







# Modi to chair G20 Leaders virtual summit on Nov 22

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a virtual G20 Leaders' summit on November 22 which will take forward key outcomes and action points agreed at the annual conclave of the grouping in September under India's presidency besides delving into the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said the upcoming summit is also expected to push for effective implementation of various decisions taken at the annual summit of the bloc in New Delhi over two months back. It said deliberations that featured during the second India-hosted Voice of Global South Summit on Friday will also feed into the discussions at the G20 summit.

Under India's G20 presidency, the grouping managed to make significant forward movement in areas of digital public infra-



structure, climate finance, clean energy and ensuring sustainable development.

At the end of the G20 summit in New Delhi in September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India will host a virtual Leaders' Summit of the grouping before the end of its presidency.

"In pursuance of this announcement, a virtual G20 Leaders' Summit, chaired by the prime minister, will be held on November 22," the MEA said. "Leaders of all G20 members including the chair of

the African Union, as well as nine guest countries, and heads of 11 international Organisations, have been invited," it said in a statement.

It was learnt the summit may discuss the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict. In the last few years, India has been positioning itself as a leading voice, flagging concerns, challenges and aspirations of the Global South or the developing nations, especially the African continent.

"It may be recalled that the New Delhi G20 Summit witnessed the unanimous adoption of the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration. The virtual summit will take forward key, select outcomes/action points from the New Delhi summit as well as review developments since then," the MEA said.

The G20 joint declaration unveiled on September 9 was seen as a significant diplomatic victory for India as it pulled off a breakthrough on the contentious Ukraine conflict amid apprehensions that the summit may not be able to release the document in view of sharp differences on the matter.

"The virtual G20 summit is also expected to push for effective implementation of various G20 decisions, including through relevant national and international platforms," the MEA said.

India holds the G20 presidency until November 30. Brazil will hold the next presidency of the grouping.

The G20 troika during the Brazilian G20 presidency in 2024 will comprise India, Brazil and South Africa.

# Over 700 private member Bills pending in Lok Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 700 private members' Bills, several of which seek to amend penal provisions and electoral laws, are pending in the Lok Sabha. Private member bill rarely put to vote or get passed in the Parliament and become an Act.

Only 14 private members bill have been passed by both Houses and become law in the history of Indian Parliament. The last such bill, the Supreme Court (enlargement of criminal appellate jurisdiction) Bill, was passed in 1970.

Members of Parliament other than ministers are called private members and bills presented by them are known as private member's bills.

While several of these bills were introduced in June 2019, when the present Lok Sabha was formed after the parliamentary polls, some were tabled as recently as August this year during the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Private member bills are those introduced by MPs in their



personal capacity. The aim of bringing a private bill is highlighting new laws that they think should be introduced or changes they believe are necessary in the existing statutes. According to a Lok Sabha bulletin issued on Friday, 713 such bills are pending in the Lower House.

These bills deal with issues such as bringing a uniform civil code, gender equality, climate change, agriculture, amendment to the existing criminal and electoral laws and tweaking constitutional provisions.

The second half of Fridays when Parliament is in session is reserved for the members to introduce or discuss private members' bills or resolutions in the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha.

Once a debate on a private member's bill is over, the minister concerned responds and requests the member to withdraw it.

# Rajnath visits Singapore on way back from ASEAN summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid a brief visit to Singapore on Saturday on his way back from Indonesia after attending a meeting of the 10-nation ASEAN and some of its dialogue partners.

In Singapore, Singh paid tributes to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose by laying a wreath at the Indian National Army (INA) marker, the defence ministry here said.

"After completing his tour to Indonesia, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, on his way back home, paid a brief visit to Singapore on November 18," the ministry said.

It said the construction of a monument to commemorate the "Unknown Warriors" of the Indian National Army (INA) was proposed by Netaji himself and he had laid the foundation stone in July 1945.

"Paid homage at the INA Memorial marker in Singapore. My heartfelt tributes to the 'Unknown Warriors' of the



INA," Rajnath posted on X. In 1995, the National Heritage Board of Singapore erected the INA marker on the same spot as the original memorial, the ministry said in a statement.

"The defence minister also offered prayers at the Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, which is among the oldest Hindu temples in Singapore dating back to 1855," it said.

Rajnath Singh also visited the Indian Heritage Centre in the "Little India" locality of the city-state.

The centre was set up under the National Heritage Board in 2015, documenting the story of the journey of Singaporean Indians, according to the defence ministry.

# Health Ministry dismisses reports claiming 11 lakh children missed measles vaccine in 2022

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Saturday dismissed reports as "ill-informed and inaccurate" that claimed that an estimated 11 lakh children in India missed their first measles vaccine dose in 2022.

There have been some media reports alleging that an estimated 11 lakh children in India missed their first measles vaccine dose in 2022, according to a report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"These reports are not based on facts and do not reflect the true picture. These reports are based on the estimated number reported under WHO UNICEF Estimates National Immunisation Coverage (WUENIC) 2022 report which covers the time-period from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022.



"However, as per the HMIS (Health Management Information System) of the Union Ministry of Health, a total of 2,63,63,270 children out of the eligible 2,63,84,580 children received their 1st dose of Measles Containing Vaccine (MCV) in the FY 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) and only 21,310 children missed their 1st dose of Measles Containing Vaccine (MCV) in the FY 2022-23," the ministry said in a statement.

Besides this, several initiatives

have been undertaken by the government in coordination with the states to ensure that all children, either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated receive all missed or due doses of MCV.

The catch-up vaccination for the administration of MCV has been increased from two years to five years in the periodic immunisation intensification activities.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 and 4.0 were carried out in 2021 and 2022 to vaccinate all unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children with missed or due doses of vaccines. Besides this, IMI 5.0 was carried out in 2023 with a special focus to increase the coverage of MR vaccine in children up to the age of five years.

The MR campaign was carried out in Delhi and West Bengal wherein all children in the age group of nine months to 15 years (nine months to five years in Delhi) were vaccinated with campaign dose of MR vaccine.

Several states have carried out Supplementary Immunisation activities and outbreak response immunisation, wherein a total of 30 million children have been vaccinated with an additional dose of MR vaccine.

The WHO and US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cited the report which included data from 194 countries and, marked India among the 10 countries -- accounting for 55 per cent worldwide -- with the highest number of infants who did not receive the measles-containing vaccine (MCV) MCV1.

The 10 countries were India (1.1 million), Nigeria (3 million), Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.8 million), Ethiopia (1.7 million), Pakistan (1.1 million), Angola (0.8 million), Philippines (0.8 million), Indonesia (0.7 million), Brazil (0.5 million), and Madagascar (0.5 million).

# Links between gut microbiome, micronutrient deficits discovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Misuse of and overuse of medicines is often blamed for rising Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), but now a team of researchers has discovered a striking link between early-life gut microbiome and micronutrient deficits which they say may help explain why the menace has been increasing globally. The study is published last week in Nature Microbiology.

The researchers at the University of British Columbia looked into how the community of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other microorganisms that reside in the digestive system was impacted by shortages in important micronutrients like vitamin A, B12, folate, iron, and zinc.

They discovered that these deficiencies led to significant shifts in the gut microbiome of mice—most notably an alarming expansion of bacteria and fungi known to be opportunistic pathogens.

Importantly, mice with micronutrient deficiencies also exhibited a higher enrichment of genes that have been linked to antibiotic resistance.

"Micronutrient deficiency has been an overlooked factor in the conversation about global antibiotic resistance," said Dr. Paula Littlejohn, a postdoctoral research fellow with UBC's department of medical genetics and department of pediatrics, and the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute. "This is a significant discovery, as it suggests that nutrient deficiencies can make the gut environment more conducive to the development of antibiotic resistance, which is a major global health concern."

Bacteria naturally possess these genes as a defence mechanism. Certain circumstances, such as antibiotic pressure or nutrient stress, cause an increase in these mechanisms. This poses a threat that could render many potent antibiotics ineffective and lead to a future where common infections could become deadly.

Antibiotic resistance is often attributed to overuse and misuse of antibiotics, but the work of Dr. Littlejohn and her UBC colleagues suggests that the "hidden hunger" of micronutrient deficiencies is another important factor. "Globally, around 340 million children under five suffer from multiple micronutrient defi-



ciencies, which not only affect their growth but also significantly alter their gut microbiomes," said Dr. Littlejohn. "Our findings are particularly concerning as these children are often prescribed antibiotics for malnutrition-related illnesses. Ironically, their gut microbiome may be primed for antibiotic resistance due to the underlying micronutrient deficiencies."

The study offers critical insights into the far-reaching consequences of micronutrient deficiencies in early life. It underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to address undernutrition and its ripple effects on health. Addressing micronutrient deficiencies is about more than overcoming malnutrition, it may also be a critical step in fighting the global scourge of antibiotic resistance.

The World Bank estimates that an additional 24 million people would be forced into extreme poverty by 2030 if no action is taken on AMR today.

Thomas Joseph, Head, AMR Awareness, Advocacy and Campaigns, WHO, at a recent pre-conference meeting of 22nd International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) had pointed out that "AMR is associated with 5 million deaths a year. Besides this, there is the huge burden of morbidity and healthcare expenditure that can affect household welfare severely."

# Acute Covid patients more likely to experience prolonged cough, sputum



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

People who suffered acute Covid-19 infection are more likely to experience prolonged cough and sputum production as part of long Covid, according to a Japanese study.

Multiple prolonged symptoms are observed in patients who recover from acute Covid-19, defined as long Covid. Previous studies have suggested that many Covid survivors are living with neurological symptoms linked to long COVID. The study, published in the journal Respiratory Research, however aimed to identify specific risk factors for cough and sputum in patients with long Covid. Researchers from Keio University in Tokyo enrolled hospitalised patients with Covid-19 aged 18 years from 26 medical institutions.

At the three, six, and 12-month follow-ups, there were no differences in the incidence rates of wet and dry coughs. But the proportion of patients producing sputum without coughing rose over time compared with those with both sputum production and coughing.

At all follow-up visits, analyses of cough and sputum production identified the risk factors

for persistent symptoms as the use of intermittent mandatory ventilation (IMV), smoking, and older age.

At 12 months, severe Covid-19 was associated with cough and sputum production based on imaging findings, kidney and liver abnormalities, pulmonary blood clots, and higher levels of lactate dehydrogenase (indicating organ or tissue damage), Krebs von den Lungen-6 (indicating lung inflammation or damage), and haemoglobin A1c (indicating elevated blood glucose).

"These findings emphasise that a preventive approach including appropriate vaccination and contact precaution and further development of therapeutic drugs for Covid-19 are highly recommended for patients with risk factors for severe infection to avoid persistent respiratory symptoms," the researchers said.

Long-term persistent cough and sputum are burdens on patients after recovery from acute Covid-19. Further investigations are needed to elucidate the underlying mechanisms and develop specific therapeutic drugs for these persistent symptoms in patients with long Covid, the researchers said.

# Delhi court seeks ED's response on Lava Company MD bail plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A court here on Saturday sought a response from the Enforcement Directorate on an application filed by the MD of Lava International Company seeking bail in a money-laundering case against Chinese phone-maker Vivo.

Special Judge Tarun Yogesh issued a notice to the ED on the application filed by Hari Om Rai and directed the central probe agency to file its reply by November 29, when the court will further hear the matter.

The court passed the direction after hearing arguments from Advocate Nitesh Rana, who, appearing for the accused, claimed that since Rai was not



required for further custodial interrogation, no purpose will be served by keeping him in custody.

"Accused has no role in money laundering and in the schedule offence. He is just an entrepreneur," Rana told the judge.

Rai was arrested last month with a few others under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The ED has alleged that Vivo "illegally" transferred Rs 62,476 crore to China in order to avoid payment of taxes in India.

# BJP has no policies, copied Congress' guarantees for its agenda: Kharage

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage on Saturday accused the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of copying Congress' original guarantees and include in their agenda to serve up in the elections to the people.

"The BJP has neither the intentions, nor policies. The Congress has given concrete programmes for public welfare in the form of guarantees in Rajasthan and other states," Kharage said on X.

"After a lot of efforts, Modi ji and the BJP thought it better to copy our original guarantees... And has made an unsuccessful attempt to hastily serve the agenda before the elections," he said in his post in Hindi.

"The people of Rajasthan know that the Congress has worked and will also fulfil our



seven guarantees on the ground," Kharage said, using the hashtag #Congress\_again.

Kharage will address election meetings in Vair Assembly of Bharatpur district and Tijara of Rajasthan on Saturday for the upcoming November 25 assembly polls.





# BECKHAM CONCLUDES INDIA TRIP

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
English football legend David Beckham concluded his maiden trip to India, thanking superstar Shah Rukh Khan and actor Sonam Kapoor for their gracious hospitality. The football superstar posted photos with Shah Rukh on Instagram after the 58-year-old actor invited him for a dinner party at his Mumbai residence, Mannat on Thursday. Sonam and her husband, Anand Ahuja, had hosted a grand party in Beckham's honour at their house on Wednesday. "Honoured to have been welcomed into this great man's home. To enjoy a meal with @iamsrk, @gaurikhan, their beautiful children and close friends - what a special way to end my first visit to India... Thank you my friend - you and your family are welcome any time in my home," Beckham wrote. "@sonamkapoor and @anandahuja - you hosted me with such warmth and kindness



this week, thank you for the amazing evening you created at your home - see you again soon," he added.



The 48-year-old former football player came to the country earlier this week as UNICEF's goodwill ambassador - a role which he took up in the year 2005. Beckham first went to Gujarat as part of a UNICEF programme for child rights and gender equality, which is also the global theme for World Children's Day 2023.

On Wednesday, he watched the 2023 World Cup semifinal match between India and New Zealand alongside a bevy of Indian celebrities, including John Abraham, Ranbir Kapoor, Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra. The same day, the Manchester United and Real Madrid legend was the guest of honour at Sonam and Anand Ahuja's party which was also attended by Arjun Kapoor, Malaika Arora, Shahid Kapoor, Karisma Kapoor and Farhan Akhtar. On Thursday, Beckham was clicked by paparazzi arriving at SRK's residence Mannat for dinner with the superstar. Shah Rukh had later shared a photo with the former footballer on his Instagram, calling him an "absolute gentleman". "Have always been a big admirer but meeting him and seeing how he is with kids made me realise that the only thing that out does his football is his kindness and his gentle nature. My love to your family. Be well and happy my friend and get some sleep.@Davidbeckham," the actor had posted.



## Avani fights back to stay in top 10

**PTI ■ PALMA (SPAIN)**  
India's Avani Prashanth fought back twice from two bogeys to grab birdies and finally finished even par to be placed tied ninth after the second round at the inaugural Mallorca Ladies Golf Open here. Avani will be turning professional at the end of the year after the LET's Final Stage of the Qualifying School but smilingly said she would rather win this week and avoid the school. Her senior colleague, Diksha Dagar, bidding to become the first Indian to win the LET's Order of Merit, also played even par after a first round 71. Diksha, currently second on the Race to Costa Del Sol, is 1-under and T-18. Welsh golfer Chloe Williams carded a second round of seven-under-par 65 to take a one-stroke lead into the final round. The 28-year-old, looking for her first win on the LET, made nine birdies and two bogeys moving ahead of Germany's Alexandra Forsterling, who shot a five-under-par 67. First-round leader Kristyna Napoleova carded a level par 72 and lies in third position. For the second time in two days, Avani began horribly with two bogeys in first three holes, but rallied with back-to-back bogeys on sixth and seventh. She again dropped shots on 10th and the 15th, only to fight back again with birdies on 16th and 17th. "I stayed focussed and was determined to fight back," said Avani, who this year has had two Top-10 finishes on LET events and won a LET Access Series event while being an amateur. Diksha (71-72), starting from the 10th alongside Trichat Cheenglab (72-69) and Johanna Gustavsson (77-72), ran into early trouble with three bogeys in first five holes. She fought back with a birdie on 16th but gave that back on the 18th as she turned in 3-over. She continued to fight on the second nine and birdies on second, sixth and seventh with no dropped shots saw her finish even par and in Top-20. Both Forsterling and Napoleova have won LET titles this year, in the VP Bank Swiss Ladies Open and Amundi German Masters respectively. Forsterling's round included eight birdies and two bogeys. Napoleova had to fight for her 72. South African Lee-Anne Pace and Marta Sanz Barrio from Spain are tied for fourth place on five-under-par, with five further players on four-under-par -- Trichat Cheenglab, Avani Prashanth, Caroline Hedwall, Anne Van Dam and Jana Melichova. With the Race to Costa del Sol set to reach an exciting conclusion at the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de España in Marbella next week, the top 70 players will retain their cards for 2024.

## Denmark, Albania advance to Euro 2024

**PTI ■ GENEVA**  
Denmark and Albania advanced to the European Championship and title-holder Italy got a crucial win ahead of a showdown game against Ukraine. Italy beat North Macedonia 5-2 to both avenge its elimination in the 2022 World Cup qualifying playoffs and ensure it needs only a draw against Ukraine on Monday to secure a place at Euro 2024 in Germany. At stake is second place behind group winner England, which beat Malta 2-0 on Friday. Robert Lewandowski and Poland must go through the playoffs in March after a 1-1 draw at home to the Czech Republic ended its chance of advancing directly with group leader Albania. Albania kicked off earlier needing only a point in Moldova to secure its Euro 2024 place and did just enough in a 1-1 draw. Denmark ensured it will finish top of Group H by beating closest rival Slovenia 2-1 thanks to a 54th-minute goal by midfielder Thomas Delaney. That set up another decisive final game Monday: Slovenia hosts Kazakhstan needing only a draw to return to the Euros for the first time since 2000. Kazakhstan, which beat San Marino 3-1, has never qualified for a major tournament. England secured its place last month and a 2-0 win over Malta at Wembley Stadium was routine, as was Harry Kane scoring his 25th goal in a prolific season for England and Bayern Munich. The only surprising moment of drama was Kane being shown a yellow card after he was adjudged to have dived in the penalty area. England is on course to be among the group winners with the best records who will be in the pot of top-seeded teams when the Euro 2024 tournament draw is made on Dec. 2 in Hamburg. Including Denmark and Albania, 13 countries have now qualified for the 24-team tournament, and eight more will follow by the time the qualifying groups end Tuesday. The final three places are decided in the 12-team playoffs scheduled from March 21-26. **BRAZILIAN INFLUENCE** Brazilian coach Sylvinho is going to Euro 2024 with his Albania team. The former Arsenal and Barcelona left-back was appointed in January and has led Albania on a seven-game unbeaten run after starting qualifying with a 1-0 loss at Poland in March. Sylvinho has found success after lasting less than a year at his previous jobs coaching Lyon and Corinthians. Albania needed just one point from its final two Group E games, after outperforming the higher-ranked Poles and Czechs, and got it at the first attempt on Friday. Veteran forward Sokol Cikalleshi's 25th-minute penalty put Albania ahead before Moldova equalized in the 87th. "After the last whistle, but really after nine months, working every day, it's a dream, it's a dream," Sylvinho told Albanian media. "In fact, I should enjoy it. And that is why I am very pleased, like all of you." Thousands of Albanian fans gathered at the main Skanderbeg and Mother Teresa squares in Tirana to celebrate the result by waving national flags and setting off fireworks. Cars drove through the center of the city blaring their horns and loud national music.



Alison Lee and Nasa Hataoka lead after the second day with totals of 14-under 130 each. They will have a one-shot advantage over three players tied in third place and a three-shot advantage over two players tied in sixth place.

## Aditi slips to 44th at season-ending event

**PTI ■ NAPLES (USA)**  
Aditi Ashok dropped a couple of bogeys against three birdies in a modest round of 1-under 72, as she was placed tied 44th at the midway stage of the CME Group Tour Championship. Aditi, placed 40th on the Race to CME Rankings, the Order of Merit for LPGA, was lying tied 32nd overnight following a 2-under 70 in the first round. But she slipped 12 places on Friday to be tied 44th with a total of three-under 141. Aditi, who came close to her maiden LPGA win earlier this season, had a great first half in 2023 winning the Ladies European Tour. But she has not been able to replicate that form. Currently ranked in Top-60 of the world, she is however secure for the 2024 season. Alison Lee and Nasa Hataoka lead after the second day with totals of 14-under 130 each. They will have a one-shot advantage over three players tied in third place and a three-shot advantage over two players tied in sixth place.



## Paris Olympics scales back design of new surf tower

**PTI ■ LE PECQ (FRANCE)**  
Organisers of next year's Paris Olympics are scaling back the metal tower they plan to build for judges and television cameras at the picture-perfect surfing venue in Tahiti. They're bowing to concerns on the French Polynesian island about damage to sea life and its majestic Teahupo'o wave. The tower will still be erected out at sea with aluminum but will be smaller, lighter, hold fewer people and require shallower drilling than originally planned, games organizers announced Friday evening. Critics on the island have voiced fears for coral reefs, fish and other aquatic life when the tower's foundations are drilled into the seabed and mounted on concrete. Islanders pushed for the Olympics to use a wooden tower on existing foundations that's long been the set-up for surfing competitions at Teahupo'o. They have collected more than 160,000 signatures with an online petition. Tahitian surfer Matahi Drollet has been among opponents of the metal tower. Videos critical of its plans that he posted on Instagram have many tens of thousands of likes. People on the island, some carrying surfboards, also marched in protest last month. "The ocean and the lagoon is the most precious place we have here. This is where we get our food from, where we play, where ... We spend most of our time and where we have the most precious wave in the world," Drollet said in an October post. "It's a heritage of our ancestors that we need to preserve." In announcing revised plans Friday for what they called "a leaner, smaller tower," Olympic organizers said the old wooden tower previously used to judge surfing competitions on the Teahupo'o wave couldn't be certified for safety reasons for the Olympics. Time and erosion by the ocean have weakened and corroded the tower's foundations and it "must be replaced if Teahupo'o is to continue to organize surfing events, whether for the Olympic Games or any other competition," the organizers' statement said. The surface area of the new aluminum tower will now be reduced by a quarter, to make it the same size as the wooden one - 150 square meters (1,615 square feet) - that used to be erected and then dismantled for competitions, organizers said. It will hold 25 to 30 people during the Olympics, down from 40 initially planned. They will be provided with dry toilets instead of flush ones that originally were to have been linked to the island's sewage system via a wastewater pipe that's now being abandoned. The tower's weight will also be reduced from 14 to 9 tons - also the same as the wooden one. The foundations won't have to be drilled so deeply as a consequence, organizers said. "The new tower, less imposing and reduced in size and weight, installed on new permanent foundations, is the solution that will ensure the longevity of the tower and guarantee that future sporting events can be held at Teahupo'o," the statement said.



leaner, smaller tower," Olympic organizers said the old wooden tower previously used to judge surfing competitions on the Teahupo'o wave couldn't be certified for safety reasons for the Olympics.

## We've strong chance to finish on podium in Junior World Cup: Arajjeet

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
Rising forward Arajjeet Singh Hundal, named vice-captain of the Indian team for the upcoming Junior World Cup, is living his father's dream and is determined to make a mark by helping the country finish on the podium in the Kuala Lumpur showpiece from December 5-16. Growing up in a family where hockey was a tradition, the Amritsar-born forward made his debut for India at the 2021 Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar where he scored five goals in six games and has not looked back since then. "Everyone in my family played hockey, including my grandfather, father, and uncles. My father used to go to games, and as a kid, I would accompany him," the 19-year-old told Hockey India. "From then on, my interest grew. My father had a dream to represent India, and now I am carrying forward this dream for him," added Arajjeet, who has scored 17 goals in 22 appearances so far. Arajjeet is among the seven players in the 18-member squad who represented India at the 2021 Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar. The other six members are skipper Uttam Singh, Bobby Singh Dhami, Sudeep Chirmako, Vishnukant Singh, Sunil Jojo, and Sharda Nand Tiwari. India went down 1-3 against France in the classification playoff to finish fourth in the tournament. "We have prepared well as a team at the camp and have focused on several key areas of our game. We are working on important technical areas



where we can improve and our aim is to finish with a medal," Arajjeet said. He further said they have learned a lot over the past couple of years, and the team is feeling confident ahead of the upcoming tournament.

100 per cent against all teams. We have to keep pushing ourselves till the final whistle. "We have played 3-4 major tournaments which have really given a boost to our confidence. We have also seen how other teams play and about the slight adjustments and tweaks that we can make in our game to improve our chances in a match," he said. The Indian coach forward further said winning the Junior Men's Asia Cup beating Pakistan 2-1 has been his career highlight so far. "I have had several highlights during my career in such a short time. But winning the junior men's Asia Cup trophy, beating Pakistan in a close game has been the best moment of my career. I also scored a crucial goal in the match," he recalled. "Ready to roar" India are placed in Pool C alongside Canada, Korea and Spain, and will begin their campaign against Korea on December 5. Defending champions Argentina along with Australia, Chile, and Malaysia form Pool A. Egypt, France, Germany, and South Africa have been placed in Pool B, while Belgium, New Zealand, Pakistan and the Netherlands have been grouped in Pool D in the 16-team tournament. "Now we hope to repeat a similar performance in Kuala Lumpur. We will look to minimise our errors and capitalise on our strengths in the tournament. "Our fitness levels have also improved and we have grown a lot as a team. We are all ready to roar and make the nation proud by winning a medal at the Junior World Cup," Arajjeet said. Having begun hockey around eight years ago in 2016, he received a chance to play his first Junior Nationals for Punjab & Sind Bank. After a string of consistent performances for his side, Arajjeet received a call for the Junior men's national camp in 2019, but the pandemic disrupted his dream of representing India for a year. "During the lockdown, our coaches shared programmes so that we can continue to train and maintain our fitness at home," he remembered. In 2021, Arajjeet finally made his debut for the India at the Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar. He also competed in the senior Nationals at the domestic level in 2021 and 2022, and he is also pursuing his studies.





"I know, ultimately, I want to help effect change; otherwise, I would look at myself in the mirror every day and think, 'What in the world am I doing with my life?'"

— Yara Shahidi



A Mother walked alongside her daughter through the Impossible. The daughter walked her right back through the impossible  
By ARCHANA JYOTI

# CHRONICLE OF HOPE & HEALING



**M**eenakshi Dhingra's journey, spanning from the compassionate care she provided for her daughter Tanisa, diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2016, to the establishment of the foundation in her memory, unfolds as a poignant saga embodying resilience, compassion, and the profound transformative impact of personal adversity. As the founder of Tanisa Foundation, Meenakshi has now created a dynamic platform dedicated to not only extending the lives of cancer patients but also enhancing their overall quality of life. Simultaneously, the foundation offers invaluable support to caregivers, acknowledging the integral role they play in the journey of those affected by the life-threatening but preventable disease. This initiative has successfully provided a new lease of life for more than 10,000 individuals contending with cancer and their dedicated caregivers, said Meenakshi as she shared that Tanisa was only 23 when she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The initial shock and the ensuing challenging phase were obviously overwhelming for the family. However, adding to the agony of the Dhingra's were emotional and logistical challenges, including the difficulty of navigating the complex landscape of cancer treatment in India, after they came to know that Tanisa got Ovarian cancer. "When we received the news (about Tanisa's medical condition), we held onto the hope that she would recover with the best treatment. However, we were clueless about where to go and whom to contact for the right treatment. "I found that even most of the doctors were unable to address all our queries due to time constraints. Some so-called friends also began distancing themselves, fearing that we might seek help from them. Those were tough days. But we decided to fight together. I took a sabbatical from my company and conducted extensive research on the possibilities of restoring her health. We clung to the belief that we could achieve it," reminisced Meenakshi. It may be mentioned here that Ovarian cancer is a condition characterised by the growth of cells in the ovaries. Often referred as the silent killer, it poses a life-threatening risk for women. Detecting early symptoms of ovarian cancer proves challenging, often leading to delayed diagnoses. Throughout the course of Tanisa's

treatment, Meenakshi remarked, "I discovered, through personal experience, that contrary to the common belief associating ovarian cancer with women in old age, approximately 15 per cent of women grappling with this deadly disease fall within the age group of 15-30 years. I also realised the difficulty in seeking support when facing challenges that are too emotionally taxing to discuss." Meenakshi endeavoured to emphasise this point, underscoring that "despite living in an era marked by remarkable advancements in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, the disease persists entangled with societal stigma and taboos. Many individuals still encounter denial of fundamental cancer care." This revelation held particular poignancy for Meenakshi, a known face in the furniture export sector. While they gained access to top-notch medical care, the mother of the cancer patient realised that not all doctors have the capacity to provide the kind of support patients require, and perhaps it is unreasonable to expect them to do so. India has over two million cancer patients and less than 350 oncologists, which results in most doctors spending only a few minutes with each of their patients, leaving many of the holistic needs of the patient and caregiver unaddressed. "What was particularly heart wrenching for us to witness our 23-year-old darling facing health challenges at such a tender age. She had to take sabbatical at the world's largest technology company, Google, and relocate to the US for treatment. Though she refused to give up on life and kept fighting the deadly disease till the end," Meenakshi continued as she shared how four years proved a turning point in mother-daughter duo's lives. "Transitioning from a vibrant Google employee to a cancer survivor, Tanisa's personal journey was entirely devoted to assisting others. She became a symbol of inspiration, noticing significant disparities in treatment approaches between the USA and India. This observation motivated her to bridge the gap and raise awareness about the critical importance of prevention." Tanisa returned to India in later 2016, having overcome the challenges posed by cancer. But she refused to take rest. Tanisa redirected her energy toward raising awareness and providing support. They became volunteers with the Indian Cancer Society, visiting hospitals and clinics to offer emotional support to cancer patients and their caregivers. "People always consider the cancer patient, but often forget the carer. I



Meenakshi Dhingra with her daughter Tanisa



Meenakshi Dhingra with cancer patients (Left & Right)



**MEENAKSHI NOW ENVISIONS EXPANDING THE FOUNDATION'S REACH BY COLLABORATING WITH LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS, DOCTORS, AND NGOS TO CREATE A ROBUST NETWORK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS ACROSS INDIA. THE GOAL IS TO FOSTER A COMMUNITY PASSIONATE ABOUT FIGHTING CANCER AND TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE FOR THE GREATER GOOD. TODAY, THE TANISA FOUNDATION STANDS AS A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY CANCER IN INDIA.**



feel if we connect with caregivers and tell them we are there to help them, it would help relieve some of their stress and give a sense of direction." Tanisa's passion for making a meaningful impact led her to organise various events across Delhi/NCR. Her initiatives, including events like "Breakfree From Cancer," laughter clubs, makeup collaborations, photo-shoots, and hair donation drives, reflect a holistic approach to cancer support. The foundation's comprehensive vision encompasses educational, psychological, and nutritional assistance, particularly for children. These activities, focused on alleviating trauma and instilling positivity, are now regular features. For instance, "Breakfree From Cancer" serves as a crucial gathering for patients and families to disconnect from the challenges of the disease, ensuring a supportive community within the foundation. "This movement gradually expanded. Tanisa understood the importance of embracing life, regardless of circumstances, choosing to confront the disease by dressing well and cultivating a positive self-image," fondly recalled Meenakshi. From 2017 to 2019, Tanisa positively impacted several patients and their families. In addition to her work in India, Tanisa delivered motivational

talks globally in locations such as Singapore, Malaysia, the USA, Hong Kong, etc. "As a Google employee, she even had the opportunity to present her talk before Sundar Pichai in one of her conferences," Meenakshi warmly reminisces about Tanisa's innovative initiatives. But tragically, in mid-2020, complications arose during Tanisa's treatment and she succumbed to the cancer in December 2021. With an aim of carrying forward Tanisa's legacy by supporting dreams and offering hope to the community, Tanisa Foundation was officially born in April 2022. While it was "hard to watch" her only daughter go through the painful journey, Meenakshi gives credit to her son Tejas and a few friends of Tanisa, such as Pragya, for the way they stepped up. Following in his sister Tanisa's footsteps, Tejas (28), who also joined Google in 2020 immediately after graduating from Delhi University, said, "I am now fully dedicated to helping the entire cancer community and spreading the happiness that Tanisa used to bring to him and everyone around her." Pragya Bhargava, Tanisa's childhood friend echoed similar sentiments. "I knew her since childhood. As a way of remembering and celebrating her,

I try to volunteer my time and skills to continue the work she started. She was a gem of person." Her husband, Neeraj Dhingra, too is also fully committed to honouring Tanisa's life through the foundation and volunteering to assist cancer patients. On Tanisa's part, who has left an irreplaceable void in the lives of all those who had met her in the four years following her ovarian cancer diagnosis, she showcased her resilience and compassion. Despite facing the harsh realities of cancer treatment, Tanisa worked tirelessly to support others, offering financial assistance and advocating for improved access to quality care. Recognising the financial strain on low-income households, the foundation is playing a crucial role in providing assistance and raising awareness about cancer. It is estimated that 70 per cent of cancer patients in India are detected in advanced stages of the disease, leading to a high mortality rate. Many cancers are treatable if they are detected early, noted Meenakshi asserting that she now envisions expanding the foundation's reach by collaborating with like-minded individuals, doctors, and NGOs to create a robust network of support systems across India. The goal is to foster a community passionate about fighting cancer and to share knowledge for the greater good. "In these initiatives, I am simply living my daughter's dream, as this is what she always wanted to do," said Meenakshi, poignantly recalling Tanisa's enthusiasm to work compassionately in every field she chose. In addition to being a self-made businesswoman, Meenakshi has been active in numerous cancer events and regularly counseling cancer patients across the country with a heart that understands their pain and journey. She is also an active and integral member of the Indian Cancer Society. Given that cancer treatment necessitates a more humane approach, she emphasises the importance of a holistic attempt to address patients' mental concerns, empower them to reintegrate into the mainstream, and assist them in rebuilding their lives. "Our cancer screening drives cater to people who cannot otherwise afford regular health check-ups. We organize screening camps around Delhi and NCR in collaboration with hospitals to provide health check-ups that identify early signs of cancerous or precancerous conditions before any symptoms appear," she explained. Meenakshi sums it up, "Cancer doesn't care, but we do. I miss Tanisa terribly, and no one else should suffer from this terrible disease." (The writer is an Associate Editor, The Pioneer)



## Decoding Diabetes Through Skin Signs

Dr DIKSHA AGRAWAL, a well-known dermatologist unravels the complex relationship between skin and diabetes to ensure holistic care

Diabetes, a chronic condition affecting millions worldwide, not only impacts blood sugar levels but also affects all organ systems. Interestingly, skin serves as a marker for signs of diabetes or pre-diabetes, which can help in recognizing the diabetes early, ensuring prompt treatment and prevention of further complications. Thus, skin can act as a dynamic canvas reflecting the complexities of this metabolic disorder.



DR DIKSHA AGRAWAL  
 Consultant Dermatologist,  
 Ghaziabad Dermatology Centre

People with diabetes often experience skin complications, ranging from dryness and itching to more severe conditions such as infections and slow wound healing. Understanding the underlying mechanisms is crucial for healthcare professionals and individuals alike.

Diabetes in a holistic manner, that includes skin care. Lifestyle modifications, such as maintaining stable blood sugar levels through diabetes friendly diet, regular exercise and stress management, play a vital role in preventing skin complications.

**Diabetes unmasked: A skin-deep perspective:** Diabetes can affect the skin in multiple ways. The elevated blood sugar levels associated with diabetes can lead to dehydration, causing dry and itchy skin. Additionally, impaired circulation and nerve damage, common in diabetes, contributes to slow wound healing and increase the risk of infections.

### EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS: SKIN GUIDED DIABETES MANAGEMENT

- **Self awareness-** Open communication between individuals and healthcare providers is crucial for addressing skin concerns and potential diabetes-related issues promptly.
- **Self skin checks-** Individuals with diabetes are encouraged to conduct regular self-assessments, monitoring for changes in skin texture, color, and any signs of infection.
- **Dermatological consultations-** Integrating dermatological assessments into routine diabetes care can provide personalized insights and early intervention strategies.

### COMMON SKIN ISSUES IN DIABETES

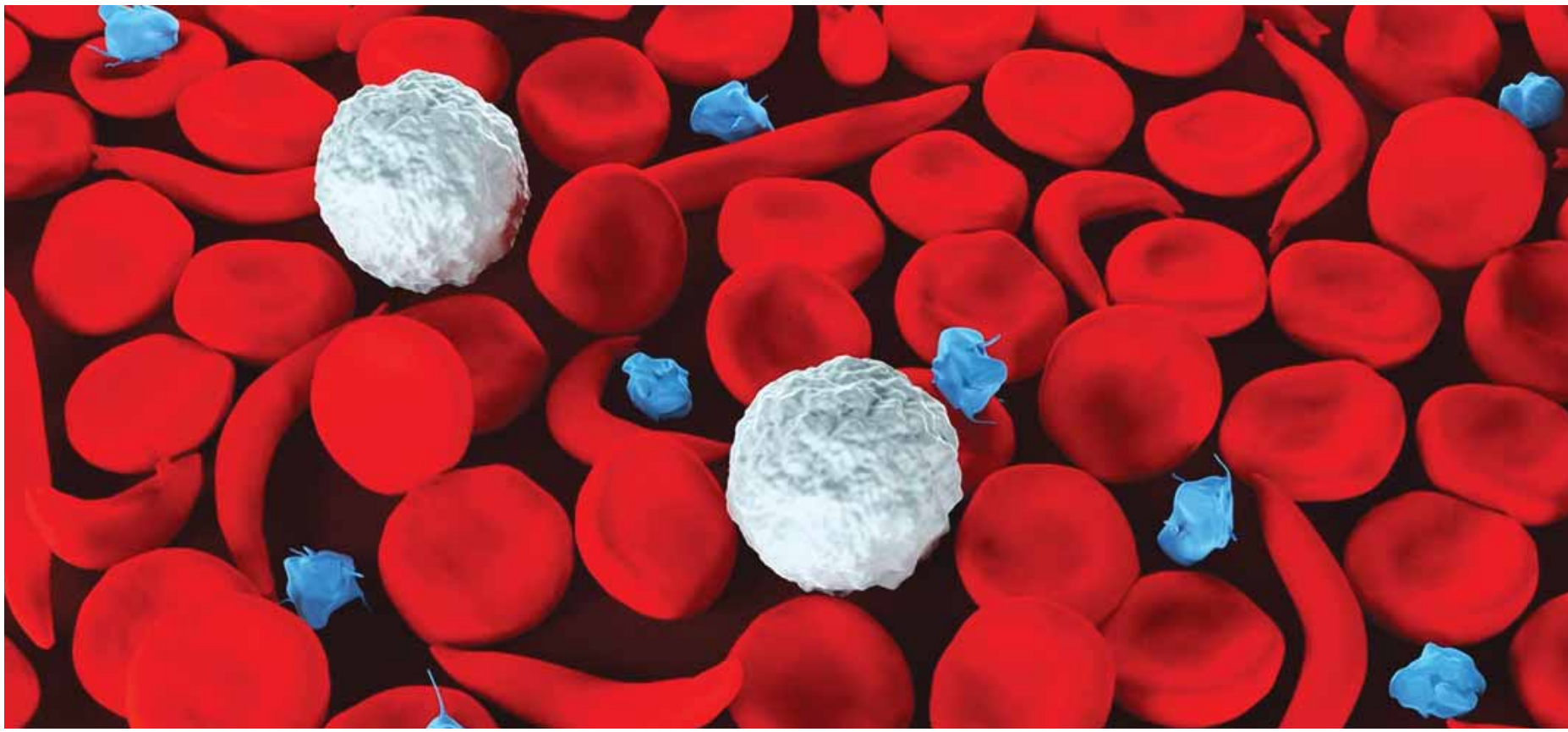
- **Dry skin (xerosis)-** High blood sugar levels can lead to dehydration, resulting in dry and flaky skin. Proper hydration and moisturization are essential for managing this common issue.
- **Skin infections-** Diabetes weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to skin infections, bacterial infections, and other skin conditions require prompt attention to prevent complication.
- **Slow wound healing-** Impaired circulation and nerve damage can hinder the body's ability to heal wounds. Diabetes-related foot ulcers are a notable concern, emphasizing the importance of regular foot care and early intervention.
- **Acanthosis Nigricans-** Dark, velvety patches on the skin, often in body folds like the neck, armpits, and groin, may indicate insulin resistance, a precursor to type 2 diabetes.
- **Yellow Skin Patches (Necrobiosis Lipoidica Diabeticorum)-** Rare but distinctive, yellowish patches on the skin, usually on the shins, may signal an underlying diabetic condition.

**Holistic approach to diabetic care:** Need of the hour- It is important to approach dia-

### SKIN FRIENDLY DIABETES TIPS FOR PATIENTS

- **Hydration-** Drink an adequate amount of water to combat dry skin.
- **Moisturisation-** Use a fragrance-free moisturizer to prevent dryness and itching.
- **Foot care-** Inspect feet regularly, keep them clean and moisturized, and wear comfortable, well-fitted shoes to prevent complication.
- **Prompt attention to skin diseases-** Report any changes in skin color or texture or non-healing wound concerns about the skin to healthcare providers promptly.

In conclusion, recognizing and addressing the multifaceted link between diabetes and dermatological health is indispensable for comprehensive diabetes care. By shedding light on this connection, individuals, healthcare providers, and diabetes associations can collectively pave the way for a future where skin health is an integral aspect of diabetes management.



# A RAY OF HOPE FOR SCD PATIENTS

Instilling optimism in millions of people suffering with the sickle cell disease (SCD) across the world including India which has the second-highest prevalence of the genetic abnormality, Britain's medicines regulator has authorized the world's first gene therapy treatment for the genetic blood disorder in the UK. **THE HEALTH PIONEER** reports

SCD is marked by chronic anaemia, recurrent episodes of intense pain requiring hospitalisation, organ damage, an elevated risk of stroke, and premature mortality.

According to estimates, the tribal population living in India's southern, central, and western states are particularly susceptible to it. Considering 10 percent of our country's population lives in tribal areas, it is important to focus on Sickle Cell Anaemia (SCA) detection in this community, say the experts in the sector.

They inform that the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency in the UK said it approved Casgevy, the first medicine licensed using the gene editing tool CRISPR, which won its makers a Nobel prize in 2020.

The agency approved the treatment for patients with sickle cell disease and thalassemia who are 12 years old and over. Casgevy is made by Vertex Pharmaceuticals (Europe) Ltd. and CRISPR Therapeutics. To date, bone marrow transplants, extremely arduous procedures that come with very unpleasant side effects, have been the only long-lasting treatment. There are very few drugs available for the treatment of sickle cell disorder.

"The future of life-changing cures resides in CRISPR based (gene-editing) technology," said Dr. Helen O'Neill of University College London. Both sickle cell disease and thalassemia are caused by mistakes in the genes that carry hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carry oxygen. In people with sickle cell — which is particularly common in people with African or Caribbean backgrounds — a genetic mutation causes the cells to become crescent-shaped, which can block blood flow and cause excruciating pain, organ damage, stroke and other problems.

In people with thalassemia, the genetic mutation can cause severe anemia. Patients typically require blood transfusions every few weeks, and injections and medicines for their entire life. Thalassemia predominantly affects people of South Asian, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern heritage.

## HOW THE THERAPY WORKS

Casgevy is a gene editing therapy. Gene-editing technologies have the ability to make lasting changes to the genes that cause diseases by precisely fixing, removing, adding, or disrupting specific sequences within those genes.

Casgevy works by taking bone marrow stem cells from a sickle cell patient, and changing the genetic material to reduce the problems caused by sickle cells. When these stem cells are replaced in the patient and used to make new red blood cells, the new red cells do not tend

to sickle or cause other problems. The edited genes greatly increase the patient's ability to make a fetal haemoglobin (HbF), which stops sickle haemoglobin damaging the red cells and reduces nearly all the symptoms caused by sickle haemoglobin.

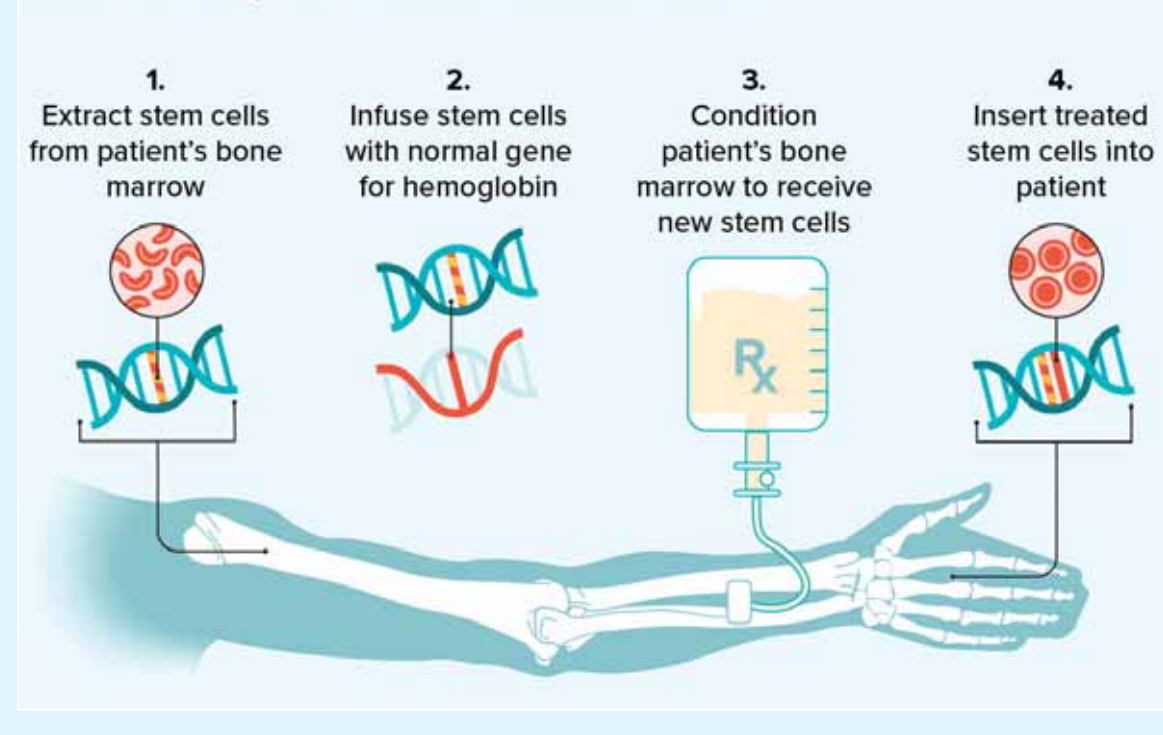
therapy may remain unaffordable until government intervention. Moreover, according to the health experts, its application, using stem cell transplant, is limited to individuals who meet specific criteria. "Consequently, it won't be a viable option for everyone," said Sickle Cell Society in a statement.

Last year, Britain approved a gene therapy for a fatal genetic disorder that had a list price of £2.8 million (\$3.5 million). England's National Health Service negotiated a significant confidential discount to make it available to eligible patients. In many countries like India, current treatment options - hydroxyurea, crizanlizumab, and voxelotor - aim to reduce the frequency of painful crises but they do not alleviate the pain, which requires strong painkillers. For example, hydroxyurea supports hemoglobin production and has been shown to reduce about half of the number of painful events a person with SCD may experience, as per the experts.

The Indian Government on its part has taken various initiatives aimed to address SCD. During the Union budget 2023, Union Finance Minister Sitharaman announced a mission to eliminate sickle-cell anaemia by 2047. The project focuses on raising awareness, universal screening of about seven crore individuals—aged 0-40—in afflicted tribal areas, and counselling through combined efforts of central ministries and state governments. A recent study estimated the life expectancy of adults with SCD to be 54 years, approximately 20 years shorter than that of adults without SCD.

In the meanwhile, the nod to the new gene therapy offers newfound hope and optimism for the sickle cell community, and a step forwards in the fight for an end to inequalities in the treatment of people living with the condition, said the statement from the Sickle Cell Society.

### Gene therapy to cure sickle cell anemia



ctors take stem cells from the patient's bone marrow and use genetic editing techniques in a laboratory to fix the gene. The cells are then infused back into the patient for a permanent treatment. Patients must be hospitalized at least twice — once for the collection of the stem cells and then to receive the altered cells. Britain's regulator said its decision to authorize gene therapy for sickle cell disease was based on a study done on 29 patients, of whom 28 report-

edly having no severe pain problems for at least one year after being treated. In the study for thalassemia, 39 out of 42 patients who got the therapy did not need a red blood cell transfusion for at least a year afterwards. Gene therapy treatments can cost millions of dollars and experts have previously raised concerns that they could remain out of reach for the people who would benefit most. In India too, for many, the

**Both sickle cell disease and thalassemia are caused by mistakes in the genes that carry hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carry oxygen**

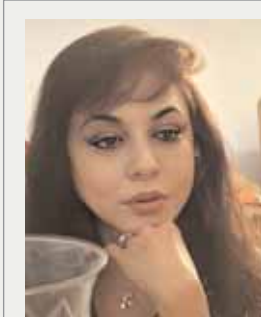
## BOOK REVIEW

# WICCA, all about self-discovery and divine-connect

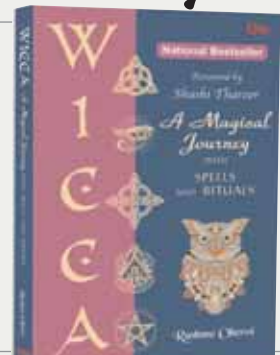
BY AMIT GOEL

The world of humans is rich and expansive. Brimming with wisdom and knowledge about the known and the unknown, this realm has a lot to offer. Wicca is one of them. It is one of the most intriguing and relatively uncharted territories that have largely remained lesser known and understood by us. In her book on Wicca,

Rashme Oberoi endeavours to open doors to the Wiccan way of life that is exotic, intuitive and hugely transformative. In her latest book on Wicca, she accompanies the reader through the maze of modern day witchcraft, magic and wizardry with ease and confidence. Not only does her book inform the reader about the craft through the fine detailing that comes associated with it,



**Wicca : A Magical Journey With Spells and Rituals**  
 Author: Rashmi Oberoi  
 Publisher: Om books international  
 Price: ₹284



it also makes the reader understand Wicca with his/her own perspective and understanding. Rashme is a practising Wiccan and her book is a testament to her expansive knowledge and mastery of the craft. Her book is a guide to the world of Wicca and spell craft for those who wish to empower themselves with the ability to heal and make our world a better place. The book is a repository

of knowledge on Wicca where almost every aspect of the craft is adequately touched upon. It opens with a chapter on the history of Wicca and moves forward to explaining the Wiccan symbols and tools in great detail. The chapter on Wiccan symbols in particular is quite informative where each symbol associated with the craft is well explained. The one on relationships is worth a mention here where the

various spells are explained in detail. If you are looking for a good weekend read on the subject of Wicca and spell craft, this book is a one-in-all. Read it to discover the Wicca in you. As they say, magic will come to those who believe in it. (The reviewer was associated with the Financial Express and is Suspended Director, The Pioneer. The views are personal)

# Fledgling INDIA bloc grapples with internal discord

Established only a few months ago after negotiations that began in April and two meetings in Patna and Bengaluru under the Congress leadership, with the aim of thwarting the BJP's bid for a third consecutive term in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the fledgling INDIA bloc is grappling with internal discord.

Fellow Opposition members are wielding knives to assail the Congress and undermine its influence within the 26-party Opposition alliance, Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA). The schism within the coalition unfolded as the intricacies of seat allocation became a focal point during the five State Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Mizoram, termed semifinal to the 2024 Parliamentary election.

The alliance parties engaged in deft manoeuvres, transforming the seat-sharing negotiations into a high-stake game of political brinkmanship. As the rift deepened, the coalition found itself navigating through the labyrinth of conflicting ambitions and aspirations, adding an intricate layer to the already complex dynamics of electoral alliances.

Akhilesh Yadav, the chief of the Samajwadi Party, emerged as the first Opposition leader to unleash a verbal fusillade against the Congress, a sentiment that found resonance in the voices of both JD(U) president Nitish Kumar and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah, who didn't shy away from, hurling rhetorical punches at the Congress - India's oldest grand party, now relegated to the sidelines after decades long tenure in power at the Centre.

"We were assured that six seats will be given to us. If we had known that there was no alliance of the INDIA bloc (of



the Samajwadi Party and the Congress) in Madhya Pradesh for the Assembly election, then we would not have sent our people to hold discussions with the Congress. If the Congress continues to behave like this, then who will trust them?" asked Akhilesh.

The architect behind the effort to bring together Opposition parties, Nitish, acknowledged for the first time that progress has been sluggish within the INDIA Opposition bloc.

"There are Assembly elections in five States. The Congress party is more interested in those. We were all working together to take forward the Congress party (alliance), but they are not worried about all this right now. They are busy with the five State elections. So, after the State polls, they themselves will call everyone," Nitish said at a rally organised by the CPI called 'BJP Hatao, Desh

Bachao (Remove BJP, Save Country)' in Patna. Omar said, "All is not well with INDIA alliance. Some internal squabbles, which should not have been there, can be seen, especially in the four five States where elections are being held. We have seen how the Samajwadi Party and the Congress are fighting each other. Both are saying that they will contest all the seats in UP. This is not good for INDIA alliance. Maybe after these State elections, we will meet again and will try to work together."

Demonstrating astute political acumen, the Congress, up to this point, has tactically avoided getting embroiled in the intensifying skirmish. Instead, it is directing its energies and resources toward a careful strategy designed to broaden its territorial influence. Winning or successfully retain-

ing the political bastions of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, (which the party rules) coupled with the strategic capture of Madhya Pradesh from the BJP's grasp, would not just be a feather in the Congress' cap, it would be a resounding triumph, a seismic shift capable of injecting newfound vigour into the party's veins, improving its importance in INDIA. This is why the Congress has been cautious about not allowing INDIA alliance partners to establish a presence in Madhya Pradesh. There is a resolute determination within the Congress camp not to cede even an inch of its political bastion.

In the 2018 Assembly elections, the Congress formed the Government in MP by winning 114 seats, just one short of reaching the majority mark. The Bahujan Samaj Party got two seats, the Samajwadi Party

won one seat, and four seats went to independents then. Nevertheless, Kamal Nath's leadership tenure proved to be a precarious balancing act in governance. Despite initially holding to power firmly, the strings of authority became vulnerable to the BJP's adept poaching strategies, ultimately resulting in the downfall of the Congress-led Government. Subsequently, the BJP returned to power.

The Congress attempted to convey a message to Akhilesh and other regional parties, emphasising that the electoral battle in MP is primarily between the BJP and the Congress. The argument put forth is that any additional party, supposedly lacking significant grassroots support, would predominantly split the anti-BJP votes, thereby providing an advantage to the BJP.

Congress' Supriya Shrinete said, "When elections are held, tussle over tickets is a natural thing. Everyone feels that the ticket should be given to the strongest contestant. As of now, the challenges and dissent will persist until a consensus is reached on the seat-sharing formula. Until that moment, our reporting on 'he said, she said' will continue."

The Congress's efforts to maintain undisputed leadership over the INDIA alliance partners have regrettably proven to be an elusive aspiration, given that both the SP and Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are contesting in many seats in MP.

The grand old party not only grapples with the formidable challenge posed by the BJP but also navigates the maze of ambitious regional power players within the alliance. Leaders such as Nitish, Akhilesh,

Mamata Banerjee, and Kejriwal, each harbouring aspirations beyond their regional bastions, pose additional challenges to the Congress' dream of returning to power at the Centre and maintaining unity within the alliance to deliver a robust counter to the BJP in 2024.

The looming complexity of divvying up the political pie among the diverse and ambitious coalition partners poses the most significant hurdle, fuelling the potential peril of disintegration of the INDIA bloc ahead of the final showdown.

The path forward is fraught with challenges, marked by the acknowledgment that when going alone, the Congress and regional parties find themselves overshadowed by the colossal presence of the BJP, a political juggernaut bolstered by the formidable leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Confronted with this political behemoth, the Congress and regional parties feel compelled to navigate the landscape of alliance politics for their survival.

There is a tacit acknowledgment that relying solely on alliance strength may not be enough to confront the BJP's supremacy and stop Modi from securing a third consecutive term in power.

This is evident from the 2019 general elections, where Modi's BJP-led alliance secured 37 per cent of the votes, winning an impressive 303 out of the 543 seats.

Maintaining cohesion within the India coalition and securing a leading role will pose a formidable challenge for the Congress until the results of the elections in five State are out on December 3.

(The writer is Deputy News Editor, The Pioneer)

**The Congress not only grapples with the formidable challenge posed by the BJP but also navigates the maze of ambitious regional power players within the alliance. Leaders such as Nitish Kumar, Akhilesh Yadav, Mamata Banerjee, and Arvind Kejriwal, each harbouring aspirations beyond their regional bastions, pose additional challenges to the Congress' dream of returning to power at the Centre.**



ASAD

## PERSPECTIVE

# Arab leaders meet highlights urgency in Gaza crisis

**The Islamic-Arab leaders' summit in Riyadh underscored the dire situation in Gaza, calling for an end to Israel's actions. Despite initial success, Hamas faces Israeli military superiority. The UNHRC seeks an investigation, while Israel plans long-term security in Gaza. The summit's impact on peace appears uncertain without US intervention.**

The Islamic-Arab leaders' summit in Riyadh last week once again reminded the international community of the grim situation in Gaza. Currently, as the situation unfolds, there is no end in sight for the people of Gaza. By now, more than 11,500 people have lost their lives in Gaza. These include mainly civilians and thousands of children, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip. This crucial summit was convened by the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, popularly known as MBS, the capital city of the country. It was attended by all the high-profile leaders from the Islamic-Arab nations. The attendees included Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. All of them together rejected Israel's justifications for its actions against the Palestinians as self-defence.

The summit urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the war crimes committed by Israel in the Palestinian territories. Saudi Arabia pressed the US and Israel to bring an end to the war. MBS once again affirmed the kingdom's condemnation and categorical rejection of this barbaric war against its brothers in Palestine. Mahmoud Abbas said that the Palestinians are facing a "genocidal war" and urged the US to end the Israeli aggression. The most significant aspect of the meeting was that Raisi hailed Hamas for attacking Israel and asked the Islamic nations to impose oil and goods sanctions on Israel. He also said, "We kiss the hands of Hamas for its resistance against Israel." Erdogan called for an

international peace conference to put a permanent end to the conflict.

However, three important things have come out clear from the summit: first, the Palestinian issue has remained at the centre; second, though the US-led efforts so far have failed to bring between the Israelis and the Palestinians, yet, Washington has remained the sole guarantor of peace and security in the region; and finally, Hamas, though initially successful in launching the attack, could not survive the superior military might of the Israelis as of now.

The worst part of the Israel-Hamas war is that most of the victims are innocent civilians. And they are not a party to this conflict. They are being punished simply because they are living in Gaza. They are caught in the quagmire. They are struggling for basic needs and looking for safety. Only a humanitarian pause will not ensure them respite from this bloody war. It demands a permanent end to this crisis. Every single day, Israel and its allies are reinforcing and validating their agenda. It redoubles Netanyahu's aggressive campaign against Hamas. Though the very foundation of "self-defence" against the brutal attack launched by Hamas on October 7 over South Israel has been repeated by Tel Aviv for more than a month now, the international community must estimate the growing humanitarian crisis in North Gaza by now.

What the UN Human Rights Commission is doing so far? UNHRC chief Volker Turk decried all allegations of serious rights violations in the war between Israel and Hamas. He demanded that there should be an international investigation to look into the instances of rights violations. After a visit to West Asia, Turk expressed



anguish over the current situation and said that both sides were committing war crimes. He said, "Extremely serious allegations of multiple and profound breaches of international humanitarian law, whoever commits them, demand rigorous investigation and full accountability." Further, while briefing UN Member States at Geneva, he said, "Where national authorities prove unwilling or unable to carry out such investigations and where there are contested narratives on particularly significant incidents, international investigation is called for." But the reality is that it would be an uphill task to carry out an international investigation without the permission of Israel. And for persuading the big powers and to finally make both the parties agree to a set of comprehensive terms and conditions seem to be unattainable at the moment. He urged for an immediate ceasefire and called on all parties to acknowledge the equal value of all human beings. He

is deeply concerned that the conflict is fast expanding beyond Gaza Strip. And as per the latest reports, the Israeli forces have already dropped leaflets warning Palestinians to flee some parts of southern Gaza. If the conflict extends to this part of Gaza wherein thousands coming from North Gaza are living in UN-run shelters, the humanitarian cost of the war might be inconceivable. The role and responsibility of the UN Security Council (UNSC) are being questioned over the fast-deteriorating situation in Gaza. The top UN body for security has not been able to halt the crisis after more than six weeks now. As death and despair rain down on Gaza, the UNSC is fighting to hammer out a solution at the earliest. But the deadlock continues among the Big Five, and so far, no consensus is emerging. It is learned that Malta's Ambassador to the UN Venessa Frazier has already circulated a new resolution among the members of the UNSC. It is hoped that after

a series of failed attempts and vetoed resolutions either by one or the other permanent members, this one might make its way to bringing peace in Gaza. The message emerging from Netanyahu is not very optimistic. He clarified that Israel would be at risk of another major attack if it did not remain engaged in the Palestinian enclave, i.e., the Gaza Strip. That means the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) will not vacate the already occupied stretches of the North Gaza, fearing once vacated, the Hamas might regroup and plan future combat operations against Israel. Now, Netanyahu has made it very clear to the international community that after the war, his country will manage "overall security" in the Gaza Strip simply to avoid any future offensive from Hamas. Thus, he said, "Israel will, for an indefinite period, have the overall security responsibility because we have seen what happens when we don't have it. When we don't have that security responsibility, what we

have is the eruption of Hamas terror on a scale that we could not imagine."

It indicates Israel's future plans in the clearest terms ever, and once again, the Gaza Strip will witness an uneasy situation after the war. Interestingly, Yair Lapid, the main Opposition leader in Israel, also quickly endorsed the plans unveiled by Netanyahu.

It shows how the major political parties are in support of retaking Gaza but in a new style, in the name of fighting terror and bringing back peace and normalcy for the Palestinians in this enclave. Previously, the Israeli forces occupied Gaza for 38 years and vacated only in 2005 largely because of strong Palestinian resistance. And today, US President Joe Biden is already sending warning signals to Israel that it would be a mistake for them to reoccupy Gaza.

For now, Netanyahu is making it clear that who should govern Gaza in the future is a different question but only that they be "those who do not want to continue the ways of Hamas". In fact, Lapid also spoke out that the Palestinian Authority, which administers the Israeli-occupied West Bank, could once again govern the Gaza Strip once the war is over. Incidentally, the erstwhile Palestinian National Liberation Movement founded by Yasser Arafat in 1959 to establish Palestine as an independent state, now known as Fatah, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, was dethroned by the Hamas from the Gaza Strip in the general elections of the enclave in 2006. Since 2007, Hamas has been ruling the enclave and running their administration over it. So, now bringing back the Fatah administration over the Gaza Strip could be a new beginning and that too under the strict security surveillance of the IDF.

In this scenario, can we expect that the Islamic-Arab leaders' crucial meeting will make any headway towards permanent peace or even for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza? To me, it is just not possible because Israel is in no mood to stop its aggression against the Hamas militants.

By now, it has decided to root out the Hamas military machine and it is damaging it on a daily basis. And this time, unlike the previous instances, the IDF may have to fight a combination of three groups - the Hamas, the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hezbollah. It is a new war game, but the theater is an old one for all the enemies.

Finally, Israelis, the Palestinians, and the rest of the residents of West Asia are no stranger to such conflicts. Since Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Zionist state has waged many battles against Gaza: once in 2008 that lasted for 22 days, in 2012 which was for 8 days, in 2014 for 50 days, and in 2021 for 11 days. But this war against Hamas is significant as it indicated to the international community the complete failure of Israel's impenetrable security and one of the most advanced intelligence systems since the 19-day Yom Kippur War of 1973, almost 50 years back. Tel Aviv will learn a lesson from the October 7 Hamas attack and will prepare itself accordingly against all its future enemies. Keeping this scenario in mind, we can say that unless the US and other western nations seriously intervene, the Islamic-Arab efforts and veiled threats to Israel will not end in either negotiating an immediate ceasefire or an abrupt end of the bloody war.

(The writer is currently president of the Global Research Foundation)



MAKHAN SAIKIA



**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week may start with a sense of disappointment, especially in matters related to finances. At your workplace, you might find yourself grappling with indecision, leading to a backlog of tasks and disorganized plans. Uncertainty might lead you to postpone significant tasks or travel arrangements. However, as the week progresses, you'll find a more stable and clear approach to handling your responsibilities. Connections from distant places could emerge, offering potential benefits. Expectations from those around you in your professional circle will increase, but you'll rise to the occasion with enhanced involvement and efficiency. This period will also boost your confidence, encouraging you to engage more with your social circle. The week, however, may conclude on a challenging note.

**Lucky number** 23 | **Lucky colour** Sea Green  
**Lucky day** Monday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Your focus is intensely directed toward your goals, leaving little room for emotional considerations. You're facing a heavy workload, which might be overwhelming, making your objectives seem distant and challenging to attain. Midweek, expect an unexpected change in your personal or professional life, possibly involving someone's arrival or departure. Be cautious of impulsive behavior; there's a risk of acting rashly. Confusion could obscure your decision-making process, potentially resulting in hasty decisions. Your week may also include travel. When uncertainty strikes, seek inner peace through calming practices to boost your confidence and clarity. Your ability to make unbiased decisions will shine, but haste could undermine your efforts. Trust your instinctive understanding in straightforward situations, and rely on your analytical skills for more intricate issues.

**Lucky number** 26 | **Lucky colour** Fuchsia  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, maintaining organization and practicing self-control could be particularly significant for you. A lingering sense of uncertainty could create tension in close connections. You might find yourself close to achieving clarity and truthfulness, yet hesitate, possibly fearing it could complicate matters. Midweek, be prepared for a challenging situation, potentially involving official matters, which might bring some disappointment. During this period, prioritizing your personal well-being is crucial. Be cautious about sharing your thoughts too freely in sensitive or heated discussions. Now is a moment for self-reflection and focusing on your self-care. Allow yourself moments of rest, reevaluate your ambitions, and focus on healing. This period of self-reflection will be beneficial, equipping you with renewed strength and clarity to face upcoming challenges more effectively.

**Lucky number** 22 | **Lucky colour** Ivory  
**Lucky day** Monday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week, expect a wave of positive developments. Long-term projects you've been working on are likely to reach successful conclusions. There's a good chance of a significant shift in your living situation, possibly involving a new home. Enjoy gatherings with family and friends, as these moments strengthen bonds and bring joy. Your natural charisma shines brightly, inspiring confidence and admiration in those around you. Your communication skills enhance this effect, drawing people to you and encouraging meaningful interactions. You naturally take on a leadership role within your social circle, a position that brings both responsibility and fulfillment. As the week closes, you'll find yourself gravitating towards reflective activities. These practices not only offer tranquility but also ignite your creativity, rounding off a week full of progress and personal growth.

**Lucky number** 17 | **Lucky colour** Teal  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**VirGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

You excel in your professional sphere, applying your extensive knowledge in practical ways. Your approach is marked by responsibility and fairness in interactions. Adhering to schedules and following established procedures, you maintain discipline and order. Adopting this strategy sets the groundwork for economic steadiness, providing safety and ease. You might experience considerable monetary benefits, possibly from unforeseen avenues. Career advancements, such as promotions, are likely, which will boost your self-confidence. This period is an opportunity for self-reflection and to appreciate your achievements. You might encounter new professional opportunities, like a different job or project. Your ability to efficiently utilize your resources is notable, and you show an eagerness to learn and integrate new concepts into your work. This period also highlights the joy and positive influence your offspring bring into your life.

**Lucky number** 14 | **Lucky colour** Lilac  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week signifies a time of notable personal development and accomplishment. It begins with a strong focus on improving both your professional life and personal skills. Your attention to detail, unwavering persistence, and dedication will be key. The challenges you face may seem daunting, but they are opportunities for valuable learning and skill development. Your efforts and intelligence will lead to notable success, allowing you to take pride in your accomplishments. During this time, there's also an opportunity for profound spiritual renewal and a deeper bond with your inner being. As the week progresses, various powerful influences converge, creating an ideal environment for emotional or physical healing. For some, this time may bring about important developments in personal relationships, including new commitments or deepening bonds.

**Lucky number** 15 | **Lucky colour** Mint  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

In this phase, you will experience a profound journey of emotional and personal development, accompanied by a significant increase in material prosperity. The week begins with positive developments in your financial sector, leading to increased gains. Your life reflects a blend of luxury and empathy, creating a harmonious atmosphere at work. Travel may feature in your plans, possibly including long-distance or leisure trips with family. Midway through the week, you'll skillfully balance your home and work duties. By the end of the week, the fruits of your labor become evident, characterized by robust health, a surge in creativity, and an optimistic perspective. The weekend offers a chance to relax and spend quality time with family, basking in the contentment of your achievements.

**Lucky number** 12 | **Lucky colour** Mauve  
**Lucky day** Friday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week starts with a focus on finding answers and skillfully handling a significant challenge. You're on the verge of completing something important, facing hurdles but equipped to deal with them. The middle of the week is marked by an increase in warmth and meaningful time spent with someone close to you. As the week progresses, the environment becomes conducive to making long-term investments. It's a time when many will encounter beneficial opportunities. The backing and harmony within your family circle will boost your confidence. Look forward to enjoyable trips and making memorable moments with those dear to you. This period is also ripe for introspection, leading to valuable insights and personal development.

**Lucky number** 19 | **Lucky colour** Aquamarine  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week ushers in a time of contentment and happiness, marked by a wealth of positive experiences in different areas of your life. It's a time when your aspirations have a strong chance of materializing, bringing a sense of completeness and contentment. The period is marked by a heightened ability to organize and harness your inner wisdom and intuition. Embrace this period to focus and amplify your cognitive abilities. Matters of personal connections and partnerships are especially significant during this time, aligning well with your plans and expectations. Opportunities for new professional ventures or projects may arise, signaling a phase of progress and achievement. Your overall vitality, influence, effective communication skills, and leadership traits are at a peak, contributing to a sense of overall fortune and success.

**Lucky number** 27 | **Lucky colour** Rose  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

Surprising shifts are on the horizon, leading you to a phase where pride and confidence blossom. You'll find yourself triumphing in an area you once thought was beyond reach. Recognition and envy from others will be evident, yet genuine support will bolster your spirits. This marks a period of significant personal growth, aligning with your true interests. You've navigated through challenges and emerged victorious, with your achievements now widely recognized and celebrated. Joy stems from revisiting cherished memories. As the week concludes, you'll find comfort in reflecting on fond moments from your early years, reconnecting with old friends, and enjoying the company of the younger generation.

**Lucky number** 28 | **Lucky colour** Burgundy  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week is a pivotal time for career-focused endeavors. Embrace challenges as they present themselves; these are not just obstacles but gateways to potential financial gains through your hard work and dedication. You're currently equipped with a dynamic energy that enables you to push beyond conventional limits. A particularly tough challenge that's been weighing on your thoughts is within your grasp to overcome, and you're poised to do so with flair and finesse. Midweek, prepare for a phase of constructive guidance from a respected elder in your family circle. Listening to the advice and guidance of a nurturing figure in your life will prove beneficial. To enhance your cognitive acuity, engage in intellectually stimulating pursuits like delving into complex books or tackling challenging puzzles.

**Lucky number** 11 | **Lucky colour** Violet  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

Effective collaboration is essential for reaching your objectives. Embracing your unique qualities, you'll bring innovation and energy to both your career and personal life. The future looks promising, indicating that your recent efforts are likely to bear fruit. Be prepared for a new opportunity or role in your professional life. Clear and collaborative communication will be vital, setting the stage for productive interactions. This period may also bring a sense of deep fulfillment. Those hoping for happy developments in their family life can anticipate good news. Your inclination to embrace new ideas and ventures boldly will serve you well. As this period draws to a close, any worries you have will be addressed, thanks to your resilience and ability to overcome obstacles.

**Lucky number** 13 | **Lucky colour** Bronze  
**Lucky day** Thursday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Holistic look reveals truth, selective approach misleads

Seeking remedial measure, someone approached me for necessary guidance: "Sir, I am going through a very bad patch in. My business has collapsed, and I am loaded with heavy debt. I don't know how to deal with this crisis and make a fresh start. An astrologer I met recently observed that my marriage has brought bad luck. For, my lagna lord Mars is exalted but Venus, the lord of 7th house identified with wife is in debility. When I reflected, it looked probable. Whatever I attempted before marriage, I came out with flying colours. After marriage, I twice took business initiative and miserably failed. I am shaken and thoroughly confused. Should I end up my marriage to ensure a smooth sail of life? Suggest me some puja to get out of this dilemma." Didn't that pundit offer quick fix solution through some puja? I countered. "Yes, but I can't afford the cost." He answered. So, it is the cost that brought

you here. I can offer you a no cost solution, which may though not offer instant solution, but will help you address the problem from the root level. Your effort, however, will not bear fruits unless you understand and acknowledge some basic truths. The genesis of problem doesn't lie in extraterrestrial forces playing in the cosmos. It is rather rooted in your inherent trends of mind, - desires, perception, habits, and attitudes. That's what ordinarily drives the functional mandate of a being. Accordingly, you make choices in life. But whenever there is choice, the probability of its use and misuse remains equal. And there is no free lunch in life. You are to own up the consequences of the choices made. Even the destiny indications are a result of the choices you made in the past. The quality and intent of your actions define the way future would unfold. It is difficult to digest that cosmic bodies could be

appealed. For, they don't enjoy discriminatory abilities necessary to selectively respond to your individualistic prayers. The most potent method is to self-reflect, identify, and acknowledge fault lines, and address them through fresh educative inputs. A purified mind will let you look at issues in hand with an open mind, free from any preconditioning whatsoever. You may then see things in the right perspective and target what is achievable. But our ego often plays spoil sport. It doesn't let you dispassionately read your mind trends. Here astrology comes handy. For, it reads energy mapping of a being, which reflects personality trends with a fair amount of precision, as energy knows no bias. "What's your take on the other pundit's observation? In your opinion what does my astrological chart reflect?" Asked the man. Well, he certainly lacked a holistic approach. Or that he purposely made selective observation to serve his vested



interest. True, your lagna lord Mars is exalted. But it is placed adverse to both Sun, and Jupiter indicating inflated ego. That binds you to your self-defined beliefs and desires. It doesn't let you go beyond for a reality check or looking for better options if any. Also, it will not let you identify and admit own weaknesses either. Instead, you find it convenient to shift the blame on others. If your wife brought ill-luck, how comes she is doing well by herself, which has helped you sail through your crisis. You should be rather thankful for her support. You are born in Aries lagna, a fiery sign, with Moon therein, which is ill-disposed off to Mars. That makes you aggressive, impulsive, commanding in nature, who will jump into action without applying proper forethought. You never wish to play second fiddle to others, which includes the superiors. That tempted you to get into business, carrying the mistaken belief that things will move exclusive-

ly to your asking, whereas in corporate sector you are to report to superiors. You forget that you are still dependent on the callings of market forces, if not your support staff. Also, mischievous Neptune is placed adverse to Venus, the natural signifier of finance. That brings in illusionary craving for amassing huge wealth. At the same time, it also makes you vulnerable to loss because of indiscrete and impulsive speculative initiatives. The result is there to see. Truth remains that 2nd sub-lord, which reflects upon the potential to earn, is Mercury, which is tenanted in the nakshatra owned by limiting Saturn. It indicates fixed income. No wonder, you did well when worked on fixed salary, but encountered failure in business where the income level fluctuates.

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