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Bhagwant Singh Mann

Chief Minister, Punjab

Department of School Education, Punjab

Himachal CM presents Rs 58,444 cr Himachal Budget; Focus on Agri sector

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday presented the annual Budget of Rs 58,444 crore for 2024-25 with focus on the agriculture sector, and announced an increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for milk.



Rajiv Gandhi Prakriyat Kheti Yojna, under which 36,000 farmers -- 10 farmers from every panchayat -- will be trained in natural farming techniques.

assessment sent to the Centre, Rs 4500 crore due from Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) as power arrears, and Rs 8,000 crore employees' contribution under the pension scheme. Sukhu said the state government will introduce new policies to promote startups, encourage sportspersons besides making HP a prominent destination for filmmakers and to put a tab on illegal mining activities.

850 education institutes to be developed as institution of excellence in Himachal

As many as 850 educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh would be developed as Institutions of Excellence in the 2024-25 fiscal, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Saturday as he allocated Rs 9,560 crore from the budget to the education sector.

describes it as a leap towards 'Aatam Nirbhar Himachal'

Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Minister Chandar Kumar and Youth Service and Sports and Ayush Minister, Yadvinder Goma, while appreciating the 2nd budget presented by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at Vidhan Sabha, said that the budget was a right step in shaping the economy of the agriculturalists and horticulturalists of the State and will play a pivotal role in strengthening the dairy sector.

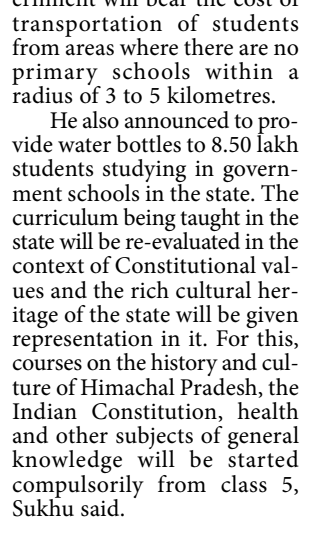
Farmers' protest continues at border; Dharnas outside residences of 3 BJP leaders in Punjab

On the fifth day of their 'Delhi Chal' march -- called by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha -- the farmers stayed put at the Shambhu and Khanauri points of the Punjab-Haryana border as they press the Centre to accept their demands, including a legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

Yamunanagar and Sirsa in solidarity with the protesting farmers. In Kurukshetra, Charuni led the tractor march at Pehowa. It started from the Grain market and took out the march in the town. Over 150 tractors participated in the march and the protesters were raising slogans against the government and in favour of farmers' unity.

Centre to bring ordinance to give legal guarantee for MSP. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher on Saturday demanded that the Centre should bring an ordinance on giving a legal guarantee to MSP, a key demand of farmers currently camping at the Shambhu and the Khanauri points of the Punjab-Haryana border.

CM Mann pays obeisance at Baglamukhi Dham Ludhiana



Ludhiana: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday paid obeisance at Baglamukhi Dham and prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of the state.

Ludhiana: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday paid obeisance at Baglamukhi Dham and prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of the state. He offered prayers and sought blessings of almighty to give enormous strength to him for serving the people of state with all humility and dedication.

Haryana and Rajasthan join hands to Combat Water Wastage during Monsoon Season

In a move aimed at addressing the challenges posed by surplus rain water, which often cause floods during the monsoon season, the states of Haryana and Rajasthan have come together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which focuses on the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) to effectively utilize surplus rainwater and mitigate flood risks.



vided to Rajasthan. This water can be used in the areas of Haryana's border districts of Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri, and Hisar. Speaking to the media after the MoU signing, Union Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma at New Delhi on Saturday.

Centre to bring ordinance to give legal guarantee for MSP

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher on Saturday demanded that the Centre should bring an ordinance on giving a legal guarantee to MSP, a key demand of farmers currently camping at the Shambhu and the Khanauri points of the Punjab-Haryana border.

MARATHON-2024 TO BE HELD IN GURUGRAM ON FEBRUARY 25

Chandigarh: A marathon race is being organized in Gurugram district on February 25 in which more than 25,000 participants are expected to take part. Cricketer Shikhar Dhawan and other celebrities are likely to be present. It will make this event even more attractive.

HRY GOVERNOR TO ATTEND THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF SURAJKUND INTERNATIONAL CRAFTS MELA

Chandigarh: Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatraya will be the Chief Guest of the closing ceremony of the 37th Surajkund International Crafts Mela on February 18. The Mela started on February 2, showcasing artworks by artists from India and abroad, and presenting glimpses of their culture by domestic and international artists.

PUNJAB VB ARRESTS FORMER KANUGO FOR TAKING RS ONE LAKH BRIBE

Chandigarh: The Punjab Vigilance Bureau (VB) has arrested a retired Kanugo Santar Singh, a resident of town Rahon, in SBS Nagar district for accepting a bribe of Rs one lakh. An official spokesperson of the state VB said this case has been registered against the accused on an online complaint lodged by Harmel Singh, a resident of village Chhokra of tehsil Nawanshahr on the Chief Minister anti corruption action line.

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NORTH 2

CM MANN PAYS OBEISANCE AT BAGLAMUKHI DHAMLUDHIANA

MONEY 6

CENTRE RAISES FCI AUTHORISED CAPITAL

SPORT 8

YASHASVI ROCKS ENGLAND, INDIA IN CONTROL

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KAMAL DRAWS IN KAMAL, CONGRESS WILTS

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/BHOPAL

In an interesting political development, Kamal Nath, one of the remaining tallest leaders of the Congress owing allegiance to the Nehru-Gandhi legacy, is all set to join the BJP along with his son Nakul, a sitting Congress MP, in a couple of days. Sources said both Kamal and Nakul have scheduled a meeting with BJP functionaries on Sunday evening as the ruling party leaders are busy in the two-day national convention being held in the national capital.

The grand old party's latest and biggest jolt in a fortnight comes after the exodus by Ashok Chavan, who joined the BJP, and Milind Deora, who switched sides to Shiv Sena; the duo had also been rewarded with Rajya Sabha berths a day earlier. Several-time Union Minister, Chief Minister, and holder of prominent party positions since the late 1970s, Kamal will share the saffron cadre with his once-upon-a-time bete noire Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, as the former was responsible for undermining the Maharaja's foothold in Madhya Pradesh, ultimately leading to the fall of the last Congress-led Kamal Nath Government after Scindia quit the Congress to join the BJP.



On Saturday evening, after the father-son duo reached Delhi, Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath dropped the Congress logo from his bio on social media. Nakul's move has added fuel to rumours of him and his father certainly defecting to the BJP. The bio of Nakul Kamal Nath on X now identifies him only as a Member of Parliament, Chhindwara (MP). In a brief interaction with the

media after arriving in Delhi, Kamal Nath said that if there were any such thing, he would inform the media first. Asked if he is joining the BJP, Kamal Nath said, "If there were any such thing, I would inform you first." When further pressed by the media if he was not denying a possible switch, he said, "It is not about denying, you are saying this, you people are getting excited, I am not getting excited, this side or that side, but if there were any such thing, I would inform you first." Nakul is the MP from

Chhindwara, the pocket borough of Kamal Nath, who had represented the constituency nine times in the past. In the 2019 general elections, the BJP won 28 of the 29 Lok Sabha seats, except Chhindwara. Kamal Nath, the sitting MLA from the Chhindwara seat, was removed as MP Congress chief in the wake of the Congress' crushing defeat at the hands of the BJP in the last Assembly elections. He is said to be disgruntled over not getting a Rajya Sabha berth, and also Rahul Gandhi has been

opposed to him since the party lost the Assembly elections late last year.

Though speculation about Kamal Nath's shift has been going on for the last few days, they got a fresh boost on Friday when Madhya Pradesh BJP president VD Sharma said Nath and his son are welcome in the BJP if they are unhappy with Congress' decision to boycott the Ram Mandir consecration event held in Ayodhya.

"Kamal Nath and his son are welcome in BJP if they are unhappy with their party's decision to boycott the Ram Temple inauguration last month and if they want to join the saffron party to serve the country and society under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi," Sharma told reporters in Bhopal. However, Nath's colleague in the party and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijaya Singh rubbished the rumours and dubbed them a "media creation." Nath stood behind the Congress like a rock during the bad patch when the government led by him was toppled by Jyotiraditya Scindia after joining the BJP in March 2020. Nath and Digvijay have the best rapport with the Gandhis, and Singh said that Kamal Nath, who started his political innings with the Nehru-Gandhi family, could never leave the party.

TEJAS WINS EQUESTRIAN NATIONAL CROWN



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Modi promises to return!



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and Piyush Goyal, BJP national president JP Nadda, veteran BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi and others during the BJP National Council meeting at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Saturday

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Setting the target for the BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said winning 370 seats would be a true tribute to its key ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee. The Prime Minister said, "370 is not merely a number for the BJP. It symbolises a profound sentiment. Mookerjee made the ultimate sacrifice for the abrogation of Article 370 to

preserve our nation's unity and integrity. As a true tribute to him, the BJP should secure victory in 370 seats." Addressing BJP office-bearers at the commencement of the two-day meeting of the party's national convention at Bharat Mandapam, Modi urged every party worker to focus on polling booths in the next 100 days, the period within

which the upcoming Lok Sabha polls are likely to conclude. He stressed the need to ensure at least 370 more votes for the party at every polling station compared to the 2019 elections. In a social media post later, Modi said, "Addressed the @BJP4India National Office Bearers. Complimented every Party Karyakarta for their exceptional efforts to

serve people. Discussed ways to deepen our party's grassroots level connect across all sections of society. Over the last decade, BJP has made a mark as a party of development and good governance. Our schemes, initiatives, and reforms have transformed several lives."

Briefing the press on the Prime Minister's address to the office-bearers, BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde said Prime Minister Modi has asked party members to keep in mind that the "lotus" (its poll symbol) will be its candidate at every seat it will contest and to work to ensure its victory. Tawde added that the party will launch a campaign to reach out to beneficiaries of various Central Government schemes from February 25 to March 5. Tawde said the Prime Minister told the meeting that the Opposition will engage in "tu tu-main main" (petty squabbling), unwarranted, and divisive issues, but they must not be distracted and remain focused on their development agenda.

Farmers continue with their journey

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the Centre considers establishing a panel involving all stakeholders to address the ongoing farmers' protest and discuss issues, farmer leaders on Saturday demanded that the Centre bring an Ordinance to provide a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), amid protests in Punjab by farmers. This demand comes a day before the fourth round of talks between farm leaders and Union ministers regarding their various demands.

Sunday. The proposed committee will address various issues, including MSP, and may also seek nominations of representatives from farmer organisations for discussions. Notably, farmer unions did not take part in the high-powered committee on MSP set up by the government in 2021. Union Ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal, and Nityanand Rai will meet with farmer leaders on Sunday for the fourth round of talks. The two sides previously met on February 8, 12, and 15, but those discussions remained inconclusive.

In another development, a mahapanchayat was held at Sisauli in Muzaffarnagar, where the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) led by Rakesh Tikait announced that

farmers will stage dharnas in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Uttarakhand on February 21. A resolution to this effect was passed in the mahapanchayat. "If the government does not accept farmers' demands, farmers will launch a tractor march to Delhi in the last week of February," he said. Meanwhile, the situation at sensitive Delhi-Haryana borders largely remained peaceful on the fifth day of the protest.

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DOCUMENT LOST I Rakesh Jain, R/o H-32/31, Sector-3, Rohini, Delhi-110085, lost my original Regular Letter of Allotment of property no. 504, Sector-56, Phase-5, Industrial Estate, Kundli, Haryana. finder pl contact 9717717118

Name Change I, Bijender Singh S/o Ramraj R/o Village Lakhna Majra, Sub-Tehsil Lakhna Majra, Distt. Rohtak hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I have change my name from Bijender Singh S/o Ramraji to Bijender S/o Ramraj.

PUBLIC NOTICE I, Sachin Sikka S/o Mangat Ram R/o H.No. 210, GH-5&7, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi declare that my daughter Mitali and Mitali Sikka both are one and same person.

OFFICE OF DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, SAHIBZADA AJIT SINGH NAGAR PUBLIC NOTICE Sh. Gurandita Singh (Partner) S/o Sh. Karam Singh and Sh. Gaurav Gandhi (Partner) S/o Sh. Diwan Chand of the Firm: M/s Golden Star, SCF No 27, First Floor, Phase-09, Mohali, District Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar presented an application in this office disclosing that due to their personal reasons, he does not want to continue this work.

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PUBLIC NOTICE I, Joginder Kumar S/o Pithi pal singh R/o 37132N.G.F. Sector-15 Housing Board Colony Sonapat Haryana affirming that I am the owner of H.No. 1188/13 Sikka Colony Sonapat Haryana vide registered compromise deed no.8953 dated - 01-12-2015.

DOCUMENT LOST It is notified for information for public at large that original Regular Letter of Allotment dated 22/08/2007 regarding the property no. 483, Phase-3 Industrial Estate, Kundli Sonapat, Haryana, has been lost or misplaced. FIR/LR no. 1258923/2023 has been registered online. Finder please contact M/s Seshasai Business Forms Private Limited (Abhay Tejraj Oswal 9930901221)

LOST AND FOUND It is hereby notified for the General Public that I, Angoori Devi W/o Late Sh. Kidar Nath owner and resident of Flat No. 1144, FF, Sector 28, HBC, Panchkula has lost the conveyance Deed of my above said Flat duly Registered at Sub-Registrar office, Panchkula at Serial No. 2394, Dated 15.10.2010. The Lost Property Report No. 132350202301492 has been already lodged at Chandimandir Police Station, Panchkula, if anyone finds the said above documents may kindly contact Mobile No. 9815970048.

THE SILVERTONE CO-OP HOUSE BUILDING (FIRST) SOCIETY LTD., SECTOR 48-B, CHANDIGARH. PUBLIC NOTICE It is hereby notified for the information of General Public that Sh. Roshan Lal Gupta (Sh. Sh. Des Raj Gupta R/o Flat No. B-186, Kendryia Vihar, Sector 48-B, Chandigarh, owner of Flat No. 1284, First Floor, Category A of The Silvertone Co-Op House Building (First), Society Ltd., Sector 48-B, Chandigarh, intends to transfer his ownership of said flat in favour of his Son Sh. Tanu Agarwal S/o Sh. Roshan Lal Gupta R/o House No. 837, Sector 5, Thanesar, Kurukshetra, Haryana-136118 as per Family Transfer Policy (Father to Son). Now they have applied for issuance of Permission/NOC for execution of Family Transfer Deed.

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Centre raises FCI authorised capital

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has increased the authorised capital of state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 21,000 crore to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfill its mandate effectively, the Food Ministry said on Saturday. FCI is the central government's nodal agency that undertakes procurement of foodgrains at a minimum support price (MSP) to protect the interest of farmers. It also maintains strategic stocks and distributes the grains under different welfare schemes. "The increase in authorised capital is a significant step towards enhancing the operational capabilities of FCI in fulfilling its mandate



effectively," the ministry said in a statement. FCI resorts to cash credit, short-term loan, ways and means etc. To match the gap in the fund requirement. The increase in the authorised capital will reduce the interest burden, decrease the economic cost and ultimately

affecting the government subsidy positively, it said. With this infusion of capital, the FCI should also embark upon modernizing its storage facilities, improving transportation networks, and adopting advanced technologies. These measures are essential

not only for reducing post-harvest losses but also for ensuring efficient distribution of food grains to consumers, it added. The Centre provides equity to the FCI for working capital requirement and for creation of capital assets. The FCI is undertaking a comprehensive

initiative to create an integrated IT system, leveraging existing internal and external systems. Through the e-office implementation FCI is making efforts towards a paperless office culture. These initiatives of integrated IT solutions serving as the

core operational software for FCI, should provide a single source of information and streamline functions with a common digital backbone. According to the ministry, the FCI has taken several steps to enhance its efficiency including construction of cement roads, roof maintenance, illumination, and weighbridge upgradation. Besides, it has also purchased lab equipment and developed a software platform for quality checking. The government's dual commitment to MSP-based procurement and investment in FCI's operational capabilities signifies a collaborative effort towards empowering farmers, fortifying the agricultural sector, and ensuring food security for the nation, it said.



Power Grid unfazed by proposed O&M norms changes by CERC

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Power Grid Corporation (POWERGRID) expects "no impact" from proposed changes in Operation & Maintenance (O&M) charges norms by Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), a top company official said. The official said the company was in discussion with the regulator. Draft regulations suggest altering the prior 75:25 (substation vs transmission line) O&M cost distribution to 65:35 ratio, increasing transmission line charges while decreasing substation charges. Chairman and Managing Director Ravindra Kumar Tyagi claimed "net impact is almost zero," with overall O&M charges maintained. "They have added one more element, 'reactor'. Earlier, we were not incurring any O&M charges for reactors. Now, reactor charges have been added per MVAR (Mega Volt-Ampere Reactive), similar to transformer charges per MVA capacity, such as Rs 20 lakh or so per

MVA. Therefore, those charges have been added. The net impact is negligible almost zero, we are going to receive the same O&M charges as before," he told investors in an analyst call. Speaking regarding Return on Equity (ROE), proposed norms suggest existing assets at 15.5 per cent and setting 15 per cent for new projects after April 1, 2024, he said discussions were on with the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) and power grid was optimistic that final norms won't adversely affect the company's revenue or profitability. The company was aiming to cross capex of Rs 10,000 crore in the current fiscal. "Our capex in Q3, on a consolidated basis is Rs 3,444 crore, and for nine months it is Rs 7,690 crore. We are hopeful that this capex will be almost Rs 10,000 crore plus," he said. Power Grid's consolidated income during the December 2023 quarter was Rs 11,820 crore. During the quarter, net profit rose 10 per cent YoY to Rs 4,028 crore.

Cutting China out of trade will be historic mistake: Wang Yi

AP ■ MUNICH

China's foreign minister told a gathering of international security policy officials Saturday that trying to shut China out of trade in the name of avoiding dependency would be a historic mistake.



Wang Yi spoke at the Munich Security Conference. Host Germany wants to avoid over-reliance on trade with an increasingly assertive China and diversify its supply of key goods in an approach it calls "de-risking." That's in line with the approach of other industrial powers in the Group of Seven, which has stressed that it doesn't seek to harm China or thwart its development. Beijing has criticized the strategy. "Today ... More people have come to realize that the absence of cooperation is the biggest risk," Wang said through an interpreter. "Those who attempt to shut China out in the name of de-risking will make a historical mistake." "The world economy is like a big ocean that cannot be cut into isolated lakes," he added. "The trend toward economic

Hyderabad sees 1 pc fall in house registration

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Hyderabad region has witnessed a 1 per cent annual fall in registrations of residential properties in January to 5,411 units, according to Knight Frank. As many as 5,454 housing units were registered in January 2023 across the Hyderabad residential market, which includes four districts namely Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Rangareddy and Sangareddy. The data covers transactions of both primary (first sale) and secondary (resale) markets.



has increased to 14 per cent in January 2024, as compared to 8 per cent in January 2023. However, properties larger than 2,000 square feet saw an increase in demand, with registrations rising to 13 per cent during January 2024, from 9 per cent in January 2023. On a district-level, Rangareddy emerged as the leading contributor to registrations in January 2024, capturing 43 per cent of the total market share. Medchal-Malkajgiri came in second with 42 per cent share.

Hyderabad district accounted for 15 per cent of the total registrations in January 2024. During January 2024, the weighted average prices of transacted residential properties witnessed a sharp annual increase of 14 per cent. Among the districts, Rangareddy experienced the sharpest increase of 12 per cent year-on-year (YoY), while Hyderabad and Medchal-Malkajgiri experienced an increase of 11 per cent and 5 per cent YoY, respectively. "The Hyderabad residential market displayed a promising start to 2024, characterised by a stable property registration momentum and a notable uptick in demand for high-quality homes in January," said Shishir Baijal, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India. This is reflected not just in the growth in price level but also the aspirational drive of homebuyers towards upgrading to higher value properties, he said. "Developers, too, are actively keeping pace with these trends, demonstrating adaptability to meet the evolving preferences of discerning buyers," Baijal said.

Bandhan Bank to collect revenues of Bengal govt

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Private lender Bandhan Bank on Saturday said that it has been authorised by the West Bengal government to collect tax and non-tax receipts on its behalf. The mandate will enable the bank to collect revenues through the Government Receipt Portal System (GRIPS). By virtue of this mandate, people will be able to pay various taxes like property tax, motor vehicle tax and professional tax using this portal, the



lender said. The bank will soon be integrating itself with the West Bengal government to operationalise the payment collection process. Debraj Saha, head-government business, Bandhan Bank said West Bengal is among the top three markets for Bandhan Bank. The bank has over 1,700 transaction outlets in the state, he said. GRIPS is an online internet-based platform for making various tax and non-tax payments to the West Bengal government.

Banks to review their empanelled advocates

PTI

New Delhi: Banks will conduct periodical review of the performance of empanelled advocates at debt recovery tribunals and rationalise the cases assigned to them based on performance, the finance ministry said on Saturday. This is part of the issues discussed at a conference of Chairpersons of Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunals

and Presiding Officers of Debt Recovery Tribunals chaired by Department of Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi. The meeting was also attended by senior officers from the public and private sectors banks; CEO, IBA; and senior officers from the Ministry of Finance and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).

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Mela Office, Kothi Road, Ujjain (M.P.) Ph. 0734-2525856

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No. USCL/266 Tender ID: 2024_UAD_334094_1 Date:- 17.02.2024

Ujjain Smart City Limited Invites Interested parties for "Guinness World Record for The Largest Display of Oil Lamps Deepotsav "Shiv Jyoti Arpanam 2024" (5th-9th April, 2024) In Ujjain Madhya Pradesh". Interested bidders may purchase and submit their proposals online at www.mptenders.gov.in.

Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 1,00,000/-
Cost of Document	Rs. 10,000/-
Probable Amount of Contract	NA
Pre Bid Meeting Date	26.02.2024
Last date for submission of Technical and Financial Bid (Online)	02.03.2024 up to 17:00 Hrs

For more details, please visit <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>. Any Corrigendum or amendments shall be published on this website only.

For, Ujjain Smart City Limited

Himachal proposes no fresh tax

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday presented the annual state Budget of Rs 58,444 crore for 2024-25 with focus on the agriculture and rural sectors, and announced an increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for milk. The government did not propose any new tax for the next fiscal. Presenting his second state Budget, Sukhu, who also holds the finance portfolio, announced a hike in MSP of cow milk from Rs 38 to Rs 45 per litre and buffalo milk from Rs 47 to Rs 55 per litre. Himachal is the first state to give MSP on milk, he said. The rural-oriented Budget focused on strengthening farming and animal husbandry sectors, besides announcing steps to make the state self-reliant. He said liabilities of all milk cooperative societies will be waived off and Rs 150 crore will be spent on strengthening infrastructure for milk

procurement and its processing. The revenue receipts and expenditure are estimated at Rs 42,153 crore and Rs 46,667 crore, respectively, implying that the estimated revenue loss will be Rs 4,514 crore. The fiscal deficit was estimated at Rs 10,784 crore that was 4.75 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Of every Rs 100 expenditure, Rs 25 would be spent on salaries, Rs 17 on pension, Rs 11 on interest, Rs 9 on loan repayment, and Rs 10 on grants to autonomous institutions and only Rs 28 would be spent on other activities an capital works. Reiterating his resolve to make a green state by 2026, Sukhu announced Rajiv Gandhi Prakritik Kheti Yojana, under which 36,000 farmers -- 10 farmers from every panchayat -- will be trained in natural farming techniques. Universal cartons will be introduced for apple packaging, and horticulture tourism will be encouraged, he added. Announcing 4 per cent



additional Dearness Allowance (DA) for government employees from April 1, 2024, he said arrears of revised pay scales will be paid to employees and pensioners in a phased manner. The DA increase will put an additional financial burden of Rs 580 crore on the state exchequer. Blaming the previous BJP government of financial mismanagement, Sukhu said the debt burden of the state has mounted to Rs 87,788 crore.

Sukhu said a sum of Rs 22,406 crore was due to Himachal from the Centre. This, he said, included a proposal of Rs 9,906 crore post-disaster need assessment sent to the Centre, Rs 4,500 crore due from Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) as power arrears, and Rs 8,000 crore employees' contribution under the National Pension Scheme (NPS). He said the state government announced a special package

of Rs 4,500 crore for disaster-affected people after last year's monsoon, and added that the Centre had not given the state any special package. Sukhu said the state government will introduce new policies to promote startups, encourage sportspersons, besides making HP a prominent destination for filmmakers and to put a tab on illegal mining activities. Other announcements included setting up of the first

modernised de-addiction and rehabilitation centre at Kandaghat in Solan district, appointment of 6,000 nursery teachers, and monthly review meeting of schools. He also said 327 old diesel buses will be replaced with electric buses and vehicle scrap centres will be established in the state. The CM also announced increasing the daily wages of MGNREGA workers by Rs 60 from Rs 240 to Rs 300 per day and increase the honorarium of functionaries of panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies. The government proposed to increase MLA discretionary grant from Rs 13 lakh to Rs 14 lakh and 'Vidhyak Kshetra Vikas Nidhi Yojana' from Rs 2.10 crore to 2.20 crore. Himachal Pradesh Transformation Cell and Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Centre will be set up in the planning department to give suggestions to accelerate the development based on best practices and monitoring and evaluation of the development programmes, Sukhu said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

SECL CMD GETS BUSINESS LEADER AWARD

New Delhi: SECL Chairman and Managing Director Prem Sagar Mishra has been awarded "Business Leader of the Year Award" for the second consecutive year. Under the leadership of Mishra, the company has achieved the fastest coal production of 150 MT in its history Promoting sustainable development, this year the company has planted more than 10 lakh saplings, the highest in Coal India. Two days ago, he was honoured with "CEO with HR Orientation Award" for HR-centric management.

NILEKANI'S GROUP INITIATIVE

New Delhi: New Delhi: Bachpan Manao, Badhte Jao, an initiative of Nandan & Rohini Nilekani's and Shankar Maruwada's EkStep Foundation aimed to educate about, and celebrate, the abundance of the early childhood years, launched an engaging film across social media platforms and 1,000+ screens of PVR across the country titled 'Celebrate Childhood. Keep Growing'. The short film follows a group of adventurous children as they explore nature during a hill-climbing adventure, embracing their natural curiosity. A grantee of Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies under EkStep Foundation, Bachpan Manao, Badhte Jao is championing the importance of holistic development of children by ensuring ample opportunities for exploration and growth through play, especially during the critical first eight years of life.

INDIAN WOMEN ENTER MAIDEN FINAL

BADMINTON ASIA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP



India kept alive hopes of winning a first-ever gold in Badminton Asia Team Championships after the women shuttlers progressed to their maiden final with a 3-2 win over two-time former champions Japan in a thrilling semifinal here on Saturday. The world No. 23 pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, world No. 53 Ashmita Chaliha and 17-year-old Anmol Kharb registered stunning wins in the first doubles and second and deciding singles to take India through to the summit clash. India will face Thailand in the final on Sunday.

India had won two bronze medals in men's team event in the 2016 and 2020 editions. Though Japan were without their world No. 4 Akane Yamaguchi, the world No. 7 pair of Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota and world No. 8 combination of Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara, they were still a formidable side, making it tough for India.

Returning from a long injury layoff, Sindhu had enjoyed wins against China's Han Yue and Hong Kong's Lo Sin Yan Happy but she couldn't produce her best against the left-handed Aya Ogori, going down 13-21, 20-22 in the first singles to peg India back. Treesa and Gayatri, playing the first doubles, dished out a superlative performance to outfit world No. 6 Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida 21-17, 16-21, 22-20 in a 73-minute contest as India drew level at 1-1.

Up against former world champion Nozomi Okuhara, who is currently ranked 20, the left-handed Ashmita produced an aggressive game, using her overhead cross drops and jump smashes to good use, to record a shocking 21-17, 21-14 win to hand India a 2-1 lead. With Tanisha Crasto suffering a niggler, Sindhu then paired up with Ashwini Ponnappa but they couldn't get across the world No. 11 pair of Rena Miyaura and Ayako Sakuramoto, losing 14-21, 11-21 in 43 minutes.

"Our girls are doing magic, they were excellent today," former India coach Vimal Kumar, who is with the Indian team in Malaysia, told PTI. "I will give a lot of credit to Gayatri and Treesa and also Ashmita for pulling out of the matches. It was an outstanding performance from Ashmita, she outclassed Okuhara, she raised her game to another level. "Young girl Anmol also showed that we can depend on her going forward. When you do well in team championships, it shows they can handle pressure and I am really impressed with her. This

is special moment for Indian badminton." **ASHMITA VS NOZOMI:** Ashmita managed to draw out errors from Nozomi and also played some delectable backhand drives and forehand cross hits to open up a 11-9 lead after an initial battle in the opening game. Nozomi clawed back at 12-12 but the Indian broke the run of play with a nice over-the-head drop and a backhand return and then a couple of straight smashes helped her to stay ahead. The Indian pushed one to the back and then Nozomi hit wide as Ashmita grabbed four game points with a jump cross smash and sealed it when the Japanese's back hand went to net. After the change of sides, Ashmita fell 2-7 behind but she soon stepped up the pace and entered the break with a 11-9 cushion. Ashmita's angled returns and leap smashes created trouble for Nozomi as the Indian continued to accumulate points. Eventually, a stiff return on Nozomi's forehand handed the Indian seven game points and she converted in the second chance. **ANMOL VS NATSUKI:** The Saina-like Anmol looked in control against Natsuki, using her drops and slices to lead 11-7 at the mid-game interval and then moved to 17-12. She grabbed six game points after Natsuki went wide and sealed it after winning a well-constructed rally.

In the second game, the duo was locked 6-6. Natsuki made two unforced errors and Anmol produced two precise returns at the forehand corner to be 11-9 at the break. On resumption, the Indian moved to 15-10. However, Natsuki chipped away at the lead, making it 15-16 at one stage. A precise return at the forehand corner helped Anmol to stay ahead. But the Japanese produced a cross court smash and with Anmol going long the scores were levelled at 17-17. However, Natsuki committed four unforced errors thereafter as Anmol sealed the match. In the final, India will have their task cut out against Thailand, who are without world No. 13 Ratchanok Intanon and world No. 16 Pornpawee Chochuwong. Their singles will be spearheaded by world no. 17 Supanida Katethong and world no. 18 Busanan Ongbamrunghpan. Supanida has troubled Sindhu in the past but the Indian will have to pull out of her match, while Ashmita will fancy her chances against Busanan and Anmol will be expected to fight it out against world no 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong. Doubles remain Thailand's strength with world No. 10 pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai, and world No. 13 Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard in their ranks.



Tiger Woods withdraws from Riviera

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

Tiger Woods returned to the PGA Tour and lasted only 24 holes, withdrawing Friday from the Genesis Invitational with flu-like symptoms and dehydration after hitting his tee shot on the seventh hole at Riviera. Rob McNamara, his longtime associate and vice president of TGR Ventures, said Woods felt flu symptoms Thursday night that worsened when he woke up. "He had a little bit of a fever and was better during the warm-up, but then when he got out there and was walking and playing, he started feeling dizzy," McNamara told a PGA Tour official. "Ultimately, the doctors are saying he's got potentially some type of flu and that he was dehydrated. He's been treated with an IV bag and he's doing much, much better, and he'll be released on his own here soon." Woods left Riviera about two hours after he withdrew, sitting in the front seat of a red SUV as it departed. He was 1-over par for the round — 2 over for the tournament — and projected just outside the cut when he asked for a cart and was driven off the course by a rules official. He has been walking slowly and looked drained of energy playing the front nine. "He obviously wasn't himself, just didn't look right. Saw that before the round started," said Gary Woodland, who played in the same group with Woods along with Justin Thomas. "Obviously, everything's better with him there and for him for his first tournament back and he couldn't come out and finish the way he wanted to, that sucks for all of us." Woodland said he noticed Woods being quieter than normal, though they all were



trying to make sure they were among the top 50 to make the cut. "I feel bad for him. He wasn't right," Woodland said. "He definitely was trying to fight through it and I hope he's all right." The 48-year-old Woods still managed to create quite a spectacle at Riviera. An ambulance and a ladder truck from the Los Angeles Fire Department were parked outside the clubhouse, presumably waiting for Woods. PGA Tour officials said IV fluid bags were needed and there were none at Riviera, so the paramedics had to deliver them. Photographers and media crowded near the ambulance next to a 6-foot high hedge raised cameras and mobile phones when there was movement, except the trucks were leaving without Woods. On the golf course, there was a steady stream of spectators headed for the exit. Woodland and Thomas approached the ninth green surrounded by only a few hundred fans. Woods had not played an official event since the Masters last April, withdrawing in the

Modest start for Tvesa in Dimension Ladies golf

PTI ■ GEORGE (SOUTH AFRICA)



India's Tvesa Malik had a modest start to 2024 as she carded 6-over 78 and was two shots off the projected cut line at the Dimension Data Ladies Pro-Am golf on the Sunshine Ladies Tour in South Africa on Saturday. She is lying tied 26th. Tvesa, who is trying to get back to the Ladies European Tour, had only two birdies a day at the Outeniqua course, one of the two courses over which the event is being played. Tvesa, a multiple winner on her domestic Women's Pro Golf Tour, will need a good second round to make the cut in the opening event of the season in South Africa. The venue was hit by bad weather including torrential downpour. Ana Dawson was the only golfer to finish under-par after the first round. The golfer from the Isle of Man, played the Outeniqua course in one-under-par 71 and ended the opening day one stroke ahead of another three international golfers who finished on level-par. The bunch in second place included Germany's Carolin Kauffmann, Scotland's Kylie Henry and Englishwoman Lauren Taylor. Henry and Taylor both took on the Montague course that is rated as being more difficult. Kiera Floyd and Lejan Lewthwaite are the leading South Africans, tied in fifth place on one-over-par with Alexandra Swayne of the U.S. Virgin Islands.



Anmol is brave and intelligent: Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Anmol Kharab is a fearless and intelligent player and her emergence is refreshing for Indian badminton, gushed chief National coach Pullela Gopichand after the teenager's impressive show at the Asia Team Championships. The 17-year-old from Faridabad humbled world number 29 Natsuki Nidaira in the deciding fifth match against Japan, a win that carried India into first-ever final in the prestigious tournament. Anmol, who won the senior national champion in December 2023, had also notched up a thrilling three-game win over China's Wu Luo Yu on Wednesday in their group match. This is her first major international assignment. "I think the result of the two matches is a testimony that she can beat top players. To take the pressure on and show that kind of nerve, it is very refreshing. She is fearless. The kind of strokes that she plays, it all come naturally to her," Gopichand told PTI. "She is reading the game well, you can see her intelligence. She played beautifully. Of course, opponents will read her game in time and that's where she needs to rework on her mistakes but she has been phenomenal. "She fought really well and she is naturally brave and intelligent." Indian women team had a phenomenal run this week, defeating China, Hong Kong and Japan to enter their first-ever final and Gopichand was also gung ho about the

performance in the Continental championship. "To beat China and Japan, I don't think many teams can say that, so really happy. There is great energy in the dug out and it showed literally during the match. "Before this tie, if you would have told me that (Nozomi) Okuhara would be beaten and we will make a comeback after Sindhu's loss, I would have said little chance but it has been a great run so far. "The match against China was a fantastic win. The morale was high in general. Good to see Gayatri (Gopichand) and Treesa (Jolly) pulling out the match and the way Anmol played it was amazing. Ashmita's was also a fantastic win." After PV Sindhu suffered a shock defeat in the opening match, doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly produced a 21-17 16-21 22-20 win over world no. 6 Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida to bring India back into the five-match rubber. "Shida and Matsuyama are a top pair, and Treesa and Gayatri had to work hard, it was close and tough match. They have beaten China and Japan in two solid matches. After losing at India Open, to comeback and win, I mean this will do them a lot of good." India will face Thailand in the summit clash and Gopichand feels the singles matches will be key. "They have top doubles teams, so doubles will be tough but we have edge in singles and we are again counting on Anmol. So, God willing, we will win tomorrow. It is another tough match."

Jordan disqualified from Riviera

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

Jordan Spieth signed for the wrong score on Friday at the Genesis Invitational and was disqualified for the first time in the 263 tournaments he has played on the PGA Tour. Spieth owned up to the mistake in a post on X. "Today, I signed for an incorrect scorecard and stepped out of the scoring area, after thinking I went through all procedures to make sure it was correct. Rules are rules, and I take full responsibility," he wrote. Spieth, who won an NCAA title with Texas at Riviera, said he loves the course as much as any on the PGA Tour and "it hurts to not have a run at the



weekend." Spieth was within three shots of the lead at the turn in the second round at Riviera until he dropped three shots as Patrick Cantlay, playing in his group, began to pull away. Spieth made double bogey on the 18th hole for a 73, leaving him 10 shots behind. But he signed for a 3 on the par-3 fourth hole when he actually made a 4, leading to the disqualification. Spieth had missed the green to the left, chipped to about 4 feet and lipped out. That leaves 51 players in the field for the weekend at Riviera. The signature event had a 36-hole cut to top 50 and ties, and anyone within 10 shots of the lead.

Chris Hoy undergoing cancer treatment

AP ■ LONDON

Six-time Olympic champion Chris Hoy says he has been diagnosed with cancer and that he felt "forced" to reveal the news. The 47-year-old former track cyclist star said he was diagnosed with the disease last year and that he is currently undergoing treatment, including chemotherapy, adding that it is "going really well" and he currently feels "fine." Writing on his Instagram account on Friday, Hoy said: "For the sake of my young fam-



ily, I had hoped to keep this information private but regrettably our hand has been forced." He gave no further details or the type of cancer he has. The Scottish cyclist, originally from Edinburgh, asked for privacy following the announcement. Hoy won his first Olympic medal, a team sprint silver, at Sydney in 2000. He won gold in the 1-kilometer track time trial at Athens in 2004 and added to his gold medal total by winning three more at Beijing four years later and two at London in 2012.

TO MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH, YOU NEED TO EXERCISE ALMOST EVERY DAY - 30 MINUTES IS RECOMMENDED, THAT'S WHAT I PERSONALLY DO - AND YOU NEED TO EAT RIGHT
— DENISE AUSTIN

FUNGUS

IGNORE AT YOUR PERIL

In recent years, fungal infections have been on the rise. This trend is expected to persist, driven by several factors including rising temperatures creating favourable conditions for fungal growth and spread, besides the misuse of over-the-counter drugs and ointments among others. ARCHANA JYOTI highlights its widespread impact through various studies.

Sachi, a 45-year-old housewife, has been experiencing discomfort and embarrassment due to a persistent fungal nail infection which started with discoloration and thickening of the nails on her right foot, gradually spreading to the other foot. Over time, her nails became brittle and began to emit a foul odor. Sachi, also experienced occasional itching and pain around the infected nails. The fungal infection has made it difficult for the mother of two to wear open-toed sandals during warmer months, affecting her confidence, particularly in social settings where she felt judged for the appearance of her nails. Initially, she tried over-the-counter antifungal creams and ointments, but they provided only temporary relief. After consulting a dermatologist, she was prescribed oral antifungal medications along with topical treatments for the infection called 'Athlete's Foot'. However, despite adhering to the treatment regimen diligently, progress was slow, and complete eradication of the infection seemed elusive. Dealing with a chronic fungal infection is taking a toll on her mental health besides financial strain. But Sachi's case is not the only one in the country; millions are battling with this fast emerging menace. A recent study conducted by experts from Indian teaching hospitals and The University of Manchester says over fifty million individuals in India are affected by serious fungal diseases, with approximately 10 per cent facing potentially dangerous mould infections. The study, published in the journal Open Forum Infectious Diseases, presents an estimate that approximately 4.4 per cent of India's population, which

Most common fungal diseases

- Fungal nail infections:** Common infections of the fingernails or toenails.
- Vaginal candidiasis:** Caused by the yeast *Candida*, also called a "vaginal yeast infection."
- Ringworm:** A common fungal skin infection that often looks like a circular rash.
- Candida infections of the mouth, throat, and esophagus:** Caused by the yeast *Candida*, also called "thrush".
- Fungal eye infections:** Rare infections that can develop after an eye injury or after eye surgery.
- Sporotrichosis:** Caused by the fungus



Sporotrichis: Sporotrichis, which lives throughout the world in soil and on plants.

- Mycetoma:** Caused by certain types of bacteria and fungi found in soil and water, typically in rural regions of Africa, Latin America, and Asia.
- Healthcare-Associated Fungal Meningitis:** Rare life-threatening fungal infection that causes swelling of the areas around the brain and spinal cord.

WHO'S AT RISK?

Fungal infections can affect anyone, but certain groups are more vulnerable than others. People with weakened immune systems, such as those undergoing cancer treatment or organ transplant recipients, are particularly susceptible to fungal infections. In addition, people with chronic conditions such as diabetes, HIV, or asthma are also at increased risk. The elderly are also more likely to develop fungal infections, as are young children and infants. In some cases, fungal infections can spread from person to person, particularly in healthcare settings. Hospital-acquired fungal infections can be particularly dangerous, as these strains of fungi are often resistant to multiple drugs.

equates to around 57 million people, are likely impacted by these fungal conditions. The research draws from an analysis of data from over 400 published academic articles. **Key findings from the study:** **Prevalence among Women:** Vaginal thrush, or yeast infection, affects around 24 million women of reproductive age, with recurrent episodes being common. **Impact on Children:** Hair fungal infections, known as tinea capitis, affect a similar number ie 24 million school-age children. This condition can cause painful infected scalps and often results in hair loss. **Mortality Contributors:** Mould infections affecting the lungs and sinuses are identified as major

contributors to mortality, affecting over 250,000 individuals. **Chronic Conditions:** The study also highlights chronic fungal conditions such as chronic aspergillosis, which affects approximately 1,738,400 individuals, and serious allergic lung mould diseases, impacting around 3.5 million people. **Eye and Skin Infections:** Over 1 million individuals are thought to have potentially blinding fungal eye diseases, while nearly 200,000 suffer from mucormycosis, commonly referred to as 'Black mould'. The global study using data from 80 countries including India has said that the annual total of mortalities from such ailment is now estimated at 3.75 million, a figure that doubles previous estimates, and outnumbers

invasive candidiasis with 9,95,000 (9.9 lakh) deaths (63.6 per cent), each year. Co-author of the study, Professor Denning from The University of Manchester and Global Action For Fungal D acknowledges the progress made in diagnostic capabilities. However, he emphasizes that fungal diseases continue to pose a significant threat to public health, leading to considerable morbidity and mortality. He also notes the existence of large parts of India with limited diagnostic capabilities, which underscores the need for further improvements in this regard. The study concludes that addressing the challenge of fungal diseases in India requires continued efforts to enhance diagnostics, raise awareness, and implement effective strategies to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of these diseases on affected individuals and communities. Dr. Ravinder Singh Chauhan, MS (ENT) Director, Delhi Center for ENT & Allergic Diseases sheds light on fungal infection of the oral cavity. "Candidiasis (also known as oral thrush) is one of the most common fungal infections of the mouth (oral cavity). It is generally seen in patients with poor oral hygiene, uncontrolled diabetes, those taking steroids for long durations for other diseases, or suffering from other immunocompromising diseases." On symptoms, he said, patients suffering from candidiasis develop white patches in the mouth or on the tongue and back of the throat. It is easily treatable if diagnosed early. If anyone has the above symptoms, they should visit an ENT specialist, said Dr Chauhan. "Patients suffering from diabetes should keep their

blood sugar under control and maintain oral and dental hygiene." Experts say, climate change is also contributing to the rise of fungal infections. As temperatures rise, fungi are able to thrive in new environments and infect new hosts. In addition, extreme weather events such as hurricanes and floods can create conditions that are ideal for fungal growth and spread. Take the case of Athlete's Foot, caused by the fungus *Trichophyton*. It typically manifests as itchy, red, and cracked skin between the toes and on the soles of the feet, says Dr Richa Chaudhary, Consultant Dermatologist, Skin & Hair by Dr Gangwani Clinic, Paschim Vihar, Delhi. "Superficial fungal infections, often affecting the skin, hair, and nails, are common yet manageable dermatological conditions. "Athlete's foot is a prevalent and contagious condition, scientifically termed tinea pedis, primarily targets the feet. It thrives in warm and damp environments such as locker rooms, swimming pools, and common showers. "The hallmark symptoms of athlete's foot encompass itching, burning sensations, and the development of red, scaly patches between the toes or on the soles. In severe cases, there can be cracking of skin or appearance of itchy pus-filled blisters, delay in the healing of the cracked skin leading to discomfort and pain. The infection can also spread to the toenails, causing thickening and discoloration. "Maintaining proper foot hygiene/avoiding shared personal items, such as towels and shoes, regularly changing socks, opting for moisture-wicking materials, and allowing shoes to air out between uses can significantly reduce risk of contracting the fungus," says the doctor. In extreme cases, or persistent or severe infection it is essential to seek professional medical advice as prescription strength antifungal medication may be required, she says.

DOCTORSPEAK

CHILDHOOD CANCER EARLY DETECTION IS KEY



DR GAURI KAPOOR
Medical Director (Pediatric Hematology & Oncology), Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre, Niti Bagh, Delhi

Childhood cancer, while rare (affecting about 50,000 children in India annually), requires a specialized, multidisciplinary approach to achieve both good cancer outcomes and a high quality of life. There are some misconceptions when it comes to cancers in children versus cancer in adults. It is important to understand that childhood cancer is unique and quite different in behaviour and response to treatment. Their cancers respond well to treatment and when diagnosed early are highly curable. Conditions like Acute Lymphoblastic leukaemia and lymphomas have excellent cure rates. In the high income countries childhood cancer cure rates are excellent, to the tune of more than 80%. However, more than 80% of childhood cancer cases occur in low and middle-income countries where access to care is very variable and cure rates are as low as 20-40%. Hence the WHO has launched a global initiative worldwide to improve cure rates to at least 60% worldwide and India is also aligned with it. Early diagnosis and proper treatment are crucial for successful outcomes. This is

why raising awareness among caregivers, healthcare workers, and the wider community is critical. There is a need to extend support to those suffering from childhood cancer, including their families and caregivers, and the survivors. There is a lot of stigma attached to the word cancer and it is important to come forward to challenge this stigma and fight against it and give the childhood cancer survivors all the support they need in society so that they can fulfill their dreams. Hence we need to identify the challenges associated with early diagnosis, and proper treatment and work together to find solutions so that all children may have access to optimum care.

HEALTH NEWS

AIIMS Delhi, Univ of Liverpool MoU for research in head & neck cancer

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi and University of Liverpool have entered into a collaboration for "AIIMS Liverpool Collaborative Centre for Translational Research in Head and Neck Cancer - ALHNS". It will impact the care of patients with head and neck cancer by combining resources at both institutions in order to develop joint research and education programmes. It is expected to enhance the quality of research and education. The ALHNS also aims to have commonly articulated



strategic goals in order to deliver cutting edge medical innovation and personalised cancer treatments, said a release issued by the Health Ministry.

NCI, AIIMS Jhajjar celebrates fifth foundation day

On the occasion of the 5th Foundation Day of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of AIIMS Jhajjar, Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya said that the way the institute has progressed over the last 5 years, is a testament to the skill and dedication of the doctors, nurses and other health workers involved in the day-to-day functioning of the institute. NCI Jhajjar registers average daily over 500 OPD patient footfall and over 60 cancer patients every OPD day.

It also registers a weekly average of 800-1,000 sessions of radiation therapy, while chemotherapy day care admissions had surpassed 30,000 in 2023. It boasts of state-of-the-art modular operation theatres where an average of 80-100 onco surgeries are conducted weekly. Recently new oncology and Yoga facilities, focusing on both cure and care of patients have been started. It also provides spiritual cancer care, physiotherapy, psycho-oncology and oncology survivorship services.

COMBATING CHILD OBESITY

Protecting Minds from Food Advertising

In a world inundated with advertisements promoting unhealthy foods to kids, The Health Pioneer delves into the WHO-UNICEF toolkit, a measure to help steer impressionable young minds away from the path of obesity

Picture a bustling cityscape, where billboards loom large, and television screens flicker with enticing images of sugary snacks and fatty treats. For too long, these advertisements have preyed upon the vulnerability of children, shaping their preferences and influencing their eating habits in ways that can have lifelong consequences. No doubt, in a world where children are bombarded with advertisements promoting unhealthy foods, the WHO-UNICEF toolkit stands as a beacon of hope. Crafted through a collaborative effort between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), this toolkit represents a concerted effort to protect the health and well-being of the youngest members of our society. The document suggests practical strategies and evidence-based recommendations, providing a roadmap for enacting meaningful change. These policies are not merely suggestions but essential safeguards, grounded in a commitment to protect the rights of every child. But the journey is far from over. As the toolkit finds its way into the hands of policymakers around the globe, there is a renewed sense of urgency. With childhood obesity rates on the rise and the impact of food marketing becoming increasingly pervasive, the time for action is now, assert health experts. Dr. Francesco Branca, Director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety at WHO, says, "Aggressive and pervasive marketing of foods and beverages high in fats, sugars, and salt to children is responsible for unhealthy dietary choices." Agrees Dr GV Basavaraja President, Indian Academy of Pediatrics. "Young minds, characterized by curiosity and susceptibility to suggestions, become targets of advertisers, who have been investing significant resources to ensure that their products capture the attention of this demographic. "Despite the potential harm to



their health, children often find themselves drawn to these products, creating a concerning link between advertising and unhealthy consumption patterns," he says. There are numerous studies that have established connection between childhood obesity and exposure to advertising. "This issue demands our attention, in the light of the staggering increase in childhood obesity cases by 11 million, since 2000, he said in his article published in the latest issue of journal Indian Pediatrics. Dr Basavaraja continues, "The implications of this extend beyond physical health, affecting education, quality of life, and have psychological consequences. Overweight and obesity are the major risk factors for a broad range of noncommunicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders and cancer." According to a recent study, obesity affects 380 million children and adolescents worldwide. Low and middle-income countries are the most affected worldwide. If current trends persist, India will contribute approximately 11% of the global burden of child obesity by 2030. India faces a

triple burden of malnutrition, stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies along with an increase in childhood overweight and obesity. The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, conducted in 2019-21), found that 3.4% of children under five are now overweight compared with 2.1% in 2015-16. The numbers may seem small, but Dr Arjan de Wagt, chief of nutrition at Unicef in India, says that "even a very small percentage can mean very large numbers because of the size of the Indian population." Unicef's World Obesity Atlas for 2022 reveals that India is predicted to have more than 27 million obese children, representing one in 10 children globally, by 2030. It ranks 99th on the list of 183 countries in terms of preparedness to deal with obesity and the economic impact of overweight and obesity is expected to rise from USD 23 billion in 2019 to a whopping USD 479 billion by 2060.

Dr Basavaraja stresses that on promotion of and implementation of WHO-UNICEF tool actively. "Our duty goes beyond treatment - we must prioritize prevention, so as to safeguard the wellbeing of future generations." The IAP has also stressed on many of these issues in its previous guidelines on junk foods, he reminds. Measurement of body mass index (BMI) as well as waist circumference should be routinely inculcated in clinical practice. Parents and children have always been a single unit in pediatrics, so educating them of the impending risks is essential for curbing this disease. Need for a balanced diet and all its components should also be explained in detail to the family. "To effectively address the challenge of balancing child rights and content regulation, we need to navigate a delicate balance between protecting the rights of children and imposing restrictions on content," concludes Dr Basavaraja.

Fortis Hospital Noida starts robotic surgery for prostate cancer cure

A robotic-assisted radical prostatectomy was successfully performed for the first time in Noida on a 67-year-old patient at Fortis Hospital Noida. Conducted under the medicos team led by Dr. Piyush Varshney, Additional Director of Urology at Fortis Hospital, the patient was discharged from the hospital just four days post-surgery. As per a study published in Science Direct titled Epidemiology of Prostate Cancer in India, prostate cancer is the second

most common cause of cancer and the sixth leading cause of cancer death among men worldwide. "Due to rapid migration from rural to urban areas, which is quickly changing lifestyles, more cases of prostate cancer are being reported. This surgery method, called robotic-assisted radical prostatectomy, is a big leap in medical science and a blessing for patients. It offers minimal invasive options for patients and shortens the recovery period," said the doctor.

Heart blockage of 50-year-old cured with ayurvedic therapy at AIIA Delhi

A 50-year-old auto driver, who was diagnosed with 95% blockage in his left anterior descending artery (LAD) after he suffered a heart attack two years ago, has been completely cured with the help of ayurveda for nearly 4 months at All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Delhi. His angiography showed a non-calcified plaque in segment 6 causing 85-90% occlusion and the RCA showed a calcified

plaque in segment 1 causing 5-10% occlusion. Assistant professor, Dr Divya Kajaria, Department of Kaya Chikitsa, AIIA, said; Kumar was provided Virechana, one of the Panchkarma therapies, followed by oral medicines for three months. He was admitted in the hospital for 15 days and then given three months of medication. Now he has 0-5% occlusion in both LAD and RCA, which is normal.

"We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time"
— TS Eliot



TRAVEL BUG



The year 2024 is all about transformative travel, and powered with lifestyle resolutions and more awareness for wellness, we embark on a life-changing journey through the snowy hilltops of Gabala, Azerbaijan. **BY NIVI SHRIVASTAVA**

REJUVENECER, REINICIAR, ACTUALIZAR UN TRANSFORMADOR DE RETIRO



If you've ever wondered how many days would you survive without tea or coffee, completely sugar-free meals, and with just one gram of salt in the entire day, you need to try out the Chenot detox. On a self-exploration wellness journey in peak winters, I find myself in one of the most breathtaking landscapes of Gabala, Azerbaijan. Covered in layers of fresh snow, the surrounding white vistas and a cold frozen lake welcome me to a retreat set in a winter wonderland straight out of a mystical fairytale.



ROAD TO RENOVATION

Although being a travel and food writer it is hard to not indulge, I look forward to following the three-day advanced detox program in the Chenot Palace Gabala, without giving in to the temptations. The biggest challenge is to resist the sugar and salt withdrawals, but once the body gets in sync and the therapies begin it won't seem so rigorous I am told. In the luxurious wellness center, each guest undergoes a comprehensive health evaluation followed by a bespoke tailored program, where they are guided by certified medical and wellness professionals to fine-tune their metabolism and physical strength. As I embark on this exciting journey of wellness, I am set to test my endurance with a strict nutritional diet, medically supervised fitness, and rejuvenating therapies for aligning mind and body. The daily wellness activities form an integral part of the retreat's holistic approach. From yoga and meditation to specialized fitness programs, guests are immersed in a diverse range of activities that cater to the body, mind, and soul. From aromatic hydrotherapies to invigorating mud baths in warm water beds, lymphatic massages, and light therapies for sound sleep and relaxation, the treatments allow guests to reconnect with their inner selves. Personalized nutrition takes center stage as well, with tailored diets focusing on caloric density, nutritional value, and preparation methods to purify and rebalance the body.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A standout feature of the retreat is the full-board meal plan, featuring a healthy diet enriched with healing non-alcoholic beverages. Crafted in alignment with the Chenot philosophy, the culinary offerings are not just a treat for the taste buds but also contribute to the overall well-being of guests. Each meal is a harmonious blend of flavors and nutrients, reinforcing the idea that food is not just sustenance but a vital component of holistic health. From steamed and baked vegetables paired with interesting sauces, buckwheat risottos, muesli soaked in almond milk, fiber-rich salads, and delicious blends of gastronomic delight - each meal was savoured in luxurious dining

and consisted of approximately 800 calories per day. A lack of salt and sugar was substituted with some healthy toppings of paprika, curry mix, and turmeric powder for those who craved more textures. One of the highlights of my stay was the exclusive masterclass with the in-house Chef Ramiz Bayramov, where I had the



opportunity to participate in a cooking class and learned some simple yet effective ways to whip up some healthy dishes without extra calories. Following the culinary experience was undoubtedly the

hardest part of the program, but it made me realize that the taste buds can be re-programmed by making mindful dietary choices, and that's something I wish to follow beyond the retreat.

HOLISTIC HOLIDAYS

From the carefully curated treatments designed to revitalize, traditional spa therapies to cutting-edge techniques, think of this as a sophisticated approach to vitality customized for every participant. As the wellness industry is witnessing an unprecedented rise beyond physical exercise and aesthetic pursuits, trends that help in pursuit of "longevity" and "anti-aging" are significantly gaining attention among elite travellers. One notable trend shaping the wellness landscape is the rise of holistic escapes. This trend reflects a growing preference for well-being experiences among travellers, blending luxury with health-focused activities in natural settings. Henri Chenot, the visionary behind Chenot Group, leads the charge in the trend of proactive scientific wellness. This approach focuses on prevention

and adaptation, leveraging innovation, technology, and precision medicine to enhance overall well-being. The emphasis on a proactive stance towards health embraces this movement with specialized programs like three-day, seven-day, and 14-day advanced detox packages, catering to diverse individual needs. Speaking about the rise in interest in wellness retreats and rejuvenation holidays, Rishad Sharifov, General Manager of Chenot Palace Gabala, shares an insightful perspective. He mentions, "A growing awareness of well-being is putting a stronger spotlight on individual health. Whether in trends, travel, or daily routines, the key is maintaining a constant dedication to wellness; we not just offer temporary escapes but inspire guests to incorporate enduring insights into their lives."



SNOW AND SOLITUDE

In the state-of-the-art wellness facility, it's easy to lose the sense of time and after all the daily fitness activities and therapies, we had the luxury of leisure. Being fond of water activities, I spent most of my free time practicing aqua aerobics and swimming in the heated pool that overlooked the snow-capped mountains afar. And, to catch the sunset I did not forget to take a long walk on the cobbled pathways, where tangerine skies reflected beautifully in the still waters of the frozen lake. On other days, a cozy time in the Moroccan-styled mosaic hamam was just the perfect way to relax or one can mull over life in the steam and sauna sessions and come back with a clear head. For those seeking an adventurous touch to their wellness journey, an outdoor excursion to the Tufandag Ski Resort is also very popular. Nestled in the picturesque mountains surrounding Gabala, this thrilling trip adds an element of excitement to



the overall experience. The crisp mountain air and the adrenaline-pumping activities at the resort complement the serenity of the wellness retreat, creating a perfect balance between tranquility and adventure.

Modi's diplomacy brings UAE closer to India

Since ascending to the position of Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi has embarked on a remarkable journey, marked by seven visits to the United Arab Emirates since 2015. His tenure signifies a profound shift in diplomatic engagement, as no Indian Prime Minister had graced the shores of the UAE in three decades prior to his tenure. A pivotal moment unfolded when President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, formerly the Prince of the Monarchy alongside his five distinguished brothers, warmly welcomed PM Modi at Abu Dhabi Airport during his maiden visit to the UAE in 2015. This historic encounter heralded a new era of bilateral relations, symbolising the strengthening bonds between the two nations at the highest echelons of leadership. In the realm of diplomacy, the synergy between Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has blossomed into an extraordinary bond, propelling the relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates to unprecedented heights. Responding to the fervent appeal of the Indian community, Modi sought the consent of Zayed Al Nahyan to construct a Hindu temple in the heart of Abu Dhabi. Without hesitation, the leader not only granted his approval but also allocated a sprawling 22 acre, chosen by the community. Thus, amid the tranquil expanse of Abu Dhabi's Abu Mureikha area, emerged the UAE's hand-carved Hindu temple, boasting Nagara-style

architecture adorned with breathtaking sculptures crafted from pink sandstone and white marble.

Its grand inauguration, presided over by Modi in a captivating evening ceremony on February 14 served as a poignant symbol of cultural reverence and mutual respect. The auspicious occasion coincided with the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22, imbuing the Indian diaspora with a profound sense of unity and pride both at home and abroad. During Modi's recent sojourn to Abu Dhabi on February 13 and 14, the strategic collaboration between the two nations was further cemented with the signing of a landmark treaty, following the trailblazing Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) of 2022.

This momentous accord precipitated a remarkable 16 per cent surge in bilateral trade during the fiscal year 2022-23, while also solidifying the UAE's position as the fourth-largest foreign direct investment (FDI) contributor to India. Against this backdrop, the inauguration of the BAPS temple stands as a testament to the enduring friendship between the UAE and India, symbolising a harmonious convergence of cultural heritage and shared values, epitomising the UAE's unwavering commitment to global harmony, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

In a transformative stride towards educational collaboration, the inauguration of IIT Delhi's



campus in Abu Dhabi represents yet another milestone in the burgeoning partnership between the two nations. With classes commencing on January 29, 2024, for its inaugural batch, this monumental achievement underscores a shared commitment to fostering excellence in higher education and fostering a culture of innovation and research. Signed into fruition through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on July 15, 2023, the rapid establishment of the campus reflects the indomitable spirit of cooperation and mutual ambition.

Modi's unwavering dedication to educational advancement was palpable during his earlier visits to the UAE, where he laid the foundation for this transformative initiative. Embodying a shared vision

for knowledge exchange and human capital investment, the campus serves as a beacon of progress, heralding a new era of collaboration in cutting-edge technology and research. Together, these initiatives underscore a shared commitment to fostering a dynamic partnership rooted in mutual respect, innovation, and progress, paving the way for a brighter future characterised by global cooperation and sustainable development.

Envision a transformative educational landscape, sculpted by the wisdom of the Radhakrishnan Commission report, which illuminates the path towards global excellence in higher learning, particularly in the realms of management and technology. Embracing this vision, our pioneering education policy unfolds with resplendent ambition, aimed at erecting

international bastions of knowledge affiliated with esteemed institutions such as the IITs, IIMs, and AIIMSS. Witness the awe-inspiring spectacle of IIT Madras casting its scholarly gaze upon the shores of Zanzibar, while IIT Delhi's illustrious presence graces the skyline of Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, the noble aspiration to extend the mantle of education beckons as plans materialise for another distinguished outpost of IIT Madras in the verdant landscape of Sri Lanka.

As we chart this illustrious journey, the aspirations and exigencies of the region stand as guiding beacons, shaping every facet of our curriculum and courses, ensuring a bespoke educational experience that resonates with the heartbeat of our communities.

Barely two moons have waxed and waned since the resplendent conclusion of

COP 28 in the radiant city of Dubai, where the clarion call to liberate ourselves from the shackles of fossil fuel consumption resounded with unanimous fervour.

Behold the intrinsic symbiosis between electric power and our very existence, intertwined with the fabric of our livelihoods, as industrial growth unfurls its majestic wings, fueled by the tempestuous currents of power consumption. Yet, amid this epoch of progress, the spectre of greenhouse gas emissions looms ominously, a harrowing testament to the heedless march of industrialisation, which has cloaked our planet in a shroud of warmth, rising by an imperceptible yet perilous 1.2 degrees Celsius.

Behold, then, the catastrophic ballet of nature's fury, as the warming embrace of the oceans and earth catalyses a tempestuous crescendo of sea surges, floods, landslides, and droughts, weaving a tapestry of despair across the globe.

Henceforth, the clarion call for change echoes with unyielding resonance, beckoning us to cast aside the yoke of coal, oil, and gas, and embrace the verdant pastures of renewable energy. Behold the alchemy of progress, as the crucible of innovation kindles the flames of hope, birthing technologies that harness the elemental fury of nuclear fusion, the luminous promise of green hydrogen, and the celestial dance of solar and wind energy. Yet, amid this symphony of progress, a lamentation arises, for the bounteous fruits of alternative energy remain

tantalisingly beyond our grasp, ensnared by the tendrils of inadequate research and finance. Thus, let us cast our gaze towards the radiant shores of Abu Dhabi, a beacon of hope and innovation, where the leviathan of progress strides forth, fuelled by the boundless ingenuity of human endeavor.

Gather, then, beneath the auspices of the inaugural programme at IIT Delhi's hallowed Abu Dhabi campus, where the Master of Technology in Energy, Transition, and Sustainability stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment towards a greener tomorrow. Let us behold with reverence the vanguard of progress, as students, sponsored by the custodians of oil and gas, embark upon a journey towards enlightenment and empowerment.

For in the crucible of knowledge, we shall forge a future teeming with possibility, where the economies of Abu Dhabi and her Gulf brethren shall transcend the shackles of fossil fuel dependency, ushering forth a new era of prosperity and sustainability. Behold, then, the emerald tapestry of transition and sustainability, unfurling beneath the hallowed halls of IIT Delhi, where the sacred rites of research and innovation converge, illuminating the path towards a brighter, greener future for generations yet unborn.

(The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) Karnataka)

In the realm of diplomacy, the synergy between Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has blossomed into an extraordinary bond, propelling the relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates to unprecedented heights



BK SINGH

PERSPECTIVE

Can Iran control its proxy Houthis?

Amid escalating tensions in West Asia, the dynamics between Iran, Houthis, and international powers have profound implications. As conflicts rage from Gaza to Yemen, the interplay of geopolitical interests, regional alliances, and economic stakes underscores the complexities of the situation and its far-reaching consequences

Since the war in Gaza has escalated, Houthis are retaliating by burning and attacking commercial shipments connecting Europe and Asia in the Indian Ocean. Houthis have asserted that their response sends a clear message: Palestinians are not alone, and they will take revenge on Israel. At the same time, the Western world, led by the United States and supported by twenty other countries, has sent a stern warning to Houthis and Iran, saying that blocking, attacking, and burning commercial ships violates international laws and adversely affects the economies of Asia and Europe. The US' reaction is also about preserving its prestige as the global police, which has been declining over the past decade. However, its unconditional support for Israel's actions in Gaza, in response to Hamas's terrorist activity on October 7 last year, has yielded little success.

The US officially acknowledges that Gaza has been devastated, resulting in the death of thousands of Palestinians, mostly women and children. Israeli actions have failed to achieve their central objective of destroying Hamas as a terrorist organisation. However, the transformation of Gaza into a battleground has brought shame upon humanity. The recent declaration at the International Court of Justice has further embarrassed American leadership and its continual support of Israel. The US' frequent use of veto power has rendered the UN Security Council's status irrelevant. The pursuit of peace and security seems distant, especially with the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine overshadowing it. Israel's relentless actions in Gaza have further undermined the legitimacy of the United Nations. The American leadership bears



the burden of discrediting the UN shamelessly. The military actions against the Houthis carry multiple implications, with the most prominent being perceived as the United States and Israel's confrontation with Iran. For Iranians, proxies such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis across the Arab world symbolise an axis of resistance and represent a deeply ingrained belief that any coercive structure will face retaliation, framing it as a battle against "oppressors." Amid the crisis, India's engagement with Iran and China's official request for Iran to restrain the Houthis signify more than just a clash between the US, Israel, Iran, and Russia. The global economy and the disruptions to the supply chain, amid conflicts ranging from Ukraine to Gaza, have significant implications for countries that have refrained from taking sides.

The brief summary of Houthis' actions in the Gulf of Aden has been both impactful and exasperating. The ongoing crossfire has failed to dissuade Houthis, despite Yemen enduring a decade-

long civil war since the Arab uprising, resulting in the loss of millions of lives. While last year's reconciliation between Saudis and Iranians temporarily curbed Houthi aggression, their recent actions carry far-reaching repercussions, posing threats to the national interests and security of numerous countries.

The larger question now remains: can Iran stop the Houthis, and will they heed Tehran's calls? The fact is, Houthi actions have been perceived collectively as Iranian manoeuvres using proxies against the US and Israel. The decline of US power in the region and the rise of Iranian proxies have emboldened Iran to pursue its goals. The strategic planning behind Hamas's actions on October 7 suggests that Tehran and Iran's de facto leader, Khamenei, were discontented with the Abraham Accords and the normalisation between Israel and Arab countries. The Palestinian pretext has played into Iran's hands. Iran now asserts itself as more powerful and accepted by the larger Arab world, which similarly

opposes normalisation. However, the recent Houthi attacks go beyond the traditional calculus of Iranian proxy actions against the US. The crisis runs much deeper than the typical narrative suggesting that Iran controls Houthis similarly to Hezbollah and even Hamas. The relationship between Iran and Houthis is complex and requires a thorough reevaluation of both parties. Iran has two centres of power, with a theocratic regime under Ayatollah Khamenei wielding more influence than President Raisi. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which train and oversee proxies, operate primarily under Khamenei's authority. Similarly, Houthis function more as strategic allies than conventional proxies. While Iranian proxies are supervised, supported, and influenced by Khamenei's IRGC, Houthis pursue agendas beyond Tehran's control, including those beyond Khamenei's influence. It is undeniable that Houthis have received support from Iran and the IRGC, but their dependence on them is less significant compared to

Hamas and Hezbollah.

Houthis are the product of civil wars and cycles of violence, positioning themselves as rulers of a divided Yemen. Their response extends beyond Israel's actions in Gaza; the more the US-led axis bombs Sana'a, the more Houthis will grow like a phoenix. They have three major objectives, some aligned with Iran and some differing. With the ongoing horror inflicted by Israel in Gaza and US-led actions in Yemen, Houthis are gaining legitimacy in the region and beyond, attracting radicalised new recruits and sending a message to the larger Arab world that their cause is a holy war. Secondly, Houthis seek official recognition akin to the Taliban in Afghanistan; their belligerence has garnered global attention, and any move towards normalisation will likely occur through dialogue, similar to the Doha Agreement, which would grant them political legitimacy. Thirdly, they aim for acceptance in the Arab and Muslim world as a moral and religious force fighting for Palestinians, rather than

being viewed solely as an Iranian proxy. Iran has indeed played a significant role in shaping and aiding the growth of Houthis, similar to its involvement with Hezbollah and Hamas. Despite the peace agreement brokered by China with Saudi Arabia, Houthis have ceased firing missiles into Saudi territory, and Saudi efforts to defeat them have been unsuccessful. However, the Tehran-Houthi alliance transcends mere Shia narratives, despite historical and ideological ties with Iran. Houthis aspire to establish a civil state rather than adhere to a theocratic regime, and they are open to integrating Yemen's Sunni population. Additionally, Houthis' war economy does not solely rely on Tehran for economic support, contrary to popular belief. Instead, it thrives on various illicit activities in the Bab-el-Mandeb area, including ransom, looting, and the mobilisation of oil money, amounting to an estimated \$2 billion. The Houthis' strategic partnership with Iran serves Iran's chokepoint strategy to sustain its economy, with Iran controlling the Persian Gulf and utilising the Bab-el-Mandeb route to supply arms to Hamas and support Houthis' control over the area. However, beyond this arrangement, the Houthis sustain themselves through their own means, including potential arms supplies from North Korea. Lastly, Houthis themselves are not inclined to become mere proxies of Tehran; they exhibit a multi-aligned stance rather than strictly adhering to a proxy role.

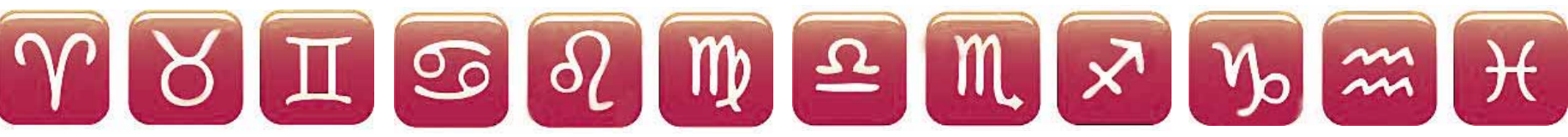
One significant impact Tehran has had on Houthis is the support provided by Hezbollah and IRGC forces for drones, missiles, and guerrilla training. While Tehran could potentially exert control over Houthis, they have their own objectives and

may not simply submit to Iran as a proxy, despite their alignment. It is highly likely that Houthis would resist Tehran's influence, but this depends on how much pressure Khomeini and the IRGC can exert. Houthis have claimed that they only target ships flagged by the US and its allies, but the international commercial shipping industry is more intricate and risky. These risks translate into increased costs, including higher insurance premiums for commercial ships. Moreover, many shipping companies do not fly flags of specific countries, undermining the distinctions Houthis have been claiming. The world is unprepared for an alternative route due to the high costs involved, particularly as economies are already strained by the conflict in Ukraine. India and China have approached Tehran to rein in Houthis, whose actions disrupt trade between Europe and Asia, accounting for over 40 per cent of global trade. The stakes of the situation are greater than they may initially appear, and while Tehran stands to gain strategically, it cannot risk disrupting its relations with China, India, and beyond. The challenge lies with the centres of power in Tehran, which have tended to prioritise ideology over pragmatism in foreign policy decisions. Ultimately, the decision rests with Khamenei as to how far Houthis will be allowed to proceed and whether they will acquiesce on all fronts. Responses may vary; Houthis may temporarily halt their actions but are unlikely to cease until they achieve their objectives, which align with those of Iran but are more akin to a strategic partnership than a mere proxy relationship.

(The writer is teaches at Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace & Conflict resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi)



PREMANAND MISHRA



YOUR WEEK AHEAD
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19
Harnessing your inner strength, creativity, and the harmony of your physical and mental well-being will pave the way to success. Dedication to your tasks, striving for excellence, and teamwork are key to achieving collective objectives. You find yourself in a profession that satisfies both your heart and your financial needs, where your courage, enthusiasm, and resilience shine through in all aspects of life. Now is the perfect time to delve deeper into activities that enhance your focus and serenity. Consider engaging in practices like mindfulness exercises or relaxation techniques to sharpen your concentration. Additionally, the possibility of a blossoming romantic connection may arise. As the week concludes, you may find yourself embodying a compassionate and imaginative spirit, ready to dream and love with all your heart.
Lucky number 8 | **Lucky colour** Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



LEO July 23-Aug 22
A new phase of financial growth and improved economic circumstances is emerging, signaling the onset of a prosperous era. Anticipation for a long-awaited opportunity is about to end, marking a period for self-care and indulgence in life's pleasures. However, potential disagreements or tension with colleagues or acquaintances may arise, testing your patience. Fortunately, support comes from an unexpected familial connection, offering assistance, or fulfilling a specific desire. Should concerns arise regarding health assessments, expect positive results. Dependence on another's support for achieving a significant aspiration will be met with reliability and dedication. Your diligent, patient approach, coupled with a humble appreciation for life's simpler joys, ensures that your hard work will be acknowledged and rewarded, bringing fulfillment and contentment.
Lucky number 3 | **Lucky colour** Pink
Lucky day Tuesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21
In the relentless chase for material gains, individuals often encounter rivalry and deceit, as some resort to manipulation to secure their ambitions. This competitive landscape can lead to a disregard for ethical standards, pushing people to prioritize wealth above all, sometimes at the expense of personal integrity and well-being. However, as the week progresses, a shift towards emotional sensitivity and familial care emerges, offering a moment to reassess priorities beyond the financial sphere. This introspection can lead to a deeper understanding of life's true value, hinting at a more spiritually enriched path forward. By week's end, a desire for tranquility takes precedence. The earlier hustle gives way to a need for rest and peace, marking a pause to recharge and contemplate a balanced approach to life's pursuits.
Lucky number 6 | **Lucky colour** Red
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20
Embracing a sense of purity, you infuse your surroundings with light-heartedness, embarking on a journey filled with discovery and self-enhancement. Trusting your instincts leads you through seemingly whimsical quests, yet these are the very pursuits that shape your essence. You're drawn to envisioning a reality filled with prosperity, allure, serenity, and an ideal living space, crafting visions far beyond your current grasp. However, amidst this dreamy state, it's essential to ground oneself in the tangible aspects of life. As you stand at a crossroads, the importance of diligent consideration becomes apparent. Weighing the benefits and drawbacks meticulously will illuminate the path forward. By focusing on tangible achievements and allowing your aspirations to guide you, rather than dominate, you pave the way for substantial, positive transformation.
Lucky number 16 | **Lucky colour** Teal
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22
Feeling a sense of disillusionment with personal connections or a lack of fulfillment from achievements may lead you to reconsider your current commitments, urging a pause to reassess boundaries and manage your energy more effectively to prevent burnout. You're inclined to distance yourself from the complexities tied to your close bonds, seeking to leave behind any unresolved matters to foster a fresh start. This period calls for resilience as you navigate moments of frustration. Should your efforts seem unrewarded, anchor yourself in the now and utilize available resources to their fullest. Your aspirations to enhance your financial well-being and overall productivity remain a priority, signaling a desire for supportive companionship that aligns with your goals. Remain patient, as assistance is on its way to guide you toward your desired path.
Lucky number 5 | **Lucky colour** Coral
Lucky day Sunday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19
This week finds you constantly on the move, with a flurry of activity that could see you embarking on a delightful journey with those closest to you or even relocating. There's a strong possibility of receiving joyful news or a significant proposal that could bring smiles and excitement. However, a wave of uncertainty may cloud your judgment midweek, presenting challenges in making pivotal choices or leading you down a path of confusion. It's a period of reflection and testing, urging you to clarify your aspirations and align your actions accordingly. On the financial front, you're poised to manage your resources effectively. Your achievements are worthy of acknowledgment, reflecting a journey of perseverance and growth. Embrace your accomplishments, allowing them to bolster your sense of value and enrich your experiences.
Lucky number 24 | **Lucky colour** Maroon
Lucky day Monday



GEMINI May 21-June 20
Your essence radiates an undeniable strength, a testament to the resilience and capability embedded within. You navigate life's complexities with a harmonious blend of compassion, courage, and wisdom, transcending mere material pursuits. This elevated perspective empowers you to achieve your goals with vigor and determination. Personal growth and mastery are within your reach, signaling a period of profound discovery and fulfillment. However, a tendency towards impatience or hurried decisions may present challenges. An impending shift in your surroundings or lifestyle could emerge, possibly involving the support or collaboration with a significant male figure in your life, allowing you to leverage your abilities or creativity. As the week concludes, a surge of emotions may become overwhelming, suggesting the need for mindful management of your emotional well-being to navigate potential difficulties.
Lucky number 22 | **Lucky colour** Lavender
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22
This week, your grand visions and selfless desires are in focus, urging you to act decisively and diligently toward achieving your aspirations. Prosperity seems within reach, particularly in endeavors related to property and career advancement, promising to elevate your status and financial well-being. You'll find clarity and insight, guiding you to set and pursue ambitions that mirror your unique character. The arrival of a new family member brings joy, while the week's challenges, though exhausting, will result in deep satisfaction and restful sleep. Your compassionate approach to others, offering comfort and support, highlights your inherent strength and wisdom. This period is about making significant strides, reflecting your resilience and sagacity, as you navigate through demands with grace and care.
Lucky number 19 | **Lucky colour** Orange
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18
This week, your assertiveness and desire for dominance may surface more strongly, as you seek to steer your environment according to your vision. Your ability to offer insightful guidance positions you at the forefront, where you're not just leading but also commanding respect through your decisive nature. Your approach is grounded in a clear-sighted understanding of situations, ensuring that emotions don't cloud your judgement. Upholding fairness, honesty, and unwavering principles will be your cornerstone, enhancing your respect and recognition. However, as the week progresses, pay attention to your financial habits. A tendency towards excessive spending calls for a reevaluation of your priorities, highlighting the importance of finding an equilibrium between personal and professional life. Strive for moderation and seek to establish a harmonious balance that respects both your ambitions and your responsibilities to loved ones.
Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Blue
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22
Embarking on a new journey requires the strength to advance confidently. Your ability to turn dreams into reality is at a peak, with collaborative ventures promising to bear significant rewards. You stand at the helm of your destiny, exuding courage, vitality, and an unwavering resolve to achieve greatness. Strategic planning is essential; setting clear objectives ensures a path devoid of ambiguity. Embrace your innate leadership, letting your inherent capabilities shine brightly. As you do, the extent of your achievements will astonish you. A sense of complete well-being awaits, encompassing personal health, financial stability, and flourishing relationships. Your aspirations are within reach, and attaining them will usher in profound satisfaction and joy, painting your life with the strokes of contentment and prosperity.
Lucky number 12 | **Lucky colour** Amber
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21
Embarking on this journey, you're filled with innovative ideas and the potential for fresh starts. It's essential to stay open and adaptable, aiming to bring harmony and beauty into your daily routines. Allow the wisdom that envelops us to guide you, and savor the bounty of the natural environment. Yet, tread carefully as unease and apprehension could spiral into darker realms of fixation, affecting your well-being. Resist being paralyzed by these shadows, and push forward with optimism. Initially, restlessness might prevail, but as the week unfolds, your vigor and purposefulness will surge, highlighting your role as a peace advocate. Your efforts in current or new ventures are likely to flourish, heralding significant achievements like professional growth or joyful family expansions, marking a period of fruitful accomplishments and breakthroughs.
Lucky number 11 | **Lucky colour** Indigo
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20
Unbeknownst to many, our consciousness is in a perpetual state of evolution, discarding outdated notions and embracing fresh perspectives. This process is natural and signifies that nothing truly perishes but rather undergoes a transformation. Anticipate significant shifts on the horizon that demand the release of obsolete viewpoints. A critical element in your life may swiftly enter or exit, marking a period of rapid transitions, possibly including a change in living situations. This phase will bolster your self-assurance, empowering you to confront and surmount any obstacles. By the week's end, a sense of fulfillment and contentment will prevail, underpinned by robust well-being and the joy derived from familial harmony. This journey of change and adaptation is essential for personal growth and satisfaction.
Lucky number 10 | **Lucky colour** Magenta
Lucky day Saturday

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Saraswati's imagery offers lesson on how to seek truth



Picking up threads from the previous issue, it comes out that when a person qualifies to become a Vipra, a stage is arrived at to further reflect upon the subject matter attended so far. Purposely to put them in synergy for the sake of a comprehensive understanding. Having thus acquired clarity in thought and vision, one could provide expert opinion on matters related to the discipline specialised.
Holistic understanding of the dynamics of life, however, cannot be said to have yet been realized. For, the entire expanse of nature is incomprehensible, having in its womb, enough of mysteries, yet to be explored and known, many of them really beyond the reach of an ordinary seeker. Naturally, many fresh questions beyond the scope of one's acquired knowledge may keep arising in a seeker's mind. One, thus, realizes the limitations of mind, intellect, and knowledge base. That tempts the seeker to move beyond all limitations to reach out unexplored territories.
Having attained the above stage, a seeker can exercise enough of self-control. They become qualified to get

tuned to the fundamental element of consciousness, which emanates from the primal source itself. That provides intelligence necessary to drive through all aspects of the world process. It, therefore, is said to be omniscient and all pervading. A seeker tracking the consciousness route could then reach out the treasure trove inlaid with nature. It needs to be appreciated here that with the onset of the creation chain, the design parameters underlying existence would have involuntarily come into play. Having got fully tuned to the element of consciousness – the substratum of life – even the subtle realities of life could be unearthed.
Had there been no design driving the phenomenal world, it would not have been doing its round for so long, and in such an orderly manner. Naturally, the one travelling the consciousness route, when they pay attention, can see through even imperceptible realms of nature, and intuitively realise existential truths, beyond ordinary man's reach. It then becomes possible for the seeker to look at things not simply from man's perspective, but even in terms of larger mandate of nature.
Having thus understood nature's larger



mandate and human being's individualistic concerns and limitations, one qualifies to be a Brahmana (wise). The paradox, however, is that egotistical human mind, bound by its preconditioning, restricts our scope of vision. And with a narrowed vision, it becomes difficult to have holistic realisation of the dynamics of life. That makes it incumbent upon us to expand

our vision, and then explore existential truths with an open mind, free from any preconditioning whatsoever. To prepare the seekers for the aforesaid task, they are first made to meditate upon the imagery of Mother Goddess Saraswati. Repeated reflection on the imagery helps the seeker realise the spirit underlying the learning process. A detailed look into the imagery will make out an interesting reading. First the word: "Saraswati". It is made of the root-syllable, "Saras", which means something that would be continuously flowing. Her name, therefore, denotes motion, implying that the imagery offers lessons in how to ensure smooth run of life, individually and collectively. Metaphorically, "She" is perceived as the consort of Lord Brahma, the God personified for creation. Supposedly, this is in acknowledgement of the fact that there must be a self-evident design component underlying the whole creation process. That, obviously, would have come into play immediately with the onset of creation process, and so its origin is assigned to the primal source itself. Therefore, to get to the ultimate truths of life, the focus of learning must be

directed towards the primal source. Mother Goddess is perceived as clad in spotless white apparel and mounted on white Swan. Transparent white is the colour of purity, Buddhi (discriminate intelligence) and Akasha (the space filled with the eternal consciousness element). It hints out at the pure, unsullied truths, as laid down with nature. Such truths can be accessed and understood only when approached with a pure and simple mind, free from any egotistical preconditioning. Otherwise, with our minds driven by a sense of relative perception, it will be difficult to identify the thin dividing line between truth and untruth. It is something like milk diluted with water, which looks no different from its pure form. However, when served to a Swan, it consumes the pure milk, leaving aside the water mixed, and hence the relevance of Her mount. To sum up, realisation of truth calls for a pure uncorrupted mind when it will be available in its wholesome form.
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