

WORLD 5

TALIBAN DIKTAT LEAVES AFGHAN WOMEN SCARED: UN

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 bête 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.

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TEJAS WINS EQUESTRIAN NATIONAL CROWN



Tejas in Bengaluru with Tiens Key

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.

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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.



Farmers at the Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border during their 'Delhi Chalo' protest, near Patiala district

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.

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Kejriwal Virtual at ED court

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The motion of confidence moved by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi Assembly on Friday was passed by a voice vote, with 54 of the AAP's 62 MLAs present during the voting. Apart from dissent from Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, the vote of confidence was passed with the support of 54 AAP MLAs, including the Chief Minister. The remaining seven BJP MLAs were under suspension. This is the second time in the past two years that the Arvind Kejriwal Government has sought a trust vote. The AAP has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Assembly, and the BJP has eight. Ahead of the trust vote in the Delhi Assembly, Kejriwal appeared through videoconferencing before the Delhi Rouse Avenue Court, seeking exemption from physical appearance for the day due to the ongoing Budget session and the confidence motion called by him in the Delhi Assembly. Kejriwal argued that no AAP MLAs defected. He said two MLAs were in jail, some unwell, and some out of station. Speaking on the motion of confidence, Kejriwal said he has faced several attacks in the past, and

now the BJP wanted to arrest him. "You may arrest me, but how will you finish Kejriwal's thoughts?" he asked. He claimed that the biggest challenger of the BJP is the Aam Aadmi Party, "which is why it is under attack from all sides. Today, if the BJP is scared of anyone, it is AAP.. With utmost responsibility, I want to say that if the BJP does not lose the Lok Sabha elections in 2024, then AAP will make India free from BJP in 2029." "The way they (BJP) have attacked the AAP and arrested our ministers; people across the country are aware of this. They think that people are fools, but they are not. Now discussions are being held in parks, and people are asking 'does PM Modi want to crush Arvind Kejriwal? Even children are asking this question because they have arrested so many of our ministers,'" said Kejriwal, adding that even if the BJP wins this year's Lok Sabha polls, the AAP will "liberate" the country from the saffron party in the 2029 elections. The Delhi Chief Minister, who is also the AAP convener, said his government has a majority in the House but needed to bring the motion of confidence because the BJP was trying to poach party MLAs and topple his



government. He said several MLAs explained how they were contacted and offered money to switch sides, allegedly by "BJP people". The Chief Minister asserted that the BJP thought it could finish the AAP by arresting him. "You may arrest me, but how will you finish Kejriwal's thoughts?" he asked. Kejriwal alleged that the BJP, through control over the Services department and the bureaucracy, was obstructing the work of his government. "They claim to be Ram bhakts, but they stopped medicines for the poor people in our hospitals. Did Lord Ram ask for stopping medicines for the poor people?" he said. Kejriwal said he has faced attacks in the past, been slapped, had ink thrown on him, and now they want to arrest him. Ahead of the trust vote in the Delhi Assembly, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

appeared through video conferencing before the Delhi Rouse Avenue Court, seeking exemption from physical appearance for the day as the Budget session is ongoing and a confidence motion called by him in the Delhi Assembly. "I wanted to come to court, but this floor test came up suddenly. Our budget session is until the first week of March. You can give me a date for after that, and I will appear," said Kejriwal, who appeared before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Divya Malhotra via video conferencing. Kejriwal was supposed to appear in court under the summons issued to him on a complaint filed against him by the ED for non-appearance before the agency. The counsel for Arvind Kejriwal submitted that he will physically appear on the next date of hearing. Appearing via video conferencing, Arvind Kejriwal told the court that due to the discussion on the confidence motion in the Delhi Assembly and the ongoing budget session, he could not physically appear before the court. Senior Advocate Ramesh Gupta, representing Kejriwal, argued that his appearance in court would cause hardship to everyone.

"Also, there is a budget session going on in the assembly and there is a floor test as well. But he will appear before the court in person," Gupta argued. Following this, the court scheduled March 16 at 10 am as the next date for Kejriwal to physically appear before it. The court accepted the request made by the Delhi chief minister and postponed the matter for further hearing on March 16. Later, speaking to the media after the court's decision, Gupta said the Chief Minister had "filed an application for exemption from personal appearance before the Rouse Avenue court, which was accepted." He went on to say that Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who represents the ED, did not oppose the application. "If everything goes well, Kejriwal should appear before the court on the next date of hearing, and he should also get bail in the matter," Gupta added. In its complaint, the ED has alleged that the Delhi chief minister intentionally did not want to obey the summons and kept on giving "lame excuses." If a high-ranking public functionary like him disobeyed the law, it would "set a wrong example for the common man, i.e., the Aam Aadmi," the agency said.

CPM aiding banned PFI to protest against me: Arif

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Arif Mohammed Khan, Governor, who is staging a single-handed battle against the Kerala Government, has fired a salvo against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his council of ministers over the Statewide demonstrations being held against the former by the CPI(M) and its students' wing, the SFI. "The CPI(M) and the SFI are staging black flag demonstrations against me with the active participation of the Popular Front of India. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his party leaders are providing tacit support to the banned PFI for staging these demonstrations," Arif Mohammed Khan told reporters at Thiruvananthapuram airport on Saturday. The Governor staging a sit-in demonstration enroute to Nilakkal recently when SFI and CPI(M) workers attacked his car made it to the national headlines. "Out of the 12 persons arrested by the police at Nilakkal. Seven are PFI activists," said Arif Mohammed Khan who returned to the capital city after three-day's tour to Thrissur and Ernakulam. In both the districts he was "greeted with" slogans "Sanghi Chancellor Go Back" and "Sanghi Governor Go Back" by



the CPI(M) workers. Though the PFI has been banned by the Centre, the Islamic outfit operates with impunity all over Kerala. Recently, the workers of the organization issued death threat to V G Sreedevi, additional sessions court judge, Alappuzha, for slapping capital punishment to all the 15 accused in the 2021 murder of Ranjit Sreenivasan, leader of BJP's OBC Morcha. The judge has been provided with round-the-clock security since then. But it proves the reach of the PFI in the state despite the ban. The Governor said that his statement is based on facts which means that he has received the information of central agencies. Sources close to Arif Mohammed Khan told The Pioneer that the governor's travel routes and tour programmes are being leaked out by the Kerala Police to CPI(M) workers giving them enough space to stage demonstrations and rasta roko. The PFI and SIMI (Students Islamic Movement of India, another banned organization) activists and leaders have infiltrated into the CPI(M) in a big way. K T Jaleel, former education minister (2016-2021) was the Kerala chief of the SIMI before he took refuge in the CPI(M). There is a parliament member from Kerala masquerading as a Marxist leader during day time and function as Jama-at-e-Islami during night hours. The running battle between the Governor and Kerala Government has reached a point of no-return as minister for higher education R Bindu on Friday reportedly played spoilsport to a senate meeting convened at the instance of the former to elect a member to head the search committee to elect the Vice Chancellor of one of the Universities in the State.

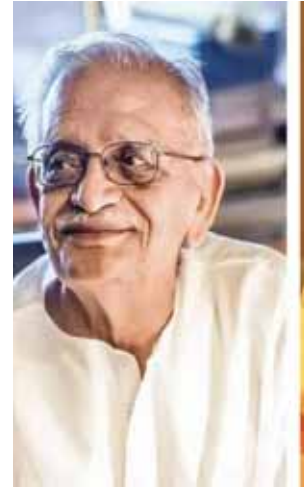
Jnanpith Award bestowed on Gulzar, Rambhadracharya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Renowned Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been named the recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award, the Jnanpith selection committee announced on Saturday. Gulzar is known for his works in Hindi cinema and is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of this era. Rambhadracharya, the founder and head of Tulsi Peeth in Chitrakoot, is a renowned Hindu spiritual leader, educator and writer of

more than 100 books. In a statement, the Jnanpith selection committee said, "It has been decided to give the award (for 2023) to eminent writers from two languages: Sanskrit litterateur Jagadguru Rambhadracharya and well known Urdu litterateur Shri Gulzar." Goan writer Damodar Mauzo had received the prestigious award for 2022. Sampooran Singh Kalra, popularly known as Gulzar, is celebrated for his works in Hindi cinema and is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of this era. Rambhadracharya is a renowned Hindu spiritual

leader, educator and writer of more than 240 books and texts, including four epics. Gulzar received Sahitya Akademi Award for Urdu in 2002, Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2013, Padma Bhushan in 2004, and at least five National Film awards for his works. Some of his finest works include the song "Jai Ho" for film "Slumdog Millionaire", which received an Oscar award in 2009 and Grammy Award in 2010, and songs for critically acclaimed films as "Maachhis" (1996), "Omkaara" (2006), "Dil Se..." (1998), and "Guru" (2007), among others.



Gulzar also directed some timeless award-winning classics, including "Koshish" (1972), "Parichay" (1972), "Mausam" (1975), "Ijaazat" (1977), and television serial "Mirza Ghalib" (1988). "Along with his long film journey, Gulzar has been setting new milestones in the field of literature. In poetry, he invented a new genre 'Triveni' which is a non-mukaffa poem of three lines. Gulzar has always created something new through his poetry. For some time now he has also been paying serious attention to children's poetry," Bharatiya Jnanpith said in a

statement. Rambhadracharya is one of the present four Jagadguru Ramanandacharyas of the Ramananda sect and has been holding this position since 1982. A polyglot, who speaks 22 languages, Rambhadracharya is a poet and writer in several Indian languages including Sanskrit, Hindi, Awadhi, and Maithili. In 2015, he received the Padma Vibhushan award. Established in 1944, the Jnanpith Award is given annually for outstanding contributions to Indian literature. This is the second time the award is being given

for Sanskrit language and for the fifth time for Urdu language. The award carries a prize money of Rs 21 lakh, a statue of Vagdevi and a citation. The recipients for the award were decided by a selection committee chaired by Jnanpith awardee Pratibha Rai. Other members of the selection committee included Madhav Kaushik, Damodar Mauzo, Professor Suranjan Das, Professor Purushottam Bilmale, Praful Shiledar, Professor Harish Trivedi, Prabha Verma, Janaki Prasad Sharma, A Krishna Rao and Jnanpith director Madhusudan Anand.

Modi promises...

From Page 1 Tawde noted that Modi has led a government, including over 12 years as Gujarat chief minister, for nearly 23 years without facing any allegations of corruption. "It has been a period free from allegations and filled with development," he said, quoting the Prime Minister, and added that there has been no instance of such a long tenure without anyone holding constitutional positions being tainted. The Modi Government scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution, which accorded special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir, in August 2019 soon after returning to power for a second time. The Lok Sabha has 543 seats, and the BJP won 282 and 303 of them in 2014 and 2019 respectively. Modi has set a target for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance to win over 400 seats. Modi's leadership is characterised by dedication, emotional investment, and a steadfast commitment to development, he said, adding that the entire nation today takes pride in the "transformative" policies and initiatives spearheaded by him. Later, addressing delegates of the national convention, BJP president JP Nadda underlined the party's meteoric rise since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office and lauded his leadership in the past decade, which has been full of new achievements for the organisation. The Modi Government is poised to achieve a hat-trick and retain power for a third consecutive term after the Lok Sabha polls, expected in April-May, he told nearly 11,500 party delegates assembled at Bharat Mandapam here for the two-day national convention. "We must surpass 370 seats, and the NDA must surpass 400," he said in his inaugural address, urging party members to channel all their energy into achieving the

target so that the party breaks its previous records. Thousands of party delegates from across the country cheered as Nadda mentioned the women's reservation law and the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, highlighting the prime minister's tenure. In his speech, Nadda noted that before Modi's rise in 2014, the BJP ruled only around five states, whereas it is now in power in 12 states. He added that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is currently in power in 17 states. Nadda highlighted that the BJP retained power for a second term in Uttar Pradesh with a significant victory in 2022, broke the trend of the incumbent party being voted out in Uttarakhand, and recently won assembly elections in three States - Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan - despite many considering it improbable. He mentioned that in West Bengal, the BJP's vote share increased from 10 per cent and three seats to 38.5 per cent and 77 seats in the 2021 Assembly polls, asserting that the party will come to power in the State next time. Additionally, Nadda stated that the party has gained ground in many northeastern states, including Assam, for the first time, and doubled its vote share in Telangana. "Lotus (BJP poll symbol) is everywhere. It is a pan-India party," Nadda said, rubbing the contention that the party's presence has been limited in south India. It has 29 Lok Sabha and eight Rajya Sabha MPs from the region against the corresponding numbers of 28 and seven of the Congress, he said. In the national council meetings held in the last 10 years, including the two organised in the national capital weeks before the 2014 and the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the attendance had generally remained around 3,000.

KAMAL DRAWS...

From Page 1

"Don't get into the breaking business. I spoke with Kamal Nathji last night around 10.30 or 11. He is in Chhindwara. The person who started his political innings with the Gandhi and Nehru family...He stood behind the party when the entire Janata Party and the then government was sending (former PM) Indiraji to jail," Singh told reporters in Jabalpur. "Can you believe that such a man will leave Congress, Sonijai, and Indiraji's family? You all should not even think of it," he added. An astute politician who had worked with three generations of the Gandhi family, Nath's relations with Madhya Pradesh date back to 1979 Indira had described him as her "third son." In a major blow to the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, several leaders switched sides last week. Former MLA Dinesh Ahirwar and Congress District president from Vidisha Rakesh Katare were the latest to join the BJP.

Cotton candy under FSSAI scanner over toxic chemicals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Fluffy texture, vibrant colors, and sweet flavor made Cotton Candy, also called 'Buddhi ke Baala' popular choice among young ones and adults alike across the country, but it has now come under the scanner of the Food Safety Standard Authority India (FSSAI) following reports of detection of cancer causing chemicals recently in Tamil Nadu which has now banned its sale. Pudukcherry was the first State to prohibit the sale of Cotton candy. More States may follow the suit as sources in the top food regulator body soon all the food inspectors across the States will be asked to pick the samples to test its content. They said that the laboratory test results on Cotton candy that were seized by state health officials during the crackdown in Chennai Marina Beach and Besant Nagar beaches when it was being sold last week showed that they contain



Rhodamine-B, a cancer-causing chemical. It has raised alarms among the authorities, highlighting the importance of ensuring the safety and quality of such treats to protect the health of children who enjoy them. The test results showed that it has a chemical called 'Rhodamine B' that was used in matches and incense sticks. The harmful chemicals were mixed to produce vivid pink and green hues. Usually, the chemical is used to dye clothes, which can lead to liver failure, the officials said. A chemical compound, Rhodamine B, also known as RhB, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH.gov) after entering the body with food, has a dis-

tributed effect on cells and tissues. Prolonged consumption of RhB-contaminated food can cause cancer or liver damage. Its presence in excess can lead to poisoning-like conditions. The officials said that they are taking steps to address these concerns and safeguard the well-being of young consumers, emphasizing the need for vigilance in monitoring food products aimed at children. "The presence of such harmful substances underscores the importance of stringent food safety regulations and underscores the need for thorough testing and monitoring to ensure the well-being of consumers," said the official. A few weeks ago, the Pudukcherry government also banned its sale. Tamilias Soundararajan, Lieutenant Governor of Pudukcherry had taken to her personal Instagram handle to urge people not to buy cotton candy, particularly for kids, as it contains toxic chemicals.

India to review ties with Greece during Greek PM visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Greece will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and explore ways to further strengthen strategic partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi and PM Mitsotakis will hold bilateral discussions and Prime Minister Modi will also host a lunch banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary."

head of state of Greece to India after a gap of 15 years. Announcing his schedule, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Saturday "Prime Minister Narendra Modi and PM Mitsotakis will hold bilateral discussions and Prime Minister Modi will also host a lunch banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary."

Shah pays tribute to Karpoori

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday paid tributes to socialist icon and former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur on his death anniversary and said he worked for the rights of the backward people and women throughout his life. The government last month had announced the country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna for Thakur. In a post in Hindi on X, Shah said Thakur set highest standards of honesty and sacrifice in his social life. Thakur worked for the rights of backward people and women throughout his life and carried out important works to make education system accessible to all, he said. Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought into light the works of Thakur by honouring him with the Bharat Ratna.

Farmers continue with their...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, the situation at sensitive Delhi-Haryana borders largely remained peaceful on the fifth day of the protest. The situation remained tense at Shambhu and Khanauri points at the Haryana and Punjab borders on Saturday as farmers' groups tried their best to break the barricades. The Bhartiya Kisan Union (Charuni) organised a tractor march in Haryana, while BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) held dharnas outside the residences of three senior BJP leaders in support of protesting farmers. Speaking to reporters at the Shambhu border, Pandher demanded that the Centre

should enact an ordinance to provide a legal guarantee for MSP, a key demand of farmers currently camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri points of the Punjab-Haryana border. Stating that the Centre has the right to make "political" decisions, Pandher said, "If it (the Centre) brings an ordinance, it can do so overnight if it wants. If the government desires a resolution to the farmers' protest, then it should issue an ordinance with immediate effect stating that it will enact a law on MSP, and then discussions can proceed further." Pandher added that as far as the issue of modalities is concerned,

any ordinance has a validity of six months. Regarding the demand for "C2 plus 50 per cent" as per the Swaminathan Commission's recommendation, Pandher said that the government was offering a price according to the "A2 plus FL" formula. "Under the same formula, an ordinance can be brought," he added. On the issue of farm debt waiver, Pandher mentioned that the government claims the loan amount needs assessment. He suggested that the government can collect data from banks for this purpose, stating, "It is a question of political willpower." "They (the

Centre) are saying it has to be discussed with the states. You leave aside the states. You talk about the Centre and central banks and then finalise how to waive farmers' debt," said Pandher. He emphasised that the other demands of farmers are also crucial. Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal also stressed that the government should bring an Ordinance "to give something to the people of the country." "The government should bring the ordinance with the intention that it is implemented immediately and within six months, it can be converted into law without any problem," said

Dallewal, who spearheaded the 'Delhi Chalo' call along with Pandher. Regarding claims suggesting that providing the MSP for all 23 crops would require substantial funds, Dallewal stated that one study indicates a need for Rs 2.50 lakh crore, while another study suggests only Rs 36,000 crore is needed. "If the government prioritises producers and consumers and pays less attention to corporates, then the issue can be resolved," he said. He also stressed the promotion of small agrobased industries in villages. Dallewal highlighted that the agriculture sector generates 50 percent of

employment. "The agriculture sector contributes 20 per cent to the GDP. If the agriculture sector accounts for 20 per cent of the GDP, then why is it difficult for the government to allocate Rs 2.50 lakh crore?" he questioned. "We are demanding a law on the purchase of crops at MSP. It is our demand that no one should buy crops in any state for less than the MSP," he added. Pandher noted that the government is importing crops like pulses from other countries. If the government guarantees MSP on crops like pulses, farmers can produce them here, he said.

LG directs removal of DPSRU VC over irregularities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed for immediate removal of Professor Ramesh K Goyal as the Vice Chancellor of the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University (DPSRU) on account of glaring irregularities and illegalities, indicating a large scale recruitment scam found against him by an inquiry committee.

Giving details here on Saturday, officials said the inquiry committee probed the recruitment process of teaching faculties conducted by the University in 2017 and 2019, when Goyal was at the helm of affairs. The LG, who is the Chancellor of the University, also gave his nod for asking the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for referring the case for investigation

by an external investigating agency, and filing of FIR against Goyal and 06 other officers. They were named in the report of the three-member inquiry committee, for their alleged involvement in the scam in which culpability of many private institutions, whose certificates were used for recruitment, has been found. Besides Goyal, probe by an external agency has also been recommended against 06 others, that includes External Expert Govind Mohan. The LG took note of the report of the Inquiry Committee dated 13.10.2023, which had looked into the matter on the basis of several complaints and concluded that major "irregularities," "illegalities" and "favouritism" were observed in the recruitment of teaching faculties in DPSRU in year 2017 and 2019.

The Committee has also observed that, Professor Goyal, who was at the helm of affairs during the scam, furnished his reply to the show cause notice on 02.01.2024, by "selectively" providing his version and not providing any answer to the major irregularities mentioned in the report, and tried to subvert the matter of irregularities pointed out by the Administration Branch of the University. Further, the Vice-Chancellor submitted "baseless," "manipulated," and "misleading" replies and resorted to shifting the responsibility related to the irregularities and tampering with the recruitment records, on all and sundry. In the process, Goyal, violated the very basic premise and principle that as Vice Chancellor, he was the custodian of all that goes on in the



University, least to say something as important as recruitment of faculty, that lies at the very base of the existence of any University. The LG noted that "This certainly does not absolve Goyal from the fact that he failed in his duties as the Vice Chancellor of the University, that entailed his overall super-

circumstances of the case, he was satisfied that there is sufficient material available on the record to establish that Vice Chancellor, DPSRU has failed to discharge his duty as Vice-Chancellor of the University. "And therefore, in exercise of powers under Clause 4(2) of the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University- Delhi Statutes, 2017 read with section 16 of the General Clauses Act, 1897, I order that Prof. Ramesh K. Goyal, Vice Chancellor, DPSRU be removed from the post of Vice Chancellor, DPSRU immediately, for large scale irregularities and illegalities in the recruitment process in the University in violation of the rules and established norms, lack of supervision and control over the affairs of the University and for his failure to perform his duties as the Vice

Chancellor of the University as mandated under the law," Saxena stated in the file. Saxena also approved the proposal of the Directorate of Training and Technical Education, GNCTD for placing before the Board of Governors, DPSRU for removing Professor Harvinder Popli, who is holding the charge of Registrar in the University. The LG also paved the path for issuing directions to the Directorate of Vigilance to examine the possibility of disciplinary action against R P Sharma, Consultant (Recruitment) in terms of rule 7 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021 for "grave misconduct" and for immediate removal if he is still continuing in his post. The LG accepted the recommendations of the Department for initiating suitable disciplinary action for consideration of

removal/dismissal of the illegally appointed faculties whose names have been mentioned in the inquiry report after following due process of law and for removal of such officers/officials, whose probation has not been cleared. Further, Saxena has given go ahead for initiating disciplinary proceedings against 17 illegally selected faculties who were appointed as Professors, Assistant Professors and Associate Professors. The inquiry report has mentioned the names of Harvinder Popli, Jaseela Majeed, Rajiv Tonk, Sushma Talegaonkar, Ajit Thakur, Mahavir Dhobi, Shilpa Jain, Geeta Agarwal, Ajay Sharma, Richa Hirendra Rai, Madhu Gupta, Sheetal Yadav, Suraj Pal, Punita Ajmera, Meenakshi Garg, Kusuma Praveen Kumar and Sachin Kumar.

Temporary structure at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium collapses, 29 hurt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 29 people were injured after a temporary structure erected at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in south Delhi collapsed here on Saturday morning, officials said. No casualties have been reported so far. Most of the injured were workers who were working under the temporary tents when it collapsed at 11 am, a police official said. The pandal was being installed for a wedding function at Gate No 2 of the stadium. Eighteen of the injured have been admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre and 11 at Safdarjung Hospital, he said. One of the injured admitted at AIIMS had to undergo a surgery, police said. A Delhi Fire Services official said a call was received about the pandal (temporary tent) collapsing at the stadium. Initially, two people were rescued from under the debris.



Later, 27 more people had to be rescued. "The pandal was being erected for a wedding function near Gate No 2 of Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium," the officer said, and added no casualties have been reported so far. "Around 11.15 am, a call was received about the collapse of a pandal/tent and the possibility of few labourers trapped under it. After arriving on the spot, it was found that 25-30 labourers were trapped under the fallen structure," DCP South Ankit Chauhan said. "The pandal was erected for a

wedding function. 25-30 people rescued and shifted to AIIMS Trauma Centre and Safdarjung Hospital. NDRF team on the spot now to conduct the rescue operation," the DCP said. A team of NDRF personnel arrived at the site of the pandal collapse at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium and started the rescue operation. As per the statement from AIIMS spokesperson, it started receiving those injured in the accident at 11:52 am after a call from authorities.

Seven patients were admitted in the Emergency department with severe injuries while 11 patients were admitted with moderate injuries, the statement said. All patients were attended to immediately in the emergency department and necessary examination, investigations and treatment are being done currently, it said. A senior police officer said the cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained. A case under relevant sections will be registered, he said. Asif Ansari, medical technician-emergency services of Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, said "10-12 people who have suffered injuries have been shifted to hospitals. The rescue operation is underway." A man working as a security guard on Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium premises said the incident took place when the labourers were on lunch. "There has not been a heavy impact," he claimed.

Kejriwal presented confidence motion to divert attention from graft: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Saturday said here Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal presented the Motion of Confidence in the Assembly only to divert attention from corruption. Making this assertion, he said there was no need for this as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has a sufficient majority in the Assembly. The truth is that AAP MLAs have faith in the Aam Aadmi Party government but it has lost faith in the public, Bidhuri claimed. Opposing the Motion of Confidence in the Assembly, he said it is a ridiculous situation that the allegation after which the Motion of Confidence has been moved in the Assembly, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Minister Atishi are not cooperating with the Delhi Police in the investigation of



this allegation. Bidhuri said the Motion of Confidence was moved to divert attention from corruption and failure of the government on every front. In his speech, Bidhuri strongly attacked the government regarding several scams of Aam Aadmi Party. He said by bringing the new liquor policy the master plan and the directions of the Supreme Court were violated.

Contractors' commission was increased from 2% to 12%. Many leaders including Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh are in jail in the scam and this policy had to be withdrawn after the corruption was exposed. Bidhuri said the Jal Board is facing a loss of Rs 73 thousand crores and when the Chief Minister of Delhi was the Chairman of the Jal Board, there were scams

worth of rupees crores which are being investigated. Private companies were benefited to the tune of Rs 8,000 crore through electricity scam, whereas these people came to power by promising to conduct CAG audit of those companies every year. Even in the name of health, Delhi government is full of scams. Delhi Government's Anti Corruption Bureau has caught the scam of fake tests in mohalla clinics. The misappropriation of crores of rupees in the class room scam is also being investigated. Bidhuri charged that the DTC scam has also come to the fore and is being investigated by the CBI. Apart from this, crores of rupees were recovered from bus operators and taxi owners in the name of panic button, whereas it proved to be only a toy. The anti-corruption branch of the Delhi government has also accepted this.

10 wagons of goods train derail near Sarai Rohilla station, rescue op underway

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 10 wagons of a goods train derailed near Sarai Rohilla Station in Delhi on Saturday, the police said. The incident took place on the Patel Nagar-Dayabasti section at around 11:50 am near the Zakhira flyover in north Delhi. An official of Railway Police said 10 bogies have derailed in the incident and added that a rescue operation was underway. Teams of railway police and fire brigade have arrived at the spot for the rescue operation. The body of the 70-year-old rag-picker, identified as Rafiq, was recovered from under a bogie, a railway police official said, adding he was working under a contractor hired by the railways, along with three other workers. His other fellow workers were safe, the official said. "Iron sheet rolls were loaded in the goods train. Possible casualty of a person on the track not ruled out," the official said. "During inquiry from the co-workers and examination of the



accident site, prima facie no foul play has been noticed," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Railways) KPS Malhotra said. Another official of the Railway Police said 10 bogies have derailed in the incident and added that a rescue operation was underway. Teams of railway police and fire brigade have arrived at the spot for the rescue operation. "The official said mobile crime team along with forensic expert have been called who are inspecting the site. Staff from local police also reached the

spot to control the crowd and to maintain the law and order situation, he said. Law and order is normal and rescue operation and resumption of the train operations over the track will resume after the railways procedures, he said. Soon after the incident, panic gripped among people living alongside the track, another official said. A video clip of the incident also surfaced in which the train bogies were seen getting derailed. In the video, the residents could be seen running away as the accident took place.

Bharadwaj inaugurates Delhi Tourism Walk Festival

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Tourism Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Saturday inaugurated the 'Delhi Tourism Walk Festival' at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park here. According to an official statement, walking tours will be organised at 50 historical spots under the programme to highlight important aspects of Delhi's vibrant history and culture. The month-long festival beckons enthusiasts and tourists to join the guided exploration of Delhi's historic marvels, culinary delights, and architectural splendours. The inaugural walk was launched at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park. The guided walks will be conducted by historians, scholars, storytellers or guides licensed by the Ministry of Tourism, the statement said. According to Delhi Tourism, attendees can delve into the splendour and heritage of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, experience the artistry and soulful melodies of Sufi music



in Delhi, and immerse themselves in the historical significance of Tughlaqabad Fort at dusk through 'Shaam-e-Tughlaqabad'. The Haunted Walk opens a window into the enigma of Malcha Mahal and the storied presence of Jinns at Feroz Shah Kotla. Speaking with journalists in this regard, Bharadwaj said that Delhi is the capital of the country and a large part of the tourists who come to our country first arrive in Delhi and then go to visit different states of the country. "The effort of

the Delhi Tourism Department is that whenever a foreign visitor comes to our country, they should spend a substantial amount of time appreciating the beauty and heritage of Delhi and understanding it. As part of this effort, the Tourism Department of Delhi has initiated a Series of Heritage Walks, in which the historical stories related to about 50 different historical sites in Delhi will be shared with tourists and the people of Delhi and the nation," the Delhi Tourism Minister stated.

Man defrauded of ₹38 lakh by woman he met on matrimonial site

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

An executive of a Gurugram-based consulting firm was defrauded of about Rs 38 lakh by a woman who befriended him through a matrimonial site, police said. The victim was lured into investing in a cryptocurrency named deuncoin and was asked for various other charges, they said. An FIR was registered at cyber crime east police station, police said, adding that the accused will be nabbed soon. According to a complaint filed by the consulting firm executive Naman Aggarwal, he met a woman named Ridhi Sharma via jeevansaathi.com in November 2023. The woman claimed to have been living in London for the past five years and that she was a native of Kolkata. After talking for some time, he developed a liking for her, Aggarwal said. "One day she lured me to invest in cryptocurrency and

made my trading account on the website m.Deuncoin.Vip. The link to this website was sent by her on WhatsApp and the customer care team of the trading platform was also communicated with via WhatsApp. "She asked me to invest Rs 10 lakh initially and said she will transfer a similar amount to my trading account. On December 20, the victim said he received a message on WhatsApp from Deuncoin customer care support team that an amount transferred by Ridhi Sharma was an act of money laundering and comes under the scanner of financial action, and the task force asked him to deposit a similar sum within 24 hours to restore the normal status of the trading account warning that it would otherwise be frozen. "I deposited Rs 10 lakh again and asked them for withdrawal of my money. They forced me to transfer money in the name of different charges," the man said in his complaint.

Inflammable material found in Alipur factory: FIR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A huge quantity of inflammable material was found on the premises of the factory in Delhi's Alipur - where 11 people died in a fire - posing a risk to human life, according to the FIR registered on the incident. The son of the factory owner was being questioned in the case as the owner was also killed in Thursday's fire, it said. The FIR, said the factory had multiple machines and iron drums, which were later found in a burnt state. At least 11 people - the factory owner and 10 workers - died and four others were injured in a fire that broke out in a paint factory in outer Delhi's Alipur area on Thursday evening. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), in a statement has said the building in which the fire broke out was being used illegally for the purpose of



mixing chemical paint. The police said that all the eleven deceased have been identified by their family members. "Eight dead bodies were handed over to their families after identification on Friday. Three more are identified on Saturday," a police officer said. Ram Pravesh (18), Kripa

Shanaker (42) and Harish Chandra Yadav (59) were identified on Saturday. The FIR which is registered on the complaint of a Sub-Inspector Anil Kumar from Alipur Police Station said that he along with head constables Subhash Singh and Sanjeet and a constable Karambir, immediately reached

the spot. When they reached the spot, the factory and nearby houses were under the blaze. They also heard multiple explosions during the rescue operation, the FIR said. Constable Karambir was injured while rescuing the people, it said. "After the fire stopped, the crime team was called for

inspection. The factory had many machines and iron drums which were found in burnt state," the FIR said. It said the factory owner had collected inflammable material in a huge quantity posing a risk to human life. A police officer said since the owner Ashok Kumar Jain, 62, himself died in the fire, his son Akhil Jain is being interrogated. He has been asked to provide the required documents related to the factory, which has been running since 2017. The police said that they will also conduct the audit on other factories running in the locality of Dayal Market of Alipur area. The audit will be related to checking the documents and other required certificates, an official said. Locals have claimed that there were over 100 factories producing chocolates, slippers and paint illegally running in the area.

NDMC collaborates with Dutch Embassy, organises concert

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the aim to strengthen the relation between Netherlands and India, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in collaboration with Embassy of Netherlands on Saturday organised a music concert by Indo-Dutch Artist on the theme of 'Song of Water' in the background of newly bloomed Tulips at Nehru Park, Chanakyapuri. Thousands of audience across the Delhi NCR region mesmerized with wonderful performances by Eminent Artist Pandit Shubhendra Rao and Maestro Saskia Rao with Pranshu Chaturial and Heiko Dijkjer in Indo-Dutch Music Concert. In his welcome address, Chairman NDMC Amit Yadav welcomed all diplomatic dig-



nities, music lovers and visitors of the Tulip Festival in Nehru Park as an audience of Indo-Dutch Music Concert as a part of the event series of Spring season celebration by NDMC. He said across the city is being visited the Tulip Festival organised by NDMC in collaboration also with Netherlands and enjoying the beauty and fragrance of the

second edition of this Tulip Festival. In this year, NDMC added a music flavour in the Tulip Festival in association with the Embassy of Netherlands. The Chairman hopes that the Netherlands will also be collaborated in future for this cultural and horticulture field to continue these activities to strengthen the friendship of India and Netherlands.

A little friction between judiciary, executive good: Former SC judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Supreme Court judge Sanjay Kishan Kaul on Saturday said a little bit of underlying friction between the judiciary and the executive is good to maintain checks and balances in a democracy. Addressing a function to confer the Sansad Ratna Awards on parliamentarians, Justice Kaul said the checks and balances of a democracy were enunciated in the Constitution which provides for an administration, a legislature and the court. "Since we have a democracy based on the first past the post concept where most governments would be having less than 50 per cent of the votes, the court plays an important role in maintaining a check and balance on the system," he said. Justice Kaul, quoting a former chief justice, said "a little bit of underlying tension is good. If things are very hunky-dory between the judiciary and the



executive, then we have a problem". Telangana Governor Tamilsai Soundarajan, National Commission for Backward Classes Chairman Hansraj Ahir, Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra Teni also addressed the function. As many as 12 parliamentarians and three parliamentary committees were conferred with the Sansad Ratna Awards by a Chennai-based NGO Prime Point Foundation here

on Saturday. The Sansad Ratna awards were conferred upon Sudhir Gupta (BJP), Shrikanth Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena), Sukanta Majumdar (BJP), Kuldeep Rai Sharma (Congress) and Amol Kolhe (NCP). The Sansad Maha Ratna awards given once in five years for consistent performance in the 17th Lok Sabha was conferred upon N K Premachandran (RSP), Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

(Congress), Bidyut Baran Mahato (BJP), and Heena Gavit (BJP). The Sansad Utkrishi Maha Ratna awards were given to Supriya Sule (NCP), Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena) and Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD). The three awardees received the Sansad Maha Ratna Awards and were honoured for their exemplary performance in the 17th Lok Sabha as well. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture chaired by P C Gaddigoudar (BJP), Finance, chaired by Jayant Sinha (BJP) and the Transport and Tourism Committee presently chaired by Vijayasai Reddy (YSR Congress) and former chairman T G Venkatesh (BJP) were conferred with the Sansad Maha Ratna awards. The committees were honoured for their consistent contributions based on sittings and the reports presented by them, relying on the data commensurate with the term of 17th Lok Sabha.

AI driven Aarogya-Doctor on Wheels attends to 13,000 remote area patients

First of its kind service attends to patients in far flung areas in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Overcoming barriers of distance, cost, and specialist availability, Aarogya-Doctor on Wheels, a first of its kind state-of-the-art, Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven free Mobile Telemedicine Clinic has attended free-of-cost nearly 13,000 remote area patients, mainly women from the far-flung regions of Udhampur-Kathua-Doda Lok Sabha constituency in Jammu Kashmir. Ordinarily, a metro hospital will cost a patient very heavily and may take two to three weeks' time. This type of free telemedicine mobile camp solves all the problems especially for those having weak socio-economic background, said Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, who represented the Udhampur parliamentary constituency. "Here, the patient attended by



the Mobile Telemedicine Clinic is screened, thoroughly investigated and then the consultation is obtained from the concerned super-specialist doctors in one of the leading hospitals in metros like Hyderabad and Bengaluru with whom an arrangement has been tied up for the purpose," explained the Minister at an interaction with media here. He further said, "Aarogya-Doctor on Wheels" functions on the latest methodology

wherein a patient can narrate his illness or complaint in his native language and the AI Doctor understands the language and responds to the patient in the same language. This hi-tech clinic is presently operated in Dudu Basantgarh in the upper reaches of Ramnagar block of Udhampur under the 4th phase from 17th January 2024, said the Minister. Its huge success will inspire other similar initiatives elsewhere across the country as well, he asserted adding that this free telemedicine facility overcomes the problems of 'Accessibility, Availability and Affordability'. For the convenience of patients, the prescribed medicines are also being provided free of cost and in addition, medicine kits containing commonly used drugs are being distributed across the constituency free of cost to all the families in general, Dr Jitendra Singh informed. The first phase of this facility covered more than 60 villages in the far-flung Gandoh area of district Doda where it spent three months. The second phase was conducted along the Zero Line villages of the International Border, and the third phase was held in the upper reaches of Bilawar, where such healthcare facilities are either not available or inadequately available, informed the Minister.

CDSCO asks inspectors to maintain list of spurious drugs

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taking proactive steps to enhance surveillance of drugs and cosmetics sold in the market, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has asked drug inspectors across States to maintain a centralised monthly list of spurious and "not-so-standard quality (NSQ)" drugs, to be published on its website so that they can be promptly recalled and public awareness raised to prevent their further use. In its guidelines issued recently, the CDSCO's noted that the current list of NSQ and spurious drugs is not regularly updated, and crucial information regarding the distributors



from where samples are obtained is not shared. However, it is important that sufficient quantities of samples are collected and forwarded to the laboratory so that all the parameters are tested and re-tested, if any required by laboratory before issuing of NSQ test report, as per the document. These guidelines aim to cover a wide variety of products and

locations, including rural and tribal areas, by preparing monthly and annual sampling plans. Each drug inspector, in consultation with their controlling authority, will prepare these plans to ensure optimal coverage of their jurisdiction. The CDSCO emphasized the importance of collecting sufficient samples and promptly forwarding them to laboratories for testing. "Additionally, a

centralised list of wholesale and retail outlets associated with spurious products will be prepared and publicized to discourage the purchase of medicines from these outlets. By addressing gaps in surveillance and implementing robust sampling protocols, the CDSCO aims to enhance consumer confidence and protect against the risks posed by sub-standard products. The apex drug regulator, under the Union Health Ministry, said that currently most sampled drugs are from big brands and collected from urban or suburban locations only. Moreover, the majority of sampled drugs are from big brands and urban or suburban locations, neglecting rural and

interior areas where the quality of drugs may differ. "From the past trends it is observed that there is no defined methodology for sample selection and location of sampling etc and was done randomly with the individual knowledge of drug inspectors," the document stated. "This guideline is mainly focused to utilize available information and identified risks for selection of sample and location to cover vast variety of drugs, cosmetic and medical devices moving in the market from manufacturing facility, wholesale outlet, retail outlet, government distribution channel etc. In urban, suburban, and rural locations," it stated.



JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh with others during a meeting with 'One Nation, One Election' Committee Chairperson and former President of India Ram Nath Kovind

Young Dangal star Suhani tragically passes away at just 19

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Suhani Bhatnagar, a young life filled with promise, talent, and potential cut short

far too soon. At just 19, Suhani had already made a significant mark in the world of cinema with her portrayal of young Babita Phogat in the critically acclaimed Amir Khan's film "Dangal". The news of her untimely demise was confirmed by a

close relative to the media. Suhani, who died on February 16 was cremated at the Ajrona crematorium in Sector-15, Faridabad on Saturday, according to reports. Although the specific details surrounding her death were

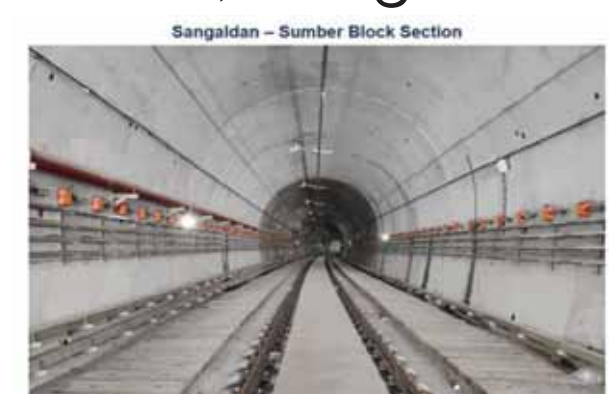
not elaborated upon, reports suggest that the reason is said to be fluid accumulation throughout her body. Some time ago, Suhani had an accident, which resulted in a fracture in her leg. The medications she took during treatment had such a

side effect on her that slowly her body began to accumulate fluid. She was admitted to Delhi's AIIMS hospital for quite some time but despite medical intervention, she succumbed to her condition on February 16th, having been admitted on February 7th.

Railways to start train service between Banihal, Sangaldan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways will start the much awaited 'dream' train services on the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section, a 48.1-kilometre-long significant segment of the country's most ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link project, on February 20. Sources in the Ministry of Railways said the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate the section by virtually flagging off a train from Sangaldan. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project is one of the most ambitious Himalayan railway projects post Independence and with this direct train service between Srinagar with Kanyakumari is not a distant dream now. The USBRL project seeks to integrate the Kashmir Valley with the Jammu region and the national rail network, spanning a total length of 272 kilometres out of which 161 kilometres have already been commissioned.



To Banihal will now be extended up to Sangaldan, a town near the district headquarters of Ramban. "It features 16 bridges -- 11 major ones, four minor ones and one road overbridge. More than 90 per cent of this section is in tunnels, with a total of 11 tunnels covering 43.37 kilometres, including the country's longest transportation tunnel, T-50, stretching 12.77 kilometres in the Khari-Sumber section," a senior official associated with the project said. "Spanning the challenging terrain of the Pir Panjal ranges, the USBRL aims at establishing an all-weather, comfortable and economical-ly-feasible transportation network, connecting remote Himalayan areas with the rest of the country. For safety and rescue, there are three escape tunnels with a combined length of 30.1 kilometres. Additionally, the section includes 30 curves spanning 23.72 kilometres. To further enhance passenger safety and comfort, several advanced features have been incorporated, such as ball-less tracks and canted turnouts (a first for the Indian Railways)," explained a project director of the railways. Besides, CCTV monitoring and state-of-the-art tunnel-safety technology, including ventilation and firefighting systems, are some of the other added safety features. So far as electrification is concerned, the Baramulla-Srinagar-Banihal-Sangaldan section of the USBRL project, which spans 185.66 RKM (route kilometres) and serves 19 railway stations, is complete, the sources said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the public at large that Mrs. Neelam Jain W/o Mr. Neeraj Mittal, R/o 241, Double Storey, Quarter, Kirti Nagar, Shikhar, Delhi-110032 is the owner of Property No. 18052-A/4 and 18052-A/5 (part of Property No. 18052) area 200 sq. yds., of Part of Plot No. 655, out of Kharsa No. 3482/1981/19 and 3482/2089/20, situated in the area of Village Chandrawali alias Shabdara, in the abadi of Kabool Nagar, Ilaga Shabdara, Delhi known as said property by virtue of Sale Deed dated 22.11.2019 executed by H.K. Sharma (Hari Krishan Sharma) alias Hari Kishan Sharma and Jitender Sharma in favour of Neelam Jain in respect of admeasuring 100 sq. yds. duty regd. as doc. No. 6810, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 3201, Pages 182-191, regd. on 28.11.2019 at the office of Sub-Registrar, I/V, and Sale Deed dated 22.11.2019 executed by H.K. Sharma (Hari Krishan Sharma) alias Hari Kishan Sharma and Jitender Sharma in favour of Neelam Jain in respect of admeasuring 100 sq. yds. duty regd. as doc. No. 6810, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 3202, Pages 182-191, regd. on 28.11.2019 at the office of Sub-Registrar, I/V. That the following document has been lost: 1. Original Survivor Membership Certificate issued by competent authority reflecting the names of Rukma Devi, Sheetal Sharma and Preety Sharma and Hari Kishan alias Hari Kishan Sharma and Jitender Sharma as the only legal heirs of late H.K. Sharma (1948/1981/19, 3482/2089/20) both are the same. Further L&T Finance Limited is intending to create a registered mortgage over the said property. In case any person/Financial Institute/Bank/Authority/Board or any other entity has any objection or vested interest over the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of this publication. It may be further noted that after the lapse of the aforesaid period no claim in any manner shall be entertained and the same will be considered as waived or abandoned. New Delhi Dated: 17.02.2024
Mohd. Gulfam, Advocate
D/87/92019
Office: Gadi & Associates, A-4, West End Colony, New Delhi-110021, +91-8800022244

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ (छत्तीसगढ़)
क्रमांक/2383/ लो.क.वि./न.पा.नि./2024 रायगढ़ दिनांक 16.02.2024
॥ ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना ॥
नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

क्र.	सि.क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनु. लागत राशि रु. (लाख में)	निविदा दायन्योद काने की अंतिम तिथि
1	2	3	4	5
1	153018	Supply, Erection, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of Plastic Shredder Unit, Supply, Erection, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of hydraulic Balling plastic unit, Supply, Erection, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of Trommel unit and Supply, Erection, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of incineration unit.	169.62	07.03.2024

उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापन, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से खानलौड की जा सकती है।
"स्वच्छ पर्यावरण के लिए वृक्षारोपण करें एवं पालिथीन का प्रयोग न करें"
कार्यालय न.पा.नि. रायगढ़

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that Mr. Neeraj Mittal (said Owner) residing at F-22/148, First Floor, sector-3, Rohini, North West Delhi, Delhi-110085 and is sufficiently entitled to as the owner of the Scheduled Property. The said Owner has represented that his title to the Scheduled Property is clear, clean and marketable free from all encumbrances. We are required to investigate the Owner's clear and marketable title, his unencumbered right, title and interest with respect to the Scheduled Property. Any person's, society's, firm's, institution (corporate or otherwise) having any claim against or in respect of the Scheduled Property or any part thereof or its share by way of sale, mortgage, exchange, charge, lease, lien, inheritance, succession, gift, trust, maintenance, possession, easement or otherwise whatsoever are hereby required to make known the same in writing to the undersigned together with documentary proof thereof at the address mentioned below within 14 (FOURTEEN) days from the date hereof, failing which the transaction shall be completed without any reference to such claims and the claims if any will be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. THE SCHEDULE ABOVE REFERRED TO All that piece and parcel of Plot No. 401 admeasuring 111 sq. ft. (Super built up area) on the 4th floor together with right to use (One) Car Parking Space. In building known as 'Tern' (Tower 8) of the Project known as Godej Woods and being part of the condominium 'Godej Woods', constructed on all the piece and parcel of land situated, lying and being on the plot of land admeasuring 44319 sq.mts bearing No. GH-01/A, sector-43, Noida and within the jurisdiction of the Sub-Registrar Noida, Uttar Pradesh.
Advocate N.N. Agnihotri
(Government of India Notary Public)
Email ID: deewritermail@gmail.com

भारतीय प्रबंधन संस्थान, रांची
Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi
Recruitment for Various Non-teaching Positions at IIM Ranchi
IIM Ranchi, invites applications for the positions of Chief Administrative Officer, Senior Administrative Officer, Corporate Relation Manager, Project Manager (Campus), Manager-Communication, Clinical Psychologist and Library Trainee.
For further details regarding eligibility and application process please visit the website- <https://iimranchi.ac.in/>
Last date for receiving online application is 03 March 2024.

CHANGE OF NAME & RELIGION
I, Laiphrakpam Dingkarani Devi D/o Laiphrakpam Shyamo Singh, R/o Langthabal Lep Makha Leikai, Langthabal Lep, Manipur University, Imphal West, Manipur-795003, have changed my Religion from Hinduism (Meitei) to Muslim and also changed my name to Afreen Hassan for all future purposes.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office- ICICI Bank Ltd. 4/10, Mythree Tower, Bommanhalli Hosur Main Road Bangalore- 560068

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Narendran, Latha Narendran & Primeside Retail Pvt Ltd/ Block No.30 House No.9 Floor No.4 19 Th Avenue Ashok Nagar, Kodambakkam Village, T S No.38, Chennai- 600083/ LBCHCE0002926303 & LBCHCE00003761713	Schedule A (Total Extent) All That Piece and Parcel of Land Together With Building (Since Demolished) Bearing Corporation Door No. 16 (Old No.17), 19th Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Chennai- 600083, Situated In The Sanctioned Plan of Ashok Nagar, Bearing Plot No. A-11, Comprised In T.S.No.38, Block No.30, Kodambakkam Village, Chennai Mambalam Guindy Taluk, Measuring All That Piece and Parcel of Land Together With Building (Since Demolished) Bearing Corporation North To South On The Eastern and Western Sides 63 Feet and 6 Inches, East To West On The Northern and Southern Sides 126 Feet and 6 Inches, Admeasuring In Extent 3 Grounds and 833 Sq.ft Or Thereabouts Bounded On The North By: Plot No.A-10; East By: 70 Feet Wide Road; South By: Plot No.A-12; and On The West By: Plot No.A-22, Situated Within The Registration District of Chennai Central and Then Registration Sub District of Kodambakkam and Present Registration Sub District of Ashok Nagar, Schedule B (Entitlement of Mr.S.Sankaran In Schedule A Land) an Undivided 6173sq.ft. Share, Right, Title and Interest, In Land In Schedule-A Property Hereinabove Mentioned Schedule C (Undivided Share In Land To Be Conveyed To The Allottee) 1365/12410 Equivalent To 10.9952% (883.6 Sq.ft) Undivided Share In Schedule A Land Now Known as Ashok Kedar Agreed To Be Purchased By The Allottee Entirely From and Out of The Share Allotted To Mr.S.Sankaran Being The Schedule B Portion Mentioned Above Through The Promoter. Schedule- D Description of The Flat Flat No.9 In The Fourth Floor In The Residential Complex Known As "Ashok Kedar" Having A Sale Area of 1365 Sq.ft, Comprising of, The Plinth Area of The Said Flat, A Proportionate Undivided Share In The Lift Core, Lobby, Staircase, Landing Areas All Forming Part of The Sanctioned FSI and Totalling To 1323 Sq.ft. and A Proportionate Undivided Share In Staircase Overhead Room and Lift Machine Room as Per Sanctioned Plan of 42 Sq.ft. Along With A Private Terrace Area of 160 Sq.ft Delineated and Marked Red In The Plan In Annexure-1. Together With The Earmarked Car Park Identified As No.9 (F.No.9) Delineated and Marked Red In The Ground Floor Plan In Annexure-1A, With The Specification Features As Detailed In Annexure- 2./ Date of Symbolic Possession 15th February 2024	30/10/2023 Rs. 59,33,460/-	Delhi

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date : February 17, 2024
Place : Delhi/NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME
I, Sanjay Chandra S/o Late Sh.Ram Jag Prasad Singh R/o H.No. 1/3555, F/F, Tyagi Colony, Ram Nagar Extn. Shahadra Delhi 110032, I have Change my Name Sanjay Kumar Chandravanshi to Sanjay Chandra for all future Purposes.
PD(279)C
I, Bharti Chandra W/o Sh.Sanjay Chandra R/o H.No. 1/3555, F/F, Tyagi Colony, Ram Nagar Extn. Shahadra Delhi 110032, I have Change my Name Bharti Kumarito Bharti Chandra for all future Purposes.
PD(280)C
I, Nandini Sharma W/o Siddharth Vij R/o H.No. 82, Near Police Chowki, Sector-6, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar, Haryana-124507, have changed my name Dhiti Vij.
PD(281)C

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD GUWAHATI BUILDING CIRCLE-II. CHANDMARI. GUWAHATI-3
PRESS NOTICE
The Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Guwahati Building Circle-II, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids for the following works having experience of similar nature of work from APWD registered contractors of Class-I (A/B/C). Details of the bids may be seen at e-procurement portal website: www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in for participating in the bidding process.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approx. Value of Work (Rs.)
1.	Waterproofing treatment of roof slab by providing Mastercrete chemical (M-81) including roof grading in the Right side slab of GNB Bhawan at Assam Legislative Assembly Complex, Dispur, Guwahati-06	1,64,89,560/-
2.	Waterproofing treatment of roof slab by providing Mastercrete chemical (M-81) including roof grading in the Left side slab of GNB Bhawan at Assam Legislative Assembly Complex, Dispur, Guwahati-06	1,60,67,180/-

Note:-
1. Any modification of tender may be seen in the portal www.assamtenders.gov.in.
Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Guwahati Building Circle-II
Janasanyog/C/16528/23/18Feb-24

Navalny's mother is still waiting for his body

AP ■ MOSCOW

Alexei Navalny's spokesperson confirmed Saturday that the Russian opposition leader had died at a remote Arctic penal colony and said he was "murdered," but it is unclear where his body is.

An official note handed to Navalny's mother stated that he died at 2:17 pm local time Friday, Kira Yarmysh said. She added that an employee of the prison colony said that Navalny's body was taken to the nearby city of Salekhard as part of a probe into his death. She demanded that his body be handed over to his family.

When a lawyer and Navalny's mother visited the morgue in Salekhard, it was closed, Navalny's team said, writing on their Telegram channel. The lawyer called the morgue and was told that Navalny's body is not there, his team said.

"We demand that Alexei Navalny's body be handed over to his family immediately," Yarmysh wrote on X, previously Twitter. The cause and the circumstances

of Navalny's death Friday remain largely unclear.

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometres (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn't be revived. The cause of death is still "being established," it said.

Maria Pevchikh, head of the board of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, said that the opposition leader would "live on forever in millions of hearts."

"Navalny was murdered. We still don't know how we'll keep on living, but together, we'll think of something," she wrote on X.

Arrests continued Saturday after more than 100 people were detained in various Russian cities Friday when they came to lay flowers in memory of Navalny at memorials to the victims of Soviet-era purges, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political repression in Russia.



The tributes were removed overnight, but people continued trickling in with flowers on Saturday. In Moscow, a large group of people chanted "shame" as police dragged a screaming woman from the crowd, video shared on social media showed.

Navalny there.

In other cities across the country, police cordoned off some of the memorials and officers were taking pictures of those who came and writing down their personal data in a clear intimidation attempt.

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow to face certain arrest after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was later convicted three times, saying each case was politically motivated, and received a sentence of 19 years for extremism.

After the last verdict, Navalny said he understood he was "serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime."

The news of Navalny's death comes less than a month before an election that will give President Vladimir Putin another six years in power.

It shows "that the sentence in Russia now for opposition is not merely imprisonment, but death," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a former British ambassador to Belarus and senior fellow for Russia & Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Hours after Navalny's death was reported, his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, made a dramatic appearance at a security conference in Germany where many world leaders had gathered.

She said she was unsure if she could believe the news from official Russian sources, "but if this is true, I want Putin and everyone around Putin, Putin's friends, his government to know that they will bear responsibility for what they did to our country, to my family and to my husband."

US President Joe Biden said Washington doesn't know exactly what happened, "but there is no doubt that the death of Navalny was a consequence of something Putin and his thugs did."

The Kremlin bristled at the outpouring of anger from world leaders, with Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying as "inadmissible and outrageous," noting that medics haven't issued their verdict on the cause of Navalny's death.

Ukraine withdrawing from Avdiivka

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's military chief said Saturday that he's withdrawing troops from the city of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine, where outnumbered defenders have battled a Russian assault for four months.

The timing is critical as Russia is looking for a morale boost ahead of the second anniversary on Feb 24 of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the March presidential election in Russia.

In a short statement posted on Facebook, Ukrainian commander Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy said he had made the decision to avoid encirclement and "preserve the lives and health of servicemen."

The commander-in-chief added that troops were moving to "more favourable lines."

"Our soldiers performed their military duty with dignity, did everything possible to destroy the best Russian military units, inflicted significant losses on the

enemy in terms of manpower and equipment.

"We are taking measures to stabilise the situation and maintain our positions," the statement read. The withdrawal came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday made another trip to western Europe, hoping to press his country's Western allies to keep providing military support.

It was Syrskiy's first major test since being appointed as Ukraine's new army chief last week.

In his previous position as commander of Ukraine's ground forces, he faced criticism for holding on to the city of Bakhmut for nine months, a siege that became the war's longest and bloodiest battle and cost Ukraine dearly, but also served to sap Russia's forces.

In recent days, reports emerged that Ukrainian troops in Avdiivka faced a deteriorating situation.

Rodion Kudryashov, deputy commander of the 3rd Assault

Brigade, said Friday that Ukrainian troops were still holding out against the onslaught of about 15,000 Russian soldiers, but he expected the situation would "soon become critical."

"The enemy is trying to penetrate our defence and in some places to bypass our positions," he told The Associated Press.

The 3rd Brigade said on its social media account Friday that its soldiers were at the huge Avdiivka Coke Plant. Russian warplanes have been dropping about 60 bombs a day, relentlessly shelling the area and launching assaults with armour and infantry, the brigade said.

A video showed dense black smoke over the factory, said to be caused by burning fuel oil reservoirs. The post said: "Poisonous smog spreads all over the plant."

Russian media reported the Kremlin's forces were making extensive use of plane-launched glide bombs, which fly at a shallower angle, to batter Ukrainian positions.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday that Russian forces were beginning to overwhelm Ukrainian defences in the eastern city. He said Avdiivka is at risk of falling to Russia, a development he blamed "in very large part" on the fact that Ukrainian forces are running out of artillery ammunition.

The United States is Ukraine's biggest single supporter but some \$60 billion for Kyiv is being held up by political disagreements among American lawmakers.

Heavily fortified with a web of tunnels and concrete fortifications, Avdiivka lies in the northern suburbs of Donetsk, a city in a region of the same name that Russian forces partially occupy. Capturing Avdiivka could be a timely boost for Moscow and serve as a possible springboard for Russia to drive deeper into the region. Fewer than 1,000 people remain in the city, according to the Donetsk regional governor, Vadym Filashkin.

Pakistan's CEC, Chief Justice involved in poll-rigging, alleges bureaucrat

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A senior Pakistani bureaucrat on Saturday alleged that the chief election commissioner and the chief justice were also completely involved in this, he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Chattha resigned from his office after "accepting responsibility" for manipulation of poll results, it said.

He said "stabbing the country in its back does not let" him sleep.

"I should be punished for the injustice I have done and others who were involved in this injustice should also be punished," Chattha said.

The former bureaucrat said there was "pressure" on him to the extent that he contemplated suicide but then resolved to present matters before the public.

"I am taking the responsibility for all this wrongdoing and telling you that the chief election commissioner and the chief justice are also completely involved in this," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Former Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's remarks came amidst jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party began nationwide protests against alleged rigging and stealing of its mandate in the February 8 elections.

Speaking to reporters at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Chattha said the candidates who were "losing" the elections "were made to win."

"It is my request to the entire bureaucracy to not do anything wrong for all these politicians," he said.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has strongly rejected the allegations Chattha has made against the chief election commissioner.

In a press statement, it said, "The Election Commission of Pakistan strongly rejects the allegations levelled by the Commissioner Rawalpindi on the chief election commissioner or the election commission and no official of the election commission never issued any instructions regarding changing the election results to the Commissioner Rawalpindi.

"Neither is the commissioner of any division ever appointed as a District

Returning Officer, Returning Officer or Presiding Officer nor do they ever play a direct role in the conduct of elections."

However, it said that the matter would be investigated.

Punjab's caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has also ordered an "impartial probe" into the allegations made by Chattha.

Taking notice of the claims in a statement, he directed that a "high-level committee" be constituted to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

"An independent inquiry of the allegations will be held," Naqvi asserted, adding that the facts will be brought forward. Following Chattha's press conference, police reached the venue and arrested him. He has been shifted to an unknown location by the security officials.

Sunak urges Conservatives to come together to beat Opp

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Saturday made a direct appeal to voters to stick with his plan to turn things around as he made a plea for the Conservative family to come together to beat the Opposition Labour Party in a general election later this year. Writing in "The Daily Telegraph" a day after bruising double defeats in by-elections that saw the governing Conservatives lose two of parliamentary strongholds, the 43-year-old British Indian leader reiterated a previous claim that the results were down to voter apathy and low turnout.

Sunak urged the electorate to back him and support his party in the general election because by then he expects his plan for the country will be delivering the goals he had set out. "The Conservative family must come together to defeat Labour and

ensure a brighter future for our country," Sunak wrote.

"I know that the last year has not been easy. I understand why people feel exhausted with politics. I get why people choose to stay at home rather than come out in a by-election that won't change the government," he said and added, "But later this year, we will have a general election that will decide who governs our country. I am confident that by then we will have made more progress that the plan will be delivering the security and opportunity that people crave."

This direct plea to the voters comes amid some tough political times for the British Prime Minister, who is under pressure from within his party to change course before it is too late.

Drawing a clear divide between his leadership and that being proposed by Labour Leader Keir Starmer, Sunak asserted that his opponent had no



plan and would take the country backwards.

He said: "A vote for anyone other than the Conservatives will just help Starmer. The reason we will stick to the plan and the reason I, unlike Keir Starmer, am willing to make difficult decisions to address the long-term problems our country faces is because a strong economy is the bedrock upon which a successful country is built. "The choice at the election later this year will be between this Conservative vision for Britain and a Labour Party that would just take us back to square

one." He sought to spotlight some of his successes, such as halving inflation since he took charge in October 2022 and lowering taxes, even as he admitted that progress on his other pledges such as slashing illegal migration and cutting National Health Service (NHS) waiting lists has been slow. "Delivering the change our country needs means taking difficult long-term decisions and sticking to the plan. Keir Starmer and the Labour Party can't say what they would do because they do not have a plan... But it's not just the fact that Labour doesn't have a plan for the economy that threatens our progress. They would also make life more expensive and more burdensome for business," he cautioned. The strong by-election impact of the far-right Reform UK, formerly Brexit Party, has led to the right wing of his party pushing Sunak to get tougher on issues such as immigration.

Imran's party begins nationwide protests

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Authorities on Saturday imposed prohibitory orders here in Pakistan's capital as jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party began nationwide protests against alleged rigging and stealing of its mandate in the recent elections.

Criticising the outcome of the polls, which saw the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party-backed independent candidates emerging as the largest group by winning over 90 National Assembly seats, the PTI announced holding country-wide "peaceful protests" against what it termed "record-high rigging."

The protests began with a march in Wana in South Waziristan of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The party has decided to sit in the Opposition in Parliament.

"The PTI has called for country-wide protests against the unprecedented, massive, brazen rigging in general elections 2024, where PTI's win of 180 National Assembly seats

and a two-thirds majority in the parliament, was cut down to half," the party said in a statement. "The 2024 elections would be remembered in the country's history due to the scale of rigging," PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan said.

The Islamabad police have said that section 144 is in force in the city and the security is on "high alert", as the PTI is set to begin its countrywide protests, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Without directly referring to protests, it said that there could be increased traffic near the F9 park and urged the public to avoid "unnecessary travel" on the nearby routes.

The police said that special forces of the Counter Terrorism Department had been deployed on patrol to deal with any emergency. "Patrolling has been increased across the district while checking has been tightened at checkpoints," it added. The police in Islamabad dug up a ditch near the Lahore Press Club to stop the PTI protest. A heavy contingent of police was deployed there to thwart the PTI protest.

Meanwhile, Punjab Police clamped down on PTI leaders and workers in Lahore who were protesting against "massive rigging" in the elections.

Police arrested Imran Khan's lawyer Salman Akram Raja and scores of PTI women who gathered on Jail Road on the call of the jailed premier to protest against the massive rigging in the elections that deprived the PTI of at least over 90 National Assembly seats.

A heavy contingent of police gathered outside the PTI office on Jail Road and baton-charged the party workers protesting against the rigging. TV footage showed the police manhandling the PTI women workers and bundling them into police vans.

Known lawyer and Khan's counsel Salman Akram Raja was also arrested.

Khan's PTI is not the only party that has voiced its concerns over the February 8 polls, as the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), and others have also complained of rigging during the elections.

Taliban leader among 7 held in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

Police in Pakistan's Punjab province on Saturday claimed to have foiled a major terror plot by arresting seven terrorists, including a key Taliban commander.

The spokesman for the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Pakistan's Punjab Police said that it conducted several intelligence-based operations in different districts of the province and arrested seven suspected terrorists with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials.

He said that Husnain Moaviya, a key commander of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had been arrested in Bahawalpur, some 400kms from Lahore.

Other arrested militants belonged to banned organizations — TTP, Al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

Taliban diktat on clothing, guardians leave Afghan women scared: UN

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Afghan women feel scared for unsafe leaving their homes alone because of Taliban decrees and enforcement campaigns on clothing and male guardians, according to a report from the UN mission in Afghanistan.

The report, issued Friday, comes days before a UN-convened meeting in the Qatari capital is set to start, with member states and special envoys to Afghanistan to discuss engagement with the Taliban and the country's crises, including the human rights situation. The Taliban — which took over Afghanistan in 2021 during the final weeks of US and NATO withdrawal from the country — have barred women from most areas of public life and stopped girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade as part of harsh measures they imposed despite initial promises of a more moderate rule.

They are also restricting

women's access to work, travel and health care if they are unmarried or don't have a male guardian, and arresting those who don't comply with the Taliban's interpretation of hijab, or Islamic headscarf.

The UN mission's report, published Friday, said the decrees are being enforced through arrest, harassment and intimidation. Women said they increasingly fear going to public spaces owing to the threat of arrest and the "long-lasting stigma and shame" associated with being taken into police custody.

Over half of the women interviewed for the report felt unsafe leaving the house without a male guardian, or mahram. Risks to their security and their anxiety levels worsened whenever a new decree was announced specifically targeting them, the report said.

Women who went out with a mahram felt safer but noted the stress from depending on another person to accompany

them. Some said their male guardians chided them for "wasting time" if they wanted to visit certain shops or stray from a route limited to performing basic necessary tasks.

This undercut chances to "enjoy even micro-moments of stimulation or leisure" outside the home, said the report.

Some women said that male relatives were also afraid and reluctant to leave the home with female relatives, as this would expose them to Taliban harassment. A spokesman from the Vice and Virtue Ministry, the Taliban's morality police that enforces such decrees, said it was "nonsense and untrue" that women are scared to go to the shops.

"There is no problem for those sisters (women) who have observed hijab," said Abdul Ghafar Farooq, "As women are naturally weaker than men, then Shariah (Islamic law) has called mahrams essential when traveling with them for the sake of their dignity and respect."

Trump spared 'corporate death penalty'

AP ■ NEW YORK

A New York judge on Friday spared the ex-president that worst case punishment as he ruled in a civil case alleging Trump fraudulently misrepresented financial figures to get cheaper loans and other benefits.

Still, Trump got slammed hard, facing big cash penalties, outside supervision of his companies and restrictions on his borrowing.

In a pretrial ruling last year, the same judge threatened to shut down much of the Republican presidential front-runner's business by calling for the "dissolution" of corporate entities that hold many of his marquee properties. That raised the specter of possible fire sales of Trump Tower, a Wall Street skyscraper and other properties.

But New York Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron called off the dissolution.

Instead, he said the court would appoint two monitors to oversee the Trump Organization to make sure it

doesn't continue to submit false figures.

"It's a complete reversal," said real estate lawyer Adam Leitman Bailey. "There's a big difference between having to sell your assets and a monitor who gets to look over your shoulders."

In his ruling, Engoron banned Trump from serving as an officer or director in any New York corporation for three years, prohibited him from taking out loans with New York banks and said his company and other defendants have to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in fines.

Here is how the decision is likely to impact his business:

CASH DRAIN: This is possibly the worst hit from the ruling.

Trump and his businesses were told they would have to pay \$355 million for "ill gotten gains." Trump's sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr., who help run the business, were ordered to pay \$4 million each. Trump's former chief financial officer was ordered to pay \$1 million, for a total judgment of \$364

million.

The penalties will slam Trump's finances at a moment he is facing other steep legal bills stemming from several criminal cases. Trump separately was hit with \$88 million in judgments in sexual abuse and defamation lawsuits brought by writer E. Jean Carroll.

It gets worse.

Trump is also required to pay interest from the dates when he received benefits from his alleged fraud. That so-called pre-judgement interest adds another \$100 million to Trump's bills, according to New York's attorney general.

NO TRUMP PROPERTY FIRE SALE: The judge's summary ruling in September was vague in exactly what he meant by a "dissolution" of Trump businesses. But several legal experts told The Associated Press that in the worse case it could have led to a sale of not only of his New York properties, but his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, a Chicago hotel and condo building, and several golf clubs, including ones in

Miami, Los Angeles and Scotland.

One of Trump's lawyers, Christopher Kise, called that potential outcome a "corporate death penalty."

Not even the New York attorney general, who filed the lawsuit against Trump, had asked for a "dissolution."

THREE-YEAR BAN: The ban on Trump serving as an officer or director for a New York corporation suggests a big shakeup at the Trump Organization, but the real impact isn't clear. Trump may be removed from the corner office, but as an owner of the business his right to appoint someone to act on his behalf has not been revoked.

"It's not that he can't have influence at these enterprises," said University of Michigan law professor William Thomas. "He just can't hold any actual appointed positions."

Thomas added, however, much depends on how the monitor will handle Trump's attempt to run his company by proxy. "He might want to walk in the office and tell them what

to do, but there will be push-back," he said. "It could limit the avenues through which he can exert control."

BUSINESS LOANS: Trump is also banned from getting loans from New York-chartered banks, a potentially devastating blow given so many major lenders are based in the city. Luckily for Trump, he has cut his debt by hundreds of millions in recent years and so won't need to refinance as much. He also has pushed out the maturity of many loans still on the books by several years.

The impact on funding for future businesses could be crushing, though. Without access to banks, he may be forced to use cash to finance new ventures, something that real estate moguls are loath to do and that won't be easy given his cash payments.

Still, only banks appear banned in the ruling, leaving Trump free to borrow from fast-growing alternative financiers, the private equity and hedge funds that make up the so-called shadow banking world.

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).

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Building & Electric)

Tel.No (0240) 2333536-40 Address: Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Executive Engineer (Building & Electric)

Fax.No.(0240)-2331213 Head office : Town Hall Pin 431001 E-Tender Call AMC (For Help): Cell No. 9764999592

No/AMC/Dy.Eng/Drg.-Bldg./627/2024 Date 17/02/2024

Sr. No	Work Name	Last Date of Tender Submission
1	Development work of various Smashanbhumi in Chh. Sambhajnagar. (Civil work). (Tender Amount Rs.7,83,36,782/-)	03/03/2024

Note 1. For the above stated work is available on web site www.mahatenders.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Building & Electric) Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

UJJAIN SMART CITY LIMITED
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 'Vidhayak 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



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 Ongbamrungphan.

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 Riwinda Prongjai, and world No. 13 Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard in their ranks.

PTI ■ SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA)

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 Oshiro, 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 outwit 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 niggle, 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.

With the five-match rubber evenly poised at 2-2, Anmol was handed the responsibility of taming world No. 29 Natsuki Nidaira, and the Indian once again lived up to the expectation, claiming a 21-14, 21-18 win in 52 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



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.”

Yuvraj shoots 67 in Malaysia

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Playing his first full season on the Asian Tour, Yuvraj Singh Sandhu turned in a fine round of 4-under 67 to move up to tied 12th place after three rounds at the Malaysian Open here on Saturday.

The Chandigarh player who gained a card through the Asian Development Tour had five birdies against one bogey in his 67 after rounds of 70-64 on the first two days.

Three of his five birdies came on par-5s, and his lone dropped shot came on the Par-4 13th.

As Yuvraj rose, SSP Chawrasia added a 68 to get to 11-under and T-20 with rounds of 69-65-68.

Veer Ahlawat, the first round co-leader dropped to T-28 as he carded 70 in the third round and is now 10-under, while Honey Baisoya (70-66-70) at 7-under is T-56 and S Chikkarangappa (69-66-73) is

T-66. Canadian Jared Du Toit, 28, who graduated from the Asian Tour Qualifying School last month, shot a fine nine-under-par 62 to take the third-round lead in the USD 1 million event.

His tournament total of 17-under gives him a one-stroke lead from joint-overnight leader Australian Kevin Yuan, who fired a 68, the same score as John Catlin from the United States, who is one shot further back - in the curtain raiser for the Asian Tour's 2024 season. Spain's David Puig fired a 62 and is tied for fourth place, three off the lead, with Korean Bio Kim and Deyen Lawson from Australia, who both shot 66s, and England's Steve Lewton, in with a 68.

The other co-leader at the start of the day Khavish Varadan from Malaysia slipped back with 72 and is five off the pace, along with compatriot Ervin Chang, who carded a 69.

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.

YASHASVI ROCKS ENGLAND, INDIA IN CONTROL

Ashwin out of 3rd Test as mother ill

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Yashasvi Jaiswal's dream season just got better as he singlehandedly seized the initiative from England with a sizzling century, putting India in complete control at the end of third day's play in the third Test. Jaiswal's (104 retired hurt off 133 balls) second ton of the series was beautifully complemented by Shubman Gill (65 batting, 120 balls), who curbed his natural aggression as India ended the day at 196 for 2 in 51 available overs. The left-handed opener, who will be torch-bearer of Indian batting for the next decade, scored his third Test hundred in only seventh Test appearance before the blazing blade was brought to a halt by back spasms that forced him to retire. The Jaiswal-Gill pair added 155 runs in quick time with the former giving the English team a test of its own medicine with nine fours and five sixes, the best being the imperious pull off Jimmy Anderson. The overall lead swelled to 322 by stumps, after Indian bowlers made a splendid comeback, getting last five England wickets for only 29 runs with visitors being bowled out for 319. Mohammed Siraj (4/84 in 21.1 overs) was brilliant with his yorkers to tail-enders while Kuldeep Yadav (2/77 in 18 overs) compensated brilliantly for Ravichandran Ashwin's unfortunate withdrawal with two quick wickets in the morning session.



However it was Joe Root's indiscreet reverse ramp off Jasprit Bumrah which Jaiswal pounced with less than a second's reaction time that turned the tables. "That shot was not on and it became a turning point," Siraj said at post-match press conference. Rohit Sharma's captaincy was spot-on and the manner in which he tweaked Jasprit Bumrah's field position at long-on to get Ben Stokes dismissed off Ravindra Jadeja (2/51) spoke volumes about his acumen. On Sunday, India would be

looking to take a lead of at least 425 if not 450 and have at least 125 overs to bowl out England. With no Ashwin available, India would need a cushion of more overs on a deck that is still good for batting. **JAISWAL JAZZ:** Jaiswal's onslaught continued despite England frenetically changing their bowling and fielding plans but none worked enough to stop the Indian opener. Having spotted a vacant off-side field, Jaiswal brought out two reverse sweeps off Rehan Ahmed for fours. However, his charge was halted only after England brought

back Mark Wood for a short-ball play yet again in the game with a packed leg side field. Unfazed with England's deployments, Jaiswal dealt in singles once into his 90s and brought up his third century of fledgling career with a four off Wood. However, the left-handed opener had to retire hurt close to the end of the play for being unable to deal with back spasms. Jaiswal not only took the wind out of England's aspirations but also consolidated India's grip on the contest, having lost Rohit Sharma (19) cheaply in

the second session. At the other end, Gill put behind the disappointment of the first-innings duck with a fifth half-century, countering England's ploy of a packed on-side field with up to six fielders placed and Wood bowling into his body. India's task was to preserve wickets and build their lead, given the amount of time left in the game and surface here being benign so far. Additionally, Rohit's early dismissal with their overall lead not being big enough would have provided some concerns but all that was

banished by the pair of Jaiswal and Gill with their unbeaten 155-run stand for the second wicket.

KULDEEP'S RIPPER: Kuldeep, who was hit for plenty by Ben Duckett on second day, found his mojo, bowling splendidly through the first session of the day which kept a leash on England, while also accounting for Jonny Bairstow with an unplayable delivery. Bairstow moved deep into the crease but was pinned in front of the wickets with one that turned sharply into him from outside the off. Bumrah then accounted for Root (18) for the ninth time in 21 innings, as former skipper's shocking dismissal - a reverse ramp to second slip - once again exposed the bizarreness of the ultra aggressive approach. Having struggled to score freely in the first session, England resorted to go all-out post lunch but the play backfired horrendously. Jadeja had Stokes (41) caught by Bumrah who was placed a bit straighter at long-on, forcing the batter to adjust his stroke. Jadeja also had Tom Hartley stumped for his second wicket. For Ben Foakes, a delivery from Siraj slowed a little bit off the surface for an easy grab for Rohit at mid-on. The India pacer wasted no time in cleaning up tail-enders Ahmed and Anderson to bring up a four-for, with England rolling over for 319 from 290/5 at lunch.

PTI ■ RAJKOT

India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Friday withdrew from the ongoing third Test against England as he flew back to Chennai to attend to his ill mother. BCCI provided an update on the development but did not mention that the medical issue relates Ashwin's mother. However, BCCI President Rajeev Shukla posted on X that it's off-spinner's mother, who has fallen sick. "Ravichandran Ashwin has withdrawn from the Test squad, effective immediately due to a family medical emergency. In these challenging times, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the team fully supports Ashwin," BCCI said in a media release. "The BCCI extends its heartfelt support to the champion cricketer and his family. The health and well-being of the players and their loved ones are of utmost importance. The Board requests respect for the privacy of Ashwin and his family as they navigate through this challenging time," the statement added further. A few minutes later, Shukla posted on X, "Wishing speedy recovery of mother of @ashwinravi99. He has to rush and leave Rajkot test to Chennai to be with his mother." BCCI secretary Jay Shah said, "The Board and the team will continue to provide any



necessary assistance to Ashwin and will keep the lines of communication open to offer support as needed. Team India appreciates the understanding and empathy of the fans and media during this sensitive period." India will play the remainder of the third Test with 10 men and four specialist bowlers. It is understood that Ashwin might not be available for the remaining two Test matches in Ranchi (Feb 25-29) and Dharamsala (March 7-11). As far as off-spin bowling replacement is concerned, team already has Washington Sundar in its ranks. The other possible replacements, outside the squad are veterans Jayant Yadav and Jalaj Saxena along with young Pulkit Narang.

FARMERS' AGITATION



Shooters sweat over Olympic selection trials in Patiala

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 150 shotgun shooters are sweating over their participation in crucial national Olympic trials later this month in Patiala in the wake of the farmers' agitation and the restrictions imposed on interstate travel. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has convened two meetings but they have not yet altered the venue or the dates for the third selection trials because of several issues, including a "packed calendar" and the impending "announcement of the general elections". The scores in the selection trials, to be held at the Moti Bagh Gun Club Ranges in Patiala from February 25 to March 2, "will be considered for selection of teams for Paris Olympic Games", an NRAI statement had said on January 22. Several shotgun shooters PTI spoke to said carrying arms and ammunition by road will be a nightmare. Besides, airfares to Chandigarh have gone through the roof because borders have been sealed due to the farmers' agitation. NRAI secretary-general Sultan Singh when asked if the federation will be able to organise the trials in Patiala given the circumstances said, "That is a very difficult question. But do we have an option, considering the (shooting) calendar, elections... I'm running against the wall." On whether the trials could be shifted to the Jagatpura range in Jaipur or the Karni Singh range in Delhi, he said the Tughlakabad range would be an issue because of the upcoming Para Shooting World Cup from March 6-15. The Para Shooting World Cup at the Karni Singh Ranges has 24 Paris Paralympic quota places up for grabs and 500 para shooters from 52 countries are competing. "If I shift it (trials) anywhere else, then the northern people have a problem going to south (India) and south people have a problem going to north (India). Shooters in Chandigarh will then ask, 'how do we reach Jaipur,'" said Singh. "We've already had two

meetings, but what is the solution? I can't even postpone the trials because of a packed calendar, and if the elections are announced, then the code of conduct will also come into play... Then there can be no shipment of ammunition, no weapons can be carried," he added. "We are totally seized of the matter, but we have no choice," he said. "I am more than welcome to any suggestions that might come up," he added. However, a top shooter told PTI on condition of anonymity that both Jaipur and even the shooting range in Bhopal would be better options compared to Patiala given the scenario. "The paramilitary forces at the borders will ask for a whole lot of documents... For what purpose we are carrying such large quantities of arms and ammunition. Then, the flights to Chandigarh have become very expensive as people are avoiding roads," he said. Another shooter said, several shooters recently travelled by road to Bhopal for the second round of Olympic selection trials. "Besides, when the NRAI talks about shooters from the south, that is only a minuscule number and they also mostly reside and train in Delhi. Most of the shotgun shooters are from Delhi and adjoining areas. So where is the problem to shift the venue," he said. Another shooter said, the code of conduct that might come into force once the general elections are announced does not apply to sports shooters. "We are exempted from depositing our weapons we use for sports purposes. I have never heard of shooting sports activity getting affected due to the code of conduct," he added. A trap shooter added that the Para World Cup commences on March 6 at the Karni Singh range here, while the Olympic selection trials conclude in Patiala on March 2. "Why can't we have the trials in Delhi itself where there are far better lodging and boarding facilities and our trials will end much before the Para World Cup begins," he said.

Sachin visits bat making unit in Kashmir



PTI ■ SRINAGAR

A cricket bat manufacturer in the Sangam area here was in for a pleasant surprise when Sachin Tendulkar and his family visited his manufacturing unit on Saturday. Tendulkar, accompanied by wife Anjali and daughter Sara, stopped by at a unit in Charsoo on the Srinagar-Jammu highway and interacted with the workers there.

"We were busy making bats when a vehicle stopped at our gate. We were pleasantly surprised to find the Little Master and his family," Mohammad Shaheen Parray, owner of MJ Sports, told PTI over phone. Parray said Tendulkar checked the quality of the bats made of Kashmir willow. "He stroked a few bats and was quite pleased with the quality.

Tendulkar said he had come to compare the Kashmir willow bats with those made of English willow. "We requested him to lend his voice in support of the local bats," Parray said, adding the batting maestro promised to support the Kashmir willow bats. Parray said Tendulkar spent an hour at the manufacturing unit and interacted with a small bunch of fans.



Indian team wears black armbands in memory Gaekwad

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Indian players wore black armbands in the memory of former captain Dattajirao Gaekwad on the third day of the ongoing third Test against England here on Saturday. Dattajirao, who played 11 Tests for India between 1951 and 1962, died on February 13 after

remaining hospitalised for 12 days. At 95, he was India's oldest living Test cricketer. Dattajirao was the father of former India batter and coach Anshuman Gaekwad. "Team India will be wearing black arm bands in memory of Dattajirao Gaekwad, former India captain and India's oldest

Test cricketer who passed away recently," the BCCI said in a statement shortly before the third day's play got underway here at the Niranjan Shah Stadium. A right-handed batter, who could bowl both medium pace and leg-break, Dattajirao was India's captain during the 1959 tour of England.

RANJI TROPHY

Mumbai thrash Assam in Ranji match Tamil Nadu pack off Punjab top-order after posting 435

PTI ■ MUMBAI

All-rounder Shardul Thakur's match haul of 10 wickets was complemented by Shivam Dube's counter-attacking century as Mumbai finished their group B Ranji Trophy league engagements with a resounding innings and 80 run win against Assam inside two days. The 41-times champions Mumbai have been at their ruthless best this season, capping five wins, four of them with bonus points to top the Group B standings with massive 37 points. They had already qualified before the last match and the final game was more of a warm-up before the semi-finals. Thakur claimed 8-1-31-4 to add to his 6/21 in the first innings as Assam were folded for 108 in 33 overs with Mumbai wrapping the issue inside two days. Mumbai encountered a solitary loss — against Uttar Pradesh — from seven matches this season, while against Chhattisgarh they bagged three points with a first innings lead. Mumbai's nearest rival Andhra have 25 points with their last league round fixture against Kerala in progress. Dube, who had completed his second century in four innings on day one, ended his innings for 121 off 140 balls that included 11 fours and five sixes. Dube now has two fifties and two centuries in six innings since his return to his state side from national duty. Shams Mulani also chipped in with a quickfire 47-ball 31 that took Mumbai's first innings to 272, giving them a 188-run first innings lead. Assam in their second essay were rocked early by new ball bowler Mohit Avasthi (2/10) who removed both their openers on single digit scores.



Tushar Deshpande (2/37) and Tanush Kotian (1/5) then kept chipping away wickets before Thakur wrapped the tail in his four-wicket burst. **ANDHRA EYEING QF DESPITE KERALA FIGHTBACK:** At Vizianagaram, visitors Kerala put up a strong fightback to post 258/3 in reply to Andhra's 272 allout. But despite being in the backfoot, Andhra are set to finish second to join Mumbai in the last-eight. Skipper Sachin Baby was unbeaten on 87, in company of Akshay Chandran (57) at stumps on day two. Earlier opener Rohan Kunnammal scored 61, while Krishna Prasad got out for 43. Abhimanyu slams double ton India A regular Abhimanyu Easwaran struck 200 not out to put Bengal's in driver's seat in their match against Bihar at Eden Gardens. Easwaran hit 23 boundaries in his unbeaten knock of 200 (291 balls) as Bengal declared on 411/5 with a big first innings lead of 316. Bihar were 32/1, trailing Bengal by 284 at close on day two. But this performance is little too late for Bengal who are already out of the quarters reckoning having endured two losses. For Easwaran, who has been found

wanting in big matches, this was his third first-class double hundred, first since his career-best 233 for India A against Sri Lanka A in May 2019. Easwaran also got two reprieves en route to his double century, first he was dropped on 152 and then survived a catch off a no ball on 185. Bengal skipper Manoj Tiwary scored 30 in what was seemed to be his final innings of his two-decade long career. The veteran of 147 first-class and 169 List A matches was trapped lbw by Bihar spinner Ashutosh Aman. The 38-year-old, who is also a junior minister of sports in Bengal cabinet, had announced earlier that he would call it quits after this match. **BRIEF SCORES** **In Mumbai:** Assam 84 and 108; 33 overs (Sumit Ghadigaonkar 30 not out; Shardul Thakur 4/31, Mohit Avasthi 2/10, Tushar Deshpande 2/37). Mumbai 272; 64.4 overs (Shivam Dube 121 not out; Dibakar Johri 5/74). Mumbai won by an innings and 80 runs. Points: Mumbai 7, Assam 0. **At Vizianagaram:** Andhra 272; 96.4 overs (Ricky Bhui 87 not out, Maheep Kumar 81, Karan Shinde 43; Basil Thampi 4/48). Kerala 258/3; 81 overs (Sachin Baby 87, Rohan Kunnammal 61, Akshay Chandran 57, Krishna Prasad 43). Kerala trail by 14 runs. **At Kolkata:** Bihar 95 and 32/1; 14 overs. Bengal 411/5 declared (Abhimanyu Easwaran 200 not out, Abhishek Porel 56, Manoj Tiwary 30). Bihar trail by 284 runs. **At Lucknow:** Chhattisgarh 414; 145.5 overs (Sanjeet Desai 202, Amandeep Khare 114; Saurabh Kumar 5/95). Uttar Pradesh 110/3; 27 overs (Saurabh Kumar 55 batting, Nitish Rana 38 batting). UP trail by 304 runs.

Tamil Nadu pack off Punjab top-order after posting 435

PTI ■ SALEM (TAMIL NADU)

Tamil Nadu took firm control of their Ranji Trophy Group C match by packing off the Punjab top-order after big hundreds by Baba Indrajith and Vijay Shankar powered the hosts to 435 in their first innings here on Saturday. Punjab were 141/4 at stumps on the second day, trailing by 294 runs. Batting on 88 overnight, Shankar duly reached his century with the help of 12 fours and a six, while Indrajith went on to make 187 in 295 deliveries after resuming the day on 122. Indrajith, who added 281 runs for the fourth wicket, found the fence 10 times and cleared it once. During their marathon association, both Indrajith and Shankar did a lot of running, relying a lot on the singles and twos to keep the scoreboard ticking. However, Tamil Nadu's lower-order batters failed to contribute significantly to their total after the dismissal of Shankar to off-spinner Jassinder Singh with the score reading 388 for five. TN skipper Sai Kishore chipped in 20 before the home team's first innings came to an end in 131.4 overs. Off-spinner Sukhwinder Singh was the most successful bowler for Punjab, finishing with figures of 4/99 in 31 overs. There were two wickets apiece for Jassinder Singh and all-rounder Abhishek Sharma, who bowls left-arm spin. In reply, at least three Punjab batters looked to have settled down nicely before losing their wickets. Prabhsimran Singh was dismissed for 24, while Anmolpreet Singh and Nehal Wadhwa got out after doing all the hard work, for 41 and 43 respectively. At stumps, Mandeep Singh and



wicketkeeper Anmol Malhotra were batting on 18 and 3 respectively. Left-arm spinner Ajith Ram, who averages an exceptional 16.6 for his 46 wickets in nine matches, had Prabhsimran trapped in front of the wickets and bowled Wadhwa to leave Punjab precariously placed at 131/4. **BRIEF SCORES:** **Tamil Nadu 1st innings 435 all out in 131.4 overs** (Baba Indrajith 187, Vijay Shankar 130; Sukhwinder Singh 4/99) vs Karnataka 1st innings 141/4 in 46 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 41, Nehal Wadhwa 43; Ajith Ram 2/34) ahead by 294 runs. **In Agartala:** Tripura: 149 and 286/9 in 70 overs (Sudip Chatterjee 95, Ganesh Satish 62; Yuvraj Singh 4/84, Himanshu Sangwan 3/55) vs Railways 1st innings 105 all out in 37.3 overs (Arindam Ghosh not out 62; Manisankar Murasingh 5/28, Bikramjit Debnath 3/16) lead by 330 runs. **In Hubballi:** Chandigarh 1st innings 267 all out in 106.4 overs (Karan Kaila 79; Hardik Raj 4/56, Vijaykumar Vyshak 4/77) vs Karnataka 1st innings 268/3 in 63 overs (Manish Pandey batting 102, Mayank Agarwal 57) trail by 1 run. **In Porvory:** Goa 1st innings 317 all out in 84.2 overs (Darshan Misal 89, Mohit Redkar 80; Chintan Gaja 3/56) vs Gujarat 1st innings 281/5 in 79 overs (Priyank Panchal batting 150) ahead by 36 runs.

the pioneer agenda

"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.

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



Sporothrix, 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.

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

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.

deaths from malaria six-fold and from tuberculosis three-fold. Dr. Animesh Ray, the lead author of the study and affiliated with AIIMS Delhi, underscores the significance of the findings, stating that the total burden due to fungal diseases is substantial but often underappreciated. He sounds alarm saying that the number of individuals affected by fungal diseases significantly exceeds those impacted by tuberculosis in India. *Candida* -- another type of fungal infection -- is becoming a serious problem in intensive care, complex surgical patients, diabetes, cancer and renal failure, as well as premature babies. The researchers estimate that about 1.57 million people suffer from *Candida* bloodstream infection or

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

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



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

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.

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.

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.

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 disoriented 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



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



VRIGO 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 you 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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