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INDIA DECIMATES PAKISTAN

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
 India fired on all cylinders in what was supposed to be war minus the shooting, blowing away arch-rivals Pakistan by seven wickets in a World Cup face-off that ended in a damp squib after causing unbridled hysteria and logistical hassles. In what is seen as the pinnacle of cricket by fans in the subcontinent, Indian captain Rohit Sharma emerged as the undisputed star of the match, scoring a 63-ball 86 to power his team to the modest target of 192 with as many as 19.3 overs to spare here on Saturday. Jasprit Bumrah was a tiger on the prowl and Mohammed Siraj displayed wolf-like aggression before skipper Rohit completed the annihilation as India produced a near-perfect performance in one of the most lopsided World Cup games between the arch-rivals. Rohit just casually flaunted his repertoire of strokes, which included a pull shot behind square off Shaheen Shah Afridi and a square driven six off Haris Rauf, as India were home by 8.05 pm local time. The win was India's eighth over their neighbours in the 50 over global event, where Pakistan had never been able to match their neighbours in terms of skill, strategy or execution since 1992. Just like he brushes his teeth, drinks water, pulling and hooking is a part of Rohit's daily chores. The 1150 gram willow is an

extension of his arm and those strong but supple wrists do their job at his beck and call. On the day, they responded to his call 12 times, six of which went over the ropes. People love to err on side of caution but Rohit is ready to err on side of risk, whether its spin of coin or dismissing a fast bouncer from his presence. There will be days when he might fail and look silly but on days he succeeds, he would look regal, like he did on Saturday. Even as the fans rejoiced the Indian win the skipper said he won't get carried away. "All in all, it is looking good. I want to keep my fingers crossed, and don't want to get too excited. I don't want to get too low as well. We want to stay balanced, keep calm and keep moving forward," he said after the match. "Every opposition we come up against is all quality. You have to play well on that particular day, and that's what we are looking at." It is very difficult to better perfection but if anything was synonymous with perfection, then decimating Pakistan for 191 in 42.5 overs would come closest. Five bowlers, showing different facets of bowling and sharing equal spoils is rarity but there couldn't have been a more opportune setting to tick all boxes like Rohit's men did on the day. Bumrah (2/19 in 7 overs), Siraj (2/50 in 8 overs), Kuldeep



India's captain Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 match between India and Pakistan at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday PTI

(2/35 in 10 overs), Hardik Pandya (2/34 in 6 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (2/35 in 9.5 overs) were relentless in their

pursuit of choking the opposition into submission. This Pakistan team never had the depth to compete with India and that one T20 World Cup game which India lost in Dubai back in 2021 was just an aberration.

For the one-lakh plus spectators at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the garba started one day in advance and the story of this absolute dominance by India will be remembered for times to come. For the rest of the country, Bengal can celebrate an early Durga Puja and in the northern part of India, it could an early Diwali. Motera was the Indian cricket fans the "Theatre of Dreams" on Saturday. One could be swayed by such atmosphere but just like Rohit, his team has also learnt the art of staying in its bubble. It was imposing and in-your-face and at times intimidating. The vibe was felt when the entire stadium sang the national anthem. Siraj and Bumrah hoodwinked the Pakistan batters with the semi-old ball and a bagful of tricks for which they had no answer. This was Pakistan's second lowest score against India in ODI World Cup after the 180 all-out in 1999. The two new ball bowlers made the semi-new ball talk by altering the length and using the wobbly seam to run through a circumspect middle-order and put India on course of their eighth victory in ODI World Cups. Kuldeep's role as the supporting protagonist was also laudable as he operated like a sly fox, removing Saud Shakeel (6) and Iftikhar Ahmed (4) in quick succession to hasten the slide. Rohit's decision to bowl first after winning the toss might have raised a few eye-brows but

the Indian team always had things under control despite a 82-run third wicket stand between skipper Babar Azam (50 off 58 balls) and Mohammed Rizwan (49 off 69 balls). It was a matter of one wicket and once Siraj got one to just move in a shade from a shorter length, the Pakistan skipper misjudged it completely and remained rooted to his crease trying to steer it to third man. The sound of timber was what the entire Motera wanted to hear. Rizwan, on cusp of his half-century got a wobbly seam slow off-cutter from Bumrah which entered through the gap between bat and pad as Pakistan's resistance ended at that moment. Babar and Rizwan had a partnership going but if one looks at how the ODI landscape has changed, they were well behind par during the stand. With two new Kookaburras used from both sides, the balls don't generally get old but the two Indian pacers, on a flat track, altered the length suitably to make the inroads at the right junctures. In case of Kuldeep, he knew Saud and Iftikhar aren't good at sweeping and it brought about their downfall. It only helped that Jadeja was parsimonious at the other end. When the Indian innings commenced, it wasn't a question of how but when will they wrap up things. Rohit ensured it happened in a jiffy.

Milestone in ties with Lanka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 Describing the resumption of a ferry service between India and Sri Lanka after a gap of four decades as an "important milestone" in strengthening ties between the two nations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said both the countries were embarking on a new chapter in diplomatic and economic relations. Addressing the event to launch ferry services between Nagapattinam in India and Kankesanthurai near Jaffna in Sri Lanka, via a video message, Modi said the ferry service brings alive all historical and cultural connections. "Connectivity is not only about bringing two cities closer. It also brings our countries closer, our people closer and our hearts closer," he said. The ferry service was disrupted four decades ago due to the Sri Lankan civil war. The high-speed ferry operated by the Shipping Corporation of India has a capacity of 150 pax. The distance of about 60 nm (110 km) between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai will be covered in approximately three-and-a-half hours



Cheriyanani, a ferry which will run between Nagapattinam (India) and Kankesanthurai (Sri Lanka), during its flagging off ceremony on Saturday PTI

depending on sea conditions. The Prime Minister said India and Sri Lanka are embarking on a "new chapter in diplomatic and economic relations" and the launch of a ferry service between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai is an "important milestone" in strengthening the relations. Underlining the shared history of culture, commerce and civilisation between India and Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister pointed out that Nagapattinam and nearby towns have been

known for sea trade with many countries, including Sri Lanka, and the historical port of Poompohar finds a mention as a hub in ancient Tamil literature. He also spoke about Sangam age literature like Pattinappalai and Manimekalai which describe the movement of boats and ships between the two countries. Modi also touched upon the great poet Subramania Bharati's song "Sindhu Nadhiyin Misai", which mentions a bridge con-

necting India and Sri Lanka. He said the ferry service brings alive all those historical and cultural connections. During the recent visit of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, a vision document was jointly adopted for an economic partnership with the central theme of connectivity, the Prime Minister said. He emphasised that connectivity enhances trade, tourism and people-to-people ties, while also creating new opportunities for the youth of both countries. Modi also recalled his visit to Sri Lanka in 2015 when direct flights between Delhi and Colombo were launched. Later, he said, the landing of the first international flight in the pilgrim town of Kushinagar from Sri Lanka was also celebrated. He also noted that direct flights between Chennai and Jaffna began in 2019, and now the ferry service between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai is yet another important step in this direction. "Our vision for connectivity goes beyond the transport sector," Modi said as he underlined that India and Sri Lanka collaborate in a wide range of areas such as fintech and energy.

SDPI rallies against Israel backfire

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
 A sense of fear has gripped Kerala following Friday night's demonstrations and public rallies across the State by activists of the Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the frontal organisation of the banned Popular Front of India. The rally held by thousands of SDPI workers carrying torches raised provocative slogans against the Central Government and India and expressed solidarity with Hamas, which was described by the rallyists as angels of peace. However, despite the rallies against Israel, there is a strong pro-Israeli wind blowing across Kerala, especially among Christians. "A section of the media and political commentators are trying to portray Israel and Jews as villains and this is highly objectionable. These people

do not know the history of Israel or the Jews," said Dr John Joseph, a medical doctor and highly respected community leader for his selfless service. "It is time the Centre banned even the SDPI as this is not the first time they are holding such rallies and raising provocative slogans against humanity," said a prominent CPI(M) leader who did not want his name to be quoted for obvious reasons. The CPI(M) leadership has gone public by expressing their support to Hamas and terming the Israeli attack as acts of terrorism. For the first time in Kerala's history, an outfit has requested expatriates working in Israel to stay put and not to return to the State at this critical juncture. The Marxists had swept the 2004 Lok Sabha polls from Kerala by displaying the pictures of Ahmed Yasin, the Hamas chief who was killed by the Israeli Army.

Christian Association and Alliance for Social Action (CASA) urged Keralites working in Israel not to leave the Jewish nation at this critical juncture. Kevin Peter, president, CASA, reminded Keralites working in Israel that the promised land required their services very badly and they should not leave that country now. "Israel is facing a serious situation from outside forces. Many have lost their near and dear ones while there are thousands of injured people requiring medical aid. Those of you who are working in fields like telecommunication, transport, health care, trauma care and as home nurses should show your love and affection to Israel by remaining in that country and focusing on your field of work. Israel needs you and your service," said Peter. He also told the expatriates working in Israel that the

CASA was making all efforts to protect their interests. "The Union Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is our only hope and we have been told by the Centre that the Modi Government is leaving no stones unturned to ensure your security and safety. Please understand that The Kerala Government is incapable of doing any help other than making you give up your job and return to the State. Israel is India's friendly country and past instances tell us that they are equally concerned about your well-being," Peter signed off with this statement. Recruiting agents charge anything between ₹2 million to ₹3 million for jobs like nurses and home nurses in Israel. Most of the job seekers have mortgaged their properties to pay off the agents and if they choose to return home, they will be facing debt trap and an uncertain future.

What does your toothpaste have in it?

Jhooth (Lie)

Using **Jhoothpaste** in the name of toothpaste has resulted not only in unclean teeth, but its chemicals made the teeth and gums even worse!

Patanjali Dant Kanti has the time-tested

Truth of Ayurveda

That's why it's called

Truthpaste

Made of **16** herbs (Akarkara, Neem, Babool, Tomar, Mint, Cloves, Peepli (small), Vajradanti, Bakul, Vidang, Turmeric, Peelun and Majufal etc.) it gives teeth

the power to fight cavities, foul smell, yellowness, pyorrhea and all other oral diseases.

HELP CITY, NCR BREATHE EASY: LG TO HARYANA, PUNJAB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has written to the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana expressing concern over the rise in stubble fires in their States and asked them to take remedial measures to protect the national Capital from increased air pollution during winter season.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva has welcomed the initiative taken by the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr. PK Mishra and Delhi Lt Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena to help improve the air quality of Delhi by checking causes of pollution.



Khattar that the incidents were on the rise this year. "It is extremely worrisome that the incidents of crop residue burning in Haryana from September 15 to October 11 this year have reached 340, which is 257 more than the figure of 83 in the corresponding period during 2022," Saxena said.

Delhi in winter when the temperatures plummet. The Delhi LG asked both the Chief Ministers to expedite remedial measures to prevent stubble burning and save Delhi from choking.

and diplomatic missions from across the globe, besides its 2 crore inhabitants. It hosts lakhs of visitors, tourists and envoys coming to India for summits and conferences who are exposed to debilitating air pollution for no fault of theirs.

to discuss steps to curb farm residual burning and check winter pollution during last 6 months," said Sachdeva.



21 construction sites get notices for pollution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said notices have been issued to 21 construction sites under the ongoing anti-dust campaign.

national Capital standing at 21.4 degrees Celsius. Earlier, in a press statement, Rai said 591 teams from 13 departments i.e. DDA, MCD, DPCC, DCB, Jal Board, DSIIDC, PWD, Revenue, Delhi Metro, CPWD, NDMC, etc. have been formed under the anti-dust campaign.

1,000 Delhiites booked for power theft

ALOK SINGH ■ PTI / NEW DELHI

More than 1,000 people booked in the case of power thefts are declared as proclaimed offenders out of 7,200 POs of the national Capital. Court declares an accused a Proclaimed Offender, or PO, if the person evades arrest and fails to appear in a court despite having a warrant issued against him.

The court had ordered that Delhi Police and the district courts would be responsible for uploading the data of proclaimed offender/proclaimed persons in criminal cases and the Director/In-charge of Inter-operable Criminal Justice System would ensure all possible technical and tactical support to the project.



electricity theft, 170 under other thefts, 104 under negligent driving, 144 under cheating, and 90 under drug-related cases. At least 40 of them were declared PO under murder and five under rape cases.

addresses or other intelligence means. "The verification of the remaining 2,000 POs is still on. The Delhi police officers do the verification to ascertain the existence of these POs, since the records from these 7,000 POs suggest that some of these POs are even from 1980-90s," said an officer.



Girl held hostage, ₹12 lakh looted from her Chandni Chowk house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Four people, including a woman, allegedly held a girl hostage and looted ₹12 lakh from a house in central Delhi's Chandni Chowk area, police said on Saturday.

Govt bats for prisoners rights to conjugal visits

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A petition filed in the Delhi High Court asserts that conjugal visitation, away from the scrutiny of prison officials, is a "fundamental right."

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula was hearing a petition urging the Delhi government and DG (Prisons) to make suitable arrangements in jails for conjugal visits by prisoners' spouses.



Delhi government six weeks to provide updates following its recommendation, and has posted the matter for hearing on January 15, 2024.

despite most prisoners being within a sexually active age bracket, they are denied conjugal visitation. It points out the progressive approach taken by courts in various countries, considering conjugal visits an important human right and their potential to reduce crimes within prisons.

3 held for running World Cup cricket betting racket

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three people have been arrested for allegedly running a World Cup cricket betting racket in South Delhi's Neb Sarai area, police said on Saturday. The arrests were made on Thursday and the accused have been identified as Ravi Kumar, Amit Kumar and Shahid Khan, they said.

HC refuses to stay ED custody of Chinese national in Vivo case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused to interfere with a trial court order sending Chinese national Guangwen alias Andrew Kuang to three-day Enforcement Directorate custody in a money laundering case against Chinese smartphone maker Vivo.



sition of proceeds of crime had taken place and which, after layering and integration, had been siphoned off by Vivo India," the court observed in an order dated October 13.

carried out in a mala fide manner and against the mandate of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and no case was made out against him.

Woman dupes people by selling mineral seeds, held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Saturday claimed to have arrested a woman accused of duping people, including an Army officer, on the pretext of selling mineral seeds that claim to improve health.



duped Sanjiv Menezes, a businessman, of ₹44.25 lakh," he added. Zule first contacted Menezes with an offer to sell 10,000 packets of the seeds at ₹3.00 lakh per packet.

Hindu College hostel remake turns alumni nostalgic

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than mere brick and mortar to many, the Hindu College's boys hostel which is under demolition for a remake, has sent several alumni waxing nostalgic about the famed building which once nestled them.

The new structure, being built at a cost of ₹50 crore, will house more than 500 students and is likely to be ready in two to three years, she added.



and nostalgic as I spent my youth in the boys' hostel. But the old order has to change to give path to the new. I am not going to stand in the way," Ali, an alumnus of the Delhi University college, told PTI.

past, is maintained in the new hostel. "The construction and architecture of the college in general has not followed the best planning in terms of visual aesthetics. It's a very important thing to keep that aesthetic in mind when they reconstruct anything in the college," he said.

dered if there was no alternative to a complete wipeout of their memories. "Is demolition the only way out, can it not be renovation in the secondary thought? People like us have spent five-six years in that hostel. Our emotions are intact there," Mukesh Kumar, director, Red Dot Entertainment, said.

families to show them their hostel. With the new construction, this will stop happening. "The current alumni will not be able to identify the building even though new students will make new memories. There is a need to preserve some part of the history. A balance should be maintained between the old and the new," she said.



ENGLAND LOOKS TO BETTER RUN RATE AGAINST AFGHANISTAN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Their campaign back on track after the humiliating loss in the opener, title holders England would look for a dominating all-round effort against a battered Afghanistan in the World Cup here on Sunday, with eyes firmly set on bettering their net run rate. Defending champions England's campaign started on a disappointing note as they lost by nine wickets against New Zealand in the tournament opener in Ahmedabad on October 5. But the Jos Buttler-led side bounced back in style, humbling Bangladesh by 137 runs in Dharamsala on Tuesday. Despite putting up a competitive 282 for nine in the opener at a batting-friendly Narendra Modi Stadium pitch, England bowlers were taken to the cleaners by Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra as New Zealand romped home in 36.2 overs. But England made a superb comeback in their next match with both the batting and bowling departments clicking in unison. It was not the batting unit which was the cause for concern for England against New Zealand, but their bowling, comprising Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, Sam Curran, Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid, which looked ordinary when Conway and Ravindra batted. But in their next match against Bangladesh, England showed their might with a clinical performance. Opening the batting, Dawid Malan smashed 140 off 107 balls, while Joe Root continued his fine form with consecutive half-centuries. Jonny Bairstow too contributed a valuable 50 up the order. They would be banking on another good start from their openers to post a massive total on a flat pitch at the relatively smaller Arun Jaitley Stadium that has witnessed huge scores in all the matches it has hosted so far in the tournament. Besides, skipper Buttler, Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone would also want to mark their arrival in the tournament with substantial contributions in the



middle-order. England's decision to replace an ineffective Moeen Ali with Reece Topley paid rich dividends against Bangladesh as the left-arm pacer inspired the bowling attack with figures of 4/43 from his 10 overs. Woakes, Wood, Curran and Rashid all returned to form and, not just were they economical, they also picked up wickets. England would look for a repeat performance from its players. England would not just look for a victory against Afghanistan but would also want to win the match handsomely to boost their net run rate (NRR), which took a beating in their opener. The Afghans, on the other hand, are low on confidence after successive defeats. Dark-horses Afghanistan lost by six wickets against Bangladesh before they were thrashed by hosts India by eight wickets. Come Sunday, they would look for a reversal and cause the first upset of the tournament. But it is easier said than done. Afghanistan's concern lies in all departments of their game. In their first outing against Bangladesh, the batters faltered, making a below-par 156. Then, against a batting-heavy India, the bowling attack fumbled despite posting a competitive 272 for eight. Afghanistan's main concern is the performance of their openers. In the two matches they have played so far, both the openers, Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran, have failed to provide a decent start, which resulted in the team's downfall. After a below-par show in their opener, skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi and Azmatullah Omarzai rose to the occasion with half-centuries to post a decent total on the board against India. But Shahidi would desperately want his openers to take the responsibility upfront. Afghanistan's bowling too looked ordinary in both the matches and the team would look for a much-improved outing from the likes of Fazalhaq Farooqi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Naveen-ul-Haq and Rashid Khan in the upcoming games to match the might of teams such as England, New Zealand and Australia.



Williamson soaked up some pressure with his knock

PTI ■ CHENNAI

New Zealand pacer Trent Boult conceded that returning skipper Kane Williamson made the job of winning against Bangladesh in their ODI World Cup match here easier by "soaking up some pressure". Williamson, playing his first match of the World Cup here on Friday, having recovered from a surgery to treat a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in his right knee, scored 78 as the Kiwis made light of the 246-run target and defeated Bangladesh by eight wickets. Williamson was out for five months, having suffered the ACL injury during IPL 2023. The skipper came at a time when New Zealand had lost opener Rachin Ravindra for 89 and he then built a strong 80-run partnership with Devon Conway to lay the platform for the Kiwi win. "He's very comfortable out there in the middle, and yeah, quality knock after six or so months off. Great to have him back, and obviously a key player for us," said Boult during the post-match press conference. "The guy's very comfortable at the crease, very familiar with

how he wants to play his cricket. And, yeah, touched on soaking up some pressure at the start to begin with. "But yeah, he plays good cricket off shots, puts pressure on the bowler and generally that's a pretty good recipe." However, Williamson was hit on the thumb during a Bangladesh fielding effort, which saw him retire hurt at 78. It is learnt that the skipper will undergo scans on Saturday. The Chepauk track for the encounter assisted the pacers with some bounce, unlike the one that was slow during the India-Australia tie. "I think you can always gauge a wicket by the nets in a way, and I thought the nets were very good. It's hot; I thought the wicket was very hard and offered a little bit of pace, which is probably not the description you normally take coming here to Chennai," added the pace bowler who took two wickets in the match. Pacer Lockie Ferguson was the star of the Kiwi bowling attack, grabbing three wickets, and Boult backed him to play a significant role deeper into the competition. "Lockie plays a huge role for us and (is) a guy that can bowl 150K and has some great skills. It's nice to see him get some reward today (Friday). "He's very clever with his plans. And, he likes to attack in the role that he's in. Hopefully, he's going to play a big role for us over the next couple of weeks." The New Zealanders play Afghanistan next here before moving to Dharamsala for matches against India and Australia. Boult affirmed that playing two matches at a venue does give them breathing space. "I think the way the draws panned out for us to be able to settle into the same venue a couple of times is probably a positive. Those conditions are going to be the big challenges as you move around the country. "But yeah, obviously each venue brings a different opposition. Big match again against Afghanistan with some guys that know these conditions very well as well. "So, we'll go away and have a bit of a chat, but understanding those conditions and understanding how to, I suppose, bowl and take the game deep with the bat is going to be a big thing," he signed off.

Top order needs to bat more responsibly, says Najmul

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Bangladesh vice-captain Najmul Hossain Shanto asked his batters, especially the top-order, to "bat more responsibly" as his side lost its World Cup match to New Zealand here by eight wickets. Bangladesh have lost two of the three matches in this World Cup with the main concern being their top-order's inability to score runs and challenge the big teams in the tournament. While they defeated Afghanistan in a low-scoring opening match, they came up woefully short against defending champions England, who won by 137 runs, and New Zealand, who won hands down here on Friday. The Asian side could only post 245 here, which the Kiwis overhauled in just the 43rd over for the loss of two wickets. "We do always plan how to bat, but we should bat more responsibly. There is always a challenge for the top order, especially with the new ball," said Najmul during the post-match press conference. The top-order batter himself scored just seven runs in the match.



However, he expressed confidence of a comeback from the side, currently placed sixth on the 10-team table with two points. "Obviously, we can make a comeback from here. All we need to do is to give a reasonable total for our bowlers to defend. More than pondering about what to do, it's vital to know how good are we playing." Also, while defending the paltry total, experienced skipper Shakib Al Hasan surprisingly bowled out his quota of spin bowling quite early. Explaining the logic behind that, Najmul said: "We did not score enough runs and did not bat well, so we needed early wickets. The pacers did bowl well, while the reason Shakib bowling his spell quickly was to gain quick wickets." Providing an update on Shakib's condition, who seemed to be struggling while batting, Najmul said that the skipper had gone for scans for a left quad niggle.

The pitch at Chepauk was a bit different than the one offered for the India-Australia match, as it had some bounce on Friday. However, Najmul said it didn't come as a surprise to the team. "Not really surprised by the track; the wicket looks pretty good. We didn't bat well. Had we scored at least 280-300, we could have defended it." One of the notable things about Bangladesh in this tournament has been their batting order, which has not been stable and seen a bit of shuffling. Najmul said that while the captain and the coach decide the batting order, he and every member in the side should be comfortable and ready to bat in any given position. "I am always ready to bat at any position as per the team's requirement. I have scored runs in the past at number four. But, it is the captain and the coach who decide the batting order. Everyone in the team must be ready to bat at any position and any given match. "Everyone in the team is informed beforehand about which position they would be batting in a particular game. It was this very move that allowed us to score a decent total against Afghanistan," he said.

Exciting to be able to test our skills against the best: Pothas on India game

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Bangladesh assistant coach Nic Pothas rated India as the best team in the world and called it a great opportunity for its side to test its skills against the hosts in the ongoing Cricket World Cup. The Tigers have lost two of their opening three ties, with the latest defeat coming to New Zealand here on Friday. The Bangladeshis have nearly a week to prepare for the fixture against the Indians in Pune on Thursday. "Where do I start? They are the best team in the world, and they are in their own conditions.

From our point of view, it's exciting to be able to test our skills against the best," Pothas said during a media interaction on Friday after failure against the Kiwis. Describing how Bangladesh can regroup before the vital India clash, he noted, "We have a good rest, because the games here at the World Cup come thick and fast with high pressure, and these games take a lot out of you." "The danger is you might think more practice helps, but it does not. We will be giving the players a good amount of mental and physical rest while



preparing to play against India." When asked about the reason for the Tigers' batters' below-par show against the New Zealanders, Pothas clarified that the players need to be at their best, with no time and freedom. "When you are playing against high-quality attacks, you have to be at your game; there's no time. Also, there's no freedom to be able to find your game." Elucidating the short-ball tactic by NZ, Pothas voiced, "No, not at all (surprised). Lockie Ferguson has got pace, (and he got it) as soon as the ball carried early."

Be happy with being you.
Love your flaws. Own your
quirks. And know that you
are just as perfect as
anyone else, exactly as
you are
—Ariana Grande



BLACK HOLE OF NEPOTISM

Kerala University, once envisioned by Sir CP Ramaswami Aiyar for quality education, now grapples with scandals and declining standards. Political favoritism, subpar theses, and controversial appointments plague the system. Scholars call for reform as the legacy of excellence gives way to a grim reality of nepotism and educational decay, writes **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

Sir CP Ramaswami Aiyar, former Diwan of the princely State of Travancore, may be turning in his grave if he were to read about the happenings in Kerala University, which he founded in 1937. All colleges in the provinces of Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar (predecessors to present-day Kerala) were affiliated with Madras University until 1937, which had made higher education inaccessible for students from average and middle-income families. When the university was launched as Travancore University (its name was later changed to Kerala University after the formation of the State of Kerala), Sir CP brought in the best teachers in the country as faculty members. He even approached Albert Einstein with an offer of Rs 6,000 per month as salary to head the physics department. However, for reasons best known to him, Einstein preferred to join Princeton University in the US. Gone are the days of the Maharaja of Travancore and the Diwan. Sir CP, who aimed to establish a modern Kerala, faced a multitude of calumnies from vested interests, and there was even an attempt on his life. Immediately after the country was liberated from the shackles of colonialism, Sir CP tendered his resignation and returned to his ancestral house, The Grove in Chennai. Soon after the swearing in of the popular governments, Kerala University began its descent into an abyss. The institution has fallen into a Black Hole. Not only Kerala University, but all universities in the State have become cesspools of political manipulations, favoritism, and the appointment of near and dear ones of comrades to senior positions and teaching posts. The

appointment of the wives of CPI(M) minister MB Rajesh, Speaker Shamseer, and Chief Minister's secretary Rakesh in violation of all norms has reached the Supreme Court. Most universities are functioning with temporary vice chancellors following the standoff between the CPI(M) Government and Governor Arif Mohammed Khan. The Governor, famous for his no-nonsense approach to all issues and a stickler for norms, has questioned the double standards of the CPI(M) in the selection of vice chancellors, which has infuriated the commissars and comrades. What comes next is literally shocking. The degrees, especially the PhDs in humanities, represent the pinnacle of callousness, irresponsibility, nepotism, and spinelessness among the senior staff members. Chintha Jerome, the youngest CPI(M) state committee member, obtained a PhD in English literature by submitting a thesis riddled with spelling and grammar mistakes, as well as factual errors. She couldn't differentiate between Vailoppilli Sreedhara Menon and Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, two romantic poets in the Malayalam language. Even schoolchildren in Kerala are familiar with the significant works of Changampuzha and Vailoppilli. Addressing them as Vailoppalli and Krishna Menon is an unpardonable error. Despite her thesis being packed with factual errors, grammatical and spelling mistakes, university authorities gleefully awarded her the PhD. There is a clamour for PhDs among students, as a research degree is essential for a teaching profession according to University Grants Commission guidelines. The Higher Education Department of the Kerala Government has discarded the UGC's

directives in the selection procedures for faculty and awarding of doctoral degrees. Jerome has become the subject of jokes on social media due to her subpar English speeches. "There is nothing surprising in the British leaving India in haste, as they were taken aback by the way we speak English," remarked an academic in the State. Chintha's case is not a "flash in the pan" example of a substandard doctoral thesis. Sunil Elayidam, a professor at Sree Sankara Sanskrit University, obtained a PhD in Malayalam language only after the intervention of a Marxist minister who requested that he be awarded the doctoral degree. The examiner who reviewed Elayidam's work candidly admitted that the thesis was substandard and did not meet the minimum requirements for a creative work. He had already made headlines for plagiarising "Bharatanatyam, A Reader", a work by Davesh Soneji, a social historian based in the US working in the field of performing arts. This earned him the nickname "Suniladi", rhyming with "Coppiyadi", Malayalam for copying an original work. Many Marxist leaders in Kerala consider a PhD a status symbol, granting access to the intellectual elite. "A PhD in the field of art and literature should embody creativity, and the thesis should serve as a reference point for researchers and critics alike," said Professor Ravi Shankar S Nair, an avant-garde critic in Malayalam literature. Professor Nair, who meticulously evaluates all PhD theses in the state, highlighted a recent "research work" by a student of Sree Sankara Sanskrit University at Kalady. He remarked that the thesis, titled "Onam: A Cultural Analysis", is of lower quality

SREE SANKARA SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY AWARDED A PHD TO A MARXIST LEADER FOR HER THESIS, WHICH IS RIDDLED WITH ERRORS. PRINCY KURIAKOSE, WHO HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS A MEMBER OF THE KERALA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, CLAIMED IN HER THESIS THAT ADI SANKARA LIVED DURING THE PERIOD 1800 TO 1900. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THIS MISTAKE, THE VICE CHANCELLOR WHO OVERSAW THE RESEARCH TOOK THE EASY WAY OUT. "SEE, I AM TRAVELING AND DID NOT SEE ANY REPORTS ABOUT THIS INCIDENT. LET ME GET BACK TO THE UNIVERSITY AND STUDY THE ISSUE," SAID DHARMARAJ ADAT, THE THEN VICE CHANCELLOR

than an essay authored by a high school student. "The main findings of this PhD thesis assert that thousands of people participate in the Kerala Government-funded Onam-Tourism week with enthusiasm. There is no permanent crowd for this festival; it is a mobile crowd. Since food is freely distributed by temples, all hotels remain closed... these are the findings for which the 'researcher' has been awarded the Ph.D.!" stated Professor Nair. Appalled by the decline in the quality of higher education, CK Anandan Pillai, a septuagenarian scholar and chief editor of Sahitya Vimarsham, a quarterly magazine, sent a questionnaire to ten academics in the State regarding the selection process of faculties pursued by university authorities and the quality of research theses. All those who responded to Pillai's inquiries were unanimous in their belief that the selection of faculties in universities is the most significant scam of modern times. "Most of the PhD theses submitted to the universities lack the value of the papers on which they are written. Dustbins are the ideal place for them," remarked RS Sasikumar, an academician with more than three decades of experience. According to KV Thomas, an educationist, PhD theses could be described as the best comedies. "Since none but the candidate reads these creations, there are no complaints," added Thomas. Rasheed Panoor, a teacher with a three-decade-long outstanding track record, suggested that Kerala may be the only State in India where the appointment of vice chancellors is based on caste, community, and religion. True to what Rasheed has said, the names of vice chancellors are discussed in the liaison committee of the Left Democratic Front before

being presented to the Governor. Sasikumar and his fellow academics have formed a Save University Campaign Committee and submitted a memorandum to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, who is leading a battle against the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government, requesting him to intervene immediately to rescue the higher education sector in the State from the shackles of Marxists. As this article is being written, yet another PhD scandal has come to light, this time from Sree Sankara Sanskrit University in Kerala. The university awarded a PhD to a Marxist leader for her thesis, which is riddled with errors. Princy Kuriakose, who has been appointed as a member of the Kerala Public Service Commission, claimed in her thesis that Adi Sankara lived during the period 1800 to 1900. When asked about this mistake, the vice chancellor who oversaw the research took the easy way out. "See, I am traveling and did not see any reports about this incident. Let me get back to the University and study the issue," said Dharmaraj Adat, the then vice chancellor. The Malayalam term for University is "Sarva Kalaa Saala", which means an institution that encompasses all forms of arts. However, Anandan Pillai suggests that the ideal Malayalam term should be "Sarva Kalla Saala" (a comprehensive institution for all kinds of thefts - 'Kalla'). There have been instances in the past where individuals going to oil-rich West Asian countries managed to secure employment by presenting wedding invitation letters to Sheikhs as if they were degree certificates from engineering colleges. Welcome to God's Own Country. (The writer is Chennai-based Special Correspondent of The Pioneer)

HEALTH BRIEFS

DOCS REMOVE BENIGN TUMOR USING ROBOTIC SURGERY

Using robotic surgery, doctors at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi have successfully removed a hemangioma -- a benign tumour made up of blood vessels -- from the base of the tongue of a 33-year-old patient, hailing from Bihar. He had been complaining of blood stained saliva, difficulty in swallowing, and difficulty in breathing at night. The doctors first performed an endoscopy of the throat and identified a mass in the back side of his tongue. They felt that the growth could be of two types, a neoplastic tumour (characteristic of cancer) or a benign hemangioma. "Hemangiomas at the base of the tongue are extremely challenging to treat due to the

risk of severe bleeding during surgery," said Dr. Kalpana Nagpal, Senior Consultant, ENT and Robotic Surgery, at the hospital. Normally, blood is arranged in the blood bank prior to surgery, but this was not required since it was robotic surgery. The robotic technology did not involve any cuts in the front of the neck and the 3D vision and magnification, used by Nagpal allowed for precise and minimally invasive removal of the hemangioma. Unlike traditional surgical methods, the robotic surgery resulted in almost no blood loss and zero visible scarring. The patient also did not require a tracheostomy or feeding tube.

MOBILE APP FOR EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF BICYCLE FLEET



In a move aimed towards promoting sustainable transportation, AIIMS-Delhi has come up with a mobile application for the efficient management of its recently-introduced fleet of over 1,000 bicycles as part of the Green AIIMS initiative. The move is aligned with AIIMS-Delhi's commitment to sustainability, promoting a healthier environment and reducing carbon footprint, Director Dr M Srinivas said. The hospital

received feedback that emphasised the need for a modern, technology-driven solution to efficiently manage and monitor the bicycle inventory and streamline the process of their issuance and deposit. "In response to this feedback, AIIMS-Delhi announces the development of a state-of-the-art mobile application, which is slated for completion by November 30," said Prof Dr Rima Dada, the media cell in-charge

'IKRIS RUN' FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS HELD

Hundreds of passionate individuals, athletes, and supporters participated on October 11 in the IKRIS Pharma's "Ikris Run 2023" held in Noida with an aim to create awareness about the breast cancer. Dr (Prof) Meenu Walia, Senior Director and HOD, Medical Oncology, Max Hospital

was the chief guest at the event organized by the IKRIS Pharma Network, a rare disease and innovator drug access facilitator, along with Sattva Shipil and Noida Entrepreneurs Association. The run also aimed promoting the importance of early diagnosis of the condition, said a statement here.

AIR POLLUTION CAN TAKE TOLL ON YOUR SKIN

A stitch in time can save nine. This holds true for our appearance as well, dermatologist says Dr Chandni Jain Gupta, who heads ELANTIS Healthcare She advises one must urgently address skin damaging culprits before it's too late. Human skin can suffer serious consequences from prolonged air pollution exposure. Severe impacts on human skin can result from prolonged exposure to different air pollutants and elements that contribute to air pollution such as UV radiation, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, oxides, particulate matter, ozone, and cigarette smoke. Through oxidative damage, air pollutants alter the way lipids, deoxyribonucleic acid, and proteins in human skin function. This results in wrinkles, premature skin ageing and inflammatory or allergic disorders such as contact dermatitis, atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, acne, and skin cancer. The skin's living tissues and cells are weakened by oxidative damage, which also makes you more susceptible to certain skin conditions and speeds up the premature ageing process. The term "oxidative damage" refers to an imbalance between unstable chemical molecules found on our skin and antioxidants that can damage our skin cells. The ageing process of the skin is accelerated by an extended state of oxidative damage resulting in texture changes and wrinkle formation on skin. Millions of different types of bacteria, fungus, and viruses live on human skin and



DR CHANDNI JAIN GUPTA

make up the skin microbiome (skin microbiome refers to the collection of bacteria, fungi, and viruses present on the human skin) To combat external microorganisms and prepare the immune system for any external illness causes, these are crucial. Pollution can reduce the number or diversity of bacterial communities in the natural microbiome population and allow dangerous bacteria to grow on the skin, which can result in a number of skin conditions. One of the main bacterial strains responsible for inflammatory acne, Cutibacterium acnes can develop in an airless, oily and sticky environment caused by pollution particles physically settling on the skin and blocking pores. How to protect your skin from air pollution? There are a variety of ways one can protect the skin from ageing due to air pollution. The problem occurs when we're exposed to chronic or high levels of airborne pollutants and those systems get overwhelmed and can't function properly; that's where topical antioxidants come up huge. Moreover, one should contact the dermatologists for best skin barrier-fortifiers.

STATES STEAL A MARCH

A Parliamentary panel that looked into the implementation of Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA) has recommended the Centre to consider emulating the best practices/innovation being implemented by some States/UTs to curb the deadly infection. **ARCHANA JYOTI** gives a glimpse of these pioneering approaches being adopted in some pockets of the country. India has kept 2025 as the TB elimination target

Officials in the Union Health Ministry agree that the practices mentioned in the reports have been designed in response to specific problems in various geographies to address health system-related challenges. "Yes, we are looking into ways to replicate such ideas where these can be implemented," said an official. For instance, the involvement of Neighbourhood Groups and Self-help Groups in TB control activities, as undertaken in Kerala, can prove a silver bullet to curb the menace in other states with the active participation of women where the disease is mired with the stigma and unawareness. The parliamentary committee was equally appreciative of an integrated approach through workplace policies similar to the employer-led model of BEST, Mumbai. It said it must be encouraged in all public and private organisations. TB is a silent killer that affects over 2.7 million people in India. Those with lifestyle disorders like diabetes, and lung and kidney-related diseases are vulnerable to TB.

INNOVATIVE MODELS

KERALA

Nalumanipookal (Flowers that bloom at 4 o'clock) is an innovation conceptualised in Kerala, combining community participation and peer education to fight against TB stigma. Neighbourhood groups (NHGs) of women were formed to target TB-free neighbourhoods. Handbooks with 51 information regarding TB in the local language were given to 12,536 NHGs, which were to be discussed by the NHG leader with the group of 10-15 women assembled in the weekly meeting. This has catered for making TB a household discussion topic and helped screen family members through the NHG members. Similarly, Nupaal sample collection unit is a microenterprise by a group of women spearheading a cost-effective sputum hub and spoke mechanism in the Idukki district of Kerala. When the direction for upfront molecular testing came from the state TB cell, the challenge was to find a cost-effective and efficient way of arranging sputum transportation across the Idukki district from the periphery to the nearest NAAT site, where 90% of the area is covered by forests and mountainous terrains with



the pre-dominantly rural population. A group of 9 motivated women agreed to be sputum transporters trained and provided with customised bags to hold the tubes containing the sample from the periphery to the molecular testing sites. This has ensured giving upfront molecular testing to all vulnerable groups at a very economical cost of transportation. **MUMBAI** Employer-led model for TB and Diabetes care in Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST), Mumbai, is an exemplary model that can be emulated in other organisations. BEST intensified TB and diabetes screening activities through programmatic collaborations

with the Mumbai District TB Control Society of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. Timely transportation of sputum samples and TB drugs is a challenge in the mountainous terrain of Himachal Pradesh. In the Mandi district, an MoU was executed with a private service provider company for the use of a drone for the transportation of sputum sample and TB drugs between the district centre at Mandi and the block headquarter at Janjheli. The usage of drones reduced both transportation time and operational costs to one-fourth. **UTTAR PRADESH** The State Government is observing the 15th day of every month as Ni-kshay Diwas across all health establishments, including private

practitioners. Under the initiative, the following activities inter alia were envisaged: attempted to refer 10% of total OPD cases for presumptive TB testing, enrolment on the Ni-kshay platform, private practitioners encouraged to notify TB cases and retrieval of lost to followup patients with involvement of gram pradhans and ASHA workers. This resulted in the examination of 31,030 presumptive cases, diagnosis of 1312 TB cases and retrieval of 1142 lost to follow-up patients across 52 the state in two rounds of Ni-kshay Diwas during December 2022 & January 2023.

TAMIL NADU

In Tamil Nadu, the FAST (Find, Assess, Support and Treat) centre is being organised as a single window system for notification of patients diagnosed with TB, linkage for public health actions and treatment adherence support to ensure standards of TB care as well as enhance the participation of all private hospitals and professional organisations in TB control activities. It is seen that notifications from FAST centres have increased by 47% as compared to an increase of 19% in non-FAST centres during the period from 2019 to 2022.

WEST BENGAL

A systematic and structured approach to TB death analysis within the ambit of "Tuberculosis Death Surveillance & Response," has been initiated. It captures all TB deaths both from public and private sector, identify level of delays (both at community & facility level), ascertain knowledge, attitude and health seeking behaviour in the community regarding TB disease, socio-demographic factors related to TB deaths and take corrective measures to avert such deaths in future. Officials say, TB-DSR process envisages prompt reporting of TB deaths within 24 hours in a prescribed First Investigation Report format, conducting community-based review by a team of fieldlevel workers led by a MO and a facility-based TB death review within the stipulated time frame of 21 days. Thereafter, all TB deaths are reviewed by CMOH of the districts and a few select cases are reviewed by District Magistrate in presence of relatives of the deceased. The officials further said, the identified preventable causes are being addressed. TB death rate has declined from 6% in 2021 to 5% in 2022.

Maiden gene therapy to cure rare type deafness in kids begins

Can gene therapy provide hearing for children born with hearing impairment due to auditory neuropathy, a condition caused by the disruption of nerve impulses travelling from the inner ear to the brain? Pioneer Health shares details of the world's first trial to provide hearing for children with a rare type of genetic hearing loss kicked off in a UK hospital

Up to 18 children under the age of 18 years from three participating countries -- the UK, Spain and the USA -- will be included in the trial and followed up for five years to see the extent to which their hearing improves. Auditory neuropathy can be due to a variation in a single gene -- known as the OTOF gene -- which produces a protein called otoferlin. This protein typically allows the inner hair cells in the ear to communicate with the hearing nerve. Mutations in the OTOF gene can be identified by standard NHS genetic testing. Children with profound hearing loss face barriers developing communication skills and may miss developmental milestones if the right support is not provided from the start. Professor Manohar Bance, an ear surgeon at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, is the chief investigator for the trial. The aim is to see if the treatment can provide them with better quality hearing compared to cochlear implants.

Children with a variation in the OTOF gene are born with severe to profound hearing loss, but they often pass the new-born hearing screening so everyone thinks they can hear. The hair cells are working, but they are not talking to the nerve. Gene therapy for otoferlin deficiency is the right starting point for young children because it's among -- if not the most -- simple approaches for treating hearing loss; everything else should be intact and working normally. Although experimental, the therapy could also potentially result in better quality hearing compared to cochlear implants. But we have a short time frame to intervene because the young brain is developing so fast, says Professor Manohar Bance. Intervening later in life becomes less effective as children may never fully form the ability to process the sounds of speech. If successful for OTOF-related hearing loss, gene therapy treatments could be extended to include people with hearing loss due to other



PROFESSOR MANOHAR BANCE

more common genetic conditions. It's really important that we get the first gene therapy treatment right because it will allow us to proceed to treating other genetic conditions, he says. Gene therapy aims to deliver a working copy of the faulty OTOF gene using a modified, non-pathogenic virus. It will be delivered via an injection into the cochlea during surgery under general anaesthesia. The procedure is similar to cochlear implant surgery, the current standard of care for OTOF-related hearing loss.

CURRENT OPTION

The gold standard treatment for the condition is currently cochlear implants but they have limitations. They do not filter out background noise in complex hearing environments, such as when multiple people are speaking, often making it difficult to participate in group conversations or to enjoy music.

The trial will consist of three parts, which must be done in order, with children receiving:

- A starting dose of gene therapy (DB-OTO) in one ear only.
- A higher dose of gene therapy in one ear only, following proven safety of the starting dose.
- Gene therapy in both ears with the optimal dose selected after ensuring the safety and effectiveness of

DB-OTO in parts 1 and 2. If the gene therapy is not effective for a child 6 months after treatment, the family can choose to receive a cochlear implant in the treated ear(s). Participants will be monitored for five years to gauge whether their hearing improves, with initial results expected to be published next February. "At RNID we are committed to a future where effective treatments for hearing loss are available for those who need and want them. Gene therapies have the potential to offer long lasting and permanent treatments for hearing loss, rather than merely managing the symptoms as hearing aids do. "We welcome this pioneering trial, which we hope will lead to a treatment for children with OTOF related hearing loss and pave the way towards treatments for other genetic conditions," said Ralph Holme, Director of Research and Insight at RNID said. This is a significant development that will be of great

interest to families of deaf children whose deafness is caused by a variation in the OTOF gene. The trial will help us to understand more about the effectiveness of gene therapy in improving hearing where deafness has a specific genetic cause. While some families will welcome being able to access this trial, it should be emphasised that with the right support from the start, deafness is not a barrier to achievement or happiness. Our role is to support families to make informed choices on whether they want to take up new treatments like this one which have the potential to mitigate the challenges their child might face, said Martin McLean, Senior Policy Advisor at the National Deaf Children's Society. The trial is sponsored by Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc and supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Cambridge Clinical Research Facility and NIHR Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre.

Another war, another successful Indian evacuation

The sudden and audacious attack by Hamas in the early hours of October 7, 2023, took Israel by complete surprise and shocked the world. With more than 1,300 killed by Hamas on the first day, including infants, women, and the elderly, it marked the single bloodiest day in Israel's history. After the initial setback, Israeli forces quickly regrouped to take back control of the military situation. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first world leaders to condemn the terror attack and extend support to its strategic ally, Israel. On October 13, as it prepared for a massive counterattack, Israel gave a final warning to citizens in Gaza to evacuate 1.1 million civilians as it finalises plans to punish Hamas for the dastardly terror attack.

Terror attacks are an absolute redline for India and having its voice heard against any form of terror is important. It was highlighted during PM Modi's speech during the P20 Summit in Delhi on October 13, where he stated: "Wherever terrorism happens, for whatever reason, in whatever form, it is against humanity".

Another very important foreign policy priority of India is to evacuate its trapped citizens in any war-torn area. In recent years, wherever there has been conflict or war, India has been among the first to launch operations to evacuate its citizens. Living up to it, India launched "Operation Ajay" on October 12, 2023. With an estimated 18,000 citizens,

including students and tourists, trapped in the war zone in Israel and only air route available to evacuate, it is going to be a long haul. Already, by October 14, two Indian air Force planes have landed back carrying more than 200 passengers each. The stories of these people evacuated from the war zone are heart rendering as they describe the destruction caused by war and their immeasurable gratitude that the Indian Government has been able to pull them out safely.

It is, however, not the first time that such dare devil rescue operations have been undertaken by India. Only last year, when the Russia-Ukraine war broke out, India made its first priority to get its people out. Despite pressure from the western world, India made it clear that among its national interests and priority, topmost was to get its people out. "Operation Ganga" launched therein evacuated almost 20,000 Indians, mostly students. It was an operation of mammoth proportions as it entailed not only a combined civilian and military air coordination but it tested India's deft diplomacy skills to the fullest as the citizens had to be moved by road to different border points and then brought back home from Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova.

Over a period of over 15 days from February 22, 2022 to March 10, 2022, more than 80 military and civilian flights were operated to rescue strand-



A flight carrying 235 Indian nationals takes off from Tel Aviv, Israel on Saturday

PTI

ed Indians. It may be recalled that Russia and Ukraine, despite being engaged in a bloody war, agreed to stop firing whenever and wherever Indians were being evacuated from. Also, multiple stories from evacuees of how well they were treated and cleared promptly at border points in Poland, Hungary, etc, whenever they were seen with the Indian flag, is a testimony of India's goodwill and global standing.

Just a few months earlier this year, in April 2023, when a civil war broke out in South Sudan, India was again quick to evacuate its citizens. In a well-coordinated operation and in close consultation with Saudi Arabia, India launched "Operation Kaveri" and brought back over 2,000 citizens in buses from the con-

flikt zones of Khartoum to Port Sudan, from where they were taken to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in Indian Air Force heavy-lift transport aircraft and Indian Navy ships. From Jeddah, Indians were subsequently brought back on commercial flights and Air Force aircraft. Earlier, in 2016, India evacuated its citizens from South Sudan in "Operation Sankat Mochan", carried out by the Indian Air Force to evacuate Indian and other foreign nationals amid the ongoing civil war.

In 2020, when Covid-19 pandemic broke out, once again India was among the frontrunners to get its citizens back through sea corridors created across the globe as a part of "Operation Samudra Setu", launched in May 2020. The operation successfully brought back almost 4,000

Indian citizens by sea. The Indian Naval Ships Jalashwa, Airavat, Shardul, and Magar participated in this operation, which lasted for over 55 days.

In August 2021, who can forget the absolutely shocking and disturbing images beaming on TV of Taliban taking over Kabul, US forces leaving Kabul airbase amid total chaos and Afghan civilians trying to flee Afghanistan, hanging onto wheels of aircraft and falling to their death. Once again, amid total anarchy and conflict, India managed to evacuate 669 people from Afghanistan, including 448 Indians and 206 Afghans, which include members of the Afghan Hindu/Sikh minority community. Later too, when Taliban was in full control of Kabul, India operated a special flight in December 2021 and brought 10 Indians and 94 Afghans, including

members of Afghan minority community which carried with them 2 Swaroopas of Guru Granth Sahib and some ancient Hindu manuscripts.

While discussing rescue operations, we can't forget "Operation Raahat" conducted in Yemen in March 2015 in which India safely evacuated almost 6,700 people through air and sea. It included 4,741 Indians and 1,947 foreign nationals from 48 countries. Why foreigners? Because India was the only country trusted and permitted by the warring parties to evacuate people! The no-fly zone imposed on the Yemeni airspace and blockade of sea route by the coalition forces made the evacuation exercise a complex and very difficult task.

Once again, the warring parties agreed to provide a safe corridor while Indians were being evacuated, no mean feat considering that the mighty US and other western nations could not even land a plane or ship in the war zone.

During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, almost 1,75,000 Indians were evacuated. Air India operated 488 flights between August and October to airlift Indians stranded in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion. The 63-day operation is still called the largest air evacuation and found its way into the Guinness Book of World Records.

In March 2011, after the outbreak of the "Arab Spring," almost 15,000 of the total 18,000 Indians were evacuated from Libya through a combi-

nation of navy and charter ships operating from Tripoli and Benghazi to Alexandria, Egypt. From there, Air India aircraft flew the passengers to India. There have been a few more too, like "Operation Sukoon" launched in 2006 to evacuate Indians from Lebanon.

However, the Indian rescue story does not end with Indians only. Even in global disasters, India has been at the forefront in rendering assistance to nations in need. "Operation Maitri" launched after massive earthquakes in Nepal in 2015 and "Operation Dost" launched in February 2023 in support of people in Syria and Turkey devastated by Earthquake are prime examples where India was the first global responder in aid of grief-struck people.

India has proved time and again that "Indians First" is its primary focus. As the world recognises India as a Vishwa Guru, India is ready to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. Indians anywhere in the world obviously come first. In PM Modi's own words, India is presenting itself as a Vishwa Mitra, which can be trusted and depended upon no matter what the circumstances and no matter where in the world. As the unfortunate war unfolds in Gaza, Indians can feel safe that Bharat is to their rescue.

(The writer, a retired Colonel, is Assistant Director at MP-IDSA, New Delhi. He has served as Director Military Intelligence and as Director in the Ministry of External Affairs)

India's steadfast commitment to the safety of its citizens, both at home and abroad, is exemplified through a series of daring rescue operations. From evacuating citizens in conflict zones like Yemen and Afghanistan, to aiding nations in distress after disasters, India's 'Indians First' policy remains unwavering.



RAJEEV AGARWAL

PERSPECTIVE

Precarious path forward for Israel, Hamas

The escalating conflict between Israel and Hamas has become a critical juncture in the West Asian region. Hamas' audacious attack has exposed vulnerabilities in Israel's security apparatus, triggering a humanitarian crisis. Controversial evacuation orders have rekindled memories of historic displacements. As tensions mount, there are growing concerns about the potential for a broader regional crisis.

Hamas has surprised the State of Israel by launching one of the deadliest terror attacks on it last week, since its foundation in 1948. This brazen assault by the terror group is viewed as a turning point in Israel-Palestinian conflict. The multi-pronged war is now seen as long planned and clearly failed the sophisticated Israeli security network, known for decades for its stealth work and extensive espionage activities against its enemies like Hamas and Hezbollah.

This crisis is crucial for the US. No US President can ignore a conflict in which Israel is at stake or directly involved in the war. Also, for President Joe Biden, who is fighting re-election next year, the quagmire in West Asia is decisive. This crisis is virtually challenging the world order led by the US, since the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the UN.

Well, Hamas knows its limits. And Israel can easily assess how far it can push. With an annual military aid of about \$3 billion to the country, the Israelis will be giving a tough fight to Hamas. Only time will tell how the current crisis unfolds and how bloodier and costlier it is going to be. But for sure, it will lead to one of the most serious humanitarian tragedies in recent days in West Asia.

Who is Hamas? Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni militant group that was founded on December 10, 1987, after the first intifada (uprising). Its name is an acronym which comes from Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya. Its English translation means Islamic Resistance Movement.

For Hamas, the main objectives since its inception have been the creation of an independent Palestine state and the destruction of the Israeli state. It will fight till the end. However, sustaining a prolonged conflict with an armed Israel would inevitably lead to further loss of lives, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, in the days to come.



Israelis take cover as a siren sounds a warning of incoming rockets fired from the Gaza Strip in Rehovot in Israel on October 13, 2023

AP/PTI

Israel. Israel has been under threat from all its neighbours since its inception. However, the country has built an excellent security system over the years to counter attacks from non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah. This attack by Hamas indicates a near-total security and intelligence failure on Israel's part, as experts suggest.

Meanwhile, there has been a deluge of international reaction to the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. The international victims of assault on Israel by Hamas come from the US, the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Canada, Thailand, Nepal, the Philippines, Cambodia, China, Tanzania, Brazil, Paraguay, Mexico, etc.

It is certain that Gaza Strip will soon turn into a hotspot of humanitarian tragedy. Israel has asked more than one million Gazans to vacate the North Gaza in no time and to move

towards the south. But the UN says the Israeli evacuation order is impossible without a major humanitarian catastrophe.

The UN also warns that Gaza is becoming a "hell hole on the brink of collapse" signalling that war clouds hovering over the Gaza Strip, the people might face all the hardships simply to survive. On the other hand, Hamas told Gazans not to leave their homes.

By now, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is deepening, as Israel has already cut off food and electricity to the besieged territory. Most of the common people are at risk of starvation. According to the estimate from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, more than 1,800 people have died so far. The UN reports that over 4,23,000 people are internally displaced due to the massive air raids conducted by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) since October 7.

US President Joe Biden

strongly criticised Hamas for its military mission against Israel. In an official message delivered immediately after the offensive, he said, "We are with Israel. Let us make no mistake." He further emphasised that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Its stated purpose is the annihilation of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people.

However, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin has criticised Israel for employing "quite cruel methods" in its response to the Hamas attack. He said, "In my view, it is unacceptable. More than two million people live there. Not all of them support Hamas by the way, but all of them have to suffer, including women and children. Of course, it is difficult for anyone to agree with this."

This shows that Putin is fully aware of the chaos left

behind by the relentless aerial bombing carried out by Israel over the Gaza Strip.

Previously, he also stated that an Israeli ground operation would be entirely unacceptable, as it would result in significant casualties. He advocates for the resolution of this crisis through negotiations, with Russia playing a role in the peace process due to its long-standing relations with both parties. These lofty words coming from a crude statesman who has been at war with his neighbour and creating another global crisis leading to thousands of deaths and displacement of lakhs in Ukraine. Before offering solutions to clash between Hamas and Israel, he must first deescalate the Ukraine crisis that he had started in February 2022.

The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, visited Israel and reaffirmed his country's unwavering support for the latter. However, he also

acknowledged the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians that are not represented by Hamas militants. While meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Blinken said, "You may be strong enough to defend yourself on your own. But as long as America exists, you will never ever have to. We will always be there by your side."

This shows how the US is directly providing aid to the Jewish state, while all other Western allies of Israel remain relatively quiet. Washington has taken one step further by sending its Defence Secretary Llyod Austin both to bolster support for Tel Aviv and assure all possible help to its ally.

By pledging full support to Israel, Austin said, "This is no time for neutrality, or for false equivalence or for excuses for the inexcusable."

When Blinken met the President of Palestinian Mahmoud Abbas in Jordan, the

latter rejected the "forced displacement of the Gazans" from the northern Gaza.

He strongly opposed the idea of evacuation and to him such a move would lead to "Second Nakba". Naqba (Palestinian Catastrophe) is an Arabic word that refers to the catastrophe brought by the creation of the Zionist State in 1948 and the displacement of nearly 7,50,000 Palestinians from their homes.

This all happened only after the end of the historic British Mandate and the establishment of Israel on May 14, 1948. This finally resulted in the beginning of the first Arab-Israeli War. Subsequently, the Zionist military forces captured 78 per cent of the historic lands of Palestine and today the remaining 22 per cent are left as the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

So now, with the evacuation of the Northern Gaza as per the order of Israel for beginning its ground offensive to crush Hamas and to rescue the hostages taken might lead to another Naqba.

At the moment, the Israeli security forces are conducting local raids in Gaza to locate the hostages taken by Hamas. And as per some media reports, the IDF is able to free nearly 200 hostages from the hands of Hamas so far. The battle is on, and it is certainly going to be bloodier than ever before.

The road ahead is complicated and filled with dangerous twists and turns for both Israel and Hamas. There will be no solution until an independent state of Palestine is created. But this will not be feasible given the circumstances that have led to the current hostilities between Israel and Hamas. Furthermore, a counteroffensive by Hezbollah and involvement of nearby Arab nations against Israel might further complicate the situation.

However, while dealing with Hamas, the IDF and the Israeli State is careful to minimise civilian casualties. Otherwise, the Israel-Hamas conflict may escalate into a larger regional quagmire.

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



MAKHAN SAINIA

EVERY TIME YOU DON'T FOLLOW YOUR INNER GUIDANCE, YOU FEEL A LOSS OF ENERGY, LOSS OF POWER, A SENSE OF SPIRITUAL DEADNESS — SHAKTI GAWAIN



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

As the stars align this week, there's a cosmic focus on your financial energies. If your thoughts are consumed by finances, the Universe nudges you toward prudent savings. Observe the ebb and flow of your resources. Prosperity is on your horizon, but with Jupiter's playful influence, you may find expenses overshadowing gains. The Wheel of Fortune tarot card suggests that many areas of your life are in motion—domestic matters, property, education, and career beckon your insights. The Hermit card's energy advises inward reflection and a pause in social engagements for the majority of this week. As the week culminates, expect a shift. The Sun card heralds a time of vitality, joy, and renewed passion. Navigate your journey with wisdom, and stay vigilant of potential challenges.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Sunday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week, you'll showcase your innate courage and resilience. Despite facing potential setbacks, including unforeseen circumstances, misunderstandings with friends, or health concerns within the family, your patience and strength will shine through. Financial outcomes, particularly from loans or property investments, might not meet expectations, leading to contemplation. However, it's essential to remember that such phases are transient. To navigate health challenges, consider seeking prompt medical counsel, and incorporating meditation and yoga into your routine. Devotion, whether to Lord Shiva or another cherished deity, may provide solace during trying times. Your equilibrium will guide you through disruptions, reminding you of your agency to influence outcomes. Embrace the support and strength that surround you, ensuring you remain fortified during the week ahead.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Monday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

While your stamina is commendable, channeling that energy effectively is essential for optimal outcomes. Addressing certain oversights should be a priority. Consider delegating tasks and refining your daily schedule. What you need is astute time and energy management. If you've been awaiting a promotion, this week looks promising. Financial gains are on the horizon. Work or business-related travels will be fruitful, introducing you to valuable long-term connections. Harness your self-confidence and tenacity; they are your ladder to success. As the week concludes, anticipate considerable financial rewards, paving the way for indulgences. Contemplating a property purchase? Proceed with diligence and thoughtful decision-making. Concerning your career, remember, you're on the brink of a significant leap. Stay centered and driven.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

In celestial patterns, a period of challenges beckons. One may encounter sharp tongues, be it from coworkers or close kin. Yet, the week initiates with auspicious energy, a beacon of positivity. Though a passionate overture might be met with resistance, casting a shadow of solitude and introspection. Be wary of building castles in the sky; it's wise to stay anchored. A budding connection might experience turbulence before truly taking root. The key lies in mastering one's emotions and keeping a calm disposition, as succumbing could lead to unease and fatigue. But remember, like a fleeting card in a tarot spread, this phase is transitory. A guiding light emerges soon, and you'll reclaim your equilibrium. A maternal figure, or perhaps a distant kin, could be the anchor in these turbulent tides.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Tuesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, emotions run deep within you, sparking a longing for cherished memories and connections. You might find yourself reminiscing about old friends or feeling a strong pull towards family if you're currently distant from them. A trip back to your roots or reconnecting with loved ones could be on the horizon, with memorable exchanges and shared moments. However, the realm of love might present challenges. You could experience feelings of heartache or disappointment, especially if there were hopes of finalizing significant relationship commitments. It's essential to remain grounded, refraining from overly possessive tendencies. To navigate these emotional waters, maintain equilibrium and consider embracing calming practices like meditation. Immersing yourself in artistic or spiritual activities can be therapeutic, transforming moments of gloom into purposeful engagement.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week presents a blend of highs and lows. Guidance may come from a mentor or an elder family member, providing clarity for your future. High aspirations and desires might cloud your judgment, leading to moments of confusion. Concerns regarding property may surface, and be wary of potential deception or unsolicited opinions. It's essential to stay grounded and not get lost in unrealistic dreams, as they could further complicate matters. Challenges in personal relationships may arise, but giving yourself and your partner space and time before making decisions will prove beneficial. Prioritize honesty, wisdom, and discernment to truly see the reality before you. A shadow seems to loom, obscuring joy; dispelling this negativity will be crucial. Trust in your strengths and capabilities as you navigate this period.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Guided by the stars, the Universe has set forth a period of abundance for you. The Lovers card heralds a time of deep connections and romance, while the Cups suite signifies flourishing emotions and heartfelt recognition. As the week unfolds, the energy of the Two of Cups resonates, symbolizing union and a harmonious bond with your partner. Through this journey, the strength of the Ten of Cups is evident, enhancing existing relationships with pure love and understanding. This positivity acts as a shield, deflecting any lingering negative vibes. The Seven of Wands reinforces your inner strength, allowing you to rise above challenges and earn respect, even from adversaries. Your aura inspires, echoing the Star card's hope and guidance. Embracing the healing power of the Temperance card, you find balance in body and soul.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you're bursting with vitality, innovation, and a resolute drive to accomplish your work objectives. If you've been waiting on communication from abroad, the time seems ripe for favorable news to reach you. As the week progresses, financial matters come to the forefront. Whether it's transactions, investments, or payments, be mindful and remember that generosity towards the less fortunate can usher in blessings. You'll find fulfillment in imparting knowledge and insights you've amassed over the years, becoming a beacon for others seeking guidance. As you embark on this new chapter filled with endless potential, a significant shift in your mindset or behavior could be the catalyst for tangible positivity. While challenges may arise, trust in your seasoned wisdom and intellectual prowess to navigate and overcome them.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week promises progress both professionally and romantically. Unexpectedly, a promotion or salary boost may be on the horizon. Be prepared for sudden work-related travel, which, in hindsight, will prove highly beneficial. As mid-week approaches, romantic sentiments will stir within, leading you to engage wholeheartedly in matters of the heart. You may encounter moments of uncertainty in relationships or circumstances, but it's crucial to let your heart guide your decisions. As the week concludes, you'll find emotional balance and clarity, with a broadened perspective that welcomes incoming opportunities. These could relate to professional advancements, the joy of welcoming a new child, or creative endeavors. The seed of a transformative idea may take root, pushing you towards grand aspirations.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Cyan
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week brims with rejuvenation and positivity, enveloping you in an uplifting aura. Many of your hopes seem to come to fruition, with moments like welcoming a new child into the family amplifying the joy. In the professional realm, you'll enjoy harmonious interactions with superiors, setting the stage for smooth endeavors. However, as mid-week approaches, be prepared for an influx of responsibilities. These might be indications of upcoming promotions or key roles. As the week winds down, you'll find yourself faced with new opportunities, leading to introspection and potential dilemmas. In times of uncertainty, confide in trusted family members. Remember to approach situations with grace and tact, seizing the moment for your benefit.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

The unfolding week spins tales filled with laughter and pure joy. Immersing yourself wholly in a challenging task becomes not a burden, but a uniquely uplifting experience. Collaborating in a group will weave not only successful outcomes but also embed new virtues within you. Through this journey, you'll unearth new skills and realizations about your own potential, as the needed focus and determination flow effortlessly within you. As midweek approaches, an international connection, perhaps through friendship or potential travel, will emerge. Your eyes steadfastly remain on your goals; distractions like love or leisure will not sway your committed heart. Ambitions of significant financial gains and establishing your reputation steer your pursuits. Recognition for your diligent efforts patiently waits, ready to manifest as promotions or salary enhancements.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week will be a time of reflection, as you assess the work and efforts of recent weeks. Recognizing past missteps will provide invaluable lessons for your journey ahead. While you've dedicated considerable energy to your endeavors, the full rewards of your hard work remain untapped. Be mindful of pessimistic thoughts that may arise during this period. Come mid-week, your spirits will lift with unexpected opportunities, perhaps a promising business proposal, a fresh assignment, or an enticing job offer. It's a favorable phase for financial growth, investments, and launching new ventures. Exercise caution with your finances, as there's a tendency for overspending. As the week concludes, the prospect of travel emerges. Whether it's a leisurely escape, a romantic outing, or a simple day out, adventure beckons.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Saturday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Detoxify your mind to improve focus



important. When you inhale, reciting opening syllable of the mantra, you draw extra life-forces from nature. That triggers the inlaid memory imprints registered in energy-format - meaningful ones as positive and unseemly ones as negative. The churning that follows helps expel negative imprints where the vibration of the second syllable plays a

pivotal role. Continue this practice for at least 20 minutes.

Obviously, as you take up Mind-Detoxification process, you will be again flooded with thoughts. They, however, would mostly relate to those parked at deeper layer of mind. Simultaneously, some thoughts generated in response to engagement with the outer world in immediate terms may also arise. They, however, may soon go out of your cognitive reach as our minds are already trained to remain disengaged from them. Here, it needs to be appreciated that what lies deep inside, needs to be allowed necessary passage to get away. Don't pay attention to those thoughts. Keep reciting the mantra with focus on the breath cycle. When a thought impression is driven away, in passing you will have a feel of it. That too, proves purposeful. You will see definite patterns in them, out of which, you may figure out your inherent

habit tendencies. Becoming aware thus, you could consciously make amends through fresh educative inputs.

The driving spirit of the process is to root out all such thought-seeds that may disorienting our thought process. As the seed gets a congenial ground, it will grow into a plant. If, however, the seed is fried, it loses its productive ability. Similarly, the thought seeds parked at deeper layers of mind are invoked and then resolved through fresh educative inputs, where after they don't chase anymore. It is however an admitted fact that it will be difficult to remain oblivious to the thoughts visiting the mind space. To remain disengaged, give an auto suggestion by inwardly saying 'neti-neti', which means 'not this'. In a way you make yourself understand that the distracting thoughts are unworthy of attention. This process is not meant to develop concentration. In fact, distraction is a necessary part of the

process. More you distract, faster the mind becomes unburdened.

Here is a case study of two medical graduates who earned their degree from a foreign university. But they could not clear off the mandatory qualifying examination necessary for becoming eligible for practising medical science here in India. Frustrated, they came seeking guidance. They were advised to pursue mind detoxification process before sitting for study. Following the process, all distracting thoughts that disturbed their focus got temporarily driven away. The sense of fear and insecurity also went away. So, their focus improved and were able to absorb their lesson better. Confidently, they faced the very next examination, and came out with flying colours.

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