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently.

As a national advocate, Bhumi will support UNDP India's efforts to raise awareness and mobilize support for the SDGs, a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Taking on the new role, Bhumi said, "I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure we leave behind a better world for future generations. The SDGs provide a roadmap for building a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all..."

Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India said that Bhumi's talent and dedication to gender equality and sustainability make her an ideal advocate for the SDGs.

## Cancer Prevention Strategies for Women



DR ADITI AGGARWAL  
Senior Consultant,  
Radiation Oncology, Paras  
Hospital, Gurgaon

As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer is the second most common cause of death globally with cases increasing every year in India as in the world.

Looking at cancers occurring in females, globally breast cancer tops the list followed by colorectal and lung cancers whereas in India, breast cancer is the leading and cervical cancer is the second most common cancer followed by ovary, head neck and colorectal cancers.

When it comes to cancer prevention, it is important to understand the risk factors for these diseases. Breast cancer

occurs more commonly in urban population than rural, pointing towards the westernization and changes in lifestyle that is contributory. Also the reproductive habits have changed over decades, amongst women in India. The older a woman is when she has her first full-term pregnancy, the higher her risk of breast cancer, no/fewer children, no breastfeeding. Poor genital hygiene, multiple births, multiple sexual partners are causative for cervical cancers. Consumption of saturated fats, processed foods, red meat, sedentary lifestyle being risk factors for breast and colorectal, as well as ovarian cancers to some extent. Smoking, tobacco chewing, alcohol are leading cause for head, neck and lung cancers. Family history is another important factor in breast, colorectal and ovarian cancers in few cases.

Amongst risk reduction/cancer prevention strategies that need to be followed, the first and foremost is leading a healthy lifestyle which means, no addictions, healthy diet with adequate



fibers, fruits and vegetables, minimal processed food, low red meat, avoiding constipation. Also moderate amount of exercise in our daily routine for around 30 minutes is recommended to maintain a healthy weight and keep many diseases away, not just cancer. Healthy reproductive habits and good genital hygiene, having children timely, limiting the number of births, avoiding high risk sexual behavior is equally important.

Following a routine of getting yourself tested regularly, termed as screening for breast and cervical cancers should be done by all females. Mammo-

graphy for breast cancer should be undertaken at the age of 45 years, thereafter done once in two years, till the age of 74 years as per USPSTF. Also PAP Smear for cervical cancer should be done for all sexually active females once in 3 years till the age of 65 years. These are simple tests which can detect very early lesions, sometimes even before they become cancerous.

Screening for colorectal cancers using a test called colonoscopy is recommended for all those touching 45 to 50 years, done once in 5 to 10 years till the age of 75 years. In case of a positive family history, these tests should start 10 years earlier than the

index case.

Another very effective preventive tool available for cervical cancers is HPV vaccine for all girls, starting at the age of 9 years and given as two doses till the age of 15 years, or three doses till the age of 26 years. We need to educate our daughters to be aware of their bodies and start breast self-examination once a month to understand what is normal for their body and to consult a doctor in case they notice or feel any abnormality. Breast self-examination should be done by all females on a regular basis once a month after their periods starts.

Head neck cancers would most of the times present with a non-healing ulcer, pain or difficulty in swallowing. These complaints should be addressed by an expert at the earliest. With increasing pollution and smoking in females, lung cancer in females is also on increase.

To summarise, cancer in women is largely preventable by following a healthy lifestyle, regular screening tests, timely vaccination and self-examination.

If chewed, Aladi Vati, Lavangadi vati and Vyoshadi vati provide instant relief in cough. Ayurvedic cough syrups containing Tulsi, vasa, jufa, pippali, mulethi, somlata, kantkari are quite effective and safe even in children and elders.

**Ayurvedic treatment:** Ayurvedic drugs are capable of treating the infection within three to five days. Medicines like Sitopaladi churan, Talishadi churan, Laxmivilas Ras, Kafet Ras, Sanjeevani Vati, Sudarshan ghan vati, Trilokyachintamani ras, Sameerpannag ras are quite effective to treat the infection. Chyavanprash, Vasa, Avleha, Agastya Haritik provide relief in cough and cold within a few days.

Therefore, let us set sail towards reaching success by enabling each child with Down syndrome to gain access to schooling and college environments which come equipped with platforms that allow for auditory/visual modifications, accommodating physical exercises (occupational/speech therapies). Efforts should be made on giving them the extra time required for classroom - all so that we can better comprehend each individual affected by this condition including his/her abilities & special needs.

After all, it is our responsibility as a society to provide opportunities and nurture diversity at every step going forward.

(The writer is Managing Secretary of Manovikas Charitable Society, Delhi)

## Down Syndrome: Untapped Sky-high Potential



ALOK KUMAR 'BHUVAN'  
President, India Down  
Syndrome Council

Down Syndrome (DS) is a condition in which extra genetic material causes delays in the mental and physical development of a child. One of the most common genetic disorders, the condition is characterised by the presence of an extra 21st chromosome. It is not a disease and there is no way to prevent it. In India, around 32,000 cases are observed.

Individuals with Down syndrome demonstrate more similarities than differences compared to other typically developing peers.

Demystifying the myths that such children have a bleak future, each day, many new kids on the block are beating the

odds, showing extraordinary achievements, the ability to possess hopes and dreams for the future, and a solid determination to meet their goals.

Though individuals with Down syndrome experience learning difficulties that give rise to developmental delays, not all areas are impacted with an equivalent effect.

Here, I would like to talk about Nagpur's Devanshi Joshi, a recipient of 'Role Model' award which was conferred on her by then President Ram Nath Kovind in 2021. She has been breaking many stereotypes and misconceptions around intellectual disability through her path-breaking achievements.

Ditto is the case with 24-year-old Adya Verma. An advocate by profession, Adya is with our organization, aiding in the creation of Easy Road Documents as well as taking part in numerous lectures and workshops to communicate her vision.

Similarly, Rashmi Rekha Sahu with Down Syndrome is charting her own path under the guidance of her parents, both school teachers. An Odissi dancer, she leaves everybody in awe with her excellent dance expressions and movements. Recently, she successfully accomplished Sangeet Visharad Pratham Khand (IV year) organized by well-known organization, Pracheen Kala.

These are just among a few examples even for many of us who are pursuing with relentless passion to accomplish their potential as well as passion.

On our part, on World Down Syndrome Day 2023 our organization in collaboration with SNAC & CBSM, organiz-

ing a programme where over 500 participants comprising those diagnosed with disabilities will attempt to exhibit their talents.

Such events are an attempt made at creating awareness related to communication skills, primary sign language and easy-read training for intellectual



# Emigrants' road to US paved with thorns

Emigrants from South America, particularly from Venezuela and Central America, who want to cross over to America are falling into the infamous and dangerous jungle track of Darien Gap while travelling to their destined nation. Besides, emigrants from Asia and Africa too try to travel through the Darien Gap to reach the US.

Undoubtedly, the number of emigrants has reached an alarming level in the Darien Gap. The international human rights organisations, aid agencies and the US Government are working hard to address the concerns of the stranded migrants. However the human rights activists are raising their voices against the apathy displayed by the American agencies in settling down the immigrants. Also many are pointing fingers at the Mexican Government for the way it is handling the migrants at the most infamous Siglo XXI Migration Detention Centre, which means 21st century in Spanish. It is located in the southern border city of Tapachula in Mexico.

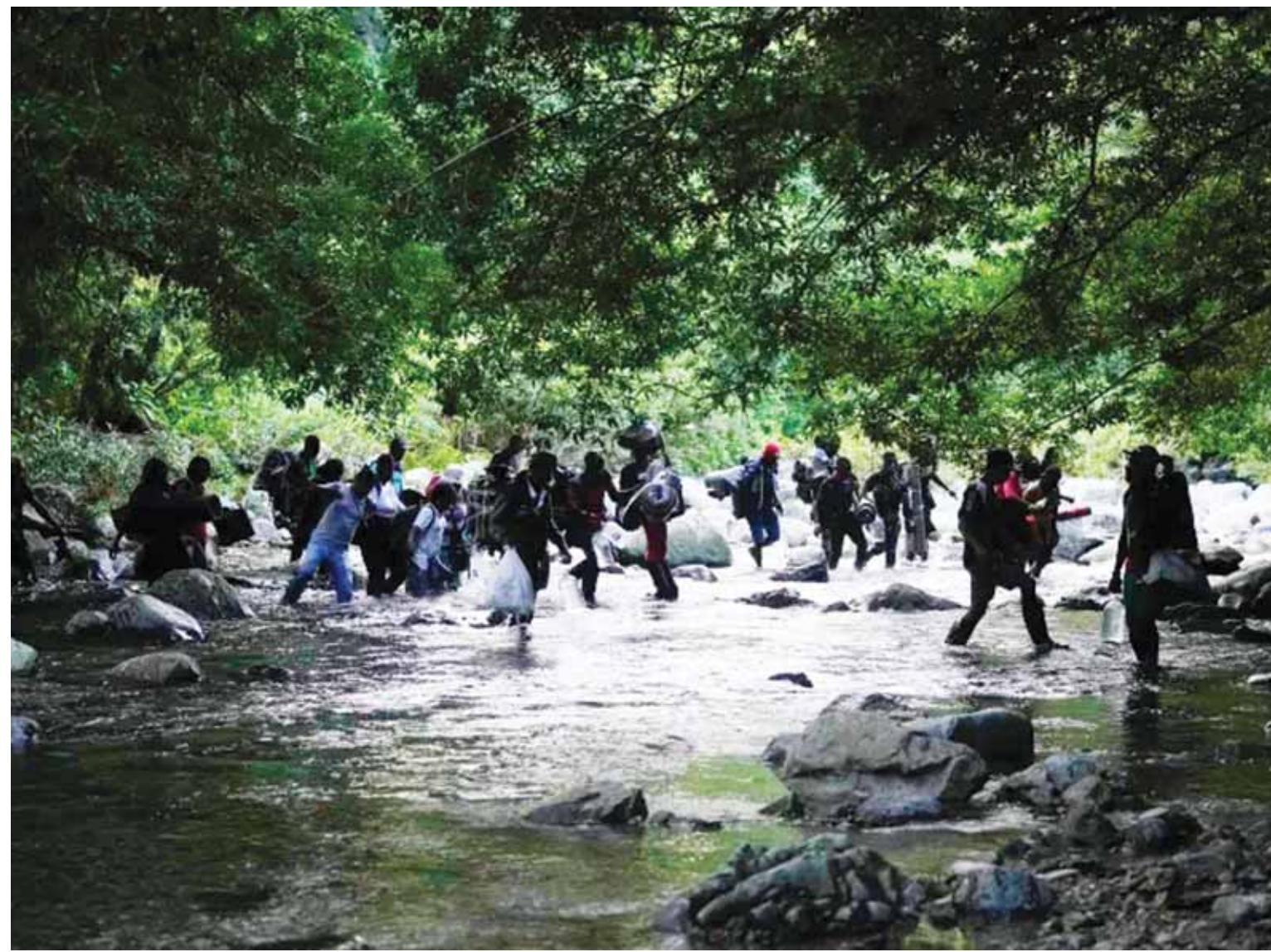
#### What is Darien Gap?

It is a 66-mile mountainous stretch between Colombia and Panama. It is highly inhospitable. Generally, the journey through this road takes at least a week with all possible health hazards and life threats. Earlier migrants were flying to Mexico before entering into the US. But now a new visa requirement in Mexico and other Central American countries have forced them to take the Darien Gap.

#### Why is it so dangerous to take Darien Gap?

First of all, it is a long mountainous tract. Therefore, for many, it becomes really difficult to survive while journeying. The emigrants die in the Darien Gap and their remains are neither recovered nor reported by anyone.

Hence, the news of only a few who die in the track is coming to light. Second, this



Emigrants cross a stream in Darien Gap to reach the US

AP file photo

jungle track is full of venomous snakes, toads, lizards, frogs, other fearsome animals and insects. Third, because of extreme humidity and rain, many of the migrants can't survive the journey.

Fourth, there is a huge flourishing market for human traffickers in the gap.

Fifth, rape and other violence are rampant in this jungle tract.

Last two years have witnessed a record number of people crossing the dangerous

Darien Gap. As per the record of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the number of people who crossed the tract doubled in a year in 2022. Sources from the Panama Government say nearly 2,50,000 people entered the country from South America compared to just 1,33,000 in the year 2021.

The number of Venezuelans who crossed this Gap increased over 50 times in 2021 and reached up to 1,55,327 in 2022. It is followed

by other countries such as Ecuador, Haiti and Cuba.

In a seminal report brought out by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2021, it was found that economic concerns force people from Central America to the US. Some of the top countries from where the maximum number of emigrants crosses over to America are El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The report "Charting a New Regional Course of

Action: The Complex Motivations and Costs of Central America Migration" clearly says 89 per cent of the people consider the US as the first choice of migration. It is found that about 55 per cent of the emigrants took the help of illegal routes and they spent nearly \$7,500 per attempt to emigrate. Once they immigrated to their dream land, their home countries also start earning in the form of foreign remittances.

Astonishingly, these

Northern Triangle countries force people to immigrate mainly because of economic precariousness, crime, violence and finally, corruption propelled by government agencies. Again the two years of Covid-19 pandemic has led to the sharp rise of migration from these nations to the US.

In comparison to 8 per cent in 2019, almost 43 per cent of the people considered emigrating in 2021.

Further food insecurity is one of the major reasons that

compels people to leave their Central American homes. The World Food Programme (WFP) launched by the UN in the year 1961 to alleviate poverty finds that almost 6.4 million people suffered from food insecurity in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala in 2021, up from 2.2 million in 2019. This rightly underlines that more and more people are considering migration as the only option to find a better life.

It has been reported that messages and social media outlets like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc, have become the main sources for the emigrants when they plan their "Hope Trip" towards the north i.e. the US. Many of them also upload videos in TikTok to inspire fellow emigrants and also to warn them about the possible risks en route to the US.

Ironically, these voyages are difficult for both the emigrants and the refugees as the bordering nations have tightened their controls on the check posts. And this has forced them to take the help of informal and dangerous routes through criminal agents by paying huge sums of money. Emigrants risk death on their long and arduous journey to the blessed land of the US.

Today, the Darien Gap is popularly known as the deadly extension of the US border. The US Government is putting all its efforts to fortify it so as to stop the migrants from crossing into its mainland. But now the question is where these poor and helpless people will go? They see no future in their lands. Only hope for them lies in reaching the US.

It is time to address the vulnerabilities in the Darien Gap. The governments concerned and human rights groups need to encourage emigrants and the refugees to take the formal route to save the precious human lives.

(The writer is the Head of the Department of Arts and Humanities at Geeta University, Panipat)

**Emigrants risk death on their long and arduous journey via Darien Gap to the blessed land of the US. Further, the US Government is pulling out all the stops to block the route so as to stop the emigrants from crossing into its territory. The moot point is where these helpless people will go? They see no future in their native lands**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# Iraqis see signs of hope 20 years after US invasion

Half of today's population in Iraq are not old enough to remember life under Saddam Hussein. In interviews from Baghdad to Fallujah, young Iraqis deplored the chaos that followed Saddam's ouster, but many were hopeful about nascent freedoms and opportunities, writes John Daniszewski

Along the Tigris River, a young Iraqi men and women in jeans and sneakers danced with joyous abandon on a recent evening to a local rapper as the sun set behind them. It's a world away from the terror that followed the US invasion 20 years ago.

President George W Bush called the US-led invasion launched March 20, 2003, a mission to free the Iraqi people. It threw out a dictator whose rule kept 20 million people in fear for a quarter-century. But it also broke a unified state in the heart of the Arab world. About 300,000 Iraqis were killed between 2003 and 2023, along with more than 8,000 US military, contractors and civilians.

Half of today's population are not old enough to remember life under Saddam Hussein. In interviews from Baghdad to Fallujah, young Iraqis deplored the chaos that followed Saddam's ouster, but many were hopeful about nascent freedoms and opportunities.

In northern and western Iraq, there are occasional clashes with remnants of the Islamic State group. It is but one of Iraq's lingering problems. Another is corruption; a 2022 audit found a network of former officials and businessmen stole \$2.5 billion.

In 2019-20, young people protested against corruption and lack of services. After 600 were killed by government forces and militias, parliament

bullish. Conversations start with bitterness about how the US left Iraq in tatters. But speaking to younger Iraqis, one senses a generation ready to turn a page.

Safaa Rashid, 26, is a writer who talks politics with friends at a coffee shop in Baghdad's Karada district. After the invasion, Iraq lay broken, violence reigning, he said. Today is different; he and like-minded peers freely talk about solutions. "I think the young people will try to fix this situation."

Noor Alhuda Saad, 26, a PhD candidate and political activist, says her generation has been leading protests decrying corruption, demanding services and seeking inclusive elections — and they won't stop until they've built a better Iraq.

Blast walls have given way to billboards, restaurants, cafes, shopping centres. With 7 million inhabitants, Baghdad is the Middle East's second-largest city; streets teem with commerce.

In a chandeliered reception room, President Abdul Latif Rashid, who assumed office in October, spoke glowingly of Iraq's prospects. Perception of Iraq as a war-torn country is frozen in time, he told *The Associated Press*: "Iraq is rich; peace has returned."

If young people are "a little bit patient, I think life will improve drastically in Iraq."

Most Iraqis aren't nearly



Youths gather along the Tigris River for a concert by rap artist OG Khalifa in Baghdad on February 25, 2023. One of the songs he performs mocks 'sheiks', those who wield power in the new Iraq through wealth or political connections

Alissawi, a mosque leader recalling the war years.

These days, he enjoys the security, "If it stays like now, it is perfect." Sadr City, a working-class suburb in eastern Baghdad, is home to more than 1.5 million people. On a pollution-choked avenue, two friends have side-by-side shops. Haider al-Saady, 28, fixes tires. Ali al-Mummadi, 22, sells lumber.

They scoff when told of the Iraqi president's promises that life will be better.

"It is all talk," al-Saady said. His companion agrees: "Saddam was a dictator, but the people were living better, peacefully."

Khalifa OG raps about difficulties of life and satirizes authority, but isn't blatantly political.

A song he performed next to the Tigris mocks "sheiks" wielding power in the new Iraq through wealth or connections.

Abdullah Rubai, 24, could barely contain his excitement. "Peace for sure makes it easier" for parties like this, he said. His stepbrother Ahmed Rubai, 30, agreed.

"We had a lot of pain ... it had to stop," Ahmed Rubai said. These young people say sectarian hatred is a thing of the past. They're unafraid to make their voices heard.

Mohammed Ziad Khaman, 18, toils in his family's café in a poor Baghdad

neighborhood. He resents the militias' hold on power as an obstacle to his sports career.

Khaman's a footballer, but says he can't play in Baghdad's amateur clubs — he has no "in" with militia-related gangs.

"If only I could get to London, I would have a different life."

The new Iraq offers more promise for educated young Iraqis like Muammel Sharba, 38. A lecturer at Middle Technical University in once violence-torn Baquba, Sharba left Iraq for Hungary to earn a PhD on an Iraqi scholarship.

He returned last year, planning to fulfil obligations to his university and then move back to Hungary.

Sharba became an biker in Hungary but never imagined he could pursue his passion at home. Now, he's found a cycling community. He notices better technology and less bureaucracy, too.

So he plans to remain.

"I don't think European countries were always as they are now," he said. "I believe that we need to go through these steps, too."

(The author is AP's vice president for standards and editor at large. Jerome Delay is chief photographer in Johannesburg, South Africa. AP reporter Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Abby Sewell, AP's Syria, Lebanon and Iraq news director, contributed from Baghdad)

THE WORLD IS FULL OF MAGIC  
THINGS, PATIENTLY WAITING FOR  
OUR SENSES TO GROW SHARPER  
— WB YEATS



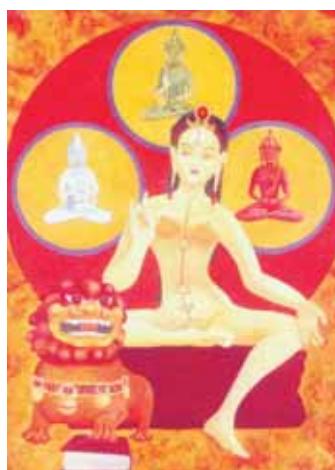
## YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA

**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This is a terrific week for you on many levels. You will come across fresh experiences and welcome hosts who will embrace you and invite you into their world. Everything is coming together, and you can feel at peace with the situation. On the professional front, an improved position, promotion, or designation is on the table. You are quite sound and grounded this week, so you are likely to make crucial professional or relationship decisions. You are dedicated and focused. This week is likely to be challenging. Your wealth of energy and self-confidence will propel you forward. On the personal front, you have a considerable amount of energy. You have a clear understanding of a problem and may now defend your position to win.

Lucky number 28  
Lucky colour Orange  
Lucky day Tuesday

**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

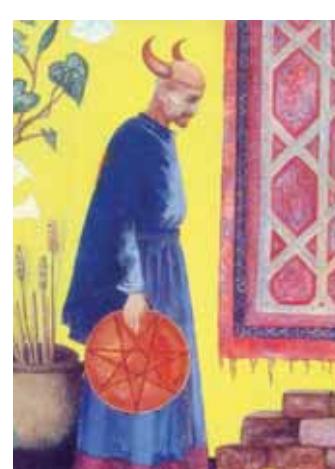
This week, your wisdom can help you solve a lot of challenges. You might be able to take control of your life with your experience and maturity. Instead of being innovative, you will need to adapt to the pre-existing set of beliefs and institutions. Any fresh theory does not fit you this week. You must adopt the conventional method. In terms of your career, you may be your own enemy. What you say is not as important as how you say it. At your workplace, there may be some inequality. Be certain that your behaviour is flawless. Strive to reduce your unnecessary spending. If you are already in a committed relationship, trust is important. If you're suspicious about your spouse, make a point to talk about it even if it's uncomfortable.

Lucky number 10  
Lucky colour Camel brown  
Lucky day Sunday

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week you will need to make some efforts to improve your health. More exercise under professional or nutritional direction is required. Take charge. This might be an extremely creative period for you. Loving yourself and your childlike enthusiasm will contribute to the enrichment of your life. This week's working atmosphere will be welcoming and consistent, increasing your efficiency. You will love working in a group and produce fruitful outcomes. You will be able to get your superior's support. Real love, a healthy partnership, dedication, and everything that is good are all around you. Since the foundation of your love is so strong, you may expect a real and long-term connection.

Lucky number 13  
Lucky colour Turquoise  
Lucky day Friday

**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week's health is going to be fine. This is the period when you are physically, psychologically, and emotionally at your best. Health, vigor, and inner liveliness energize and inspire you. Some creative thoughts will occupy and shine brightly in your imagination. Ladies who follow the family path will feel healthier and feel. Make sure you give yourself enough time to unwind. There may come a time in your life when you feel compelled to make changes in your profession. If you are dissatisfied with your job, you should consider changing jobs. Some of you may choose business over a career. Do not neglect your personal life. Your loved ones mean to you. Take some time out, let the heart speak louder than the mind.

Lucky number 30  
Lucky colour Green  
Lucky day Thursday

**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

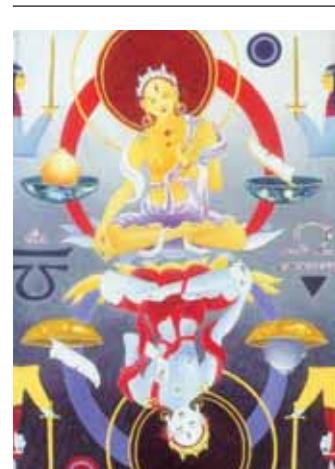
This week you are receiving the benefits of your past. You will be focused on the truth that life is a circle and that what goes around always, will come around. Remember that giving, whether with your time, energy, or money, is also an investment in your future. Professionally, you may be motivated to embark on a new project. You've reached a point in time when you are content with who you are and how you feel. Allowing your imagination to flow opens up new possibilities for you. In terms of relationships, if you fall in love and intend to make him or her your life partner, get your parents' consent first. You will maintain contact with your elderly at home and receive their blessings.

Lucky number 12  
Lucky colour White  
Lucky day Monday

**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

General health remains good. You are energized and enthusiastic. The efforts put into a health routine some time ago are finally beginning to yield results. New things, such as improved nourishment, new techniques, and fresh ideas, are required. Individuals who have recovered from a major illness must complete the required steps. On the professional front, if you are participating in any kind of competition, you should keep an eye out for any signs of cheating. The bottom line is to cover your back, make sure you're doing things correctly. You are not a very outspoken partner. Saying nice words to someone you care about allows you to express yourself. Your introversion and individuality do not help you get closer to someone you care about.

Lucky number 20  
Lucky colour Sky Blue  
Lucky day Friday

**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

You are mentally active this week. Your inner thoughts may appear to be working overtime. Your desire to make things happen is reignited. Your analytical and thinking abilities are exceptional, and you do not listen to others. You believe that what you say or do is correct. Do not point out flaws in others. On the professional front, some good news is on the way. An unexpected opportunity may surprise you. Your calm demeanor will help you navigate through challenging situations. This week may bring deception and disputes in love affairs. You risk jeopardising things you desire, such as close, deeper relationships with your friends and lover. At this point, a lack of communication and understanding might be harmful.

Lucky number 14  
Lucky colour Brown  
Lucky day Wednesday

**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You are a calm and keen observer this week. A good attitude will alter your perspective on life. Spirituality things will be going well, and you will be feeling optimistic. You may have to decide whether to invest your energy in things, people, and situations in which you are already involved. On the professional front, you want your time and space, as well as some solitude. The agony of losing your career has overwhelmed you, as have financial and health concerns. You find most of the answers in your isolation. That is also not the time to make important decisions. The card shows the beginning of love, happiness, and compassion. The beginning of a new connection, whether friendship or romance, will put a smile on your face.

Lucky number 11  
Lucky colour Pink  
Lucky day Monday

**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week will bring you joy, excellent health, and worldly pleasures. You have a positive attitude and will carefully assess and examine what people ask you now. Yoga, meditation, cosmic healing, and discovering new hobbies are all on the agenda. Professionally, there is a rift between the two options. You must pick between job and leisure. This is a good moment to review your priorities and responsibilities. You must make judgments to improve working conditions and outputs. Stay away from anxiety and stress. Negative factors should not affect you. On the personal front, examine yourself carefully to see whether you are being realistic about love. Do not waste time dwelling in self-pity or wishing your life away.

Lucky number 10  
Lucky colour Silver  
Lucky day Saturday

**CANCER** June 21-July 22

You are feeling trapped or confined in your life this week. Health problems are out of control. On the health front, there might be one issue after another. You must examine why you are feeling this way and attempt to free yourself from these restrictions. You require an emotional release from whatever is keeping you stuck. Professionally, you are in a good mood and want to have a good time. You spend some time pampering yourself to feel and look beautiful. Earnings will be satisfactory. This is an excellent time for home décor and home renovation. Messages of love and affection are likely to come your way. If you are single, you may meet a new suitor with whom you share many interests.

Lucky number 31  
Lucky colour Red  
Lucky day Wednesday

**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 22

Avoiding reality does not fit your personality. If you have a medical concern, see a doctor outside your vicinity. A change of scenery will revitalise your health. Do not worry about little matters; it will actually harm your health. On the professional front, you are prepared to face any unfinished business in your life. You are firm and determined. You've gone through your prior experiences and learnt from them. Your life's jigsaw pieces are finally coming together to create a whole. On the personal level, it is preferable to listen to your mind rather than your heart. Your desire to make things happen is reignited. At home, your dominant demeanor may anger others, and you may be left alone. Listen more and speak less.

Lucky number 8  
Lucky colour Camel Brown  
Lucky day Friday

**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

You are thinking about self-improvement this week. To avoid stress, engage in some creative activity and keep oneself active. Don't be afraid to discuss your feelings with trusted people or to seek their assistance. Professionally, this is an excellent time to begin long-term planning. What do you want to achieve in the next five years? How are you going to make it happen? Concentrate on your abilities and potential. You have high aspirations for life and like the surprises it frequently provides. Your previous investments are likely to return to you with interest. An existing relationship may suffer because of a misunderstanding. Think calmly and carefully about your relationship limitations.

Lucky number 22  
Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Friday

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## ASTROTURF

BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

In tradition bound Indian society, parents begin to lose their nerves, when their child's marriage gets unduly delayed. Keen to expedite their marriage, they run to pundits for remedial measures. The charlatans keep waiting to cash in such opportunities. They make them bleed in money for belief driven pujas directed towards appeasement of divine forces. What people are not aware that planetary and stellar reflections in a chart are indicative of one's inherent nature, which set the terms of interpersonal relationship skills, vital to a happy union. Also, they speak of a programme layout for one's evolution by offering time and space necessary to overcome one's limiting tendencies by going through learning lessons of life. One then becomes matured enough to handle relationship issues with ease and comfort. Accordingly, the horoscopes indicate time frame suitable for one's marriage. That evidently varies from person-to-person, depending on how much one needs to work upon his/her fault lines. The question now is: "Can the programme layout of a person, coming as it may as Karmic carryover from the past, be changed by belief driven pujas mediated by pundits? Also, given the fact

that one's personality trends have mind genesis, can the pundits invade a person's mind space to correct inherent thought process?" It is simply difficult to digest.

The other day, a worried mother of a girl child in late thirties and yet not married came with her daughter asking: "What is in store of my daughter's destiny? Why is her marriage getting unduly delayed? My relatives keep making uncomfortable remarks. Please guide me."

Well, your focus should be a stable and happy married life for your daughter, no matter how much it gets delayed. You don't need to prove yourself to anybody and everybody. True, by usual standards her marriage has got delayed. But that is purposeful. It needs to be appreciated that marriage is a union of two individuals, both born unique, each reflecting varying mind traits. Yet, the two are to live for each other more in a 'giving' than 'demanding' mode, overriding their individual limitations, as they have a shared destiny. It doesn't happen in case of those still stuck to their habit tendencies and illusionary perceptions. Their individualistic egos drive them crazy. Such characters are to have a delayed marriage. In the process,

they get opportunity to overcome their inherent fault lines and develop interpersonal-relationship skill. Your daughter falls under this category. "What are her limiting tendencies that she needs to work upon, and what is its basis?" The mother asked.

She is born in Gemini lagna with fiery Mars placed there. She is dominating by nature, who wishes to live on her own exclusive terms in a demanding mode. In fact, 'my way or high way' seems to be her nature. She would like to have only 'yes persons' around. It is difficult for her to digest contrarian view when she goes wild. The Sun placed adverse to Uranus and Neptune makes her self-willed, erratic, and tactless. Also, she would be stuck to her illusionary perceptions and beliefs, distanced from ground realities. She may not acknowledge truth on its first appearance and would blindly pursue her line of thinking till pushed to the wall. Moon ill-disposed off to Saturn brings in a negative mindset, makes her pessimist, self-doubting, and overcritical of others. Mars adverse to Moon and Jupiter makes her aggressive, impulsive, irritable, and argumentative. Also, she has an inflated ego, which limits her scope of vision to self-defined beliefs

and perceptions, not open to look beyond for a reality check. Mars placed adverse to Saturn makes her temperamental, bad tempered, impatient, and habitually suspicious. In the event of differences in opinion, she would take the tendency of fight to finish to prove her point. Venus placed opposite Jupiter and also adverse to Uranus and Neptune, speaks of a volatile emotionality. She may get overexercised even on trivial issues, and stretch it beyond due, unnecessarily brooding and contemplating, when she may lose her sense of reason and order.

She has enough of positives also. But the above tendencies would prove detrimental to marital happiness and stability. The girl in question said that she did carry the above tendencies, which she has been able to overcome during the last couple of years. So, you are now ready for marriage and in all probability it should come about next year, I observed. It will be still desirable to submit to meditation process as suggested to do away with your inherent tendencies from the root level.

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## Marry when naturally due



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