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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Orange hills

Nainital is just one example of ongoing forest fires damaging the fragile ecosystem in Uttarakhand

Historically, Uttarakhand is somehow a little more prone than other hill States in India to the scourge of frequent forest fires, especially in summers. Otherwise famous for its breathtaking beauty and lush greenery, the State has of late again experienced a series of jungle blazes: To give an idea of the seriousness of the situation, more than 500 have been reported since January and one almost every hour in the past 24 hours. The latest incident has struck perilously close to the inhabited areas in Nainital, gutting 108 ha of forest land and sounding alarm bells for the residents and authorities alike. With the situation worsening, the Army and IAF have been pressed into action to aid containment efforts. These fires, often man-made to clear dead vegetation or fuelled by natural friction amid dry vegetation and exacerbated by strong winds, pose a significant threat to the fragile ecosystem. Despite concerted containment efforts, the inferno has spread its tendrils closer to human population. The IAF helicopters equipped



with water-spraying capabilities are deployed to douse the flames, offering a crucial advantage in reaching inaccessible terrain. Additionally, Army personnel are working on ground to create firebreaks and prevent further spread. As for the bright side of this challenge, the wildfires have brought out the best in humans — cooperating with authorities and fighting it together. Amid the suffocating chaos and burning uncertainty, the spirit of community resilience has shone brightly. Local residents, alongside volunteers and NGOs, have rallied together to support firefighting efforts and offer assistance to those affected.

From food and shelter to lending a helping hand in evacuation efforts, the collective response has underscored the strength of solidarity in the face of adversity. However, these forest fires carry grave environmental implications. The loss of precious flora and fauna, coupled with the release of harmful pollutants into the atmosphere, underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate future fire outbreaks. Strengthening forest management practices, implementing early warning systems and fostering community awareness are paramount in safeguarding the region's biodiversity and mitigating the risk of catastrophic wildfires. It is about time that a comprehensive policy was framed to fight the wildfire menace. The Uttarakhand Government must draw from the US experiences in California, where such fires are frequent but they manage them rather well and swiftly with an early warning system, besides a mechanism for controlled burns. As the battle against the Nainital forest fire rages on, it serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of our natural ecosystems as also the resilience of the human spirit. With the combined efforts of authorities, armed forces and local communities, there is hope that the flames will soon be extinguished. However, the aftermath of this crisis should serve as a catalyst for concerted action towards building a more resilient and sustainable future for Uttarakhand and beyond.

### PICTALK



'Veerakumars' gather to participate in the the Karaga festival at Sri Dharmarajana Swamy Temple, in Bengaluru

# Pakistan paying for its misplaced priorities



BHOPINDER SINGH

Ambassador Asif Durrani acknowledges the Pak Government's shortcomings in handling the Afghanistan situation and underscores a reality check for Islamabad's foreign policy

Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan, Ambassador Asif Durrani, conceded the grave reality of the Pakistani Government's abject failure in Afghanistan. Speaking at a conference titled, "Pakistan in the Emerging Geopolitical Landscape", the diplomat accepted that the ensuing price of the flared tensions along the Durand Line far exceeded the human and financial cost of all the wars with India, put together!

Cold and frightening statistics like the loss of over 80,000 lives in the so-called 'War on Terror' which Islamabad joined in 2001 (including 8000 security personnel) and an estimated economic loss of \$150 billion—the reality check of what ought to worry Pakistan, i.e., between its traditional enemy across the Line-of-Control, or the one across the Durand Line—couldn't have been clearer. To make matters worse for Islamabad, it isn't even close to the end of its miseries as the deadly attacks by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have shot up by 65% and the accompanying suicide attacks by 500%! In such a scenario to persist with India as the 'enemy number 1' is not only to suffer from an acute sense of Ostrich syndrome, but also to refuse the hard lessons of Karma i.e., what goes around, comes around.

The fixation with India owes itself to the wounds of the partition and the desperate need of various institutions to have an 'enemy' to legitimise themselves in the eyes of the citizenry e.g., clergy, military, politicians etc., as also, as to defend the flawed 'two-nation theory' that ostensibly rationalises Pakistan. The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 exposed the hollowness and amorality of a nation created in the name of religion - the current equation with Afghanistan further exposes the untenability of a relationship based on co-religionism. That religion can never be the basis of nationhood or indeed ensure a 'brotherly relation' (as insincerely claimed) with a neighbour, is further proved. At the end of the day, what matters is, 'intent' or neat. Over time, intent has an



inevitable way of revealing itself that cannot be suppressed by homilies of co-religiousity. As the speech by Ambassador Durrani accepted, "After the withdrawal of NATO forces, it was hoped that peace in Afghanistan would bring peace to the region. However, such expectations were short-lived". Anyone with a modicum of understanding about history (especially about Afghanistan, the home to many 'Great Games') ought to have known that to 'control' the narrative in Afghanistan was not just impossible and impractical, but also counter-productive. The worst-kept secret of nurturing a desire to have 'Strategic Depth' in Afghanistan could not be hidden even from its creation, the Afghan Taliban. While the Afghans had accepted the support and infrastructure afforded by Pakistani regimes of all hues and shades since the late 1970's — to expect the proud Afghan (even a Pak-created Taliban) to toe Islamabad's line blindly was an affront to the cultural-civilisational identity of an Afghan. Not only did the Taliban Government bolt out from the shackles of controls, 'advisories' and condescending platitudes from Islamabad, but it knowingly harboured and supported its ideological offshoot i.e., the Pak-facing Tehreek-e-Taliban



THE PROJECT OF DEMONISING INDIA BY THE PAKISTANIS HAS FAILED SPECTACULARLY AMONGST THE CONSERVATIVE AFGHANS, AS EVEN THEY HARBOUR A RATHER WARM PERCEPTION OF THE INDIANS, AS OPPOSED TO THAT OF THE PAKISTANIS

Pakistan (TTP) fighters, who attack Pakistan with impunity and deadly consequences. A grim observation of the situation suggests that the attacks on Pakistan are not just a phenomenon afflicting disaffected Pakistani folks across the Afghan side, but that the "worrying aspect is the participation of Afghan nationals in these attacks". Basically, either as genuinely motivated or even as trained mercenaries, Afghan nationals are attacking Pakistan! The project of demonising India by the Pakistanis has failed spectacularly amongst the conservative Afghans, as even they harbour a rather warm perception of the Indians, as opposed to that of the Pakistanis. At the end of the day, the difference in sovereign intent emanating from Islamabad, versus those emanating from Delhi, has surfaced. Beyond certain constraints mandated by their self-invested image, ideology and inert conservatism, the language used by the Taliban Government officials bears a stark contrast, from the one that was imagined when the US/NATO forces abandoned Kabul and the Taliban stormed into Kabul. Today, given the 'dark' investments made by the Pakistani State it finds itself in an awkward and inextricable position. Try hard as it might, the

Pakistanis are struggling to undo and trace back the steps that it took to create the prevailing environment, infrastructure and instinct in the region. As Ambassador Durrani lamented, "Afghanistan has become a permanent fixture in Pakistan's regional paradigm for over four decades". Therefore, all support or otherwise to Pakistan is seen from the lens of Afghanistan. Ironically, Pakistani complaints about the situation with Afghanistan fall on deaf ears as the global community attributes much of what went wrong with the Afghan storyline, to the Pakistanis themselves. In some sense, it is a 'cry wolf' situation for the Pakistanis and there simply aren't too many takers or sympathisers of the Pakistani woes. A deeper introspection would reveal the rot in the thinking of the Pakistani system set in 1947 when it thought that religion was to be its trump card. History is instructive, that religion can never be a basis of Statehood for any moral and sustainable nation. Both Bangladesh and Afghanistan discredit the 'two-nation theory' (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SC UPHOLDS EVMs

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Supreme Court rejects 100 per cent VVPAT verification plea", published on April 27, this is my response. The Supreme Court has rightly reaffirmed its faith in the working of EVMs and refused the return of ballot papers. They seem to be satisfied with several safeguards and stringent checks which have been an integral part of EVM functioning. It is also a welcome move by the court that they have now given number 2 and 3 placed candidates an option to check and verify 5 per cent microchips per assembly segment so that they remain fully satisfied. One additional burden the Election Commission has to make is to also store symbol loading units for 45 days in addition to EVMs. Now hopefully this EVM issue should be closed for good and the opposition must create a narrative which resonates with the voters. The ruling party has given a lot of opportunities to the opposition where the former could have been put on the mat but the latter failed to do so. There are still 5 phases to go in the current elections and the opposition would do better to channel their energy in the right direction and highlight BJP's negative points than keep crying over EVMs.

Bal Govind | Noida

### JAMMU ELECTIONS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Stage set for phase II LS Polls", published on April 25, this is my response. The second phase of the Lok Sabha elections is completed now. The EVMs had made it captured the fate of Jammu as well. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are specifically annoyed with the governance of J&K as a Union Territory. The bigger mandate of J&K so disclosed appears to be extremely annoying with the BJP the people want to topple the UT administration to put in place proper Statehood.

### No moral high ground for India or the US



Apropos the editorial, "All is well", published on April 27, this is my response. Neither the US nor India can claim to be on the moral high ground to point an accusing finger at each other. The regularly occurring deaths of Indian students in the US are as much a blot on that nation as are the deaths of hundreds of innocent Manipuris in the State of Manipur. India's response to the allegations made by the USA has been rather dismissive because we all know the truth about Manipur. The US apart, even the Opposition parties of India had raised a quarrel over the situation in Manipur and rightly so. Therefore, for India to say that the US report is "deeply biased" and reflects a "significant misunderstanding of the ground realities" is to turn a blind eye to the facts. Both countries need to introspect and take measures to set their own house in order instead of indulging in a provocative blame game.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

The hope of Congress restoration is high along with the National Conference & PDP party compared to the Bhartiya Janta Party. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are anxiously waiting for this very moment. Hope the design will be fulfilled soon and very soon Jammu and Kashmir will enjoy complete Statehood like other Indian States.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

### STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

Madam — In every domain, women are enchanting their presence. The inclusion of women in the decision-making process is their fundamental right and it is also pivotal for sustainable development. If women have significant representation, We will attain legal parity in economic opportunities and also unleash the benefits and economic progressions linked with this assortment. Also, they will influence voter's opinions, mobilise support and actively participate in the electoral process. A

paradigm shift of the Government's strong focus on women-led development, going beyond women-centric, represents a key pillar of India's progress. The Government is promoting women's empowerment by implementing a host of schemes, like, Skill Upgradation and Mahila Coir Yojana, Women Scientists Scheme, PM Mudra Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana and many more. On top of that The Women's Reservation Bill passed by the parliament, gave women a significant voice in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies. In 2024, the launch of the Alliance for Global Good-Equity and Equality, focus on investing in women with the theme for International Women's Day 2024 - "Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress," shows that Indian leadership is now gaining global recognition for women's empowerment.

Apurva Garg | Ujjain

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## Political parties must prioritise environmental preservation

Political leadership must prioritise sustainability and combating plastic pollution to safeguard ecosystems and human health



BIJU DHARAMPALAN

It's election time in India and various political parties vie for their space in the hearts of the public. Even when political parties give multiple offers, including providing sustainable living in their manifestos, there is no concrete measure to tackle issues affecting our planet. Even for the few who speak about the environment, the vision is for the future, not immediate. What we want is a manifesto that speaks about protecting our planet the moment it comes to power. Every political party stresses developmental politics. But what is the use of development if our planet's status is in a dilemma? The climate is changing; glaciers and the water table are receding and water scarcity is severe in parts of the country. We haven't devised a concrete step in managing our garbage, even in our capital city. Is it a lack of scientific knowledge? We have one CSIR lab exclusively working on the environment and many other research institutions working on similar lines. Still, we fail in this? Is it a lack of political will? Nobody knows the actual reason behind this. Every



part of the planet suffers from anthropogenic activities during this Anthropocene period. In the electioneering process, political parties also create lots of garbage containing lots of plastic materials. During elections, political parties often use a variety of promotional materials such as banners, posters, flyers and flags, many of which are made of plastic or contain plastic components. Political rallies, public events and gatherings organised by political parties often generate significant amounts of waste, including plastic cups, plates and other disposable items. Improper waste management practices at these events can result in plastic litter ending up in the environment. Why can't the Government ban plastic from its production source? After manufacturing and selling to the vendors, for namesake, the official makes some per-

iodic visits and fines poor vendors. It's like keeping sweets near a diabetic patient and telling him not to touch them. Plastic pollution has significantly threatened ecosystems, wildlife and human health worldwide. Plastic pollution in oceans is a well-documented problem with devastating effects on marine life. Sea turtles, whales, seabirds and fish often mistake plastic debris for food or become entangled in plastic waste, leading to injury or death. Additionally, plastic fragments, known as microplastics, are ingested by smaller organisms and can bioaccumulate up the food chain, posing risks to human health. Coral reefs, often called the "rainforests of the sea," are highly sensitive ecosystems that provide habitat for numerous marine species. Plastic pollution can smother coral reefs, blocking sunlight and inhibiting coral growth. Chemicals released by plastic degradation can also harm coral health, contributing to reef degradation and loss. Political parties can influence public opinion and behaviour through messaging

and advocacy efforts. Parties that prioritise environmental issues and promote sustainable practices can help raise awareness about the harms of plastic pollution and encourage individuals and communities to take action. They should teach their followers to follow clean environmental practices in their party functions and their daily lives. In India, political parties have the power to shape policies and promote initiatives that influence people's attitudes and behaviours toward plastics. So, they should take responsibility. We don't have decades to wait for the results. Already, the global temperature has reached its threshold. Any further increase may cause unforeseen consequences on the life on this planet. We need a political mindset to change our attitude towards plastics and the environment immediately. It will be good if we always remember that we don't have a 'planet B' to sustain humanity. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## THE CRISIS OF SELF-IDENTITY

Discovering the self brings change, peace and liberation



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Today, almost every country in the world has been putting in hard efforts to make a Better World that is free from all kinds of fear and insecurities and is safe for all. However, in this whole exercise, we must not forget the fact that the breakthrough in man's efforts to bring change comes only when he knows his real identity. The present world crisis, which is generally known as the crisis of values, is in fact, a deep crisis of self-identity. This crisis of values also has resulted from the loss of the knowledge of the real identity of the self. While man has discovered many 'lost continents' or land masses on the globe, this continent of the self has yet to be discovered or rediscovered by all of us. Thus man has first to be made aware of the truth that he has, in him, a certain potential of divine qualities or a core of human values and that these qualities or values, within him, have gone deep down in the sea of the Subconscious and the Unconscious Mind and have now to be brought again to the surface, into the light and have to be used as the keyboard for actions. Man has also to be given a realisation of the truth that, with the cremation or burial of the dead body, man's all deeds good or bad done by him during his lifetime, or the abilities and qualities acquired by him over some time, are not all lost.

Neither does man's good actions go unrewarded forever nor does he go unpunished for his bad actions. Unless and until man realises that, in truth, he is an eternal being, a soul or a being-of-light and that so are other beings, his outlook and his attitude towards all others does not undergo a total change. When, however, he realises his real identity, he takes a new 'mental and spiritual birth' so to say and then an improvement in his self and his relationships with others takes place automat-



ically and naturally even as day follows night. So, we may adopt whatever strategy we think is suitable for a particular country or a group of people but let us keep in mind that, sooner or later, we have to give to all those who come in touch with us the knowledge of the real identity of self, for without this knowledge, there is no going nearer to our goal of a better world.

Today we all identify ourselves with the body that we have acquired because we are unaware of the immortal entity called 'soul' which resides within us and functions through our body. This ignorance about the existence of the soul thus results in 'body-consciousness' or a worldly approach towards life, as a result of which throughout our life we struggle to improve our condition of life without understanding the fact as to why the physical and mental conditions and environments of two individuals differ widely right from the time of their birth. We get baffled by human sufferings & untimely deaths on a mass scale caused by natural calamities, terrorism, violence and wars due to which we constantly fear for our death all the time.

In this whole merry-go-round, we fail to realise that unless these basic aspects of life are rightly understood, the body-conscious approach is bound to be there. Considering one's physical existence as the 'be all and end all' of everything results in man's adopting wrong values in life which in turn leads to his committing wrong acts and consequently causes suffering to him. No wonder, despite striving hard, he is unable to avoid sorrow and suffering in life. Hence to live a peaceful, contented, happy and liberated life, proper knowledge of one's real self i.e. the soul, its functioning and its role in the world drama is a 'must'.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist; views are personal)

## Market-oriented gig skill sets under focus

As the job landscape evolves, the focus is now on fostering market-driven skill sets to meet the demands of a changing workforce



DINESH SOOD



In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving job market, employers are not just interested in hiring candidates with degrees from prestigious institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) or the Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), they now prioritise hiring candidates with specific skill sets.

Despite the widespread recognition of IITs for academic excellence and coveted placement opportunities, recent worrisome reports have revealed that they are not delivering as per their ranking and perception. Every year among thousands of students who dream to get admission in IIT's, only 20-25 per cent of them remain lucky charm to clear the JEE (Joint Entrance Exam) advanced process to get admission while pursuing their academic excellence and coveted placement opportunities every year they look forward to the placement season with an eye on big-ticket jobs.

However, The 2024 placement season is described as "lacklustre" by IIT students. This is a worrying situation in IIT-Bombay, which is ranked third among engineering institutes in India by NIRF. According to the Global IIT Alumni Support Group, nearly 36% of students were unable to secure jobs for the 2024 placements. Although IIT-Bombay contested this report, stating that only 6.1% of students remained unplaced, the situation is still concerning.

The Global IIT Alumni Support Group data shows that nearly 30-40% of IIT students are still unplaced in the top-ranked 8 older IITs like Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and others, while around 50-60% of students are still unplaced in the 15 newer IITs like BHU (Varanasi), Ropar and others.

The unemployment crisis in India is par-



NEARLY 83 PER CENT OF THOSE UNEMPLOYED IN INDIA ARE YOUNG AND AMONG THESE UNEMPLOYED YOUNG INDIANS, NEARLY 66 PER CENT ARE EDUCATED

ticularly acute among educated youth. The cost of an engineering degree remains at Rs 8-10 lakh, yet the placement rate remains around 30%. Furthermore, there is an influx of MBA degree holders entering the market, even though the demand has dropped by 55% this year. This raises the question of the value of a college/university degree.

Being highly educated is no guarantee of employment in India, as the International Labor Organisation (ILO) report reveals. Nearly 83% of those unemployed in India are young and among these unemployed young Indians, nearly 66% are educated. According to the ILO report, the "youth unemployment rate has increased with the level of education, with the highest rates among those with a graduate degree or higher." On the other hand, those without university degrees or even school dropouts have a higher employment rate.

Several highly educated youths set an example by adopting odd entrepreneurship and proudly titled it MBA's Chaiwalas and Chatwalas.

Despite the promise of creating 100 million jobs through the flagship "Make in India" initiative, the expected job creation did not materialise in the last 10 years. Raghuram Rajan, the former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, has emphasised the need to make the workforce more employable and create jobs. Every year, around 7-8 million young

Indians enter the workforce, but many remain unemployed.

It is a proven fact that our youth with higher education degrees are not well-skilled. One of the main reasons why skills are more important than higher degrees is because they are directly applicable to the job at hand.

A candidate with a degree may have a broad understanding of a subject, but without the specific skills needed to perform the job, they may struggle to succeed. On the other hand, a candidate with the right set of skills, even if they don't have a higher degree, may be able to hit the ground running. It is essential to note that having relevant skills is more crucial than having higher degrees since skills are directly applicable to the job at hand.

A candidate with a degree may have a broad understanding of a subject, but without the specific skills required to perform the job, they may struggle to succeed. Conversely, a candidate with the right set of skills, even if they don't have a higher degree, can hit the ground running and perform exceptionally well. For example, gig skill courses like digital marketing and beauty-wellness are available for around Rs 30 to 50 thousand and have a placement scope of over 90 per cent.

A gig economy offers a shot: The gig economy in India is vibrant, skill-driven and bucking the unemployed youths. According to a report by gig work platform Taskmo (which has over 7,50,000 gig workers registered) youth participation in the gig economy

has increased an astounding eightfold between 2019 and 2022, with most of the young people coming from Tier-I and Tier-II cities. In 2022, a projection report by Niti Aayog on the gig economy predicted a higher demand for skilled gig workers in the future. Areas such as digital marketing, social media management, logistics, healthcare and beauty-wellness will be in high demand, reflecting the diverse needs of employers and the evolution of the job market. The gig workforce is expected to expand to 23.5 million by 2029-30, from 7.7 million in 2021-22.

It's fascinating to see that a professionally trained gig worker, such as a hairdresser, can earn more than an MBA or IITan's. Jawed Habib, a hair stylist expert entrepreneur, is an excellent example of this. With his global exposure, he's inspiring young people to envision beauty wellness as a profession of the future. It's important to note that having a higher degree is no longer the only way to get hired or advance in a career. Employers are increasingly looking for candidates with specific skills that are directly applicable to the job and can help the company succeed. Therefore, it's crucial to focus on market-driven gig skill sets.

(The writer is a co-founder and MD, of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), network member of India International Skill Centres; views expressed are personal.)

## Taiwan urges for stronger global health governance

Taiwan advocates for global health governance, urging inclusion and collaboration to ensure human rights

Despite not being a WHO member State, Taiwan emphasises the importance of contributing insights into pandemic management and learning from international best practices. Taiwan's proactive approach to pandemic response underscores its commitment to global health. Advocating for amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) and inclusion in the pandemic agreement, Taiwan seeks to collaborate on monitoring, reporting and exchanging vital health data to enhance global health security. Additionally, Taiwan champions universal health coverage and humanitarian efforts to uphold the fundamental human right to health worldwide. The three years of



HSUEH JUI-YUAN

the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a terrible loss of life and exacerbated health inequalities. The global economy slumped and, worldwide, people's lives were affected. This experience demonstrated that the present global health governance framework is not effective in responding to threats to global health. Although COVID-19 is no longer labelled a public health emergency of international

concern (PHEIC) and trade and economic activity globally have returned to normal, the World Health Organisation (WHO) cautions against the threat of a Disease X pandemic. Therefore, countries across the globe must unite to bolster health governance.

WHO and many countries began reviewing response strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Weaknesses in the International Health Regulations (2005) as concerns managing this crisis were revealed. As a result, changes are afoot. Proposed revisions include enhanced surveillance, reporting and information sharing; improved response readiness; and revised criteria for declaring PHEICs. At the same time, there is vigorous debate around a new

pandemic agreement, which aims to craft a robust global pandemic governance framework grounded in accountability, transparency and equity. It may be approved at the 77th World Health Assembly.

As Taiwan is not a WHO member State, it cannot directly influence revisions to the International Health Regulations (2005) or the drafting of the pandemic agreement. Nevertheless, we remain greatly concerned about the content of and developments regarding these central documents.

We are eager to contribute our insights into pandemic management and learn from international best practices. Taiwan was the nation that initially identified the epidemic risk and promptly executed adap-

tive measures. Taiwan also proactively shared vital information with global partners and garnered public trust through a commitment to openness. We strongly endorse the passage and implementation of amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) and the pandemic agreement. We call on WHO to include Taiwan as a signatory to these documents.

We urge WHO to support Taiwan's inclusion in overseeing global health. Taiwan remains committed to participating based on the principles of professionalism, pragmatism and making contributions. Taiwan seeks to cooperate with WHO to remedy geographic gaps in global health security and to con-

struct a comprehensive global health framework.

The WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All has found that at least 140 countries recognise health as a fundamental human right in their constitutions. Despite this, many nations have not passed and implemented laws to ensure that their citizens have access to healthcare services. Taiwan has worked hard to reach universal health coverage and has consistently improved the quality of health care over the past few decades in line with WHO recommendations.

Taiwan has effectively integrated and allocated social welfare resources to enhance primary and oral health care for all, implement mental health programs and

strengthen the social safety net. Taiwan has put in place an agile and resilient healthcare system able to combat both communicable and non-communicable diseases. We are improving health for all individuals throughout their entire lives.

The theme for World Health Day 2024 is "My health, my right." This is a way to advocate for every individual, everywhere, to have access to quality health services, education and information, as well as to enjoy safe drinking water, clean air, good nutrition, quality housing, decent working and environmental conditions and freedom from discrimination. Through a public-private partnership, Taiwan has been contributing to global efforts to realise the

right to health in collaboration with partner countries and international organisations.

Taiwan should be included, as a matter of pragmatism, in the World Health Assembly and all WHO meetings, activities and mechanisms, particularly those concerned with the WHO pandemic agreement. This would better empower Taiwan to collaborate with global partners to uphold the fundamental human right to health stipulated in the WHO Constitution and the vision of leaving no one behind espoused in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

(The author is Minister of Health and Welfare Republic of China (Taiwan); views are personal.)







FIU notifies fresh money laundering, terror financing reporting alerts for capital markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh set of 'alert indicators' have been issued by India's financial intelligence unit (FIU) for capital markets, insurance companies, online payment gateway intermediaries and crypto currency service providers...

and shares them for action with various investigative and intelligence agencies. FIU proactively engages with the financial sector regulators and reporting entities to understand emerging risks...



Though the MIIs have been sending suspicious transaction reports (STRs) to the FIU for years now, the report said there was a lack of alert indicators 'specific to them' and this left a lot of scope for improvement...

The new alert indicators were issued after a working group of agencies like markets regulator SEBI, FIU, stock exchanges and depositories decided to 'comprehensively' revise these guidelines...

A similar working group, that included insurance regulator IRDAI, went into issues related to the insurance sector during 2022-23 fiscal and the revised guidelines laid 'special stress' for generating alerts in cases of frauds experienced by the insurance firms and...

analyse these from the AML/CFT perspective and furnish reports to FIU in suitable cases, the report said. In the case of online payment gateways, a working group comprising banking regulator RBI, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) 'extensively' studied the business model of these technology-enabled financial services firms as these 'new-age' players pose challenges in respect of transparency of the parties involved in transactions facilitated by them...

In the case of credit rating agencies (CRAs), the new guidelines will ensure timely reporting of STRs by them to FIU and help in identifying serious corporate frauds having AML/CFT implications in the early stages and ensure timely action by law enforcement agencies based on such financial intelligence preventing siphoning of funds by delinquent issuers, it said.

A similar set of alert indicators were issued to debenture trustees and they were directed to call for 'periodic reports' from issuers of debentures and take appropriate action in the interest of the debenture holders as soon as any breach of trust deed or law comes to their notice even as the FIU said these violations may have implications from the AML/CFT perspective.

Banks may have to slowdown loan growth in FY25: S&P

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian banks' credit growth, profitability and asset quality would remain robust in current fiscal reflecting strong economic growth, but they may be compelled to slow down their loan growth as deposits are not growing at a similar pace, S&P Global Ratings has said.



Generally, loan growth has been led by private sector banks which see around 17-18 per cent growth, public sector banks on the other hand see loan growth in the range of 12-14 per cent.

growth, profitability and asset quality to remain robust reflecting strong economic growth. Loan growth is 1.5 times of nominal GDP growth, while deposit growth is in line with nominal GDP growth.

Need to be watchful about steel imports, says TV Narendran



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As steel imports continue to surge, Tata Steel CEO T V Narendran has said there is a need to be watchful about the situation. The comment comes at a time when India has reported a 38 per cent surge in steel imports to 8.319 million tonnes, becoming a net importer of the commodity during the 2023-24 financial year.

fiscal year, he said in reply to a separate question on demand. Steelmakers have been raising concerns on increasing imports from certain countries, including China and seeking the Government's intervention on the issue.

RCAP lenders urge Hinduja Group arm to stick to resolution plan deadline

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over slow progress, the lenders of debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCAP) have asked the Hinduja Group arm, IndusInd International Holdings Ltd, to expedite the process of obtaining necessary regulatory approvals and stick to the resolution plan deadline of May 27.



on Friday with the senior officials of IndusInd International Holdings' (IIHL), the lenders of RCAP said the company has to make a payment of Rs 9,650 crore to them by the said date, a source said.

IIHL is yet to receive the crucial IRDAI approval on the resolution plan. The IRDAI has raised multiple queries and concerns over the proposed corporate structure for the transfer of RCAP's insurance businesses to IIHL, and the company is yet to address those concerns.

The NCLT on February 27, 2024, approved Hinduja Group firm IIHL's Rs 9,650-crore resolution plan for Reliance Capital. In November 2021, the Reserve Bank superseded the board of Reliance Capital on governance issues and payment defaults by the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group company.

Boult IPO likely next year: Co founder Varun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian consumer tech brand Boult plans to go public next year, with a revenue benchmark of Rs 1,000 crore in FY25, as it expands into international markets and new categories, according to its co-founder Varun Gupta.

presence in our TWS (True Wireless Stereo), which is the biggest category for us. And thirdly, getting offline as a channel and thereby international channels," he said.

ITPCL debt restructuring: NCLAT rejects SBI objection on liquidation value provided by PNB

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT has rejected SBI's pleas opposing the liquidation value of ITPCL provided by the debt-ridden firm's lead banker PNB and said the country's largest lender cannot "wriggle out" the debt restructuring process of the IL&FS group's thermal power company.

between the lenders. Moreover, over 90 per cent lenders by value and 75 per cent by numbers have already approved ITPCL restructuring plan.



has been entered between the parties, according to which any decision agreed by lenders with 75 per cent by value of total outstanding credit facilities and 60 per cent of lenders by number, shall be

binding upon all the lenders. ITPCL is an SPV (special purpose vehicle) incorporated by IL&FS to set up a 3,180 MW thermal power plant in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu. It currently has 1,200

MW (2x600 MW) operational. The project is being implemented in phases. Second phase shall have 3x660 MW. The State Bank of India (SBI), which owns a minority/small part of around Rs 9,000 crore debt being restructured, had opposed the liquidation value obtained by PNB, saying that it was based as on October 15, whereas, it was to be calculated as on March 31, 2023.

calculate and provide liquidation value as on the date of execution of the Master Restructuring Agreement and to stay further distribution of fund and payout as per the approved restructuring plan. However, SBI's plea was rejected by a two-member NCLAT bench which said: "The Liquidation Value as on 30.09.2018 is as per order dated 12.03.2020 where this Tribunal has accepted 15.10.2018 as the cut-off, we do not find any error in fixing the Liquidation Value as on 30.09.2018."

Indian startup to develop electric air taxi prototype by March 2025

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chennai-based startup The ePlane Company expects to develop a certifiable prototype of a flying electric taxi by March next year as it works on ways to alleviate urban congestion.

senior executive. The ePlane Company's Founder and CEO Satya Chakravarthy said it is developing an eVTOL (electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing) aircraft and to begin with, it will be a three or four-seater plane which can be converted into an air ambulance.

Chakravarthy told PTI. As per the startup's website, an ePlane will take only 14 minutes to reach a place that will take 60 minutes by a personal vehicle. The company's vision is to alleviate congestion in urban spaces with eVTOLs.

Chakravarthy said that both sets of drones — 2-6 kg payload and up to 50 kg payload — will be able to fly up 40-60 kilometres. Meanwhile, InterGlobe Enterprises and US-based Archer Aviation plan to launch an all-electric air taxi service in India in 2026, that will carry passengers from Connaught Place in the national capital to Gurugram in Haryana in just 7 minutes.

CII launches corporate governance charter for startups

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body CII on Sunday announced it has launched a charter for startups that enlist voluntary recommendations on corporate governance keeping in view unique nuances to govern startups.

and therefore the term 'Startup'. However, entities which are in the nature of sole proprietorship, limited liability partnership, partnerships may adopt similar structures/structures/guidelines for corporate governance within their organisation," the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) stated.





KKR wary of resurgent DC, marauding McGurk

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Resurgent Delhi Capitals will look to exploit Kolkata Knight Riders bowling vulnerabilities and ascend to top-four in the table during their Indian Premier League match here on Monday.

in five matches at a strike-rate of 237.50. His brutal treatment of the otherwise sensational Jasprit Bumrah stands as a testimony of his skill-level.



against Mumbai. Pant is also making rapid progress with every match as the DC top-five in Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel, Shai Hope, Pant and Stubbs will be

a cause of concern for KKR bowling. The KKR replaced injured Mitchell Starc with Sri Lankan pacer Dushmantha Chameera but the latter gave away 16 runs

per over in his debut for KKR and failed to inspire any confidence. Barring spinner Sunil Narine, who returned with 1/24 from his four overs, none of the KKR

bowlers made any impact. IPL's costliest buy Starc has been their biggest letdown and KKR would hope that the Aussie hits his stride soon after overcoming the thumb injury.

In bowling, Kuldeep Yadav who was sidelined under Dinesh Karthik while he was with KKR, will look to prove a point against the Kolkatans as he along with left-arm spinner Axar Patel has formed a formidable spin pair.

TEAMS (FROM) Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarty, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain and Muejeb Ur Rahman. Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Abishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra, Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhwe Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Gulbadin Naib, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk.

India should pick two wrist spinners for T20 WC: Irfan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former all-rounder Irfan Pathan said India must pick five specialist bowlers along with two wrist-spinners in their squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup to be played in the Caribbean and the USA.



"Yes, we're talking about Chahal right now because of the IPL performances but don't forget the fielding part of it as well. If you have to balance the fielding, you have to balance where a bowler can bowl at the particular area," he said.

combination of fast bowling. It's very important to fix that combination, so go towards experience. "With Bumrah, you can see (Mohammed) Siraj and Arshdeep (Singh) there, which I don't think is ideal, but this is the only option you have now," he said.

said. "That's why I'm saying we should look at who's bowling well in the death overs, and that is Avesh Khan. He's been performing well and he's done well on the international front, he has a little experience as well. He's mastered the wide yorkers also," Srikanth added.

Samson, Rahul put their hands up for WC selection: Smith

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The classy fifties made by Sanju Samson and KL Rahul in the IPL has intensified the race for the second wicketkeeper's slot in the Indian team for the upcoming T20 World Cup.

be announced soon and Rishabh Pant is set to be drafted in as the first-choice wicketkeeper-batter.

hands up for World Cup selection," said Smith in JioCinema. Rahul made a 48-ball 76 for Lucknow Super Giants, but Samson trumped that effort with an unbeaten 71 off 33 balls as Rajasthan Royals cruised to a seven-wicket victory.

during their unbroken fourth wicket stand that was worth 121 runs. "He's a quality batter. He's got proper cricket shots. He can play all formats of the game and knows when to go through the gears as needed.

Batters have evolved quicker than bowlers in IPL: Klusener

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants assistant coach Lance Klusener placed the quicker evolution of batters as reason behind the frequent tall team totals in the ongoing Indian Premier League.

performances throughout the competition, for me, they have been quite disappointing. There hasn't been a lot of good bowling," Klusener told the media after LSG's seven-wicket loss to Rajasthan Royals here on Saturday.



teams have been able to take advantage. Sure, surfaces have

been flat. I haven't seen a lot of swing either," he added. Klusener observed that the bowlers are opting for several variations at death but they have not been using the wide yorkers enough.

OTHER SPORTS

Archery WC: India men team shocks Olympic champions Korea to bag historic gold

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Jadhav shocked reigning Olympic champions South Korea in a historic win to land an Archery World Cup gold medal after 14 years, here on Sunday.



the gold medal-winning team in Shanghai World Cup Stage 4 in August 2010. Then the recurve team comprising Rahul Banerjee, Tarundeep and Jayanta defeated Japan.

the recurve mixed team of Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj who trounced Alejandra Valencia and Matias Grande of Mexico 6-0 (35-31, 38-35, 39-37) to win bronze.

AP ■ MASSACHUSETTS (US)

Lionel Messi scored two goals to excite a New England Revolution-record crowd, leading Inter Miami CF to a 4-1 victory on Saturday night.

Benjamin Cremaschi, who scored the third goal after Messi's shot was stopped. "He makes it look so easy. We're just happy that we have him by our side. When he has the opportunity, he takes it."

Indian women team seals Uber Cup quarterfinal spot

PTI ■ CHENGDU (CHINA)

Isharani Baruah and Anmol Kharb shone bright as the Indian women's team entered the quarterfinals of the Uber Cup badminton tournament with a lopsided 4-1 win over Singapore in the second tie of group A, here on Sunday.



the result was enough for both India and their Asian neighbours to seal the quarterfinal spot. With the twin victories, India are now placed in the second position behind China in Group A.

against world No. 18 Yeo Jia Min on Sunday, going down 15-21, 18-21. National champions Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra, ranked 67, then brought India back with a 21-15, 21-16 win over Xiao En Heng and Jin Yu Jia in the first women's doubles.

2012 Olympic champion Gabby competes for first time in eight years at American Classic

AP ■ TEXAS

Whether the gymnastics star's return to the sport carries all the way to the Paris Olympics remains to be seen.

years on Saturday at the American Classic. The 28-year-old looked rusty in spots and promising in others while posting a score of 50.65 in the all-around.

when she takes the floor at the the U.S. Classic in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 18. Douglas last competed at the 2016 Rio Olympics, where she helped the Americans claim a second straight gold in the team competition.



watching the 2022 U.S. Championships, and she's spent the better part of the last two years training in the Dallas area with an eye toward trying to make the five-woman U.S. Team that will be heavily favored to win gold in Paris this summer.

but she pulled out of the competition just days before after testing positive for COVID-19. She has limited press exposure and unlike 2020 Olympic gold medalist Sunisa Lee and Jade Carey - both of whom competed at American Classic - she opted not to participate in podium training on Friday.

competition and showed flashes of what turned her into a star in London. Her double-twisting Yurchenko on vault had plenty of amplitude and on bars - her best event - she had the pieces of a routine that would certainly be competitive at the elite level.

Douglas came off bars twice and her floor routine lacked the crispness and endurance to stack up with what will be required for anyone hoping to make a serious bid for the Olympic team.