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LG nod to suspension of professor facing sexual harassment charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved a proposal for immediate suspension of a Delhi Government-run medical college Assistant Professor facing charges of sexual harassment. In a note, Saxena said he has considered the proposal for suspension of the assistant professor and to initiate major disciplinary proceedings against him. He said the "shocking incident of sexual harassment" took place in a medical college, so a mere transfer of the accused, as recommended by the internal complaints committee of the medical college, will not mitigate the "intimidating atmosphere" for the students.

"I approve the proposal of placing the officer under suspension with immediate effect, under Rule 10 of the CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965," the LG said and pointed the alleged act of the accused involved "moral turpitude".

The L-G also advised the



department concerned to resubmit the proposal for initiation of disciplinary proceedings against the accused with due recommendations of the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) as the Delhi chief minister, who is the chairman of the panel, is in judicial custody. The NCCSA is the body that deals with transfers and postings of officers. It is headed by the chief minister and comprises the chief secretary and a member secretary. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on March 21 in connection with a money laun-

The Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has hit back on Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj over his demand for removing the Principal of Baba Saheb Ambedkar Medical College where a professor allegedly sexually harassed a 22-year-old MBBS student, saying that the Principal of the college couldn't be removed due to Bhardwaj's inaction. Adding fuel to fire in the tussle between the Centre appointed LG and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Saxena accused Bhardwaj for "crying foul" over the alleged sexual harassment case and demanding the removal of its Principal, claiming that "the file for his transfer has been held up for nearly 45 days by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal himself".

In a communication to LG, Bhardwaj alleged that chief secretary (CS) Naresh Kumar, in a note to him, "defended" the delay in taking action against the accused and those who tried to shield him.

14 years old boy thrashed, wooden stick inserted into private parts by classmates

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking incident, a 14-year-old boy was beaten up and a wooden stick was inserted in his private parts allegedly by his classmate in a school, triggering protests in East Delhi.

According to police, the accused has been apprehended and produced in the Juvenile Justice Board.

The 14-year-old student had allegedly got into a fight with his schoolmates before he was cornered by four of them and brutally thrashed. According to the FIR, the incident took place on March 18. Police said the victim's family suspects more students might have been involved in the assault. After the incident, a protest was held outside the school by the parents and relatives of the minor who sustained injuries in the attack. The student's family accused the police and the school authorities of negligence, alleging a lack of cooperation. They claim that they have been denied access to the school principal.



Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Apoorva Gupta said the incident occurred on April 2 on the premises of a private school. The victim, a student of class eight, allegedly got into a fight with the accused over some issues.

As per the complainant, he got into a fight with his classmate on March 13 and was assaulted by the accused on March 18. The victim did not tell anyone about the incident at first as he feared reprisal. On March 20, he complained of stomach ache and was taken to nearby doctor. However, the victim's situation did not improve and he had to be rushed to a hospital

on March 28 and had to undergo an operation. The doctors at the hospital informed the family that the child had probably been the victim of some untoward incident. When the boy gained consciousness on April 2, he narrated the whole ordeal to his family, following which a police complaint was filed.

The victim told the police that one of his classmates, who was wearing a mask, beat him up and inserted a wooden stick in his private parts. The accused also threatened him with dire consequences if he told anyone about the assault, Gupta said.

The doctors told the police that a foreign object was inserted

inside the posterior of the boy leading to injuries, the police officer said. Following the incident, the parents and relatives of the victim held protests outside the school on April 3 demanding action.

The victim was counselled and legal action has been initiated, another police officer said.

The medical report revealed that the victim had suffered a severe injury involving the insertion of a foreign object, specifically a wooden stick, into his anal region.

"The student told about the incident of beating and insertion of a wooden stick in his posterior by one of his classmates. He was also threatened for not disclosing the incident to anyone," the FIR read.

A case has been registered under the Indian Penal Code section 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 377 (unnatural offences), 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code and The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Further investigation is underway, the officer said.

Tihar documents show Sanjay Singh health improved in jail, gained six kg

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Tihar jail authorities' documents showed that the AAP MP Sanjay Singh has gained almost six kg weight throughout his six-month-long jail term. The document also showed signs of improvement in health during his jail tenure. This comes amid the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) claimed that jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal lost over 4 kgs in prison which the Tihar jail refuted the claim and shared Sanjay Singh's medical report which showed improvement in his health while he was in jail.

From October 2023 to April 2024, Singh's body weight increased from 76 kg to 82 kg and his blood sugar levels went down from 153/103 to 136/70 mm Hg, according to the document.

In December 2023, two months into serving his term his weight increased to 79.9 kg while his BP was recorded at 128/80. Singh's weight showed an increase again during his January checkup. This time it stood at 80 kg with 120/86. Singh's weight reached 81 kg in February followed by 82 kg in March. During this time his BP was recorded at 132/82. During his last medical checkup at the Tihar Jail on March 28 this year, his weight was recorded at 82 kg while BP stood at 136/70. Singh was lodged in Tihar Jail



following his arrest in the liquor policy case and the Supreme Court had, while granting him bail, set the condition that he would not make any public statement regarding the case. Earlier in March, a Delhi court directed the authorities concerned to provide a healthy and nutritious diet and bottled drinking water to Singh after the MP alleged he was not provided basic amenities like clean drinking water, proper diet and hygienic living conditions at places of his stay during production before courts outside Delhi.

Earlier, After Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal sent to judicial custody in Tihar, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders, including his wife Sunita, claimed that the Delhi Chief Minister's weight has decreased rapidly, and has lost 4.5 kg since his arrest on March 21 in the

BJP Youth Wing holds bike rallies on Foundation Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



On the occasion of the BJP's Foundation Day, the Delhi BJP Youth Wing on Saturday here released a QR code for digital dissemination of Modi Government's achievements and organized bike rallies in all 70 Assembly constituencies. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva released the QR code developed by the Delhi BJP Youth Wing under the Modi Transforming India program, clicking on which will provide complete information about the achievements, guarantees, and schemes of the Modi government to the public.

On this occasion, Youth Wing President Sagar Tyagi outlined the 50-day promotional program for the QR code. Youth Wing Secretary Gaurav Chaurasia, Arun Daral, and Puneet Sharma acquainted journalists with digital pro-

motion.

The Youth Wing organized motorbike rallies in all 70 assembly constituencies of Delhi to enhance discussions among the youth about the schemes and achievements of the Modi government.

Sachdeva inaugurated the rally series by showing the green flag at the rally starting from Paharganj Oil Market. He said "Under the 'Modi Transforming India' initiative, we can see the work done by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's government in the last 10 years through a QR code in a moment. The vision of Developed India can be seen through a QR code."

Sachdeva said QR codes of digital technology will be promoted in all assembly constituencies of Delhi, and today's motorbike rally will be a means to connect thousands of new youths with the BJP.

AAP announces plan to stage fast across India to protest arrest of Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In response to the arrest of its national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has announced plans to stage a fast in protest, both in Delhi and across various locations in India and abroad.

AAP Delhi State Convener, Gopal Rai, stated that the protest will take place at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and Kharkar Kalan, the ancestral village of Shaheed Bhagat Singh in Punjab. AAP MLAs, ministers, MPs, councilors, and officials will join the public in abstaining from food as a mark of solidarity.

Simultaneously, supporters in 25 states across India and key international hubs such as New York, Boston, Toronto, Washington DC, Melbourne, and London will participate in community fasting to show support for the Chief Minister. Rai urged fasting individuals to share images of their solidarity fasts on WhatsApp number 7290037700, highlighting the global resonance of this movement in backing Kejriwal's cause.

In addition to the fast, the AAP will observe a 'Samuhik Upwas' (community fasting) to protest against the arrest of the Delhi Chief Minister.

At a press conference here, the

Delhi Cabinet Minister also announced that the AAP will observe a 'Samuhik Upwas' (community fasting) to protest against the arrest of the Delhi Chief Minister.

"The BJP has plotted against Arvind Kejriwal and used probe agencies to arrest him. With each passing day, Modi government's conspiracy is getting exposed in front of the country. People have been asking for a long time about why these senior leaders including Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh were arrested, on what basis was the Chief Minister of Delhi arrested?"

"They are conspiring to finish off Kejriwal by leveling a false liquor policy case against him." In response to the AAP's planned fast, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva expressed regret, stating, "it is regrettable that instead of AAP leaders apologizing to the public for the liquor scam of their government they are projecting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest in corruption as persecution against him."

"It is regrettable that instead of AAP leaders apologizing to the public for the liquor scam of their government they are projecting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest in corruption as persecution against him."

Inner Wheel Club, NGO organise Raahgiri Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A vibrant celebration of culture, tradition, and community engagement is set to unfold this Sunday here which is being jointly organized by a branch of Inner Wheel Club and the esteemed NGO, Aayas Prayas, Raahgiri Day. A myriad of engaging activities with a few of them towards reviving traditional games like Pithu (Stack and Throw), Stapu (Hopscotch), Tug of War, Hoopa Hoop, and Badminton will be held.

"We are exploring cultural richness through activities such as Nukkad Natak, State Dances, and Lazim," said representatives from Inner Wheel District 301 and Aayas Prayas for Raahgiri Day.

Apart from the above, there will be physically energizing morning routines encompassing yoga, Zumba, weightlifting, cycling, walking, and skipping. To foster intellectual growth with a vibrant Book Club, members can exchange books, enabling a culture of reading and sharing knowledge. Through meaningful interactions and connections, our efforts aim to promote social cohesion and spread happiness, they said.

Atishi asks ED to reveal action against BJP leaders in money laundering cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after getting a notice from the Election Commission, Delhi Minister Atishi on Saturday asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to reveal the action taken against BJP leaders in connection with alleged money laundering cases. Questioning the probe agency, the AAP leaders said the ED has been searching for money trail in alleged liquor scam for two years, now that money trail is public, why is it still silent?

Addressing a press conference here, the senior AAP leader lashed out at the Election Commission accusing the poll body of working at the behest of the BJP.

"On the basis of mere doubt, the ED arrested AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia, and even the national convener of our party Arvind Kejriwal ji, even as no money trail was found against them. 'What action has the ED taken against the BJP leaders where the investigation agency has been able to establish a money trail,' she asked. Criticising the AAP leader Atishi, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva has said that Delhi's Minister Atishi has become a fake stories teller.

"Every morning she wakes up

to create a new political controversy with her diatribe. The lies she keeps telling on liquor scam have all been kept in the Court hearing the liquor scam as a part of the Kejriwal government's defence strategy but none of their stands could stand in Court resulting in jail for all the accused including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal," he said.

Earlier, during the press conference, Atishi accused the BJP of using the Election Commission like other central agencies to target the opposition. "The BJP has been using agencies like the CBI, ED and now the Election Commission to target AAP leaders and get them arrested. I want to tell BJP that it should stop hiding behind these agencies and battle AAP in the elections," she said.

In another press conference, AAP leader Jasmine Shah asked the ED to investigate the alleged relationship between the accused-turned-approvers in the case and the BJP. "BJP turned ED into Gandhi Ji's three monkeys, 'won't listen to anything against BJP, won't see it, and won't speak about it,'" he said adding ED has been searching for money trail in alleged liquor scam for two years, now that money trail is public, why is it still silent?

Court extends judicial custody of Sisodia till April 18 in liquorgate scam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Saturday extended the judicial custody of Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia till April 18 in a money laundering case related to the alleged liquorgate policy scam.

Earlier, arguing in the bail matter, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) special counsel Zoheb Hossain on Saturday submitted to the court, that the accused persons including former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia were making deliberate and concerted attempts to delay the trial in Delhi excise policy case. Hossain said that a total of 95 "frivolous applications" were filed by various accused persons, including 6 by Sisodia, which were dismissed by the court. "This is only to show that one accused or the other along with the nature of the applications demonstrates that there was a concerted effort on behalf of accused persons to ensure that trial does not commence," he said.

"It will be a weighty factor that if at all there has been any delay, it is at the instance of the accused persons and not the prosecution," he said. Hossain made submissions on the aspect of delay in trial as Senior Advocate Mohit Mathur argued on the same on behalf of Sisodia. He



added: "According to me, disposing of 95 applications is by no measure a snail's pace." "If at all there is any kind of delay, it is at the instance of the accused and not prosecution. That will be a weighty factor to be considered... A total of 95 applications were filed by the accused persons. Some of them have the same prayers, some piecemeal. Present accused (Sisodia) has filed 6 applications... All these frivolous applications are being filed and these play a crucial role in the time being consumed," Hossain contended. The ED counsel described the filing of multiple applications as a concerted effort to delay the commencement of trial.

"Delays are being caused deliberately... The fact that there were applications being moved belatedly has been noted by this court and there is no explanation by them... At every stage there has been cooperation from our side... For the last one-month,

inspection (of documents) has been going on in the most lackadaisical manner," he said. After the arguments, Special Judge Kavari Bawja extended Sisodia's judicial custody after he was produced before the court on the expiry of the judicial custody granted earlier.

Sisodia's colleague Sanjay Singh, a co-accused who was recently granted bail by the Supreme Court in the case, also appeared before the court for the proceedings. In another development, another accused BRS leader K Kavitha, moved a court here on Saturday opposing a CBI plea that sought her interrogation in Tihar jail in a corruption case related to the alleged scam. The court on Friday allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to quiz Kavitha in Tihar. The order was passed on the plea filed by the CBI seeking the court's permission to interrogate Kavitha in judicial custody.

Man held for duping people on pretext of selling tools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of selling machine tools and spare parts by posing as a wholesale trader and posting fraudulent advertisements on social media, police said on Saturday.

The accused Raushan Kumar, a resident of Bihar, was arrested on Friday from Chhatisgarh's Raipur. Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Joy Tirkey said. Kumar posed as a wholesale trader and posted advertisements on social media, for selling machine tools and spare parts for cheaper rates. He would provide fake invoices from reputed firms in Raipur to the victims, the DCP said.

The matter came to light when Amzad Ali filed a complaint in August last year against Kumar for duping him of Rs 5.7 lakh under the pretext of selling him machine parts.

According to the complaint, Ali paid Rs 5,70,050 in five instalments for different packages including advance, packaging and transportation. While Kumar provided him with the invoices, courier slips and acknowledgement, he allegedly never received the tools, police said.

MCD marks World Health Day with awareness programme

SAMAR PANDEY ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Saturday marked "World Health Day" with an awareness program held at Modern School in Vasant Vihar here. Attended by around 108 teachers from various private schools in the South Zone, the event was focused on the theme "My Health My Right".

According to a statement here by the civic agency, the Municipal Health Officer and other senior officials from the MCD Public Health department talked about the prevention and control of Dengue and other vector-borne diseases (VBDs) within schools and their surroundings. They also addressed the participants, emphasizing the importance of health rights and responsibilities and protective measures against mosquitoes and strategies to engage students in spreading awareness about Dengue and other VBDs.

Main focus of the event coinciding with World Health Day was the introduction of the Dengue Home Work Card, a practice already implemented in municipal schools for several years. Additionally, demonstrations on identifying larvae of different mosquito species and discussions on prevention



and control measures for mosquito breeding were conducted.

The MCD has been asking representatives from government offices, educational institutions, commercial establishments, market associations, and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) to ensure proper maintenance of water storage facilities.

This includes keeping overhead tanks and other containers covered, re-painting water tanks of coolers, changing pads regularly, and cleaning and scrubbing coolers weekly, said the statement.

The event served as a platform to reinforce the importance of health consciousness and efforts in combating vector-borne diseases (VBDs), particularly in educational institutions and their surroundings, it added.



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CBI busts infant traffickers gang

Seven held, three children rescued in raids in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has busted a network of traffickers involved in buying and selling of infants across India for the purpose of adoption through social media ads as well as for other illegal purposes. The CBI said as it carried out raids at multiple locations in the national Capital region and rescued three children while also arresting seven accused in connection.

CBI sources said, newborns were being bought and sold as commodities in the black market. Seven people, including women and a hospital staffer, allegedly involved in selling and buying children have been arrested by the CBI and are being questioned. The CBI is currently in the midst of interrogating all parties involved, including both the women who sold the children and the buyers themselves.

Three newborn babies were rescued from a house located in the Keshavpuram area of the national Capital after the CBI conducted raids at seven locations across Delhi and Haryana. The raids were carried out in several areas in Rohini and Keshavpuram on Friday evening. During searches, the CBI



During the operation, CBI official rescued two newborn babies from a house located in Keshav Puram in national Capital

seized Rs 5.5 lakh cash and other documents. The arrested persons have been identified as Neeraj of Sonapat and Indu Pawar of Delhi's Paschim Vihar, Aslam of Patel Nagar, Pooja Kashyap of Kanhaiya Nagar, Anjali of Malviya Nagar, Kavita and Ritu.

Based on an input, the CBI on Friday evening started a search operation at seven locations in Delhi and Haryana when two infants — 1.5 days old and 15 days old

—were found by the agency sleuths which the gang was planning to sell, the CBI said. The gang allegedly contacted childless couples desirous of adopting babies through advertisement, on social media platforms like Facebook page and WhatsApp groups. "They allegedly purchase babies from real parents as well as surrogate mothers and thereafter sell the infant children at the prices ranging from Rs 4 to Rs 6 lakh per

child. These accused are also allegedly involved in duping many childless couples of lakhs of rupees by creating fake documents related to adoption," CBI spokesperson said about the operation. According to CBI, among the arrested, masterminds Neeraj hails from Sonapat and Indu Pawar from Paschim Vihar, Delhi. Their associates Aslam from Patel Nagar, and Pooja Kashyap, Kavita and Ritu were tasked with taking care of the children. Anjali of

Malviya Nagar allegedly used to bring customers, the CBI said. The CBI has registered a criminal case under various penal provisions of IPC and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 against 10 accused persons over allegations that a network of infant children traffickers involved in buying and selling of infants across India for the purpose of adoption as well as for other illegal purposes, the sources said. It is being said that certain hospitals, medical centres may also be on the list of the probe agency with their suspected role in the entire ordeal.

The probe in this regard has so far revealed that the accused used to approach and get in touch with childless couples wanting to adopt babies across the country through advertisements on social media platforms. It is also said that the syndicate allegedly used to purchase babies from real parents, mainly very poor individuals, surrogate mothers and thereafter would sell the infant at the prices ranging from Rs 4 to 6 lakhs per child. They were also allegedly involved in duping many such couples of lakhs of rupees by creating fake documents regarding adoption.

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SANDESHKHALI 2.0 NIA officials attacked by TMC goons in Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday claimed a "state-sponsored attack" on the National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials in West Bengal and accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of inciting the violence to create hurdles in the 2022 blast case probe to protect those involved in the incident.

These charges were leveled after the NIA arrested two key conspirators in the 2022 blast case amid an attack on the probe agency's team by a crowd in West Bengal's East Medinipur district earlier in the day.

Reacting sharply to the incident, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "The attack on the NIA officials is Sandeshkhali 2.0 orchestrated by the State to put hurdles to the investigation into the bomb blast case."

"It was not just a coincidence but a well thought out experiment. It was a state-sponsored attack on the NIA officials. The attack was organised by the ruling TMC," he charged.

Poonawalla alleged that the pattern of attack on the NIA



Purba Medinipur: Villagers argue with security personnel during an investigation into the 2022 Bhupatinagar blast case by National Investigation Agency (NIA), in Purba Medinipur district, on Saturday PTI Photo

officials in Bhupatinagar area of West Bengal's East Medinipur district was similar to the attack on the Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials, organised by the ruling TMC, in Sandeshkhali area in North 24 Parganas recently to "protect" Shahzahan Sheikh.

"Two days ago, Mamata Banerjee, while addressing a rally in Cooch Behar, first gave inciting statements to provoke violence against the NIA officials. As soon as the NIA team was attacked today, Mamata swiftly came in to justify the violence and gave the attackers a complete clean chit," he charged.

The BJP leader alleged that the attack on the NIA

officials in Bhupatinagar area on Saturday was "direct evidence of the TMC's Talibani mindset culture".

"Political violence, violence against central probe agencies, corruption, protection to terror and radical elements have been clearly institutionalized under this Talibani mindset culture of Mamata Banerjee government," Poonawalla alleged.

"TMC means too much corruption and too much chaos as well. 'Ma Mati Manush' slogan of the TMC Government has changed and it has now become 'bomb blast and save rapists,'" the BJP leader added.

Congress manifesto has Muslim League imprint: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/SAHARANPUR/AJMER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday slammed the Congress manifesto for its Muslim league imprints equating the grand old party to that of Mohammed Ali Jinnah led body that had ultimately caused the 1947 partition to carve out Pakistan and whatever part of it is left is completely dominated by the leftists.

"The kind of manifesto released by Congress yesterday proves that today's Congress is

completely cut off from the hopes and aspirations of today's India. Reflecting a historical ideology akin to the Muslim League, the manifesto is heavily influenced by leftist ideologies. Overall, the Congress fails to address contemporary issues and is unfit to lead India into the 21st century," Modi said at a public meeting in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, that will vote in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on April 19. The Prime Minister said the Congress once fought for independence ended decades ago. Now, the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and BJP candidate Atul Garg during a road show, ahead of LS elections, in Ghaziabad PTI Photo

remaining Congress lacks neither policies for the welfare of the nation nor a vision for nation-building." "The Congress government had weakened India's image and made it a corrupt country. Today, the BJP government has made India's image strong and has made it a rapidly developing country. That's why today the whole country is once again saying - 'Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar'," the PM added.

After Saharanpur rally, stepping up the tempo of poll campaign, the Prime Minister addressed rally in Ajmer in Rajasthan and held a road show in Ghaziabad in support of BJP candidate Atul

Garg. In his first roadshow in the State since the announcement of the Lok Sabha polls last month, the prime minister was joined by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Garg in an open jeep as Modi waved at the enthusiastic lot of supporters. The roadshow started from the Maliwad Chowk and will culminate at Chaudhary Mod. The district administration has made elaborate security arrangements for the event including the deployment of large number of personnel and enforcing traffic diversions. This is the PM first roadshow in Uttar Pradesh after the announcement of Lok Sabha elections.

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Democracy in danger, Congress tears into BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

Congress on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of tearing apart the country's dignity and democracy and claimed that various tactics were being used to force Opposition leaders to join the BJP.

Addressing her first election rally for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the longest serving party president Sonia Gandhi claimed that for the last 10 years, the country has been in the hands of a Government that left no stone unturned to promote unemployment, inflation, economic crisis and inequality.



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and Ashok Gehlot during a public meeting ahead of LS polls, in Jaipur, PTI

"Today our country's democracy is in danger. Democratic institutions are being destroyed and a conspiracy is being hatched to change our Constitution.

This is a dictatorship and we all will give a reply to this. Considering himself great, Modi ji is tearing apart the dignity of the country and its democracy. Fear is being

installed in the entire system" Sonia said. Asserting that the country "is not the property of a few people and it belongs to everyone", she said, "Our ancestors have shed blood for it."

Sonia Gandhi also alleged that various tactics were being used to intimidate opposition leaders and force them to join the BJP. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge described PM Modi as a "leader of liars" and sought to know what steps he has taken to fulfil the guarantees given by him earlier. He questioned the country's

foreign policy under the BJP Government and claimed that China encroaching on Indian land and changing the names of Indian villages but PM Modi was not talking about it.

Kharge said, "He (Modi) claims that he has a 56-inch chest... Whether it is 56 inch, 55 or 54, (we) will call a tailor, measure it and see what it is." "PM Modi, his people and the RSS say that if you give two-thirds majority, we will change the constitution of this country," the Congress president said.

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Vote and savour world's first republic rich heritage

Voting delight to first time voters

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Snap, Share, and Win! In a bid to spark youth engagement in the electoral process, the Vaishali district administration in Bihar has introduced an exciting initiative aimed at first-time voters. "Once the voter has exercised their democratic right, they simply need to snap a selfie at designated selfie points and share it. "Fifty lucky participants will then be selected through a lottery system. The fortunate few will be treated to an enriching tour of Vaishali's major tourist attractions. These include historical hotspots Buddha Stupa, Jain Stupa and a temple museum, all three located in Vaishali," District Election Officer cum District Magistrate, Yashpal Meena told The Pioneer about the innovative experiment. The idea is to ensure 100 per cent voting and increase the voting percentage in the Lok Sabha elections, he said.

Vaishali is revered as one of the world's first republic so it is obvious that the young voters must be offered something special that help elevate voter turnout, quipped an equally excited Yashpal. The move to tap in India's youngest eligible voters, aged 18 and 19 comes in the wake of Election Commission data showing them apparently hesitant to exercise their electoral rights.

Continued on Page 6

Harnessing power of Reels, influencers to connect with voters

ASAD ■ NEW DELHI

The emergence of Reels, those bite-sized marvels of creativity, is not only popular among digital-savvy youths but also within the corridors of power. What once started as efforts by digital creators to capture the virtual world of fame has swiftly transformed into a potent game-changer for political parties.

With the seven phases of the 2024 general elections to begin from April 19, political parties of all hues are actively harnessing the power of Reels and influencers to connect with the

people, especially the 1.85 crore first-time voters in the 18-19 age groups.

"Through social media, political parties aim not merely to disseminate their messages but to build genuine connections, capturing hearts and minds of voters," says Dr Subi Chaturvedi, AI and social media expert, and former Member MAG, United Nations, Internet Governance Forum.

Recognising the potential of this medium, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while interacting with party workers from 22,640 polling booths across 10 Lok Sabha



constituencies in Uttar Pradesh through the NaMo App, as part of the "Mera Booth Sabse Majboot" campaign of the party on Wednesday, advised BJP booth workers to utilise the power of social media.

Modi urged them to upload captivating Reels apprising people of the Government's welfare schemes. Other political parties too are using social media platforms to widen their reach to new

audiences in the remote corners of India's hinterlands. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi engaged in a dialogue with influencers during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. Previously, he collaborated with the Village Cooking Channel on YouTube. With smartphone penetration rising in rural India, many digital experts predict that Reels, YouTube and Shorts and influencers could wield significant influence in shaping the electoral verdict in 2024.

"The meteoric rise of short-format videos and the reach of influencers reflect a seismic shift in digital consumption patterns,

compelling political parties to move towards this new source as a means to effectively engage with their desired audience. The popularity of Reels cannot be ignored, as it has driven more than a 40 per cent increase in time spent on Instagram since its global launch. In India, it continues to boost content creation and participation from Tier II and III cities.

Therefore, this popular medium cannot be overlooked," says Professor Farhat Basir Khan, author of *The Game of Votes* and an expert on new media technology and political communication.

China may misuse AI to target elections in India, US to boost its geopolitical interests: Microsoft

PTI ■ NEW YORK

China is likely to deploy Artificial Intelligence-generated content via social media to sway public opinion to boost its geopolitical interests during elections in countries like India, South Korea and the US, tech giant Microsoft has warned.

Voting for 543 Lok Sabha seats in India will take place between April 19 and June 4, spread across seven phases.

South Koreans will go to the polls in a general election on April 10 while the US will hold the Presidential election on November 5.

"With major elections taking place around the world this year, particularly in India, South Korea and the United States, we assess that China will, at a minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content to benefit its interests," Clint Watts, General Manager, Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, said in a blog post.

Despite the chances of such content in affecting election results remaining low, China's increasing experimentation in augmenting memes, videos, and audio will likely continue — and may prove more effective down the line, he said.

China will do it along with North Korea, he wrote. These are among

the Microsoft Threat Intelligence insights in the latest East Asia report published on Wednesday by the Microsoft Threat Analysis Center (MTAC).

China is using fake social media accounts to poll voters on what divides them most to sow division and possibly influence the outcome of the US presidential election in its favour. China has also increased its use of AI-generated content to further its goals around the world.

North Korea has increased its cryptocurrency heists and supply chain attacks to fund and further its military goals and intelligence collection. It has also begun to use AI to

make its operations more effective and efficient. Beijing will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in October, and North Korea will continue to push forward key advanced weapons programmes, the report said.

"Meanwhile, as populations in India, South Korea, and the United States head to the polls, we are likely to see Chinese cyber and influence actors, and to some extent, North Korean cyber actors, work toward targeting these elections," it said.

China will, at a minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content that benefits its positions in these high-

profile elections, it said.

"While Chinese cyber actors have long conducted reconnaissance of US political institutions, we are prepared to see influence actors interact with Americans for engagement and to potentially research perspectives on US politics," the report said.

"Finally, as North Korea embarks upon new government policies and pursues ambitious plans for weapons testing, we can expect increasingly sophisticated cryptocurrency heists and supply chain attacks targeted at the defence sector, serving to both funnel money into the regime and facilitate the development of new military capabilities," it added.

Mexico snaps ties with Ecuador after embassy raid

AP ■ QUITO

The Mexican president has quickly moved to break off diplomatic ties with Ecuador after police broke into the Mexican Embassy to arrest a former Ecuadorian vice president who had sought political asylum there after being indicted on corruption charges.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador made the announcement Friday evening after Ecuadorian police forced their way into the embassy in the capital, Quito, to arrest Jorge Glas who has been residing there since December. Glas, arguably the most wanted man in Ecuador, has been convicted on bribery and corruption charges and Ecuadorian authorities are still investigating more allegations against him.

Police broke through the external doors of the Mexican diplomatic headquarters in the Ecuadorian capital and entered the main patio to get Glas.

"This is not possible. It cannot be. This is crazy," Roberto Canseco, head of the Mexican consular section in Quito, told local press while standing outside the embassy. "I am very worried because they could kill him. There is no basis to do this. This is totally outside the norm." Defending its decision, Ecuador's presidency said in a statement: "Ecuador is a sov-

ereign nation and we are not going to allow any criminal to stay free."

López Obrador fired back, calling Glas' detention an "authoritarian act" and "a flagrant violation of international law and the sovereignty of Mexico."

Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's secretary of foreign relations, posted on the social platform X that a number of diplomats suffered injuries during the break-in, adding that it violated the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Diplomatic premises are considered "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties and local law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter without the permission of the ambassador.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange lived inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London for seven years because British police could not enter to arrest him.

Bárcena said that Mexico would take the case to the International Court of Justice "to denounce Ecuador's responsibility for violations of international law." She also said Mexican diplomats were only waiting for the Ecuadorian government to offer the necessary guarantees for their return home. Ecuador's Foreign Ministry and Ecuador's Ministry of the Interior did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel finds body of another hostage in Gaza

AP ■ CAIRO

Israel's military said on Saturday it had recovered the body of a 47-year-old farmer who was held hostage in Gaza, while negotiators prepared to begin another round of talks Sunday on brokering a cease-fire and securing the release of the remaining hostages, six months into the war.

Israel's army said it had found the body of Elad Katzir and believed he was killed in January by militants with Islamic Jihad, one of the groups that entered southern Israel in the October 7 attack, killed more than 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. Katzir had been abducted from Nir Oz, a border community that suffered some of the heaviest

losses.

The discovery renewed pressure on Israel's government for a deal to get the remaining hostages freed, as families have long feared time is running out. At least 36 hostages in captivity have been confirmed dead. About half of the original number have been released.

Meanwhile, the toll of Israel's ongoing offensive in Gaza is measured in tens of thousands of deaths and more than a million Palestinians displaced.

"We have arrived at a terrible milestone," the UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said in a statement marking six months and noting "the immediate prospect of a shameful man-made famine."

He called the prospect of further escalation in Gaza "uncon-

scionable."

Israelis are divided on the approach by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government after multiple rounds of stalled cease-fire negotiations. A week ago, tens of thousands of Israelis thronged central Jerusalem in the largest anti-government protest since the war began.

Negotiations will resume on Sunday, according to an Egyptian official and Egypt's state-owned Al Qahera TV. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the talks.

US President Joe Biden has sent CIA Director Bill Burns to Egypt. And a Hamas delegation will arrive on Sunday to join the talks, the militant group

said. Hamas has insisted on linking a phased end to the war — not a temporary cease-fire — to any agreement releasing hostages. It has said it will agree to release 40 hostages as part of an initial six-week cease-fire deal that would include the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

Hamas also seeks the return of displaced people to devastated northern Gaza and more aid. Israel has offered to allow only 2,000 displaced Palestinians — mainly women, children and older people — to the north daily during a six-week cease-fire.

The new talks will come days after international condemnation of Israeli airstrikes that killed seven humanitarian workers with the World Central

Kitchen charity. The Israeli military has described the strike as a tragic error. Aid groups say the mistake is hardly an anomaly.

Some Israel allies are now considering halting arms sales. Biden warned Netanyahu that future US support for the war depends on swift implementation of new steps to protect civilians and aid workers.

"We need security guarantees for us as humanitarians but also for the people we serve," said Marika Guderian with the World Food Program, speaking inside Gaza.

The killings halted aid deliveries on what had been seen as a crucial new sea route for humanitarian aid directly to Gaza as the UN and partners warn of famine.

3 crew members from ISS land in Kazakhstan

AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian space capsule with two women and one man safely landed in a steppe in Kazakhstan on Saturday after their missions aboard the International Space Station.

The Soyuz MS-24 carrying Russia's Oleg Novitsky, NASA's Loral O'Hara and Marina Vasilevskaya of Belarus touched down southeast of the remote town of Dzhezkazgan at 12:17 pm Kazakh time (07:17 GMT).

Those remaining at the orbiting outpost are NASA astronauts Michael Barratt, Matthew Dominick, Tracy Dyson and Jeannette Epps as well as Russian cosmonauts Nikolai Chub, Alexander Grebenkin and Oleg Kononenko.

O'Hara arrived at the International Space Station on September 15, 2023, spending a total of 204 days there, NASA said.

Novitsky and Vasilevskaya blasted off to space on March 23, two days later than initially planned.

The launch of a Soyuz spacecraft carrying them and NASA astronaut Tracy Dyson, scheduled for March 21, was aborted at the very last minute due to a voltage drop in a power source, according to Yuri Borisov, head of Russia's space agency Roscosmos.

The delay resulted in a two-day, 34-orbit trip to the space station for the crew. If the launch had gone as scheduled, the journey would have been much shorter, requiring only two orbits.

The space station, which has served as a symbol of post-Cold War international cooperation, is now one of the last remaining areas of collaboration between Russia and the West amid tensions over Moscow's military action in Ukraine. NASA and its partners hope to continue operating the orbiting outpost until 2030.

Chinese nationals resent following security protocols, says Maryam

PTI ■ LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Friday said that Chinese nationals living in Pakistan get "resentful" when they are asked to follow security protocols, a week after five Chinese engineers were among six killed in a suicide bombing in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Maryam, the daughter of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who became the first-ever woman chief minister of a province in Pakistan, while addressing her maiden Apex Committee meeting here said "the Chinese living here do not want to follow security discipline." "They are resentful when they are asked to follow security protocols. They don't want to come under any discipline as they fret over it," she added.

The meeting was also attended by Corps Commander

Lahore Lt Gen Syed Aamer Raza and other senior military officers. Maryam, however, expressed her government's resolve to provide fool-proof security to the Chinese nationals working on development projects in Punjab. The meeting also condemned the killing of Chinese engineers in Bisham.

Five Chinese engineers — and their Pakistani driver — were killed in the suicide bombing last week while travelling between Islamabad and a hydroelectric dam construction site in Dasu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The bus was attacked in Bisham city of Shangla district.

Maryam said terrorism has taken the shape of difficult warfare. "Terrorists got digitalised and we need to be ahead of them on such platforms. Besides, terrorists have the latest weapons and technology. They have the US weapons

which they got in Afghanistan. The weapons coming from Afghanistan are a big challenge for the law enforcement agencies," she said.

The 50-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party leader added that the youth is also being brainwashed and recruited by terrorists. "And social media is one of the major tools being used for the purpose," Maryam said.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed all the security agencies to ensure fool-proof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on various projects in the country.

According to a statement, the prime minister said he had decided to "personally review the meetings with respect to the overall security of the country, especially the security of the Chinese citizens". Sharif said the war against the menace of terrorism will continue till its complete eradication from the country.

4 senior Pak police officials face action

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has ordered disciplinary action against four senior police officials for their "negligence" after an inquiry committee probing the suicide attack which killed five Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver submitted its report, the information minister said on Saturday.

Last Tuesday, a vehicle-borne suicide bomber targeted the convoy of Chinese engineers in the remote Besham area of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when they were being driven to a construction site of the Dasu Hydroelectric power station in Kohistan district of the same province.

Five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that Prime Minister Sharif directed action against senior Khyber Pakhtunkhwa officials after the inquiry committee formed to probe the

March 26 attack and identify the lapses in security protocol submitted its report, Geo News reported.

"The prime minister has directed to take action against the regional police officer (RPO) Hazara Division; district police officer of Upper Kohistan and Lower Kohistan; director security, Dasu Hydropower Project and commandant special security unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 15 days," the report quoted Tarar as saying. "We want peace in the region, but our desire should not be misconstrued as a weakness. We are taking the matter of the security of the Chinese very seriously," he said.

"Prime Minister Shehbaz is himself overseeing the security of the Chinese projects and engineers," he added.

On Friday, Sharif directed all Pakistani security agencies to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on various projects in the country.

Earthquake aftershocks halt demolition of leaning building in Taiwan

AP ■ TAIPEI

The demolition of a building that is leaning precariously after an earthquake in Taiwan was halted on Saturday because of aftershocks that made it lean even more, media reports said. The red building, about 10 stories tall and inclined over a street in the city of Hualien, has become an iconic image from the magnitude 7.4 earthquake that also buried people under boulders at nearby Taroko National Park, a popular hiking destination

about 25 kilometres (15 miles) northwest of Hualien. The death toll rose to 13 after a third victim was found on the park's Shakadang Trail. Six other people are still missing, including three on the same trail. More than 400 people remained stranded three days after the quake in locations cut off by damage. Most are at a hotel in Taroko park.

Hundreds of aftershocks have struck the area since the Wednesday morning quake off Taiwan's east coast, including a magnitude-5.2 earthquake

shortly before noon on Saturday. Survivors have told harrowing tales of rocks tumbling onto roadways, trapping them in tunnels until rescuers arrived to free them.

The relatively low number of deaths from the powerful quake has been attributed to strict construction standards and widespread public education campaigns on the earthquake-prone island. The quake was the strongest to hit Taiwan since a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in 1999 that killed 2,400 people.

Rescuers were planning to bring in heavy equipment to try to recover two bodies pinned under boulders on the Shakadang Trail. The three dead and three missing on the trail include a family of five.

Search and recovery work had been called off Friday afternoon because of aftershocks. In Hualien, a city official said that experts would discuss how to proceed with the demolition of the leaning building.

Offerings were made at a ceremony before the demolition began the previous day.

Russian missile strikes on Kharkiv kill 6, injures 11

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces overnight Rattacked Ukraine with drones and missiles, killing at least six people and wounding 11 more in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, local officials reported.

Governor of the Kharkiv region Oleh Syniehubov said missile strikes on the city damaged residential buildings, a gas station, a kindergarten, a cafe, a shop and cars.

Overall, Russia fired 32 Iranian-made Shahed drones and six missiles at Ukraine overnight, according to the air

force commander. Ukrainian air defence forces shot down three cruise missiles and 28 drones, Lt. Gen. Mykola Oleshchuk said in a statement. "Russian killers continue to terrorize Ukrainians and attack Kharkiv and other peaceful cities," he said.

The Russian military has not commented on the strikes, but said that Ukraine on Saturday morning fired Vampire rockets at Russia. All 10 of them were shot down over Russia's border region of Belgorod by air defence systems, the Russian Defence Ministry said.

Thousands evacuated after floods break a dam in Russian city

AP ■ MOSCOW

Floods caused by rising water levels in the Ural River broke a dam in a city near Russia's border with Kazakhstan, forcing some 2,000 people to evacuate, local authorities said.

The dam broke in the city of Orsk in the Orenburg region, less than 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) north of the border on Friday night, according to Orsk mayor Vasily Kozupitsa. By Saturday morning, more than 2,400 residential buildings in the city of 200,000 were flooded and electricity was cut off in several areas. Evacuation efforts are still ongoing.

Footage from Orsk showed water covering the streets dotted with one-story houses.

According to local authorities, the dam could withstand water levels up to 5.5 metres (nearly

18 feet). On Saturday morning, the water level reached about 9.3 metres (30.51 feet) and rising, Kozupitsa said.

Authorities also said floods affected other places in the region, located in the Ural Mountains area, causing the evacuation of nearly 4,000 people. It wasn't clear whether the 2,000 already evacuated in Orsk were included in that number.

The Ural River, about 2,428 kilometres- (1,509 miles) long, flows from the southern section of the Urals into the north end of the Caspian Sea, through Russia and Kazakhstan.

Russia's Investigative Committee opened a criminal probe to look into suspected construction safety regulations violations and negligence that could have caused the dam to break.

New UK documentary examines racist attacks on British Indians

PTI ■ LONDON

Driving around with hockey sticks in the boot of the car and stockpiling petrol bombs to defend themselves are among some of the gripping accounts that make up a new UK documentary chronicling racist attacks faced by British Indians in the 1970s and 80s.

'Defiance: Fighting the Far Right', a three-part series aired on Channel 4 on Monday, uses a cache of archive footage and compelling new testimony from the people who were there to tell the story of the fightback of Britain's South

Asian community against a wave of brutal racist attacks and murders between 1976 and 1981. The film highlights how the community stood in the face of a rising tide of anti-immigrant feelings and a campaign of violence and intimidation unleashed by notorious far-right and racist groups such as the National Front.

"Back then, my Ludhiana-born father would drive around with hockey sticks in the boot of his car in case we ever ran into far-right thugs as we went about our daily business," said Rajesh Thind, the British Punjabi director of one of the three

episodes who grew up amid some of the upheaval in west London.

"Ever since I was a child witnessing those events of the late 1970s and early 1980s, I have wanted to tell these stories of how we British Asians fought back against the National Front and other racist and fascist organisations," he said.

"I have had a burning desire to show the world that far from being meek and mild, as some Western stereotypes would portray South Asians, our communities were courageous, resilient and resourceful, drawing on decades of experience of

anti-colonial struggles both in India and Africa," he said.

The series, created by BAFTA-winning Rogan Productions, Left Handed Films and GroupM Motion Entertainment, investigates seminal events in British South Asian history referred to as the Southall protests, the Battle for Brick Lane and the Bradford 12 — events often overlooked by the press, the police and the government of the day.

"At a moment when we have a British Asian Prime Minister [Rishi Sunak] and an Asian First Minister in Scotland [Humza Yousaf], it is incredi-

bly powerful to be able to tell the stories of everyday British Asians fighting to make their way in this country and to be heard," said Shaminder Nahal, Channel 4 Head of Specialist Factual, who commissioned the series. "A comprehensive telling of the extraordinary experiences of a generation of Asian refugees and migrants who came to Britain and faced an unprecedented wave of racial violence, stood their ground and turned the tide, is long overdue," said James Rogan, Executive Producer for Rogan Productions. The series starts with the killing of 18-

year-old Gurdeep Singh Chaggar on the streets of Southall, west London, and the chilling words of far-right leader John Kingsley Read: "One down, one million to go!"

What follows is a brutal battle between Britain's South Asian and black communities and the far-right activists. "The British Asian civil rights movement is a forgotten piece of history... These are stories of bravery in the face of violence and a refusal to let prejudice go unchallenged — they could not be more timely," said Riz Ahmed and Allie Moore from Left Handed Films.

India, Singapore bilateral trade grows to \$35.6 billion in FY22-23

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

The bilateral trade between Singapore and India rose to USD 35.6 billion in 2022-23, a growth of 18.2 per cent on the year, a senior diplomat at the Indian High Commission here said on Saturday. Singapore is India's eighth largest trade partner (2022-23), with a share of 3.1 per cent of India's overall trade, T Prabakar, the First Secretary (Commerce) at the high commission said.

He was addressing the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) Third International Conference being held in Singapore from April 5-6. Trade between Singapore and India saw a growth of 18.2 per cent in the year and rose to USD 35.6 billion in 2022-23, Prabakar said.

"Our imports from Singapore in FY 22-23 were USD 23.6 billion, a growth of 24.4 per cent, and exports to the city-state totalled USD 12 billion, up 7.6 billion in the previous financial year," he told some 100 delegates at the conference.



The cumulative FDI inflows from Singapore to India stood at USD 155.612 billion from April 2000 to December 2023, accounting for 23 per cent of the total FDI flows into India, he said.

Giving an overview of India-Singapore relations, Prabakar pointed out that Singapore is also amongst India's largest sources of External Commercial borrowings.

He also highlighted a wide range of strategic cooperation between the two nations in new fields, such as technologies, AI and green energy.

The two-day conference discussed a wide range of trade and technology issues, with ICSI members seeking insights into Singapore's law related to businesses that can be complementary to corporate and small enterprises in India.

With further predicted rise in temperatures, many studies have reported a decline in wheat production in the world.

Rajbir Yadav, wheat breeder and Principal Scientist at Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), said the climate-smart seed varieties that India has developed can be easily grown in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

India better prepared than Pakistan to handle climate shocks in wheat crop

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Conducive weather conditions in both India and Pakistan are helping them to achieve record wheat output this year, but India is better prepared than the neighbour to handle climate change impact as it has developed many indigenous heat-resistant and short-duration seed varieties, according to agri-scientists.

India is the second and Pakistan is the eighth largest wheat-producing country in the world. While India is self-sufficient in wheat output, the latter imports 2-3 million tonnes.

One of the reasons behind Pakistan still being dependent on imports to meet domestic requirements is its failure to develop indigenous varieties of climate-resilient seeds.

Presently, the harvesting of wheat crops is underway in both countries. India has projected wheat output to touch a new record of 114 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year (July-June), while Pakistan has set an ambitious target of 32.2 million tonnes from an area of 8.9 million hectares. While the two countries have been facing the adverse impact of climate change on wheat crop since 2010 onwards, the current year has been exceptionally favourable as there have been no events of terminal heat waves nor unseasonal rains affecting the crop.



"Climate has been favourable this year. During the crucial period of mid-January and February, there were no incidents of sudden heat waves, unseasonal rains, and lodging. We are expecting a bumper crop," ICAR-Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (ICAR-IWBR) Director Gyanendra Singh told PTI.

He highlighted that climate-resilient wheat varieties have been sown in more than 80 per cent of the total wheat area of 34.15 million hectares this year because of the availability of newer seed varieties and also greater awareness among farmers.

Out of 600 indigenous wheat varieties released so far in India, Singh said as many as over 100 climate-resilient varieties are in the seed chain now. Around 14 new varieties were released in the current year itself.

According to Naresh Kumar, Principal Investigator at ICAR's National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), India is doing much better when compared to other countries in taking various agronomic measures such as changing planting dates and short-duration varieties besides promoting raised bed cultivation, sprinkler irrigation, and soil-water-nitrogen management.

Wheat crop is highly sensitive to temperature increases. Hot and unseasonal weather cut India's wheat output in 2022 and 2023, leading to a drawdown in state reserves.

It is reported a 5.5 per cent decrease in wheat yield during the past 30 years (1980-2010) occurred due to a decadal temperature increase of 0.13 degree Celsius.

JSW Energy raises ₹5,000 crore from Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, others

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Energy Limited has raised Rs 5,000 crore by selling shares to institutional investors, including Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), to accelerate its growth plans. In a regulatory filing on Friday, the company informed that it has successfully completed its Rs 5,000-crore Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP).

JSW Energy said, the proceeds from the QIP will further bolster its capital structure, enhance financial flexibility and enable the company to accelerate its ambitious growth plans.

"The issue garnered a very strong interest from marquee global long-only investors, domestic mutual funds and insurance companies..." it added.

The QIP witnessed more than 3.2 times subscription. Some of the largest global asset managers, such as GQG, Blackrock, Nomura, Wellington, UBS and ADIA, participated in the QIP issue.

"This marks the first-ever equity raise by the company since its listing in 2010," JSW



Energy said. This is the largest primary equity raise in the Indian power sector in the last decade and among the top three largest primary equity raises in the history of the Indian power sector, the company said.

Sharad Mahendra, joint managing director and CEO of JSW Energy, said: "India's strong investment cycle-driven economic growth momentum bodes well for power demand outlook. The strong institutional investor interest reflects their unwavering confidence in our positioning as a diversified energy transition platform focused on growing both the generation and storage

businesses, with optionality for green hydrogen and its derivatives."

At JSW Energy, he said, "We are not just witnessing the transformation of the energy sector, we are actively shaping it, setting new benchmarks for industry leadership, and aiding India's journey towards net-zero targets by 2070."

Jefferies India Private Limited was the sole book running lead manager. Khaitan & Co. Was the legal counsel to the company while Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co. And Linklaters Singapore Pte. Ltd. Were counsels to the book running lead manager.

JSW Energy Limited, a part of the USD 23-billion JSW Group, has presence in

sectors such as steel, energy, infrastructure, cement and sports, among others.

JSW Energy began commercial operations in 2000, with the commissioning of its first 2x130 MW thermal power plants at Vijayanagar, Karnataka.

Since then, the company has steadily enhanced its power generation capacity from 260 MW to 7,189 MW having a portfolio of thermal 3,508 MW, wind 1,615 MW, hydel 1,391 MW and solar 675 MW. The company is presently constructing various power projects to the tune of 2.6 GW. JSW Energy has total locked-in generation capacity of 12.5 GW comprising 7.2 GW operational, 2.6 GW under-construction assets.

Besides, the company has 3.4 GWh of locked-in energy storage capacity through battery energy storage system and hydro pumped storage project.

The company aims to reach 20 GW generation capacity and 40 GWh of energy storage capacity before 2030. It has set the target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Livspace says India business becomes cash flow positive on robust growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Home renovation platform Livspace has become "cash-flow positive" in India business on the back of robust growth in its revenue, a top company official said.

Livspace is expecting around 30 per cent growth in its revenue during the 2023-24 financial year from around Rs 1,100 crore in the preceding fiscal.

India business contributes 80-85 per cent to the company's total turnover. The company's EBITDA losses narrowed to 95.35 million Singapore dollar from 96.86 million Singapore dollar during the period under review.

"Our revenue has grown 50

per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) in the past two fiscal years. We have become cash flow positive from October-December quarter of 2023-24 in India business, which is 80-85 per cent of our total revenue," Livspaceco Founder Ramakant Sharma told PTI.

Asked about the revenue during the last fiscal year, Livspace Chief Strategy Officer Ankit Shah said the numbers have not been finalised yet but the revenue could be around 30 per cent higher in 2023-24.

He asserted that the company is not burning cash anymore and is generating enough cash flow to expand business organically.

CBI busts infant...

From Page 1

Further, a thorough investigation is being conducted in the matter, while the probe agency is questioning the arrested accused to further find out linkages, the sources said.

The scope of this operation extends far beyond the borders of Delhi, with the CBI making arrests of individuals involved in trafficking seven to eight children across the National Capital Region

Democracy in...

From Page 1

Referring to the Prime Minister's public address in Churu on Friday, Kharge said Modi talked about Article 370 abrogation at a place where he should have talked about the works he did for farmers.

In its rule for 55 years, the Congress worked for the development of the country. It built infrastructure and created institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. But Modi is taking credit just by flagging off trains on tracks laid by Congress governments," he said.

Kharge also accused the PM of stealing the word 'guarantee' and said that Congress governments fulfilled guarantees in states where it was in rule.

Addressing the event earlier, the party's national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra referred to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind

Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's arrest by federal agencies to claim that the Opposition was under attack under the BJP rule at the Centre. "They are taking corrupt people into their party fold. Such people become clean by joining the party and no one raises the matter anymore," she said.

Priyanka Gandhi claimed that the BJP Government was favouring a few industrialists and handing over the properties of the nation to them. However, many industrialists create jobs and favouring a few industrialists was an injustice to others, she claimed. "You see how big industrialists live... The country's property is handed over, their loans are waived while farmers commit suicide," she said.

BUSINESS BRIEF



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT VIT-AP AMARAVATI: VIT-AP School of Business at VIT-AP University, in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, Australia and the International Institute for Better Future, Australia, organized International Conference on Innovation and Sustainable Business Practices in the Digital Era (ICISD'24). The two days' seminar highlighted the key objective of exploring the convergence of innovation and sustainability in today's digital landscape. With a rich agenda encompassing keynote speeches, panel discussions, technical sessions, and interactive forums, ICISD'24 brought together a diverse community of scholars, researchers, and industry practitioners. The event served as a platform to explore cutting-edge strategies, emerging technologies, and best practices driving both business growth and environmental stewardship.

BRPL WINS GOLDEN PEACOCK NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD

New Delhi: In recognition of excellence, BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) has been adjudged the winner of the coveted Golden Peacock National Quality Award. Bestowed by the Institute of Directors (IOD), these awards are considered the benchmark for corporate excellence in India. BRPL holds the distinction of being the first power discom in Delhi to receive this recognition. The awardees are meticulously evaluated by a distinguished jury led by Justice MN. Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission of India, and the National Commission for Constitution of India Reforms.



Vote and savour

world's first...

From Page 1

As per the EC, less than 40 per cent of these 18 or 19-year-olds who are eligible to vote have registered for the 2024 elections across the country, with certain states such as Bihar, Delhi, and UP showing even lower enrollment rates.

In Vaishali district, there are 26.17 lakh voters of which 32,015 are young electors, 37,385 senior citizens, 16,112

persons with disabilities in the district. The elections in the district will be held in three phases-between 4th to 6th phase on May 13, May 20th and May 25th.

Yashpal urged the youth to lap up the opportunity to visit the sites of historical importance by being part of the world's largest democratic process.

The district officials led by Yashpal have been already holding Voter Awareness Campaign throughout the Vaishali district, from various villages to towns including colleges. "Such campaigns

enhance awareness in society and help people understand the importance of voting. Programs like these are fundamental pillars of democracy and contribute to educating and promoting democratic values. Through such programs, social harmony and empowerment sentiments are also fostered in society," Yashpal said matter-of-factly.

The administration has also launched a special election logo on the occasion highlighting the importance of democracy.

To encourage overall voters to

participate in the electoral process, the district officials are all set to launch a four-day mega awareness programme 'Maha SVEEP' programme from Sunday with officials and staff initiating door-to-door campaigns in 1585 revenue villages.

The use of technology, such as the Google form for uploading selfies at the designated selfie point, streamlines the process of selecting participants and adds a modern touch to the initiative, said an official from the district.

Savarkar biopic long...

From Page 1

According to Ranjeet, chairman, Swatantrya Veer Savarkar National Memorial, the ideology propagated by Savarkar has become more relevant now as the communism has collapsed all over the world and the Abrahamic religions are fighting among themselves for one-upmanship. Media reports from various theatres where the movie has been released say that historians, sociologists and film lovers expressed their happiness over the work by Randeep Hooda. "Though a movie of this kind should have been made long back, it would not have been possible to bring it to the theatres because the ruling class and the fifth columnists would have sabotaged such a movie. I am sure the movie Swatantrya Veer Savarkar would be a strong contender for top honours in the race for national awards. It is a movie of global standards," said Sandeep Shinde, Sanatan Sanstha .

Congress manifesto has...

From Page 1

Braving the harsh sun, the supporters had been waiting on the road since the afternoon as drums and bands kept them engaged. As the Prime Minister's vehicle moved slowly on the road, people lining on the both sides of the road showered flowers on him and raised slogans. Paintings were installed at various points on the way including one of his mother Hiraben blessing him. A tableau of Lord Ram and Sita was also exhibited. Modi remarked on the BJP's foundation day, highlighting

the party's rapid growth and widespread support. He attributed this success to the party's focus on national interest over politics, emphasizing their slogan 'Nation First' and said that BJP foundation day resonates our priority of 'Rashtraneeti' over 'Rajneeti'.

Talking about the 'Vocal For Local' campaign, Modi said, "The wood carving of Saharanpur and the renowned skills of its people are well-known far and wide. We want to boost sales of your products, which is why he has brought 'One District, One Product' scheme. Have you ever heard such things from the leaders of the opposition alliance? We have initiated the PM Vishwakarma Yojana to increase the income of all families involved in traditional arts. This will greatly benefit our artisans in

Saharanpur on a large scale." Without taking the name of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Prime Minister Modi said, "You might remember here in Uttar Pradesh that the film featuring two boys ('do ladke'), which had flopped last time, the film of two boys has been re-released by these people." "I do not understand how many times will these INDIA alliance members put the wooden pot (on fire)?" he added.

Targeting the Opposition parties which have come together against the PM, he said, "Some parties are struggling, floundering to attain power. I say - 'Bhrastachar Hatao, they say - 'Bhrastachari Bachao'. But Modi is not one to retreat. Swift action against corruption will continue, and

this is Modi's Guarantee." He added, "My 24/7 is for 2047; your dream is Modi's resolve." Also, Modi appealed to the people of Saharanpur and Kairana to cast their votes in favor of the BJP on a large scale.

Modi reached out to the Muslim community, which has a sizeable population in the Lok Sabha constituencies of western Uttar Pradesh, saying real secularism is when all get the benefit of government welfare schemes irrespective of their caste and religion as has been seen during the BJP rule. "The BJP Government has ended the evil practice of (instant) triple talaq. We enacted a strong law in the interest of crores of Muslim sisters" and protected their families, he said.

Some are saying Muslim women have benefitted but "they do not have a complete

understanding. It is not that only Muslim women have benefitted" but also their parents and brothers who were always worried as to what would they do if their daughter or sister had to go through triple talaq, Modi said. "By ending this practice of triple talaq, we have saved the entire Muslim family and liberated it from the fear of the sword hanging over them. For centuries to come, Muslim daughters will continue to bless Modi," the prime minister said.

The Lok Sabha constituencies in western UP with a sizeable Muslim population are Rampur (42 per cent), Amroha (32 per cent), Saharanpur (30 per cent), Bijnor, Nagina and Moradabad (28 per cent each), Muzaffarnagar (27 per cent), Kairana and Meerut (23 per cent each) and Sambhal

(22 per cent). Apart from this, the Muslim voters constitute 19 per cent of the electoral population in Bulandshahr, Baghpat and Aligarh. Speaking on the occasion, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said "A new debate has started in the country. Every vote of the public can prove to be helpful in changing the destiny and picture of the country. The foundation of this is the continuous change that has occurred in the country since 2014." "We should vote not based on caste, religion, appeasement or any other agenda, but for the vision of a developed India and a bright future for the next generation," he added addressing a public meeting here for BJP candidates Raghav Lakhnapal (Saharanpur) and Pradeep Chaudhary



ANUPAMA, THARUN WIN KAZAKHSTAN INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE TITLES

PTI ■ ASTANA
Indian shuttlers Anupama Upadhyaya and Tharun Manneppalli emerged champions in the women's and men's singles competition at the Kazakhstan International Challenge tournament in Ural'sk on Saturday. The 19-year-old Anupama from Almora, who won the Polish International challenge last month, claimed her second successive title with a

21-15 21-16 win over compatriot Isharani Baruah in a 41-minute final. The 22-year-old Tharun, who was runner-up at the senior national championships in Guwahati last December, beat eighth-seeded Malaysian Soong Joo Ven 21-10, 21-19 to register his maiden international title. In mixed doubles final, the Indian pair of Sanjai Srivatsa Dhanraj and Maneesha K lost 21-9, 7-21, 12-21 to Malaysia's

Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien to sign off with a runner-up finish. Anupama, the former senior national champion, has been in good form this week as she defeated fellow Indian Harshitaa Rout, Czech Republic's fifth seed Tereza Svabikova, compatriot Devika Sihag and Japan's Sorano Yoshikawa en route to the final. Anupama, a former junior world No 1, has won the India

International Challenge in 2021, Polish Open (2022 and 2024) and Tajikistan International Series in 2023. Tharun also recorded some fine wins on way to the summit clash, defeating compatriot Gagan Balyan, 2022 World junior championships silver medalist S Sankar Muthusamy, fourth-seeded Dmitriy Panarin of Kazakhstan and seventh seed Le Duc Phat of Vietnam.

Chess: Vidit dumps Nakamura; Gukesh downs Praggnanandhaa

PTI ■ TORONTO
Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi crashed through the defences of world number three Hikaru Nakamura of United States, while R Praggnanandhaa went down to compatriot D Gukesh in the second round of Candidates chess tournament here. After four draws in the first round, all the four games in the second round ended decisively on Saturday. Top seed American Fabiano Caruana was impressive in cruising past Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan and Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi outfoxed Firouza Alireza of France. In the women's section, R Vaishali went down fighting against Zhongyi Tan of China, while Russian Aleksandra Goryachkina proved superior than Ukrainian Anna Muzychuk. In the other games in this section, Koneru Humpy played out a draw with Kateryna Lagno of Russia and Nurgul Salimova signed peace with Tinjia Lei of China. Gujrathi along with Caruana, Nepomniachtchi and Gukesh emerged as the early co-leaders of the event with 1.5 points apiece while Nakamura, Praggnanandhaa, Abasov and Alireza share the fifth spot on half a point each. In the women's section, Tan remained in sole lead with her second victory on the trot and



Goryachkina was right behind her just half a point adrift. Salimova, Humpy and Lagno share the third spot with one point in their bags and Lei, Vaishali and Muzychuk share the sixth spot with half a point to their credit. A total of 12 rounds still remain in the biggest competition of the year that will decide the challengers for the next world championships matches. For the second day running, Gujrathi stole the show. It is clear that the Indian has gotten past his last below-par performance in the Prague masters. The Opening choice was a Berlin by Vidit who played his second black in a row. Nakamura was facing a finely crafted new idea as early as on move eight and the American was on his own. It was just three moves later that Gujrathi stunned his opponent with a Bishop sacrifice.

Accepting the sacrifice was the best way but Nakamura declined it and his position worsened slowly but surely. Vidit launched a king side attack soon and wrapped the issue in just 29 moves for a remarkable triumph. Gujrathi's dominance was certified by Nakamura, who was the first to say "good game" to the Indian. Asked about summing up the game, the Indian said that it was a day when everything worked for him. "Your prep comes in, he makes a mistake and you get a brilliant attack, cant add much to it," he said. Praggnanandhaa's Catalan opening yielded a decent yet extremely complex position in the opening. Gukesh, black, had to find things on the board and once he steered the game in to uncharted waters Praggnanandhaa was the first to err. Gukesh could have been on

top if he could find the best machine-like moves. However that did not happen and it was a wild position on board wherein Praggnanandhaa blundered amidst tactical complications. The game lasted 33 moves. Caruana opened with the Rossolimo variation against Abasov's Sicilian defense. The American got a tangible advantage in the middle game after a dubious pawn sacrifice by Abasov and technical part was handled quite well by the American. Nepomniachtchi also faced the Berlin defense and parted with a pawn early in the middle game. While the compensation remained it was never clear till Alireza failed to find the best continuation in the middle game. The Russian, who is playing under the FIDE flag, pounced on his chances and scored his first victory. In the women's section, Vaishali was outdone by a not-so-regular queen pawn opening. Playing black, the Indian equalized quite easily trading off both Bishops early and slow manoeuvring ensued by both players wherein the Chinese was going after the black king. It was on the 30th move that Vaishali blundered in her bid to keep the position closed, allowing a knights tango that resulted in material loss. The Chennai-based player called it a day after 34 moves.



Lille beats Marseille 3-1 to move into third in France

AP ■ PARIS
Lille moved into third place in the French league after a 3-1 victory over a faltering Marseille. The win took Lille above Monaco on goal difference and to within a point of second-placed Brest. It has not lost a league game at home since September. Jonathan David opened the scoring from the penalty spot after 53 minutes to take his season tally to 15, second only to Kylian Mbappé in the Ligue 1 scoring chart. Rémy Cabella made it two, and although Ismaily's own goal gave Marseille a glimmer of hope, Gabriel Gudmundsson restored Lille's two-goal advantage in the 83rd. It was Marseille's third league defeat in a row, its worst run this season. The south coast club remained in seventh place, above Reims and Rennes on goal difference, although both have a game in hand. Marseille's record away from home against the six teams above it in Ligue 1 reads played six, lost six.

Indian men hockey team lose 1-5 against Australia in first Test



PTI ■ PERTH

The Indian men's hockey team was expected to put up at least a decent fight but was hammered 1-5 by Australia in the first Test of the five-match series here on Saturday. The Australians controlled the tempo of the match from start to finish. The Indian team showed some sparks in the final quarter but it was too late by then. Tom Wickham (20th, 38th minute) scored a brace, while Tim Brand (3rd), Joel Rintala (37th) and Flynn Ogilvie (57th) were the other goal-getters for the winners. India's lone goal was scored by Gurjant Singh in the 47th minute. The Kookaburras showed positive intent from the start and took the lead as early

as the third minute through Brand, who shocked India early with brilliant individual skills from the left flank. He received a long pass from the deep and outfooted Jarmanpreet Singh with his stick work and pushed the ball past veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh. Australia continued to press hard on the Indian defence and secured their first penalty corner in the eighth minute but could not breach Sreejesh's defence this time. Sreejesh made a reflex save with his extended right leg to deny Joel Rintala. A minute later, an alert Sreejesh used his razor-sharp reflexes to again keep Rintala out of target from Australia's second penalty corner. India secured their first penalty corner in the 10th minute but failed to utilise the

chance. Soon, Jake Whetton's reverse shot was parried away by Sreejesh. Australia was at their attacking best as their moves outwitted the Indian defence. The home team increased its lead just five minutes into the second quarter through Wickham, courtesy some sloppy defending by the Indians. Australia denied India to settle into a rhythm with their attacking hockey and relentless pressure to go into the halfway break with a 2-0 cushion. The hosts continued in the same vein after the change of ends as Rintala was in the right place at the right time to get a neat deflection off Ky Willott's reverse hit seven minutes into the third quarter. The Indian defence was caught napping by the ever-attacking Australians as

Wickham scored his second of the day with a fierce shot from the right corner past Sreejesh's extended right foot. Down by four goals, the Indians showed urgency thereafter but lacked ideas as they failed to create clear cut chances from field play. Twice in the third quarter India came close to registering goals but on both occasions Australia goalkeeper Andrew Charter easily kept the rivals at bay. Australia continued to play high-pressure hockey and secured another penalty corner just at the start of fourth quarter but failed to cash in on the opportunity. In turn, the Indians made quick counter-attack and reduced the margin through Gurjant, who scored with powerful strike from the top of the D after receiving an inch-perfect pass from Mohammed Raheel. India made some terrific incisive moves through the mid-field to expose Australian defence in fourth quarter but failed to create any scoring chances as the Australian defence stood tall. The Indians earned back-to-back penalty corners in the 51st minute, but on both occasions skipper Harmanpreet Singh failed to get past Charter in front of Australian goal. Australia secured another penalty corner three minutes from the final hooter. Jeremy Hayward's initial flick was saved by second Indian goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak but Ogilvie sounded the board from the rebound to register the comfortable win for the hosts. The two teams will meet again on Sunday in the second Test of the Perth International Festival of Hockey, considered as a preparation for the upcoming Paris Olympics.



Tvesa maintains momentum, lies T-7th in South Africa

PTI ■ KEMPTON PARK (SOUTH AFRICA)

Indian golfer Tvesa Mallick continued her momentum in South Africa as she was placed Tied-7th after the second round of the Absa Ladies Invitational on the Sunshine Ladies Tour here. Tvesa, who won her first-ever international title in South Africa in February, had rounds of 72-72 and is even par for 36 holes at the Serengeti Estates, where the conditions were tough with gusting wind and testing pin positions. The other Indian in the field, Ridhima Dilawari, a winner on the domestic Tour, also made the cut after rounds of 74-73 and was T-19th. Tvesa, who had three birdies and three bogeys in the first round, was looking very good on a windy second day on Friday. She had three birdies against one bogey in her first

six holes after starting from the 10th. She dropped shots on 17th and 18th and had two birdies against one bogey on her second nine. Overall Tvesa had five birdies against as many bogeys on day two. Kiera Floyd (67-71) and Casandra Alexander (68-70) will go into the final round sharing the lead after the pair of South Africans handled the conditions well. They are both at 6-under 138. They are three shots ahead of another the vastly-experienced Lee-Anne Pace of South Africa, who collected three birdies in four holes around the turn and posted a one-under 71. Spain's Harang Lee shot a 69 and leapt into fourth place on two-under-par and Namibia's Bonita Bredenhann and South African Stacy Bregman are on one-under.

Verstappen back after troubles in Australia, claims pole in Japan

AP ■ SUZUKA (JAPAN)
Max Verstappen was asked a few days ago if he had concerns going into the Japanese Grand Prix. His rear brakes caught fire just two weeks ago at the Australian GP, forcing him out on the fourth lap. "No, no," Verstappen replied. True to his word. No worries. The Dutchman claimed the pole for Red Bull in Saturday qualifying, poised to return to his unprecedented dominance in Formula 1 after the blip in Australia. Verstappen clocked 1 minute 28.197 seconds, just 0.066 ahead of Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez. Lando Norris of McLaren and Carlos Sainz of Ferrari — the winner in Australia — will make up the second row. "It was quite close at the end," Verstappen said of his teammate Perez. "I think overall this track is very sensitive with the tires. When you really want to go to the limit it doesn't always work out." Verstappen did not sound totally pleased with his day, but he'll take it. "The point is to be on pole," he



added. "Of course you want every lap to be perfect but around a track like this that's not always the case. But overall a very good day - a good starting position for tomorrow. And of course, tomorrow is what counts." He also relished starting alongside Perez. "It's great as a team of course to be one and two, and hopefully we can keep that going for tomorrow." Verstappen pointed to Ferrari as Red Bull's biggest threat, perhaps looking at Sainz who won in Melbourne and is in view again. "Ferrari look very comfortable," he said.

"Maybe they were not so quick on one lap, but they were definitely fast in the long runs." Verstappen is the three-time defending champion and has won 21 of the last 25 races entering Sunday's race in Japan. He's won every pole this season - four - and this was the 36th of his career and he chases his 57th win on Sunday. Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes, who dominated the sport before Verstappen, is without a win in 48 races — the last in 2021. He will start from seventh on the grid. Saturday was a sunny, dry day and race day should be the same with no rain in the forecast. Rain often plagued the race when it was traditionally held in the fall. This season it's been moved to the spring and dovetails with Japan's cherry blossom season. Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin was fifth, with McLaren's Oscar Piastri qualifying in sixth place ahead of Hamilton. Japanese driver Yuki Tsunoda of the RB team will start No. 10 on the grid as he tries to top his strong seventh-place finish in Australia.

Bhambri, Olivetti make semis exit in Marrakech

PTI ■ MARRAKECH (MOROCCO)

India's Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti crashed out of Marrakech Open after losing the hard-fought semifinal to second seeds Lucas Miedler and Alexander Erler of Austria. The unseeded Indo-French pair lost the gruelling last-four stage match 5-7 6-3 7-10 in the ATP 250 clay court event on Friday night. Bhambri and Olivetti had earlier knocked out third seeds Nicholas Barrientos and Rafael Matos in the quarterfinals. It was a closely-contested match between the two pairs. Bhambri and Olivetti converted only two of the six breakpoints in the match while their opponents converted both their chances. There was no let up in the decider as the contest went down to the wire, where Miedler and Erler sealed the contest in the



Super tie-breaker. Bhambri has teamed up with Olivetti for the first time this season, having played with Dutchman Robin Haase in most of the tournaments. The Indian had paired with former partner Michael Venus from New Zealand at the Miami Masters where they made a first round exit. Bhambri's best performance of the season came at an ATP 500 Dubai, where as qualifiers the Indian and Haase reached the semi-

finals, earning crucial 225 ranking points. Ranked 62, the 31-year-old Bhambri is India's second highest ranked player behind world number one Rohan Bopanna. It will be interesting to see if Bopanna chooses Bhambri as his partner for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Bopanna being a top-10 player will have the choice of selecting his partner. Bhambri confirmed to PTI that as of today he has not heard from Bopanna about the possible pairing. The cut off date to consider rankings for direct entries is June 10 and the last date to submit names by the National Olympic Committees is June 19. Meanwhile, at the ATP Houston Open, India's N Sriram Balaji and his German partner Andre Begemann bowed out after losing their semifinal 7-6(5) 2-6 3-10 to fourth-seeded Australian duo of Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson.

Senthilkumar bows out of German Open

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National squash champion Velavan Senthilkumar was handed a straight game defeat by higher-ranked Eain Yow Ng of Malaysia in the quarterfinals of the German Open in Hamburg. World no. 59 Senthilkumar, a 2023 Asian silver medalist, went down 7-11 6-11 4-11 to the fourth seed at the USD 50,000 PSA World Tour Bronze event on Friday. "It's always been a close affair (between us). For some reason, every time he (Senthilkumar) upsets a few players to get to me," Yow Ng told the official PSA website. "It's getting tougher every time, but I also know my strengths, I know I can hang in there, play the big points better, and I think it showed in the first and second games. "I'm just happy to get through in three today," added the Malaysian World no. 22, who has a 3-0 head-to-head record against the Indian in PSA events.

Nagal beats Cobolli in Monte Carlo Masters qualifiers

PTI ■ MONTE CARLO (FRANCE)

Ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal was off to a winning start in Monte Carlo Masters as he defeated world number 63 Flavio Cobolli of Italy in straight sets in the qualifiers here on Saturday. The unseeded 95th-ranked Indian registered a 6-2 6-3 win over eighth-seeded Cobolli. Nagal will now be up against the

winner of the two Argentinians — Facundo Diaz Acosta and Diego Schwartzman — in his final qualifier fixture. While Acosta is ranked 55th and seeded third, Schwartzman is ranked 124th and is a wild card entrant in the tournament. Seven qualifiers will be granted entry into the main round. Nagal has been in the headlines since making it to the main draw of the Australian Open in



January, where he had beaten Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan before bowing out in the second

round. He then emerged triumphant in the Chennai Open before playing two more Challenger competitions, along with an ATP 500 competition (Dubai Championship) and two ATP 1000 Masters (Indian Wells and Miami). Since his Chennai victory, Nagal has reached the semi-final only on one occasion, during the Bengaluru Challenger.



Rookie pacer Yadav in focus as LSG eye third win in a row

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

New pace sensation Mayank Yadav will be closely followed by all and sundry after his match-winning performances as Lucknow Super Giants eye a hat-trick of wins when they take on an inconsistent Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday. Yadav has caught everyone's attention in the ongoing IPL with his raw pace and razor-sharp control, winning back-to-back player-of-the-match awards.

In his debut match against Punjab Kings, the 21-year-old returned impressive figures of 3/27, stunning England batter Jonny Bairstow with his searing pace. He followed that performance with 3/14 figures against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, blowing away Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell with a 151kmph delivery, and then cleaned up his teammate Cameron Green. His spectacular performances have led to debates within the cricketing community whether he should be



fast-tracked into the Indian team. But only two games can't be a parameter for a place in the Indian team. For Yadav, the crucial factor would be his consistency, which the national selectors will be closely following. On the batting front, LSG boast of a solid opening pair of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul. The South African has been in prime form

after a rare off day in the team's opener but the skipper needs to get his act together as he hasn't been able to capitalise on starts. The big-hitting Nicholas Pooran has been LSG's go-to-man in the finishing overs while Krunal Pandya was also handy in the last game. But the major concern for the Lucknow outfit remains the form

of Devdutt Padikkal and Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis.

In bowling, Yadav needs more support from the likes of Naveen-ul-Haq, Yash Thakur, Mohsin Khan, Stoinis, and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi. On the batting front, LSG, who are placed fourth with two wins out of three games, would also look to keep a clean slate at home and cash in on familiar conditions to register the third successive win this season. Gill, on the other hand, have had a mixed bag campaign so far under new captain Shubman Gill, winning two and losing two games to occupy the seventh spot on the points table. Gill, who scored an unbeaten 89 off 48 balls, found some much-needed runs in the previous game and would look to continue in the same vein.

B Sai Sudharsan has looked in good touch but would be on the lookout for a big score. However, the likes of Wriddhiman Saha and Vijay Shankar need to rise to the occasion. Mohit Sharma has been the stand-out performer for GT, but he needs

more support from the likes of Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad.

TEAMS (FROM)
GUJARAT TITANS: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Robin Minz, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Mandhara, B Sai Sudarshan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Shahrukh Khan, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Kartik Tyagi, Shshant Mishra, Spencer Johnson, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma and Manav Suthar.
LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS: KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yuvraj Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur, Amit Mishra, Shamar Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Mohd Arshad Khan.

RCB should try to chase targets to revive fortunes: Gavaskar

PTI ■ BENGALURU



Legendary batter Sunil Gavaskar said on Saturday that the embattled Royal Challengers Bengaluru should try to chase targets more to revive their fortunes in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL).

RCB are currently languishing at eighth place with two points from four matches, and in their fifth match they will face Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on Saturday. "Of course, the toss is not in your control. But at all possible opportunities, they should chase targets as batting is their strong point. I think that will give them a better chance at winning matches," said Gavaskar here during the cricket talk show, Midwicket Stories, which also featured England batting legend Geoffrey Boycott and former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull. Gavaskar was hinting at the out of form bowling unit of RCB that failed to defend totals on both the occasions they have been asked to. While chasing, the Bengaluru outfit has managed to eke out one win against Punjab Kings and went down against Lucknow Super Giants in the other.

Talking in general about the impact of T20, Gavaskar emphasised on the entertainment quotient it has brought to modern cricket. "Modern cricket is hard but entertaining. These days not many balls are being left and a lot more shots are being played - switch-hits, reverse scoops etc. The concept of taking the shine of balls is not followed as it was the norm in our times," he said. That brought the talk to the future of Test cricket, and Gavaskar said the longest format would not fade away as many have been fearing. "Test cricket is not dying, it will survive. Perhaps, three or four nations will play five-match series against each other while the rest will play the three-match series. I think that is going to be the way forward for that format," Gavaskar noted.



CSK committed to back players in search of new hero: Fleming

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Terming pacer Mukesh Chaudhary's poor performance against Sunrisers Hyderabad as "tough baptism", Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming asserted that the defending champions remain committed to support their players in search of "a new hero when short on firepower". CSK suffered a six wicket defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, their second loss of the season. Playing for the first time in the season, Mukesh, who was brought in as an Impact Sub, bowled the second-most expensive over of the 2024 IPL, conceding 27 runs. Handed the ball by skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad in the second over, the left-arm pacer, who was CSK's highest wicket-taker with 16 scalps in 2022, faced the wrath of the in-form Abhishek Sharma (37 off 12 balls) who hit him for three sixes and two fours. "We had a chance to introduce Mukesh Chaudhary today. He was

good for us a while back. It wasn't his day. But that's part of the IPL," Fleming said at the post-match press conference on Friday. "It's managing players, and when you do find yourself a little bit short on firepower, it's finding the new hero. It didn't happen today, but we put trust in the players that we introduced and they've been training well and doing the job. Tough baptism. "The first five or six overs were the best to bat, and the aggressive way in which they played showed that," he added. CSK had to rejig their team as they were without the services of pacers Mustafizur Rahman, who is back in Bangladesh to fetch his visa for T20 World Cup later this year and young Matheesha Pathirana. When asked if CSK missed Rahman, Fleming said: "Without a doubt, it's part of the IPL. He's not here, so we can't use him. "But having injuries and losing players in an IPL is part of the process," Fleming added.

Faltering MI, DC desperate to arrest slide

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A fit-again Suryakumar Yadav will be expected to immediately deliver the goods when faltering Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals lock horns in a bid to arrest their slide in their Indian Premier League clash here on Sunday. With three losses in a row, MI are languishing at the bottom whereas Delhi Capitals have spiralled down to the ninth spot in the 10-team points table following a 106-run hammering in their last match. If MI have once again made a characteristic start of falling into a hole with a string of defeats, the misfiring Delhi Capitals have had a similar fate suffering three losses from four outings and are

under pressure to bounce back. Suryakumar's potential return to action will keep him at the cynosure since the T20 World Cup follows this iteration of IPL immediately and his form and fitness will be crucial for the Indian campaign. Having spent the last three months nursing an ankle injury and recovering from a surgery for sports hernia, the world's premier T20 batter Suryakumar hit the ground running with his first training session here at the Wankhede Stadium on Friday. Along with strength and mobility exercises, Suryakumar batted without any visible discomfort to get back in the groove and gear up to come to the rescue of his struggling teammates,



who have collectively failed in all departments. At the top, both Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan have looked promising but neither has notched up a big score yet. The same can be said about the other Indian batters such

as Tilak Varma and Naman Dhir, who, irrespective of how appealing they have looked in the middle, are yet to deliver a match-winning performance. Even the embattled captain Hardik Pandya has not been able to inspire his side.

However, for someone who has been subjected to brutal reaction from fans inside the stadiums so far, there could be some respite as the contest on Sunday afternoon will be attended by more than 20,000 children. Akash Madhwal's three-for in their last match was the only positive from the bowling front, wherein MI changed the way they used Jasprit Bumrah by giving him three overs in the powerplay but did not have enough runs to challenge Rajasthan Royals. For DC, comeback star Rishabh Pant (152 runs) has found consistency with two consecutive fifties but he needs support from the others. Enduring the worst outing so far with the ball wherein DC

bowlers kept erring with the line and lengths to allow Kolkata Knight Riders pile up a humongous 272/7, the Pant-led side was short of spunk in reply with the bat to be bowled out for 166. David Warner (148 runs) and Tristan Stubbs have been marginally better than the other batters but Delhi will hope get the more out of swashbuckling Prithvi Shaw, for whom the Wankhede Stadium is a homeground. Mitchell Marsh has featured in each of Delhi's four matches so far but the burly Australian has not been able to impose himself on the opposition. Like a few others in his camp, Marsh too will be desperate to get a big score under the belt. Squads:

Fans should not boo Pandya, not his fault if named MI captain: Ganguly

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Saturday reprehended the fans booing Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya, saying it is not the fault of the player if he has replaced much-loved Rohit Sharma, who shepherded the team in previous seasons. Pandya has been at the receiving end of the fans' anger ever since Mumbai Indians announced that he will captain the five-time champions. The India all-rounder was booed in the first game that he played as MI skipper upon his return at the home ground of his previous franchise Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad. The trend continued when Pandya went to Hyderabad to face the Sunrisers Hyderabad and much to the surprise of



many, the 29-year-old was booed when Mumbai Indians played their first home match of the season against Rajasthan Royals. "I don't think they should boo Hardik Pandya. It's not correct," Ganguly told the

media here during Delhi Capitals' training session at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday. "It's not correct. The franchisee has appointed him as captain. That's what happens in sport. Whether you captain India or you captain a state or whether you captain your franchise, you are appointed as captain. "He's (been) appointed captain. Obviously, with Rohit Sharma he's a different class. His performance for this franchise, his performance for India has been at a different level as captain and as a player," the Director of Cricket for Delhi Capitals said. "But then it's not Hardik's fault that he's been appointed as captain. All of us need to understand that," he added. Mumbai Indians will take on Delhi Capitals on Sunday afternoon here.

Bazball is fine, but England Test team needs common sense: Boycott

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Batting legend Geoffrey Boycott on Saturday reiterated his aversion for England's 'Bazball' way of cricket, and exhorted the coaching staff to instill a dose of "common sense" to their methods. The root of Boycott's criticism was England's failure to emerge winners in two most important series -- in the Ashes against Australia in 2023 and in the series against India earlier this year. "There are some amazing decisions under Brendon McCullum (England Test head coach), as he has changed the (team's) mindset into more positive. But they have gone a bit too far with it. "They want to save England cricket, the whole of Test cricket. But no Sir, the objective is to win a Test match or series," said Boycott here during the cricket talk



show, Midwicket Stories, which also featured batting legend Sunil Gavaskar and former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull. Boycott said the England team should learn to respect opposition players and conditions. "We lost two Ashes Tests and with it the series, playing stupid cricket, and the same happened against India. They came to the series saying we have done practice in Abu Dhabi and all. But Players like

(Ravichandran) Ashwin, (Ravindra) Jadeja and Kuldeep (Yadav) got their wickets not without talent. "Heavens! Those three have some 900 wickets among them in Tests. And we have a captain (Ben Stokes) who does not bowl. So, play with aggression, which is fair, but have that bit of common sense too," said Boycott. The Yorkshire great, who made 8112 runs at an average of 47.72 with 22 hundreds as opener, also derided England's obsession with veteran pacer James Anderson, who recently completed 700 Test wickets. "To be fair to Jimmy, he was a great bowler, I mean he is still good. But he is not what he used to be as a bowler. When was the last time he bowled 20 overs or more in an innings, he bowled 12 or 14 overs per innings, and that puts pressure on other bowlers," noted Boycott.

Smith admits he needs to turn it around as Australia Test opener

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Australia batter Steve Smith has admitted finding it "challenging" as an opener in Test cricket but is eager to turn it around after going through a rough patch since taking up the role. Smith put his hand up to fill in the spot vacated by David Warner after he retired from Tests last Australian summer, but the former has had his share of troubles in his new batting position.

The move was indeed surprising since it diverted from the policy of appointing the specialists for the opening role including Cameron Bancroft, Matthew Renshaw and Marcus Harris. The promotion in the batting order certainly has not worked for the 34-year-old Smith, considered one of Australia's best-ever, since he has averaged a mere 28.50 in four Tests against his career average of 56.97 and nearing 10,000 runs. "I'm not reading too much into it. You know, I feel like I've still been



batting well." Smith, a member of the Star Sports Incredible Star Cast, told PTI in an exclusive interaction at the channel's studio here. "A few things I'd like to fix up a little bit technically, but I've had that going throughout my whole career, and it doesn't really matter where I'm at in that respect. We'll wait and see," he added. Smith has spent the majority of his Test career at No. 4 garnering 5,966 runs at 61.50 with 19 centuries and 26 fifties, while at No 3. He has made 1,744 runs at 67.07 with eight hundreds and

five half-centuries. For that matter, even at No 5, the right-handed batter has enjoyed success with 1,258 runs in 19 Tests at 57.18 with four centuries and six fifties. In his defence, Smith pointed out that while the pitches he batted on as opener were tricky, the opposition batters did not flourish on them too until the ball had lost its sheen. "It's been challenging so far. We've played with some tricky wickets, particularly new-ball wickets that have done quite a bit. It has been

challenging. I'd love to sort of turn it around and score some runs up there, that's for sure," he said. "(You) can't sort of underplay how difficult the wickets have been. A lot of the top orders that we've played against haven't scored a great deal of runs, and it hasn't been until the 30-40 overs-mark that we've seen the wickets get a little bit better and the lower order score some runs," he added. Former captain Tim Paine suggested Australia will be playing in India's hands if Smith is persisted at the top of the order

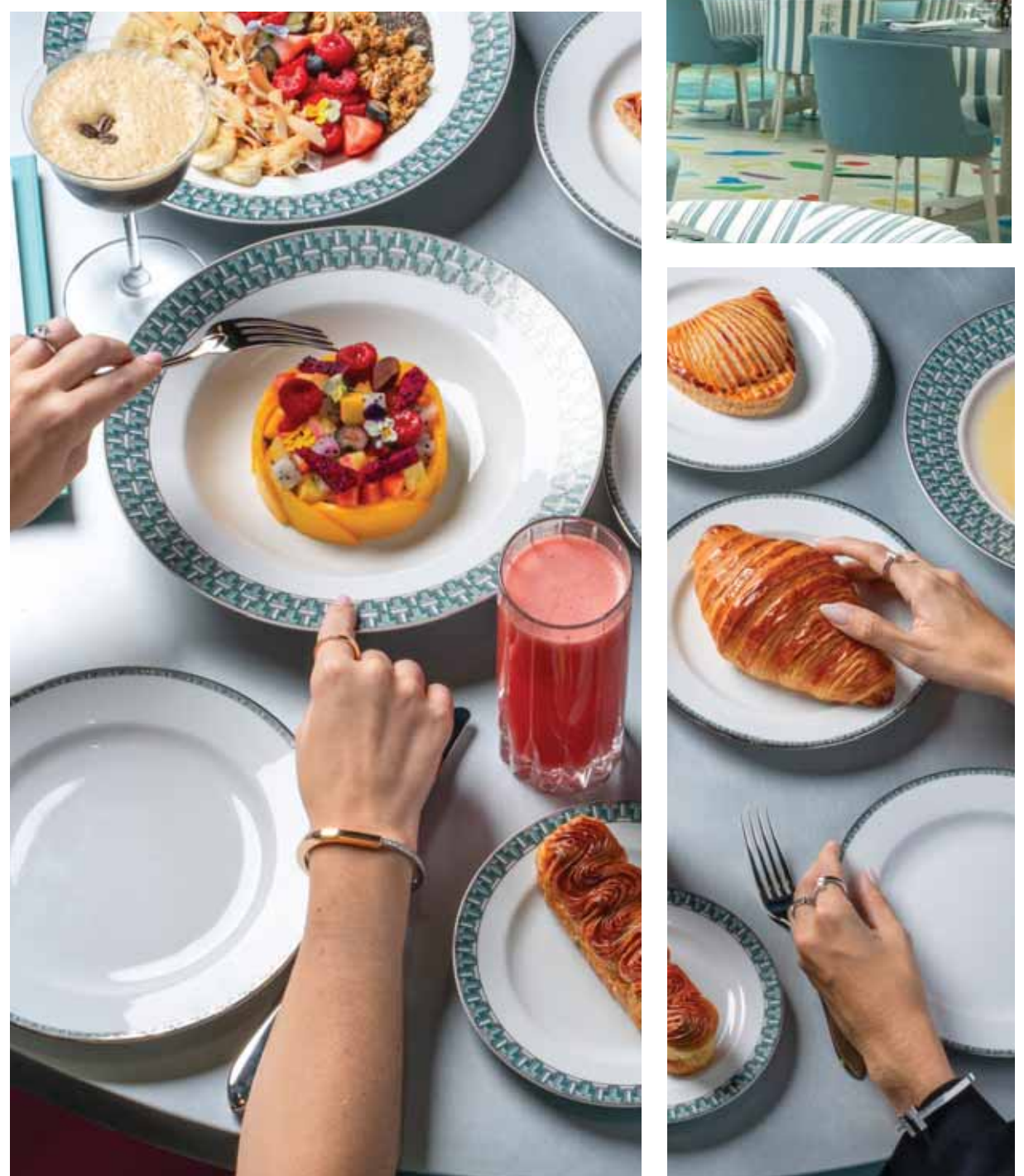
and not moved back to his usual No. 4 slot. The two teams are set to face-off in a five-Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy later this year and Smith, who remained non-committal about his future, said it was exciting to play that many games in the series. "We really enjoy playing against each other. There's that sort of rivalry there now and it's going to be five Test matches for the first time, which is exciting. I'm looking forward to this summer; it is going to be a great contest," he said.

"So long as you have food in your mouth, you have solved all questions for the time being"
— Franz Kafka



HOW ABOUT BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S?

Renowned for its lavishness and extravagance, Dubai unveils yet another culinary treasure in its illustrious array. Presenting a dining oasis exuding sheer opulence, the distinguished Dubai Mall now hosts a luminous addition - the prestigious Blue Box Cafe by iconic jewellery brand Tiffany & Co



BY RUPALI DEAN

Although Truman Capote's 1958 novella and the famous 1961 movie featuring Audrey Hepburn implied a fancy event called 'Breakfast at Tiffany's,' this didn't become a real thing until Blue Box Café first opened its doors in 2017. For those who do not know, the title refers to Holly Golightly, a lively Texan woman in the story, enjoying pastries while looking through the windows of the famous Tiffany & Co. store on Fifth Avenue, making this scene well-known. Bid adieu to your routine coffee pit stops and embrace a decadent experience sipping from the renowned 1837 Blue cups at the Blue Box Café, overseen by the talented French chef Marion Lefebvre. Outside, the café maintains the House's enchanting tradition of creating captivating window displays, a legacy immortalized in the cinematic masterpiece 'Breakfast at Tiffany's.' The café's interior reflects the ambiance of Landmark while drawing inspiration from Tiffany & Co.'s renowned Fifth Avenue store. It's like stepping into a magical place filled with blue and white colours that mirror the elegance, promising a chic and refined rendezvous that is simply unparalleled. An exclusive chandelier crafted from the signature blue-coloured boxes is a visual delight. The menu presents three distinct culinary experiences inspired by French influences on traditional New York fare: 'Breakfast at Tiffany's,' 'Afternoon Tea at Tiffany's,' and A La Carte all-day dining. Imagine enjoying a royal breakfast and pretending to be Audrey Hepburn. I get to have Breakfast at Tiffany's and taste Holly's



favourite dishes counting enjoying a delicious scrambled egg dish - the star of the prestigious Blue Box breakfast menu. Effortlessly blending global culinary influences, this establishment meticulously crafts a gastronomic journey that delves into the intricate textures and flavours of daily produce. The breakfast menu goes beyond Ms. Golightly's simple coffee and croissant, celebrating the flavours of both Paris and New York. I enjoy scrumptious pancakes, avocado toast, and a variety of pastries. With an unwavering passion for baking, the chef prides themselves on creating what could arguably be the finest croissants in the Middle East. Hand-crafted with pure



butter, these croissants are not only visually captivating but also transport one to the essence of French culinary tradition. A labour of love spanning three meticulous days, the croissant-making process unfolds in stages of initiation, lamination for layering, and proofing to achieve a golden-brown, caramelized spiral exterior. Each bite reveals hundreds of delicate, buttery layers meticulously formed as the croissants bake to perfection, exuding a symphony of flavours and textures that evoke a sense of indulgence and culinary excellence. I must admit, indulging in this was quite a lavish treat for myself. I truly loved the luxurious experience and would definitely suggest it to anyone who loves the movie, the song, or the brand. Or maybe you just want to feel like Audrey Hepburn for a bit. If you happen to be in Dubai and seek something truly unique to do, I highly recommend booking a table for breakfast (or afternoon tea!) at The Tiffany Blue Box Café.



The author is a travel, lifestyle and food writer and photographer

FACT BOX

Blue Box Café Dubai
Located at Tiffany & Co. flagship store, Grand Atrium, Dubai Mall
Tel: 04 250 4935
Email: reservations@blueboxcafedubai.com
Hours of Operation: Monday - Sunday: 10:00 AM - 12:00 AM

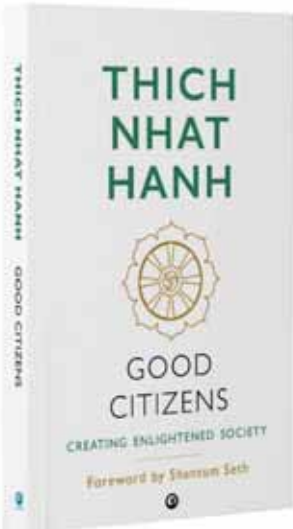
Through his life, his books, and his teachings, he continues to illuminate the path towards a world suffused with love, understanding, and mindfulness

THICH NHAT HANH

A GUIDE TO MINDFUL CITIZENSHIP, PEACE, AND ENLIGHTENMENT

BY GYANESHWAR DAYAL

In the midst of escalating stress and uncertainty, mindfulness emerges as an indispensable tool for navigating the complexities of modern life. The relentless pace of society, coupled with incessant demands and pressures, often leaves individuals feeling overwhelmed and disconnected. In such turbulent times, mindfulness offers a lifeline, providing a refuge amidst the chaos. By cultivating a present-centered awareness and cultivating an attitude of acceptance, individuals can develop resilience in the face of adversity. Mindfulness stands as a timeless practice with profound implications for modern living. In a world inundated with distractions and incessant stimuli, cultivating mindfulness offers a sanctuary of clarity and presence. By fostering a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, mindfulness enables individuals to navigate life's challenges with grace and equanimity. It serves as a



powerful tool for managing stress, anxiety, and emotional turmoil, allowing practitioners to cultivate resilience and inner peace amidst adversity. Moreover, mindfulness fosters deeper connections with oneself and others, fostering empathy, compassion, and understanding. As we

embrace mindfulness, we unlock the profound potential to live more fully, authentically, and harmoniously in a world that often pulls us away from the essence of our being. Mindfulness is the essence of Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching. He taught just that and what is most amazing. He did it so

effortlessly and calmly that even before one realised one was already drawn into it. Renowned globally as Thay, meaning "teacher" in Vietnamese, Thich Nhat Hanh embodies the essence of tranquility and wisdom. His journey, from the serene landscapes of central Vietnam to the bustling cities of the

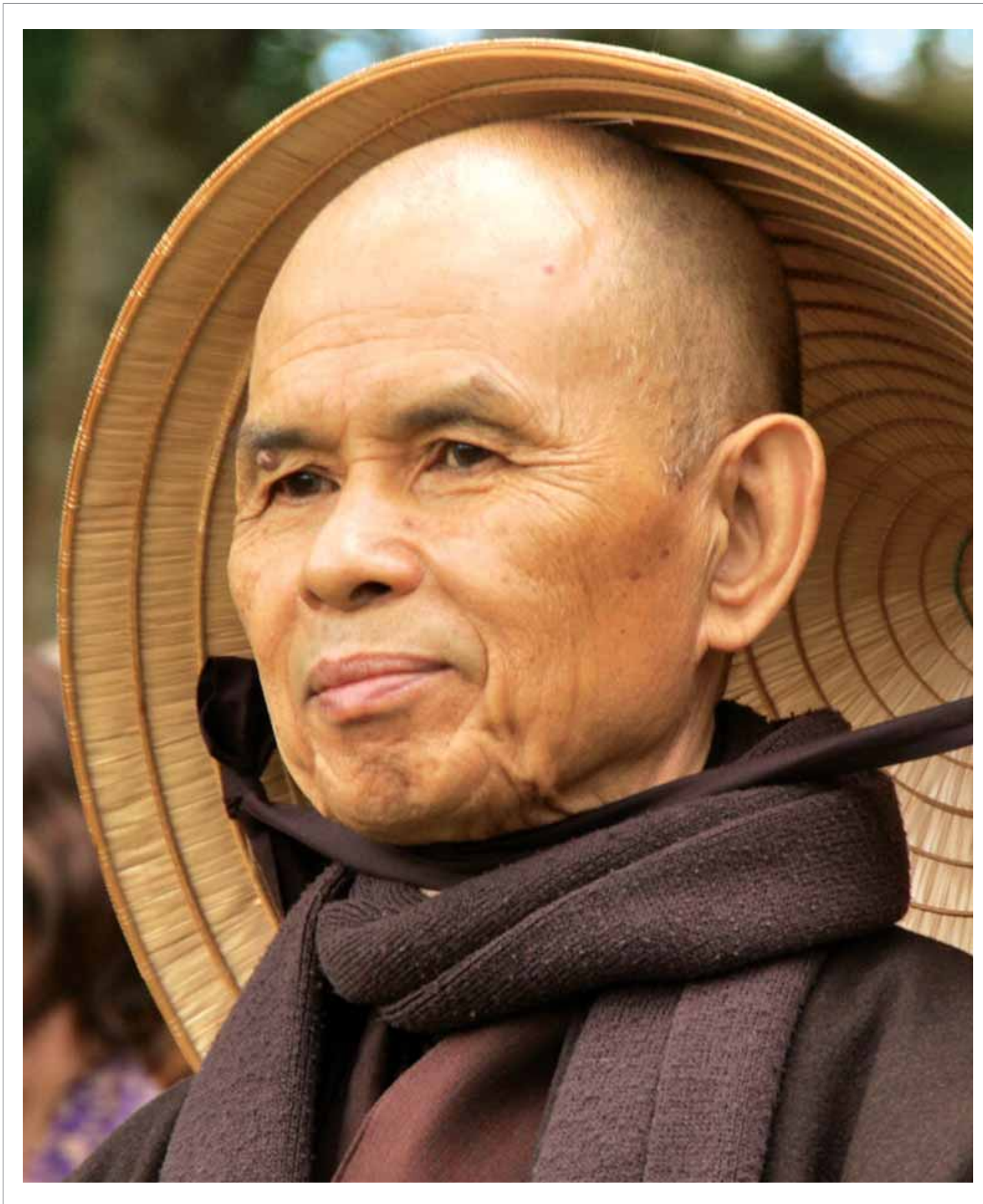
West, has been marked by a profound commitment to peace, compassion, and mindfulness. Ahimsa Trust recently organised a session of meditation and lectures to promote his teaching in New Delhi. The occasion was the launch of his book 'Good citizens.' In this book Thich

Nhat Hanh addresses citizens of every tradition, culture and religion to lay the foundations of a renewed ethic capable of leading humanity towards a world of peace and sharing of wealth, capable of overcoming divisions to live in total harmony. Through practical mindfulness exercises and examples taken from the life

of the Buddha, the Vietnamese monk indicates a path entirely based on the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism: through awareness of the existence of pain and the search for the roots of evil, we proceed to understand its causes to finally be able to embark on a path towards

happiness and found a global ethic based on mutual respect. Born in 1926, Nhat Hanh's spiritual odyssey began at the tender age of sixteen when he was ordained as a Buddhist monk. His early years were shaped by the tumultuous backdrop of war-torn Vietnam. Amidst the chaos, he co-founded the An Quang Buddhist Institute, a beacon of Buddhist studies amidst the strife. Embracing the teachings of Gandhi, he spearheaded nonviolent resistance movements, embodying the principles of Engaged Buddhism. In 1967 Martin Luther King Jr won the Nobel peace prize. In the crucible of war, Nhat Hanh faced a profound dilemma – whether to retreat into contemplation or to engage actively in alleviating suffering. Choosing the path of compassionate action, he founded the Engaged Buddhism movement, advocating for inner transformation as a catalyst for societal change. Throughout the 1960s, Nhat Hanh's endeavours blossomed, from founding the Van Hanh Buddhist University to establishing the Order of Interbeing, a testament to his commitment to peace and enlightenment. His tireless advocacy earned him a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 1967, a recognition of his unwavering dedication to nonviolence. Despite exile from his homeland, Nhat Hanh's message of peace resonated globally. His pilgrimage took him to the far corners of the earth, where he tirelessly advocated for harmony and compassion. It was during this time that Plum Village, a sanctuary of mindfulness, took root in France, blossoming into a vibrant community dedicated to mindful living. Nhat Hanh's teachings transcend boundaries, resonating across cultures and continents. His literary legacy, spanning over a hundred titles, serves as a beacon of enlightenment, guiding readers on the path to inner peace and understanding. Translated into myriad languages, his works continue to inspire and uplift souls worldwide.

In India, the seeds of Nhat Hanh's wisdom find fertile ground, with Ahimsa Trust leading the charge in disseminating his teachings. Publishers like Full Circle, Aleph, and Harper Collins have brought his works to Indian readers, fostering a culture of mindfulness and compassion. As Thich Nhat Hanh's legacy continues to flourish, his message of peace and enlightenment remains as vital as ever.



GURUSPEAK



SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR
Spiritual Guru

SHIVA

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ASPECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS



The auspicious night of Shivaratri represents the enlivening of the Shiva tattva (principle) — the most beautiful aspect of Consciousness

LORD Shiva is not a person or a figure. Shiva is the eternal tattva (principle) that is the essence of everything. It is the principle from which everything has come, which sustains everything and in which everything dissolves. How does one capture and express this tattva that is so subtle yet palpable? One of the expressions that encapsulate this most exquisite and unfathomable substratum of existence in its near totality, is the depiction of Shiva as Nataraja or the Cosmic Dancer. Nataraja is a fascinating symbol of the interplay between the material and the spiritual realms of creation. Of the 108 postures of the Nataraja the most adored and beautiful is the Ananda Tandava — the dance of bliss. The beauty, elegance and grace with which the Shiva Tandava is represented here is unparalleled. When one has access to mystical realms through deep sadhana and detachment to the material world, one is able to experience the Ananda Tandava. There are multiple dimensions of existence. One who has gained entry to the subtle realms of creation will find that the dance of Shiva is happening in a ceaseless continuum. This blissful dance of the cosmic rhythm can be enjoyed only after transcending the body, mind, intellect and ego complex. Though it is mistakenly



believed that Shiva took a human form and walked this planet, Shiva is Anadi — birthless, and Ananta — deathless. To limit Shiva to a form confined to time and space would be undermining the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of this Eternal Principle. The damaru in the upper right hand of the Dancing Shiva is in the shape of

infinity. It signifies sound and space and symbolizes the expanding and collapsing nature of the Universe. Through finite sound one can behold the infinite. The fire in the upper left hand of Nataraja represents the primordial energy of the cosmos. Ananda upholds energy while pleasure depletes it. The lower right hand, which is in abhaya mudra represents the



protection and assurance of orderliness. The other hand pointing to the feet is indicative of infinite possibilities. Underneath the feet is Apasmara, the demon that symbolizes ignorance and denotes the epileptic state in which there is absolutely no control over the body and the life force. When human consciousness is able to free itself from the shackles of ignorance and gains mastery over the body-mind complex, the dance of ecstasy starts dawning in life. The Ananda Tandava of Nataraja symbolizes the cosmic cycles of creation and destruction. The whole world is nothing but a rhythm of energy, rising and contracting again and again. Devas can only be perceived in the subtle realms or the sukshma jagat. Those who have gone deep in meditation have discovered this phenomenon. It is said that Deva Apraakrata Divya Manusha Rupa meaning the devas have non-material bodies of light which are

perceived in human form by human beings. The different forms of divinity that we see are the outer projections of what the sages observed in deep meditation. These inner experiences of the sages have found beautiful expressions in temples and the artistic landscape of India. The Chidambaram temple in Tamil Nadu is a magnificent representation of the cosmic stage of Nataraja. Chidambaram — 'Chit' meaning Consciousness and 'Ambar' meaning space — refers to the scintillating consciousness. The eternal dance of Shiva never occurred on earth. It is happening perpetually on the stage of consciousness. The central roof of the Chidambaram temple is adorned with 21,600 gold tiles, denoting the number of breaths taken by a human being in a day. The scriptures extol the Shiva Principle as being all-pervasive — Sarvam Shivamayam Jagat — everything in this world is an expression of Shiva. Shivaratri is the most unique time to rise above the mundane and bask in the supreme glory of the infinite, innocent and blissful Shiva tattva. Though the external worship to Shiva seems elaborate with numerous offerings, it is said the finest flowers used in Shiva's worship are knowledge, equanimity, and peace. Celebrating the Shiva tattva in oneself is real Shivaratri.



MANAN DWIVEDI

Immigration takes centre stage in US President primaries

President Biden faces Republican criticism over his policies, especially concerning Mexican migration. The issue gains momentum amid global observations of Trump's immigration clampdown and domestic instability in Mexico. These factors shape crucial debates in the upcoming elections

lections in any nation tend to be hotly and keenly contested occasions, whether it is the campaign utilising roaring tigers in Pakistan by the PML(N) or the whistle-stop tours of the American Presidential Elections. For a long time in the United States, immigration of aliens has been a theme that has drawn both strategic and political traction. In the contemporary context of the US Presidential primaries, before the elections heat up to a crescendo, President Joe Biden is being attacked by the Republicans for his stance and policies on immigration. Mexico stars in the debates and discussions wherein, once the migration of Mexican settlers increases to 5,000 people per day, then the American checkpoints close down.

Donald Trump and the Republicans do not intend to be seen as weak or soft on the theme of Mexican influx, so they assail President Biden whenever the opportunity arises.

According to one American survey, undocumented aliens account for around 11 million in the American homeland. They enter the nation and dissipate into the realm of unorganised vocations and the resultant economy, which has been a difficult challenge for investigative and law enforcement agencies. If one refers to the Hollywood flick, "Scarface," the entire American nation's mafia emigrated from Italy and other European nations and began to rule the political

and economic roost in the US, consistent with one assessment of the dark economy and societal nature.

The domestic situation in the nation-state of Mexico is also in a state of instability and flux as controversies cast a pall of despondency over the country. Reuters reported in one of its articles: "Huge crowds filled Mexico City's main square on Sunday in support of the nation's electoral authority, accusing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of trying to weaken the body ahead of a presidential election in June. The protests, one of several in recent years, meant to 'protect' the National Electoral Institute (INE), come after Lopez Obrador sent a sweeping package of constitutional reforms to Congress, which would include an overhaul of the INE."

One can hark back to the issue of illegal migration into the US from Mexico and South America. The Darien Gap is a stretch of densely forested land that serves as a conduit for illicit migration into the US territory. Depending on what they can pay, people trudge through the Darien swamp and walk for five to ten days at the mercy of criminal gangs who, after demanding a lump sum amount, often maim, mutilate, and rape the migrants in the Darien Gap. These are a few of the issues being debated in the US Presidential Election deliberations for November 2024.

In March 2024, a report



succinctly states that a highly anticipated bipartisan immigration and foreign aid bill was recently defeated by former President Trump, a staunch opponent of a border deal. He actively lobbied Republicans to vote against the bill, despite its inclusion of many provisions they had initially supported. Even Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell succumbed to Trump's influence, voting against the bill despite his role in its development and his prior efforts to garner support

within his party. This action by McConnell has further intensified the electoral confrontation between the two presidential candidates. With some Americans advocating strongly for immigration reforms, President Biden could leverage Republican intransigence on immigration to lay blame on Trump for obstructing progress on immigration policy. The rhetoric surrounding immigration policy remains highly divisive, potentially leading

to further recriminations from both presidential candidates. Further north in the United States of America, Republicans have seized upon illegal immigration as a pivotal issue in the 2024 Presidential primaries. While it might be considered hyperbolic, one cannot ignore the significant role immigration plays as an electoral issue that could sway the outcome of the US Presidential Elections. The notion of aliens posing a threat to national and

homeland security in the US has gained considerable political and popular traction. Republicans have intensified their criticism of President Biden's lenient approach towards the steady and unlawful influx of immigrants from South America through Mexico. This has emerged as a central electoral theme, eliciting considerable criticism and political upheaval. It has been argued that American immigration policies are failing. Recently, it's been contended that the

system is broken and could potentially harm President Biden's re-election prospects. In Latin America, for example, countries like Venezuela are suffering under the grip of kleptocracy, which adversely affects both the nation and its people. So, what is the solution? The pertinent question arises: do people migrate to the United States of America to escape repression and hardships, seeking the promise of a brighter future despite the perceived decline in America's fortunes?

Immigration laws are under scrutiny as Capitol Hill debates intensify. There are concerted efforts to amend immigration laws within the American homeland. Efforts to overhaul the nation's immigration laws, for the first time in decades, have gained sudden momentum. Additionally, the upcoming US Presidential election will likely revolve around the dilemma of whether citizenship or permanent resident status, signified by a green card, will become the prevailing norm, and how much emphasis the twin candidates will place on this issue.

There was a global impact of Trump's immigration clampdown, which was observed by IR experts and the legal fraternity.

The first executive order signed by President Trump disallowed migrants from seven West Asian nations to enter the American homeland.

One of the initial executive orders signed by President Joe Biden revoked these bans on migrants from Islamic

countries. These nations included Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Sudan. However, one cannot overlook the fact that the agencies responsible for monitoring and tracking terrorist outfits such as Boko Haram, ISIS, the Taliban, and Al-Shabaab are the worst affected when deals occur between political leaders. Trump's bravado, premised upon the theme of immigration, resulted in a plethora of economic costs and was fraught with political risks.

Several European nations, similar to the United States of America, are facing the menace of migration from conflict zones such as Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq, thereby initiating talks of fencing and walling the frontiers and borders, which is exactly what former President Trump also advocated on the global stage, specifically in America. As a telling fact, the cost of managing the Oresund bridge between Denmark and Sweden is a significant amount. Additionally, apart from Mexican human outages, gun running, and drug trafficking pose a perilous threat to the homeland security of the United States of America.

In the Hollywood film "The Mule," released in 2018, Clint Eastwood's character, Earl Stone, indulges in drug trafficking after his flower farming business goes bankrupt.

(The writer teaches International Relations and International Organisations, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi)

PERSPECTIVE

CAA: Why the hullabaloo?



MAKHAN SAIKIA

The CAA is not anti-Muslim; it just prioritises citizenship for persecuted minorities, not others, from three neighbouring countries. Future legislation may address concerns for Tamils and Rohingyas. Recognising historical context, it aims to assist six religious groups seeking refuge in India. Importantly, the CAA doesn't prevent Muslims from these countries from applying for Indian citizenship

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) marks a watershed moment in India's electoral system. The government amended the Citizenship Amendment Act 1955 to facilitate citizenship acquisition for religious minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, reducing the qualification period from 11 years to 5 years under the new law.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) was initially introduced in Parliament in the Lok Sabha in 2016 by amending the existing Citizenship Act 1955. Subsequently, the Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), which submitted its report on January 7, 2019. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill the following day, but with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha, the Bill lapsed.

By December 9, the Bill was reintroduced by Home Minister Amit Shah in the 17th Lok Sabha and passed on December 10. The Upper House, Rajya Sabha, also passed the Bill on December 11, 2019. This outlines the journey of the present CAA through both houses of Parliament, culminating in its establishment as a crucial piece of legislation.

The Act is drawing both national and international attention for three main reasons: First, it offers citizenship to six persecuted religious and undocumented groups who arrived in India from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014. These groups include Hindus, Jains, Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians. Second, it excludes Muslims from these countries from applying for citizenship in India.

Third, the Narendra Modi Government introduced the Act just one month before parliamentary and assembly polls in some states. Now, the critical question arises: why is the Act sparking Opposition ire and protests in some States?

The central point of controversy is its alleged discrimination against Muslims, as it does not offer citizenship to Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Critics argue that Muslim minorities such as the Baloch, Shia, Ahmadiyya of Pakistan, Hazras from Afghanistan, Rohingyas from Myanmar, and Tamils from Sri Lanka face religious persecution in their homelands, yet they are not covered by the Act. Second, critics contend that the CAA violates Article 14 (Right to Equality), the first Fundamental Right mentioned in Part III of our Constitution, by providing a classification of citizens based on religion, which is prohibited under this Article. Third, it allegedly seriously violates the historic Assam Accord signed between the All Assam Students Association (AASU) and the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress Government in 1985. This accord set the cutoff date for entry of illegal migrants to Assam as March 24, 1971, whereas the current Act pushes this cutoff date to December 31, 2014. Moreover, there is widespread fear that once these illegal migrants from six religious groups become citizens, they will have access to all other rights and facilities like the locals, thus burdening Assam's limited economic resources.

Meanwhile, the matter has reached the Supreme Court, with nearly 237 petitioners approaching the top court to stall the immediate implementation of the CAA. Under this Act, the Government can fast-track the grant of Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. The lead petitioner in the case is the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). During an oral mention of the case last week by a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, efforts were made to calm the



apprehensions of all petitioners regarding the fast-tracking of the citizenship acquisition process by the Union Government. Again, the Supreme Court has agreed to consider the question of staying the operation of the new Citizenship Amendment Rules of 2024 on April 9. However, so far, there is no official statement from the Government indicating that it would not grant fast-track citizenship to the aforementioned groups of people. Today, the main arguments emerging in the Supreme Court include: the rules governing the CAA are based solely on religious grounds; once citizenship is granted, it cannot be reversed; and the Act has eliminated the scrutiny of new citizenship applications by District Collectors and the recommendations of respective State Governments. Opposition parties and various petitioners are also arguing that if the Government could wait for the last five years, it should be willing to wait for a few more months to implement the CAA.

Now, the irony lies in why countries like America are so concerned about an internal issue of India. India is a democratic country, and its Constitution provides equal rights

and opportunities to all its citizens, including religious minorities, since its independence and the very inception of the Constitution itself. American Senator Ben Cardin is raising the seriousness of the issue by branding this Act as controversial and also questioning the intentions of the Indian Government as it deeply impacts Muslims, especially during their holy month of Ramadan. He speaks about the Indo-US relationship, based on shared values, where we need to be concerned about the protection of human rights for every person regardless of religion. It is true, we need to respect the human rights of all minorities, including Muslims.

But sadly, the people of India in general and the Government of India in particular do not need to learn lessons on human rights from any foreign parliamentarian like Cardin. India's long history and cultural traditions have displayed enough of our tolerance and mutual co-existence, demonstrating how this land has accepted people from various civilisational roots. Instead, Cardin should focus on how his own country is engaged in wars after wars in many Muslim nations, especially in the West Asia, leaving

behind a trail of human rights violations for years now.

By now, the US should have been able to stop its closest ally Israel from carrying out bloodshed against the Palestinians, a war conducted in the name of fighting Hamas militants. Before pointing fingers at Vladimir Putin (for the Ukraine invasion) and Xi Jinping (for the alleged genocide of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang), America should introspect and assess its actions worldwide.

The Ministry of External Affairs has already termed the American statement on the CAA as "misplaced, misinformed, and unwarranted". It has categorically said: "The CAA 2019 is an internal matter of India, showcasing the inclusiveness of Indian society. The CAA is an act of granting citizenship, not of revoking it." For the Opposition parties in the country (INDIA Bloc), their aim is not simply to oppose the NDA Government at the centre, but specifically the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With the CAA, they have yet another issue to raise concerns about the Muslim minority in the country. Frankly speaking, for decades, the Congress ruled this country and many of the States. The grand old party, with its visionaries on board, should have already addressed the plight of persecuted minorities, including the Tamils from Sri Lanka, in India.

It is clear that the CAA is not against Muslims. This Act is designed to offer expedited citizenship only to persecuted minorities as mentioned in it, not to others. Therefore, a new legislation can be considered by the Government in the future for Tamils and Rohingyas. In fact, this new law acknowledges the historical background of partition and aims to address the plight of these six religious groups who sought refuge in India. The CAA does not prohibit Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan from applying for

Indian citizenship.

The CAA does not violate Article 14. In the 1997 case of David John Hopkins vs Union of India, the Madras High Court clarified that the Union Government's right to refuse citizenship is absolute and not fettered by equal protection under Article 14.

Similarly, in the 1991 case of Louis De Raedt vs Union of India, the Supreme Court held that the right of a foreigner in India is confined to Article 21, and they cannot seek citizenship as a matter of right. These judgments make it clear that citizenship is not a matter of right for any foreign citizen in this country. It must be emphasised that the Union Government has the final power to decide the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters under Article 11. Additionally, the CAA has been implemented under the Seventh Schedule, which includes citizenship in the Union List, making Parliament the sole authority to decide on this matter. State governments, currently refusing to implement it (such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala), have no final say in this matter.

Also, the CAA does not change or dilute the Assam Accord, as it is applicable throughout India. It does not apply to the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura, nor to areas under the Inner Line Permit prescribed by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873. Lastly, the Opposition and the hundreds of petitioners should have enough faith in the apex court of this country, as the matter has already been brought before it. The court will decide the fate of this Act, determining whether it violates the basic tenets of the Constitution, including secularism, and other pertinent issues raised by the petitioners so far.

(The writer is currently President of the Global Research Foundation.)

I THINK A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IS NOT SO MUCH A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY. IT'S A JOURNEY OF RECOVERY. IT'S A JOURNEY OF UNCOVERING YOUR OWN INNER NATURE. IT'S ALREADY THERE — BILLY CORGAN

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

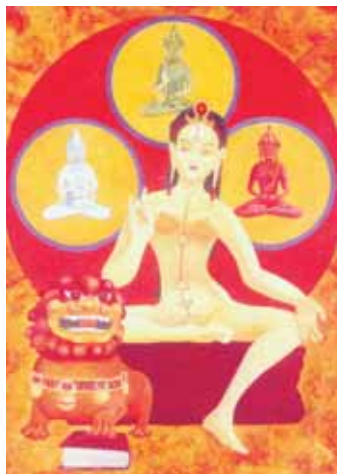
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week heralds a period of significant prosperity, with early indications suggesting a noteworthy improvement in financial standings. The onset of the week might surprise you with an unexpected increase in income, setting the tone for a period of joy and revelry. Celebrations of professional achievements will not only bring personal joy but also familial contentment. This period shines particularly brightly for the influential women in your life, who will exhibit remarkable vitality and ingenuity, becoming pillars of joy and support. The possibility of celebratory events, possibly marking new beginnings or joyous additions to the family, will bring loved ones closer, strengthening bonds through shared joy. As the week concludes, anticipate a shift in perspective, perhaps a newfound understanding or belief, paving the way for a future rich in potential and fulfillment.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week calls for a measured approach, urging you to temper your enthusiasm and curb any impulsive behavior. Strive for balance, as moments poised to enrich your life may instead become marred by an inflated sense of self or indifference toward others. While it's important to hold your dignity in high regard, maintaining respect for yourself and those around you is equally crucial. You might find yourself on the cusp of developments that could stir envy among competitors. Moreover, be vigilant against potential deceit or harmful intentions directed at you. This period warrants caution—pay close attention to the motivations and actions of those around you, adjusting your interactions to navigate their intentions wisely. Additionally, safeguard your valuable possessions and remain observant of those who work for you or with you.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you are poised to experience a surge of strength and illumination, guiding your endeavors to fruitful outcomes. Your energy finds its way to where it's needed most, empowering you to confront challenges and reach for your dreams with unwavering determination. An occasion for celebration may arise within your home, bringing joy and fulfilling a longstanding desire. This could manifest through moments of happiness linked to family, such as significant achievements by younger members or realizing educational aspirations. Your belief in your abilities, combined with a deep trust in a greater force, cultivates a positive atmosphere that turns aspirations into realities. Moreover, this period might also highlight opportunities in significant property transactions, signaling a time of pivotal changes and progress.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Thursday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week finds you in a swirl of deep feelings and heightened empathy, placing you in a position of strength when it comes to nurturing those close to you. Your natural inclination to offer support and guidance is prominently highlighted, making you a sought-after source of wisdom. However, there's a gentle reminder to not let these emotive currents distract you from your professional obligations. It's important to stay vigilant and grounded, as there's a chance others might misinterpret your kindness for naivety. Crafting and following through on fresh strategies are key to maintaining both emotional balance and material success. Without proactive efforts and a focus on your ambitions, you risk being caught in a loop of unproductive daydreams. Striving for equilibrium and keeping a close watch on your aspirations are crucial this week.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Thursday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Currently, you might be experiencing a profound sense of solitude and a feeling of being disconnected from daily life. This could stem from challenges in personal relationships, such as difficulties in love or separation. Professionally, obstacles may seem insurmountable, despite your diligent efforts and patience. However, it's crucial to stay alert and recognize your inner strengths, preparing to use them if necessary. This period represents a significant test from adversarial forces, but it's also a precursor to achieving your objectives. Embrace the potential for personal transformation. Assistance may come from an unexpected ally, whose guidance will help you navigate through these challenges. By the week's end, a newfound confidence will emerge, paving the way for accomplishments and fresh starts in various aspects of your life.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may find yourself navigating a mix of feelings and detachment in close relationships. Partnerships might face several challenges, with minor issues leading to emotional outbursts, disagreements, and eventual resolutions that align with mutual understanding. In your professional life, your kindness and generosity shine through. An unexpected boost in your financial situation will bring a sense of security, highlighting your adeptness at balancing both personal and financial matters with skill and effectiveness. Your willingness to invest time and effort, coupled with your reliable and trustworthy nature, makes you a dependable figure. Your eagerness to explore new knowledge fuels your ambition and sets a positive example for those around you. Standing firm in your values, you advocate for yourself and your beliefs, embodying integrity and leadership.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, your strength lies not in physical prowess but in the influence you wield. Your ability to lead and inspire is paramount, setting a tone of authority and rigor. However, your focus on discipline and control may overshadow emotional connections, potentially leading to estrangement or misunderstandings in personal relationships. A particular challenge may arise regarding a significant personal choice, facing opposition from a maternal figure, sparking familial debates. Midway through the week, external pressures may leave you feeling constrained, struggling to navigate these personal dilemmas independently. Nevertheless, as the week concludes, you find yourself in a better position both materially and emotionally. A figure of authority, possibly a paternal presence, will extend their support, offering a balanced perspective that paves the way for future accomplishments.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

In this phase of your journey, expect shifts that herald positivity. Encounters with estrangement in personal bonds may occur, bringing about profound emotional challenges. The shadow of apprehension over potential setbacks looms; however, embracing these apprehensions as catalysts for personal fortification invites remarkable resilience. The essence of bravery blooms only in the soil of adversity. Should a door to advancement swing open, step through with unwavering resolve, gripping the reins of boldness firmly. The present moment beckons you closer to your aspirations—dismiss hesitations, allowing no barrier to deter your progress. Should self-reflection reveal dissatisfaction with past efforts or outcomes, it's a signal to reassess your strategies and explore fresh avenues. Aligning your actions with your core intentions may steer you towards a fulfilling trajectory.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Navy Blue
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week presents an opportunity for significant personal growth and influence for those who thrive on ambition and integrity. You'll find yourself in a unique position where direct communication with influential figures is not just possible but encouraged. Embrace the surge of energy that propels you to connect deeply with others, serving as a beacon of guidance and stability. Your ability to maintain a harmonious balance in all aspects of life shines through, bolstering your resilience and decision-making prowess. As you navigate this period, your presence commands respect and admiration, fostering a fair and truthful environment. Your unwavering commitment to your principles, coupled with your holistic vision, allows you to lead and inspire. This time is marked by your capacity to influence and enact positive change, setting a standard for leadership and personal accountability.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Monday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week, embrace a period of tranquility and rejuvenation. It's essential to prioritize self-care through activities that nurture both your physical and emotional well-being. Consider engaging in practices that ground you and bring a sense of calm, such as engaging in gentle exercise, experiencing the natural beauty around you, and ensuring you get ample rest. This foundation of self-care will equip you to navigate the energetic pace of life that awaits. Expect a flurry of creative projects, professional endeavors, and opportunities for travel that will require your full engagement. There may be positive developments in your career, perhaps acknowledgments like a raise or a new role. On the home front, prepare for a bustling environment with family obligations, particularly involving children, leading to some financial outlays for their needs.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Tuesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You possess remarkable strength, bordering on overwhelming, fueled by a dominant force that guides your actions and decisions. Your ability to penetrate the essence of any situation with your sharp insight and perception is unparalleled. This period marks an apex in understanding and cognitive clarity, making the attainment of your objectives seem almost effortless. This is an opportune moment to dispel any confusion that has obscured your view of the truth and to sever the ties with the past that have constrained your progress. Concentrate on what you wish to achieve. This phase also heralds a profound spiritual renewal. You're encouraged to harmonize with the natural world—consider engaging in morning or evening strolls, embracing practices that center your mind and body.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Lemon Yellow
Lucky day Tuesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You possess boundless capabilities that enable you to change and shape your future as you wish. Although it's not feasible for everyone to unravel every mystery and hidden truth, you stand as a beacon for those eager to explore the depths of their own capabilities and unearth their latent talents. You adhere to a fundamental principle of balance, recognizing that each choice you make sets in motion a chain of events reflective of your intentions. To cultivate positive outcomes, it's essential to make decisions aligned with the outcomes you desire. This awareness and purposeful action pave the way for profound achievements and the resolution of many challenges. Anticipate significant opportunities for growth and exploration that may prompt you to embark on new paths.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Ivory
Lucky day Wednesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Control the monkey mind



will know no limits. The irony, however, is that invariably human beings are not aware of their own true self. For, they are born with a clouded and pre-conditioned mind. Stuck to the limits circumscribed, they fail to have access to full landscape of mind. One's mind power, thus, remains restricted. It is said that human beings have access to just 5 to 7 percent of their mind-power by default. More than that is subject to our conscious efforts. If, however, even

if they can make optimum use of whatever they have in hand, they could successfully negotiate the usual callings of life with ease and comfort. The irony, however, is that an ordinary mortal, caught up in the thought web of their own making, dissipate a considerable sum of their mind power over inconsequential acts. Attending to carryover effect of negative imprints picked up in the past they often develop sense of insecurity over assumed thoughts and dream perceptions. That in turn, leads to unnecessary stress. Consequently, they are hardly left with enough to do justice to their priority preferences, and with obvious consequences. It will be interesting to note that human beings carry both animalistic instincts and humane virtues. Which of the two drives a being would depend on how one's mind is oriented. The irony of the whole situation is that one's animalistic instincts keep playing their part involuntarily from the front. But one's virtues need to be identified, acknowledged, honed, and then consciously invoked for bringing them to use.

What stands in the way is that human mind is fragile. It keeps randomly flitting around with varied thoughts, something like a monkey unmindfully jumping from one branch of a tree to the other. It, thus, becomes incumbent upon a being to first control one's monkey-mind, for the indwelling virtues to play out unhindered. And that can be achieved following the two-stage meditation process. Pursuing Dhyana, with focus on Lord Hanuman, would inspire the seeker to imbibe his spirit. Accordingly, one would be tempted to explore, identify, and acknowledge, inlaid virtues, and then hone them, so that they become worth use in contemporary terms. And because Lord Hanuman is identified with valour, reflecting on His imagery may also help get over the sense of fear and insecurity if any. Also, it may grant the will and resolve needed to take on the challenges ahead in life in all strength.

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