



**WORLD 5**

**WORLD LEADERS STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE**

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**SEBI USING AI FOR INVESTIGATIONS: OFFICIAL**

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**INDIA ON BACKFOOT AFTER JAISWAL GRITTY FIFTY**

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## Draw 100 days action plan: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a strategic move ahead of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has instructed his Council of Ministers to draft an "actionable, measurable, and clearly defined" plan to be presented at the meeting on March 3. During the last Cabinet meeting on February 21, Modi directed his ministerial colleagues to prepare an action plan for the next 100 days. With the Lok Sabha polls expected to be announced after March 13, he has urged them to engage in extensive consultations, including with experienced individuals such as senior bureaucrats, grassroots workers, and domain experts, before finalising their action plans, according to sources. During the meeting, Modi tasked his ministers with outlining key initiatives and deliverables for the next 100 days, along with a comprehensive five-year roadmap. These documents, focusing on the Government's priorities and strategies, are to be submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat. Sources said Modi has instructed them and their ministries to brainstorm over the agenda for the period, which is also the likely duration before a new government takes office.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the foundation stone laying ceremony of multiple key initiatives for cooperative sector in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

following the Lok Sabha elections expected in April-May. The Prime Minister told the Cabinet that they should draw up these plans without considering who gets what ministerial positions post-elections. Sources said the prime minister wants to ensure that the government's work continues amid the poll cycle, and his call for preparing the agenda for the next 100 days is part of such an effort.

He has also repeatedly expressed confidence in the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance retaining power at the Centre. He recently asserted that he has already begun preparing a roadmap for his third term and has received suggestions from over 15 lakh people. During a cabinet meeting

held in the first week of February, PM Modi cautioned his Cabinet Ministers against complacency, urging them to work diligently for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Despite the favorable momentum from the consecration of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi



temple in Ayodhya, Modi emphasised that the BJP should not underestimate the challenge. He referred to the BJP's casual approach in the 2004 elections, highlighting the need to avoid complacency. Earlier, at the party's national convention at Bharat Mandapam, Modi urged party workers to dedicate themselves to engaging with new voters over the next 100 days. *Continued on Page 2*

## BJP nixes Congress Temple tax Bill

PTI ■ BENGALURU

In a setback to the ruling Congress in Karnataka, a Bill that sought to collect funds from temples with over ₹10 lakh annual income was defeated by the Opposition BJP-JD(S) combine in the Legislative Council. The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was passed by the Legislative Assembly earlier this week. It was defeated by a voice vote in the Upper House, where the Opposition has a majority, on Friday. The Bill among other things, proposes to collect five per cent from temples whose gross income is between ₹10 lakh and less than ₹1 crore and 10 per cent from temples whose income is above ₹1 crore, to be put into a Common Pool Fund, administered by Rajya Dharmika Parishath, which is proposed to be used for Archakas' (priests) welfare and upkeep of 'C' category temples (State controlled) whose annual income is less than ₹5 lakh. The act that was earlier amended in 2011 had made way for five per cent of the net income of temples with annual income between ₹5



lakh and ₹10 lakh and 10 per cent of the net income of temples with annual income of over ₹10 lakh would come to the fund. The amendment Bill had created a huge controversy, as it angered the Opposition, especially the BJP, which charged the ruling Congress with trying to fill its "empty coffers" with temple money, while, the Congress had sought to turn the tables saying the saffron party had effected an amendment in 2011 to seek funds from high-income Hindu shrines. Leader of the Opposition in Council Kota Srinivas Poojary, who was the Muzrai Minister during the BJP government, while welcoming the move to

provide social security to Archakas, opposed diversion of the revenue earned by temples. He questioned why the government can't provide funds in the budget for their welfare. The Opposition also opposed the proposal in the Bill for nomination of the temple committee president by the government. Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy, trying to convince the Opposition, assured the House that the government would not interfere in the nomination of the temple committee president and also to reduce the amount proposed to be diverted from the temples to the common pool. *Continued on Page 2*

## New criminal justice laws from July 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The newly enacted laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act — to completely overhaul the criminal justice system in the country will come into effect from July 1. However, the provision related to cases of hit and run by vehicle drivers will not be implemented immediately. The three laws got Parliament's approval on December 21 and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on December 25. According to three identical notifications issued by the Union Home Ministry, provisions of the new laws will come into force from July 1. The laws will replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian

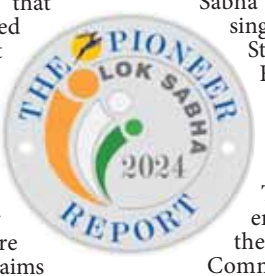
Evidence Act of 1872 respectively. The three legislations aim at completely overhauling the criminal justice system in the country by giving definitions of various offences and their punishments. The Government, however, has decided not to implement the provision related to cases of hit and run by a vehicle driver as promised to truckers who had protested against it. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (45 of 2023), the Central Government hereby appoints the 1st day of July, 2024 as the date on which the provisions of the said Sanhita, except the provision of sub-section (2) of section 106, shall come into force," one of the notifications said. *Continued on Page 2*

## EC plugs transfer, posting loopholes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Noting violations of transfer and posting instructions for officers ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission has instructed States to ensure that officers transferred out of a district are not posted in any district within the same parliamentary constituency. By adjusting its policy on officer transfers before elections, the EC aims to close loopholes exploited by State governments. This action follows the Election Commission's serious concern over instances where officers were transferred to adjacent districts within the

same parliamentary constituency by State governments. In a related development, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced on Saturday that most political parties in Tamil Nadu have urged the EC to conduct the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in a single phase in the State. Following his two-day visit to Tamil Nadu to assess elections preparedness, the EC emphasised that the Election Commission (EC) would take strict action against officials who fail to ensure a level playing field for all parties, saying that "in a democracy, officials should be absolutely impartial." *Continued on Page 2*



## AAP, Congress ink seat sharing ties, but both to go solo in Punjab

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

At a time of challenges within the INDIA bloc, the Congress and the AAP have resolved their differences to finalise a seat-sharing agreement in Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat, Chandigarh, and Goa for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. But both the parties will go solo in Punjab. This marks the second seat-sharing deal within the INDIA bloc, following a similar agreement between the SP and Congress in Uttar Pradesh recently. In Delhi, the AAP will contest four seats — West Delhi, South Delhi, East Delhi, and New Delhi. The remaining three — North East Delhi, North West Delhi, and Chandini Chowk — will be contested by the Congress. In the 2019 election, the BJP won all seven seats. The announcement came during a joint press conference of the AAP and the Congress. *Continued on Page 2*

## INDIA Bloc in tatters in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As the TMC has reiterated to go it alone in the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, the State Congress said it is in talks with the CPI(M) for seat sharing in the State. The Congress, the TMC and the CPI(M) are constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc. Reacting to a statement by TMC leader Derek O'Brien, who claimed that the TMC's stance towards the Congress in Bengal remained unchanged, Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury on Saturday said, "I had no information about who said what... I only know that they have decided to go it alone in Bengal... But one thing is for sure: we are proceeding with our talks with the CPI(M)." On Friday, O'Brien had reiterated that his party had not deviated from what the Chief Minister had said a month ago regarding the

alliance talks. "A few weeks ago... Mamata said the TMC is contesting all 42 seats in Bengal. We are also contesting a few seats in Assam and the Tura Lok Sabha seat in Meghalaya. There is no change in this position," he had said. In Bengal, the Congress has been requesting 6-8 seats, while the TMC has offered only two seats, Behrampore and Malda South, currently held by Adhir Chowdhury and AH Khan Chowdhury. In a sharp attack on the TMC, the PCC president highlighted how Mamata's party was caught between losing minority votes on one side and facing ED and CBI raids on the other. "Mamata had made it clear that her party will contest the elections alone," he said, adding, "They (TMC) are in a dilemma because if they leave the INDIA alliance they will lose the minority votes... whereas if they don't do so

and go ahead with the alliance then the Narendra Modi Government will send ED and CBI to their houses... this is the reason why the TMC is vertically divided in two groups... while one section wants the alliance to continue, the other is in a dilemma." Reminding how Mamata had declared that she would go it alone in Bengal, Chowdhury said, "Irrespective of who says what we are going ahead with our talks with the CPI(M) and I am already in the midst of seat-sharing talks with their State secretary Md Salim." Meanwhile the Congress national leadership, however, continued to go soft on the TMC saying their doors were still open to her. "Our doors are always open for the TMC. Mamata and the TMC have said they want to strengthen INDIA Alliance and the biggest motive is to defeat the BJP... Heated discussions keep taking place between the two parties but we respect Mamata," senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said.



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# LeT, Hizbul ultras assets attached in terror case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

To choke the funding networks that are fuelling terrorism in Kashmir, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has attached four properties and seized cash in the Handwara narco-terrorism case, involving 2 proscribed terrorist outfits, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). The properties belonging to the four accused have been attached in tehsil Handwara of district Kupwara by the NIA, which has also seized a total of Rs 2.27 crore in cash under Section 25 of the UA(P) Act. According to a statement issued by the NIA spokesperson, "The Immovable properties attached are the double-storied house of accused Afaq Ahmad Wani, single-storied house of accused Muneer Ahmad Pandey, the house of Saleem Andrabi and the double-



storeyed house of Islam ul Haq". So far 12 accused have been arrested in the case, in which the NIA has charge sheeted 15 individuals. The case (RC 03/2020/NIA/JMU) relates to the use of the 'proceeds of narcotic drugs' to fund violent terrorist activities by LeT and HM operating in the Handwara-Kupwara region. The case was registered following the recovery of a black bag and a large number of Indian currency notes of 500 denominations during the checking of vehicles

# Noida Police recovers cache of vape sourced from Nepal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Noida Police on Saturday said it has arrested two men and allegedly recovered a large number of China-made e-cigarettes sourced by them from Nepal. The e-cigarettes — whose use is banned in India — were being transported by the accused in a car and meant to be supplied in Delhi, a senior officer said. "Police have arrested two men with banned e-cigarettes and illegal cannabis (ganja). The seizure was made from a white Creta car without a registration number. Preliminary questioning of the car's driver, Abdul Momin Peer, had led to the revelations about the narco-terror nexus, which had sparked a detailed investigation by the NIA. During the initial searches in the houses of various accused, 21 kg of heroin was seized, in addition to various incriminating material, including large sums of cash.



Additional DCP Manish Mishra said a total of 960 IGET Star L7000 Disposable Vape along with more than three kilogrammes of cannabis was seized by the police. Assistant Commissioner of Police Rajneesh Verma said, "The e-cigarettes seized are made in China and sourced from Nepal by the accused duo. The total value of the items in black market is estimated worth around Rs 45-50 lakh." During initial probe, the accused revealed that they got the e-cigarettes through an international supplier and the

cannabis was procured by them from Uttarakhand, according to police. The accused brought the e-cigarettes from their supplier near Nepal border in Uttarakhand's Khatima district and transported it to Delhi's Rohini area, the police said. In Rohini, the e-cigarettes were sold at high rates in bars, restaurants, and to young customers along with cannabis, the police added. "The police said those held have been identified as Tasleem, 45, and Ahmed, 31, both residents of Udhav Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand.

# Police car securing route for Yogi convoy meets with accident, 13 injured

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

At least 13 people, including police personnel, were injured when a police jeep met with an accident here on Saturday evening while securing the route for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's cavalcade, officials said. It was not immediately clear whether the Chief Minister was in the convoy which met with the accident in Arjunganj while returning from the airport here. According to police sources, the accident occurred when the speeding jeep hit a vehicle parked on the roadside while trying to avoid an animal that suddenly came before it. They said the local police jeep was at least a kilometre ahead of the cavalcade. "A police jeep travelling ahead of the convoy of the Chief Minister met with an accident

in Arjunganj market area on Saturday evening. 13 persons were injured," Lucknow Police Commissioner SB Shiradkar told PTI. Those injured include police personnel and they have been rushed to a hospital for medical care. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the stray cattle menace has become a "dangerous truth" of Uttar Pradesh. "The convoy of the Chief Minister himself met with an accident today due to the problem of stray animals not being taken seriously. Many people have been injured. (It is) Sad as well as worrying," he said in a post on X in Hindi. "The problem of (stray) animals is a dangerous truth of Uttar Pradesh. This is a question of people's lives. The BJP should take a lesson from this incident," he said.

# Paper leak: UP Police constable recruitment examination cancelled

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major decision, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Saturday, ordered the cancellation of the Police Constable Recruitment Examination-2023 held on February 17 and 18 following allegations of question paper leak. He ordered a fresh examination to be conducted within the next six months with utmost transparency. The decision came following a thorough review of the ongoing investigation by the Special Task Force and the actions taken thus far regarding the examination. Reiterating his firm stance on transparency and fairness of exams, the chief minister stated, "Playing with the hard

work of the youth and compromising the integrity of examinations will not be tolerated. Stringent action will be taken against those responsible." More than 240 people were arrested and detained by police across the state for allegedly adopting or planning to use unfair means in the recruitment exam. Following the chief minister's directive, the Home department issued an order to cancel the examination. As per the order, after careful examination of the facts and information pertaining to the police recruitment examination held on February 17 and 18, 2024, the government has decided, in accordance with the highest standards of integrity and transparency, to cancel this examination.

# 24 on route to holy bath die as tractor trolley falls into pond in Kasganj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic accident in Kasganj, 24 villagers, including eight children, were killed while 10 others were injured when a tractor-trolley they were travelling in fell into a pond on Saturday morning. The group was en route to the river Ganga for a holy bath to mark the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima' early on Saturday morning. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have expressed grief at the loss of lives in the incident. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each for the family members of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for those who suffered injuries in the accident. "The loss of lives in a road acci-



dent in Kasganj district is extremely heart-wrenching. My condolences are with the bereaved family," Yogi wrote in a post on his official X handle. "District administration officials have been instructed to provide proper, free treatment to all the injured. I pray to Lord Shri Ram to grant peace to the departed souls and speedy recovery to the injured," he added. Inspector General of Aligarh Range Shalabh Mathur

confirmed the deaths in the mishap, saying eight children and seven women among the deceased. He said the tractor-trolley was coming from Jaithara in Etah district. The accident occurred when the tractor driver lost control while trying to avoid a car, causing the trolley to overturn into a seven to eight-foot-deep mud-filled pond on Patiali Dariyav Ganj road in Patiali area of Kasganj.

# Give ₹1 crore to kin of man who died in stray cattle attack, BJP asks MCD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP's Delhi unit on Saturday demanded that the MCD should give a compensation of ₹1 crore to the family of the man who died in a stray cattle attack here. At a press conference held at party's Delhi unit headquarters, Leader of House in AAP-led municipal House Raja Iqbal Singh said if such incidents occur again, the BJP will protest against Mayor Shelly Oberoi and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). He demanded that the affected family be given a financial assistance of Rs 1 crore by the MCD. The man being killed by a stray cattle in Khanpur Ward is a "result of the negligence and failure of the Aam Aadmi Party-headed Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Mayor Shelly Oberoi", the Delhi



BJP alleged in a statement. BJP councillors will not allow the functioning of the MCD House until the mayor takes "moral responsibility" for this incident, and action is taken against officials of the veterinary department, it said. Subhash Kumar Jha, 42, a resident of Khanpur, was waiting for the school bus for his child in Devli Mor when the animal gored the man and pounded him with its hooves as he lay on the road on Thursday. The MCD, in a statement on

Friday, said that in response to the incident, its veterinary department will take action against illegal dairies in the area and will disconnect their electricity and water supplies, besides sealing them. "Today, in the Khanpur area of South Delhi, an individual was attacked by an animal. In response to this incident, a team of the veterinary department of the Delhi Municipal Corporation took action and captured nine animals," it had said.

# EC plugs transfer, posting...

From Page 1

Addressing reporters on the concerns raised by political parties, he noted, "most political parties are advocating for single-phase polling and have called for measures to reduce the influence of money power during the elections." "We met with various political parties, both national such as the BJP, INC, and state parties like the AIADMK, DMK. The majority of their demands were for single-phase elections and measures to curb the distribution of money and freebies," he said. The parties also called for action to prevent "voter impersonation," distribution of liquor, and transfer of money through online modes. During past elections in Tamil Nadu, parties have often accused each other of "inducing" voters by distributing cash and gifts. They also sought the disqualification of candidates found distributing cash during the elections or engaging in any form of inducement. "Procedurally, they (political parties) have emphasized that the bureaucratic machinery needs to be impartial. They need to provide a level playing field so that every candidate is treated equally," he said. According to the CEC, Tamil Nadu is home to 6.19 crore voters, of which there are 3.15 crore women and 3.04 crore men. In a communiqué to States and Union Territories, the poll body said according to the policy all officers who

were either posted in their home district or have completed three years at a place are transferred out ahead of Lok Sabha or assembly polls to ensure they do not disturb the level-playing field in favor of a candidate or a party. "The commission has strengthened its existing transfer policy to ensure that officials are not able to disturb the level-playing field in the elections," the EC said in a statement on Saturday. "Plugging the loopholes" in the existing instructions, the commission has directed that, except for states and union territories that comprise up to two parliamentary constituencies, all States shall ensure that officers who are transferred out of the district are not posted within the same parliamentary constituency, the EC said. The EC under Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has told states that the policy "must be adhered to in both letter and spirit and not just being camouflaged to show compliance". There has been a zero-tolerance policy of the commission against disturbing the level-playing field in the elections, it pointed out. In the recently-held Assembly elections in five States, the commission had ordered transfer of various officials, including top police officials. Following the EC's directions based on the policy, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation

(BMC) Commissioner IS Chahal and Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) Commissioner Vikram Kumar are set to be transferred. In Chennai, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said that the voters have a right to know about the feasibility of fulfilling poll assurances made by political parties and made it clear that the matter is however, sub judice. Political parties have a right to make promises in their election manifestos and the electorate has a right to know if these are genuine and how these programmes could be funded, he said, adding the entire matter forms part of an ongoing case and the matter was sub judice. The CEC said the Election Commission has prepared a 'proforma' to make parties to make disclosure on their election promises. However, this aspect also relates to the pending court matter. He said enforcement agencies have been directed to stay vigilant and prevent distribution of cash and freebies. National Payments Corporation of India too has been tasked to monitor online transactions. Majority of political parties in Tamil Nadu have sought single phase polls. To a question on 'fake news', he said, 'today fake news is running as you mentioned that election dates have been announced. This fake news has, however, been countered within half an hour and it was made amply clear that it was fake.

# 2,48,000 people took part in Yamuna Jan Jagran Abhiyan: DJB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Saturday said its 'Yamuna Jan Jagran Abhiyan' or awareness programme organised under Yamuna Action Plan-II is a success and till date more than 2,48,000 people have taken part in it. Making this assertion here, the DJB said the rising number of mass participation is clear evidence that the people of Delhi are aware and willing to keep the Yamuna clean. This campaign is an effort to increase awareness about Yamuna conservation efforts among the people of Delhi and to actively involve them in cleaning and preserving the holy river. Under this campaign, activities like street plays, door-to-door awareness campaigns, focussed group discussions, women outreach, training sessions, workshops etc. are being organized. Last month, about 12,260 people participated in this campaign, which is evidence that the campaign's popularity is growing. The Jan Jagran Abhiyan is being implemented

by the Partner NGOs of DJB under Yamuna Action Plan-III. There is active support from NGOs namely, Ganga Devi Educational Society, Hariyali Center for Rural Development, Rural Education and Welfare Society and Social Network India. The partner NGOs under Yamuna Action Plan-III are working in different areas of Delhi and making this campaign successful by directly connecting with communities. Listing highlights of the programme, the DJB said in the last few months, not just participation of people has increased in Jan Jagran Abhiyan, but their interest in discussions and awareness programs related with Yamuna conservation has also increased. Women are also coming forward for the clean Yamuna mission in large numbers and actively participating in various activities organized under the campaign. By training and skilling the people, the means of livelihood of the communities living on the banks of Yamuna are being strengthened

# Draw 100 days...

From Page 1

"In the next 100 days, you need to connect with every new voter, reach every beneficiary, every section, every community, and every person who believes in every religion. We

need to gain the trust of everyone," Modi stated. Emphasizing a robust return of the BJP to power, the Prime Minister said, "Today, even opposition leaders are chanting slogans of the NDA government crossing the 400-mark. And for NDA to cross 400, BJP must surpass the milestone of 370."

# AAP, Congress ink seat sharing ties; but both...

From Page 1

In Gujarat, out of its 26 Lok Sabha seats, Congress will contest 24, while AAP will contest two, including Bharuch and Bhavnagar. In Haryana, which has 10 seats, Congress will contest nine, and AAP will contest one, Kurukshetra. Extensive discussions were held regarding the Chandigarh seat, ultimately decided in favour of the Congress candidate. Detailed discussions also took place concerning Goa, with both seats being contested by the Congress," he added. Seat-sharing has been a major challenge for the INDIA bloc, with negotiations complicated by the aspirations of regional parties. The Congress's recent electoral setbacks in three heartland states have emboldened these regional powers to demand a larger

share of seats. Last week, the AAP had announced a candidate for South Goa but will now withdraw it to accommodate its ally. Initially, the AAP had planned to contest all 13 seats in Punjab independently. During the press conference, Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely, former Congress general secretary Deepak Babaria, along with AAP MLAs Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj, and AAP MP Sandeep Pathak were present. Wasnik emphasised that it's not just the AAP or Kejriwal facing pressure tactics from the BJP. "This isn't limited to the AAP or AAP's leader Arvind Kejriwal. The circumstances created by the BJP in the country pose a threat to democracy. Using agencies like the CBI, ED, and Income Tax to exert pressure on everyone is the kind of politics the BJP is engaging in, which is dangerous for Indian democracy. It's not just the Congress and AAP, but the people of India who will fight against it," he

said. The Congress alliance with the AAP has put many party workers in dilemma as they were not in favor of aligning with Arvind Kejriwal's party in Delhi. There's a possibility that some Delhi Congress leaders may leave the party. The Pioneer spoke to several Delhi Congress leaders who expressed their dissatisfaction with the alliance with the AAP. "The Congress has been finished in Delhi," said a Congress leader on the condition of anonymity. In Bharuch, late Congress stalwart Ahmed Patel's daughter, Mumtaz Patel, apologised to party workers after the Bharuch seat went to the AAP's quota as part of the seat-sharing arrangement for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. In a social media post on X, Mumtaz Patel expressed disappointment over the alliance's decision and called on the party workers to regroup. "Deeply apologise to our district cadre for not being able to secure the Bharuch Lok Sabha seat in

# BJP nixes Congress Temple tax...

From Page 1

Highlighting that the Bill only proposes minor changes to what the BJP government had proposed in 2011, he said, the intention is the welfare of Archakas at 'C' category temples and the upkeep of such temples. As the Opposition insisted that changes be made to the bill before it is passed, Reddy sought time till Monday, as he needed to discuss it with the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah as it involves financial implications. However, the Deputy Chairman MK Pranesh,

who was in the Chair, did not give time till Monday saying that there is no such provision as the House has already taken up the Bill for consideration. The Bill was subsequently put to vote and was defeated by the Opposition BJP-JD(S) combine. This is the second such setback to the Congress government in this session, as the BJP and JD(S) combine had referred the Karnataka Souharda Cooperative (Amendment) Bill 2024 to the select committee earlier this week.

# New criminal justice laws from...

From Page 1

After the laws were enacted the truckers had protested the provision of Section 106 (2) which provides for 10 years imprisonment and fine to those who causes death of any person by rash and negligent driving of vehicle not amounting to culpable homicide, and escapes without reporting it to a police officer or a magistrate soon after the incident, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description of a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine." While replying to a debate on the three bills in Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said the focus was on delivering justice rather

than handing down the punishment. For the first time, the word terrorism has been defined in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. It was absent in the IPC. The laws have given a clear definition of terrorism, abolished sedition as a crime and introduced a new section titled "offences against the State". The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita lists offences such as acts of secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities, separatist activities or endangering the sovereignty or unity in the new avatar of the sedition law. According to the laws, anyone purposely or knowingly, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or by

electronic communication or by use of financial means, or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite secession or armed rebellion or subversive activities, or encourages feelings of separatist activities or endangers sovereignty or unity and integrity of India or indulges in or commits any such act shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine. According to IPC Section 124A, which deals with sedition, anyone involved in the crime may be punished with life imprisonment or with a three-year jail term. Under the new laws, 'Rajdroh' has got a new term 'Desdroh', thus doing away with the reference to the

British crown. The provisions of this Sanhita shall also apply to any offence committed by any citizen of India in any place without and beyond India, any person on any ship or aircraft registered in India wherever it may be and any person in any place without and beyond India committing offence targeting a computer resource located in India. Under the new laws, the magistrate's power to impose fines has been increased as well as the scope of declaring a proclaimed offender. Shah had said the three legislations were drafted after comprehensive consultations and that he had gone through every comma and full stop of the draft legislation before bringing them to the House for approval.



# LG questions Kejriwal on delay in Budget presentation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Opening another front in his battle with the AAP, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, questioning the delay in presenting the Budget and urged him to expedite the "stalled" process of Budget presentation in the Assembly. The LG's letter comes a day after his missive to Kejriwal regarding five Comptroller and Auditor General reports that, he said, have been "pending" with Delhi Finance Minister Atishi since August 2023. The Delhi Government in a statement said the budget was en route to the LG office for his approval.

The Delhi Assembly's Budget Session, which started on February 15, was extended till the first week of March with the finance minister citing a delay in its finalisation and seeking approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The Budget Session was initially scheduled to end on February 21. Hitting out at the government, Saxena has accused it of "stalling the budget for no apparent reason" and said the people have a right to know how public funds are being used. "I am constrained to bring to your notice that despite the Annual Financial Statement being ready and available with the Government, after due clearance of

Government of India, since as long as 19.02.2024, it is yet to reach me for causing it to be laid in the House as per law established," the Lt Governor said in the letter. "You are accordingly requested to get the process expedited and utilize the Budget Session for what it was summoned for in the interest of transparency, accountability and good governance," reads the letter. "You may be aware that Section 27 of the GNCTD Act, 1991 entails the processes and procedures involved in laying the Annual Financial Statement (Budget), that inter alia in its sub-section (1) specifies that, 'The Lieutenant Governor shall in respect of every finan-



cial year cause to be laid before the Legislative Assembly, with the previous sanction of the President, a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Capital for that year, in this Part referred to as the 'annual financial statement'." "It will be pertinent to mention here that the Cabinet's decision to summon the House for Budget Session between 15.02.2024 and 21.02.2024 was taken on 31.01.2024. It was sent to me on 02.02.2024 and on the

basis of the same, orders of summoning were issued by me on 06.02.2024; the letter said. The Lt Governor further stated that subsequently, the Annual Financial Statement (Budget) was received by my Secretariat on 13.02.2024 and the same was cleared by me for further approval by the President of India on 14.02.2024. It was then sent to MHA, for sanction of the President, on 15.02.2024 by GNCTD, following which the Government of India conveyed its approval on 19.02.2024, within 03 working days. Thereafter, the process seems to have been stalled for no apparent reason at the level of GNCTD.

"Be that as it may it will be in the fitness of things that the Annual Financial Statement (Budget), be laid, discussed and passed in the Assembly at the earliest for the benefit of people of Delhi. Needless to say that it will not only give an opportunity to the people to know about the expenses and revenue of the Government, but also apprise them of the programs that public funds - that belongs to the people themselves, are being utilized for what purpose," reads the letter. Criticising the AAP government, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri have accused the Kejriwal govern-

ment of deliberately delaying the budget of Delhi and neglecting the issues of public interest raised by the opposition in the Assembly. Sachdeva said that Arvind Kejriwal is making the Assembly his weapon to hide his corruption and incompetence and once again he has lied about the budget. "CM Kejriwal has with malafide intention suppressed the budget that was approved by President Draupadi Murmur on February 19 and sent back to the Delhi government," he said. Bidhuri said that Kejriwal is using the Assembly only to hurl abuses at the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, the Central Government, and BJP leaders and to justify his corruption.

# AAP, Congress alliance makes Delhi poll fight bipolar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The battle lines in Delhi for upcoming Lok Sabha polls were drawn Saturday with INDIA Bloc partners AAP and Congress officially announcing a 4-3 seat-sharing formula to challenge the BJP dominance in the national Capital. The coming together of AAP and Congress will make the poll contest in Delhi a bipolar affair involving the BJP which seeks to repeat a clean sweep of all the seven constituencies for a third time in a row. A major challenge before the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) candidates, however, will be to bridge the huge gap of votes between the winning BJP candidates in the 2019 polls and the defeated candidates.



had tried to enter into an alliance in Delhi in 2019 also but failed to do so. Two-time BJP MP Manoj Tiwari defeated former Chief Minister and Congress candidate Sheila Dikshit by a margin of 3.6 lakh votes in 2019 from Northeast Delhi seat. Sources said the Congress is likely to field its Delhi unit chief Arvind Singh Lovely from the seat that has the highest percentage of Muslim population (over 29 per cent) of all the parliamentary constituencies in the city. The name of young Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar is also doing the rounds as a probable from Northeast Delhi seat, which has a dominance of Purvanchali voters and which was rocked by riots in 2020. The Congress will also contest the reserved Northwest Delhi seat that is currently held by the BJP's Hans Raj Hans. A famous Punjabi sufi singer, Hans won the seat in 2019 by a margin of over 5.5 lakh votes defeating Gagan Singh of AAP. Udit Raj, who won the Northwest Delhi on a BJP ticket in 2014, is likely to be a Congress candidate this time

from the same constituency, party sources said. He quit the BJP after being denied ticket in the 2019 elections and joined the Congress. The Congress will also contest from the Chandni Chowk constituency with senior party leader JP Agarwal, a former MP from the constituency, said to be a leading probable this time. Mahila Congress chief Alka Lamba, who earlier represented the Chandni Chowk Assembly seat as an AAP leader, could also be considered by the Congress, sources claimed. Agarwal was defeated from Chandni Chowk by Harsh Vardhan of BJP by nearly 2.3 lakh votes in 2019. The AAP is likely to field former West Delhi MP Mahabal Mishra from the same constituency this time, sources in the party said. Mishra, a Congress candidate in 2019, was defeated by the BJP's Parvish Verma, former Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma's son, by a whopping margin of over 5.8 lakh votes. The South Delhi Lok Sabha seat will be contested by the AAP and its Chhatrapur MLA

Kartar Singh Tanwar is said to be a probable, sources said. The seat was won for the second time by Ramesh Bidhuri of the BJP in 2019 by defeating the AAP's Raghav Chadha by more than 3.65 lakh votes. East Delhi and New Delhi constituencies too will be contested by the AAP. Former cricketer Gautam Gambhir won the East Delhi seat on a BJP ticket in 2019. He defeated the current Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely by over 3.9 lakh votes. The AAP is considering to field its Moti Nagar MLA Shiv Charan Goel from the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat, the sources said. Interestingly, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister is an MLA of New Delhi Assembly constituency. Two other ministers of AAP government, Saurabh Bhardwaj and Raj Kumar Anand, too have their constituencies in New Delhi parliamentary area. In 2019, present treasurer of Congress Ajay Maken was defeated by BJP candidate Meenakshi Lekhi by more than 2.5 lakh votes. Despite suffering heavy losses on all the seven seats in Delhi, the Congress managed to be runner up on six seats while AAP trailed on three places. Raghav Chadha from South Delhi was the only runner up of AAP. Further, three AAP candidates — Pankaj Gupta from Chandni Chowk, Brijesh Goel from New Delhi, and Dilip Pandey from North East Delhi — had lost their deposits in 2019.

# Seat sharing ties prove Kejriwal has lost connection with Delhiites: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday took a jibe at the AAP and the Congress after the two INDIA alliance partners announced their seat-sharing alliance and reminded Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of his promise of putting the leaders of the grand old party in jail. Lambasting the Congress-AAP alliance in Delhi for the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP said the move "shows Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has lost his connection" with the Delhiites. BJP MP from Delhi Manoj Tiwari lashed out at the AAP and the Congress alleging that Kejriwal-led party has been disappointed with the seat-sharing formula in the alliance. "Kejriwal attacked the Congress time and again and removed it from power in Delhi, but now they are forming an alliance. The alliance also shows both the parties' dis-appointments. The parties collaborated for their own benefits," he said. "You must have heard 'chor chor mausere bhai'. That is what is happening between AAP and Congress. AAP workers are disappointed because Arvind Kejriwal used to speak about putting



Congress leaders in jail but he is now at their feet," said Tiwari said. The BJP leader alleged the AAP "doesn't care about the citizens well being" and added that they have formed an alliance "for their own benefits". "Two parties joining hands doesn't mean they can garner more votes from the citizens. They don't care about the well-being of the Delhiites, they only care about their personal benefits," he alleged. In a statement, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "Kejriwal's alliance with the Congress shows he has lost his connection with the Delhiites. The AAP knows that rural population, traders and Dalits of Delhi are not with them." "By deciding to ally with the Congress, the Delhi CM who has 62 of 70 seats in the Delhi

Assembly has shown that he has lost faith of almost half of Delhi," he added. Sachdeva said the people of Delhi are "shocked to see" the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress forming an electoral alliance and added that, irrespective of the collaboration, the BJP will win all seven Lok Sabha seats of Delhi. "Irrespective of this alliance, the BJP will win all 7 Lok Sabha seats of Delhi with huge margin on the basis of support from all sections of the society," Sachdeva said. "The people of Delhi are surprised that till the other day, both the Congress and the AAP called each other corrupt and today they formed an alliance," he added. Speaking about the seat-sharing formula between the AAP and the Congress, Sachdeva alleged that by giving the Northwest Delhi seat to the Congress, the AAP leadership has confirmed that it has lost connect with the rural population and the Dalit voters. "Northwest Delhi is a SC reserved seat of large rural population along with huge

scheduled caste population. By surrendering that seat, the AAP has proven that they don't connect with the rural and the Dalit population anymore," he alleged. "Congress will contest on North East, Chandni Chowk and North West seats. AAP will contest in New Delhi, West Delhi, South Delhi and East Delhi. As a part of the INDIA Alliance, we had said earlier too that we will follow the order of high command... We will have a positive result in the time to come," Delhi Congress Chief Arvinder Singh Lovely said. Meanwhile, Delhi minister and AAP leader Atishi has claimed that Arvind Kejriwal can be arrested soon after the party announced its alliance with the Congress in Delhi, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Goa and Haryana. "Ever since the INDIA alliance seat sharing was nearly finalised, Arvind Kejriwal started getting threats from all sides. We were told, if we don't exit the alliance, after ED, CBI will also frame charges against Arvind Kejriwal to arrest him. We have information that the CBI will issue a notice on Monday, and probably in some days, Arvind Kejriwal will be arrested," he claimed.

# Atishi declares order appointing standing counsel in HC as invalid

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Law Minister Atishi has declared as "invalid" an order issued by the principal secretary (Law) appointing another lawyer as standing counsel to represent Delhi Government before the Delhi High Court on interim basis instead of standing counsel (civil) Santosh Kumar Tripathi. The minister, in an order issued on February 15, said "Tripathi will continue to handle the responsibilities of standing counsel (civil), Delhi High Court, GNCTD". A copy of the order has also been sent to the registrar general of the high court.



Chief Secretary and the appointment of the standing counsel is a transferred subject and is a decision taken by the Council of Ministers of the Delhi government. "Removal or appointment of a standing counsel (whether in a permanent or interim manner) is outside the purview of the Hon'ble LG. Neither is this covered under the GNCTD Amendment Act 2023," she said in the order. "The impugned order has been issued by principal secretary (Law) without the approval of the minister in-charge and is therefore without basis in law, and is in violation of Allocation of Business Rules, Transaction of Business Rules, GNCTD Act and Article 239AA of the Constitution. Therefore, the impugned order is ab initio null and void, and therefore declared invalid," she said. The principal secretary (Law) on the instructions of LG, had also asked Tripathi not to appear on behalf of Delhi government before any court of law till further orders and till the decision is taken in the matter by the competent authority. A similar order was also issued to advocate Arun Panwar, who is also a panel counsel of Delhi government. Earlier, Raj Niwas officials had said the proposal of the Excise Commissioner to submit the report of the committee -- set up on the orders of the Delhi

High Court regarding conforming and non-conforming wards — to the court was moved for LG's approval on August 18, 2022. However, it was stalled by the then minister twice, officials had said. "All this while the government kept telling on record in HC, that the report was pending with LG. It prompted the court to request the LG thrice to clear the file for submission of the report expeditiously, despite the fact that the file was not with LG. "The proposal was cleared by Atishi (Delhi minister) who sent it for further recommendation to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who cleared it on January 16 this year and sent it to LG," an official had said. In a file noting to Kejriwal, Saxena noted that the file relating to the approval of the report was received at the LG Secretariat on January 16 this year — after a lapse of one year and five months since it was first moved for LG's approval on August 18, 2022, the official had said. Saxena had noted in the file that the case is a "sad reflection on the manner in which the State Government counsels made false and misleading statements" before the court, showing the Lieutenant Governor and his office in poor light in the eyes of the court.

# Urdu Heritage Festival organised at Sunder Nursery



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The four-day Urdu Heritage Festival, which commenced at the Sunder Nursery near Nizamuddin on Thursday, is enthralling the audience. Delhi's Minister of Art, Culture, and Language Saurabh Bharadwaj, participated in the program as the chief guest. This festival illuminates the rich cultural fabric of the Urdu language. During this extraordinary event, attendees can enjoy numerous cultural celebrations, including soul-stirring musical presentations, exhilarating dramas, intricate poetic performances, and thought-provoking debates. Addressing the gathering, Bharadwaj said "Urdu is a very sweet language that connects one person to another. The program is being organized for four days, from the 22nd to the 25th of this month. For this event, the Delhi government has invited renowned personalities from the world of ghazals and Sufi music, such as the

Nizami Brothers, Khannak Joshi, Talat Aziz, and Salman Ali, winner of Voice of India. Along with this, for the first time in this program, a spectacular rendition of Rameleela through Urdu has been organized, which is a marvelous representation of the ancient Ganga-Jamuni culture of our country," the Minister added. Bharadwaj expressed heartfelt gratitude to the attendees of the program and appealed to everyone to inform their friends and relatives about the program so that more and more people can enjoy such programs organised by the Delhi Government. The highlight of the third day of this program was the organization of a Rameleela with dialogues in Urdu. All the characters of Rameleela spoke their dialogues in Urdu. The wonderful blend of Sanskrit and Urdu was highly appreciated by the audience. Following the enactment of Rameleela, several Urdu scholars and historians engaged in excellent discussions on various versions of Ramayan printed in Urdu.

# Students have key to Viksit Bharat@2047, unlock it: Dhankhar at DU

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday here told the newly graduated students of Delhi University that they have the key to Viksit Bharat@2047, unlock it. He also said the centenary convocation of the Delhi University in the 75th year of the Republic is much more than a ceremony. This is a launch pad. It is somewhat similar to the ISRO rocket launch pad at Sriharikota, Dhankhar said. He made these assertions while addressing the 100th convocation of Delhi University and said this safe launch pad will take you not only to new destinations but also to new heights inspired by the elixir you have gathered in this university. In a first, the Delhi University conferred over one lakh students with special degree certificates with prominence given to their mother's name besides heightened 'currency like' security features at the 100th convocation ceremony of the varsity. The Vice President awarded the degrees. Clad in traditional Indian attire and newly designed handloom fabric angvastras (stole), the students received the special degree with 17 security features at the centenary year of the Delhi University. "It is a historic moment for me. Getting my degree at the 100th convocation ceremony of the Delhi University is like a dream come true. The security features added in the new degrees is a very good step taken by the university. We don't have to worry about its security or durability," Sandeep Sharma, a PhD holder from DU's History department, said. "It is a special experience. The initiative taken by the Delhi University to secure degree



certificates will benefit the students in many ways," added Bhavana Bansal Gupta, a teaching faculty at Miranda House college, who received her PhD degree during the event. Applauding the changes introduced in the degree certificates, Dhankhar said, "What a monumental event. The degree awarded to the students will have a host of new embellishments. Most impactful being the students mother's name and the student's coloured photograph." During the ceremony, the post-graduate students were seen wearing gold-bordered turquoise stoles featuring the university's logo and Shatabdi logo on both sides. The undergraduate students donned yellow stoles, while Ph.D, Doctorate of Medicine and Master of Chirurgery students pulled on red stoles. Starting this year, the Delhi University's degrees will be embellished with the student's mother's name printed on the top of the degree along with a colour photograph of the student. These degrees have been equipped with about 17 security features, including micro-text, hidden image, invisible ink logo, barcode and QR code to avoid duplication or forgery. This is the first batch to receive DU's special degree certificates, according to the varsity officials. 1,38,020 students,

including 58,545 male and 79,475 female, were awarded degrees during the event of which 1,30,697 are undergraduate, 7,323 postgraduate and 659 PhD students. Addressing the students, Dhankhar said your learning does not end with degree, you have to always be engaged in learning. Learning is a lifelong activity and it is our commitment to humanity. You leave as an alumnus of this great university with the determination to always make yourself, your parents, your friends, the alma mater and the nation proud. Concluding his address, the Vice President appealed to the students to say, "Remember, you all are an important part of the marathon journey of Bharat@2047. Its success rests on your shoulders, I have full hope and confidence that the nation will succeed, because you cannot afford to fail. You are the architects not only of your own destiny, but also of our shared future." Vice Chancellor of University of Delhi Professor Yogesh Singh presided over the function and presented a detailed account of the glorious journey of 101 years of the university. He called upon the graduating students to maintain the high standards of the University such as ethics, honesty, hard work, humility and determination in their lives.



Defence exports have touched ₹16,000 crore, says Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Saturday the Government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on long-term gains and not short-term outcomes to make India a developed nation by 2047.



Reforms undertaken in the defence sector for long-term gains in the last few years, including creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff and setting up of the Department of Military Affairs which has enhanced jointness, synergy and smooth coordination among the three Services.

on the integration of the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force, which will ensure enhanced coordination among them in times of crisis.

with over 4,600 items for DPSUs, to ensure that the soldiers use made in India weapons and platforms. He also referred to the decision to earmark 75 per cent of the capital acquisition budget for procurement from local companies.

Indian warship assists merchant vessel after suspected drone attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

An Indian warship provided critical assistance to a merchant vessel after it caught fire following a suspected drone or missile attack in the Gulf of Aden, the latest in a series of such support missions in the region, navy officials said here on Saturday.



An explosive ordnance disposal team of the Navy embarked the vessel and sanitised it for any residual risk following which the vessel was cleared for onward transit, they said.

assistance to the injured crew member, they said. In a swift response to a distress call from the vessel, the Indian warship arrived in the vicinity of the cargo ship within a few hours to provide critical support, an official said.

Vivek Madhwal said. In the last few weeks, the Indian Navy extended assistance to a number of merchant vessels in the Western Indian Ocean following attacks on them.

Quad reflects growth of multipolar global order: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

As China is asserting itself in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Saturday the Quad is a statement that others cannot have a "veto" on choices of like-minded nations and the coalition is here to stay, grow and contribute to global prosperity.



flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded enterprise. These are not adjectives we normally associate with the bureaucracy," he said explaining the principles that the grouping stands for.

36 per cent Rajya Sabha candidates declare criminal cases against themselves: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Almost 36 per cent of Rajya Sabha candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves while the average assets of candidates analysed stood at ₹127.81 crore. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) latest report, the analysis found that 36 per cent of the scrutinised candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves.



out of two RJD nominees, one (50 per cent) out of two BJD candidates, and one (100 per cent) BRS candidate have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

assets worth Rs 1,578 crore and JD(S) nominee from Karnataka Kupendra Reddy with assets amounting to Rs 871 crore are among the top three wealthiest candidates, according to the analysis.

Cash rewards for Asian Games medallists from Armed forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved a financial incentive for the Armed Forces personnel who bagged medals in the 19th Asian Games and 4th Asian Para Games held in Hangzhou, China in September-October 2023, Defence Ministry said here on Saturday.



for their outstanding performance. He had also approved cash rewards to 45 medal winners, including seven Para athletes. These 45 athletes won 09 Gold, 18 Silver and 17 Bronze medals in the Asian Games and 01 Gold, 04 Silver and 02 Bronze medals in Asian Para Games.

CHANGE OF RELIGION & NAME

I, LAIPHRAKAPAM DINGKARANI DEVI D/o Laiphrakpam Shyamo Singh W/o Md. Nadeem Hassan, Permanent R/o Langthabal Lep Makha Leikai, Langthabal Lep, Manipur University, Imphal West, Manipur-795003, Present R/o A-99/A, Gali No.5, Tigri Road Devli Extension Tigri, Dist. South Delhi-110062, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I have embraced ISLAM and renounced HINDUISM (Meetic) with effect from 21/02/2024. Further I have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AFRREEN HASSAN.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concerned that Late Sh. Ram Prakash Garg S/o Late Raghuram Lala R/o A-126, Sector-36, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.) who is the original allottee of property No. Plot No. A-126, Sector-36, Noida (U.P.). WILL was executed on in favour of Mrs. Kusum Lata W/o Late Sh. Ram Prakash Garg R/o A-126, Sector-36, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.) which is registered on dated 07/01/2017 Vahi No.3 Jld No.800 Page 71 to 88 Sr. No.6 in Sub Registrar-II Noida. So it is informed to all concerned that the said Property No. Plot No. A-126, Sector-36, Noida (U.P.) is going to be transferred in favour of Mrs. Kusum Lata W/o Late Sh. Ram Prakash Garg R/o A-126, Sector-36, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.) if any one has/has any objection/he/she may file his/her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Residential Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Pilot project of world largest grain storage plan launched

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the pilot project of what is poised to become the 'world's largest grain storage plan' over the next five years ensuring creation of storage facilities across the country capable of accom-

modating more than 700 lakh metric tonnes of food grains. The aim is to mitigate post-harvest losses and ensure a reliable supply of grains, even during periods of scarcity.

under the mega storage plan being carried out in 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in as many States. To build this mega infrastructure, over Rs 1.25 lakh crore will be spent in the coming years, Modi said, who also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple key initiatives for the Cooperative sector here at an event.

PM Modi to launch ₹52,250 crore health, road projects in Gujarat



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Gujarat on February 24 and 25 and will launch a slew of development projects worth over ₹52,250 crore related to health, road, rail, energy and tourism across the country. In a significant step towards strengthening tertiary healthcare in the country, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said, Modi will inaugurate five All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rajkot (Gujarat), Bathinda (Punjab), Raebareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Kalyani (West Bengal) and Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh). He will inaugurate these facilities at a public function in Rajkot. At a function in Dwaraka, the prime minister will inaugurate the 'Sudarshan Setu' connecting the Okha mainland and the Beyt Dwaraka island built at a cost of around Rs 980 crore. The 2.32 km-long cable-stayed bridge is the longest of its kind in the country, the PMO said in a statement.

reach Beyt Dwaraka. Among other projects, Modi will inaugurate a pipeline project at Vadinar involving the replacement of existing offshore lines, abandoning the existing pipeline end manifold (PLEM), and relocating the entire system to a nearby new location. During the visit to his home state, Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 200 healthcare infrastructure projects worth over Rs 11,500 crore across 23 states and Union territories. He will inaugurate a medical college of JIPMER at Karaikal, Puducherry, and a 300-bed satellite centre of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical and Educational Research (PGIMER) in Sangrur, Punjab, among many other health projects spread across the country, the statement said. The 250-bed National Institute of Naturopathy named 'Nisarg Gram' in Pune will also be inaugurated. In a step to boost the production of renewable energy in the region, the prime minister will lay the foundation stone of various renewable energy projects, including the 300 MW Bhuj-II solar power project, grid-connected 600 MW solar PV power project, Khavda solar power project and the 200 MW Dayapur-II wind energy project among others. He will lay the foundation stone of the new Mundra-Panipat pipeline project worth over Rs 9,000 crore as well, according to the statement.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rita Garg who is owner of Commercial Plot of land measuring 0.76 Marla i.e. 23.33 sq. yds., Part of Khevali/Khata No. 221/237, Must. No. 94, Killa No. 42, Kasba Tauru, Tehsil Tauru, Distt. Nuh, Haryana; having purchased the same from Mr. Amit & Mr. Sumit vide Sale Deed dated 22.07.2022, vide Document No.1304, at SRO-Tauru, on 22.07.2022, and same to be finance & mortgage by Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/lien/interest/objection creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucern Legal LLP Plot No.136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049, Contact # 91114048316

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concerned that Mr. Taj Mohammed Qureshi S/o Muhammad Issq R/o A-1, Block-3, Qtr no. 87, I.A. Colony, Vasant Vihar 2, New Delhi 57, who was the original allottee of Residential house no. D-117, Sector-20, Noida, District G.B. Nagar U.P.(201301) has sold through GPA (general power of attorney) basis in favour of Smt. Jatinder Kaur W/o Shri D.P. Singh R/o D-117, Sector 20, Noida, G.B. Nagar U.P. GPA Duly registered on dated 08/10/1982, registered with sub registrar-II Delhi and the agreement to sell was not registered. Because the agreement to sell is not registered it is inform to all concerned that the said residential house no. D-117, Sector-20, Noida, is going to be sold and transferred in favour of Mr. Navjot Singh S/o Late Sh. D.P. Singh R/o D-117, Sector 20, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. if anyone have any objection, they can file their objection to the D.G.M. in the housing department Noida authority, along with sufficient proof within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I Ashok Kumar Mathur S/o Shri S.B. Mathur R/o FLAT No 803, TOWER No. 8, Purvanchal Royal Park, Sector 137, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh 201301, have changed my name from Ashok Mathur to Ashok Kumar Mathur for all future purposes. PD(287)C

Public notice

This is to inform to all concerned that Mr. Taj Mohammed Qureshi S/o Muhammad Issq R/o A-1, Block-3, Qtr no. 87, I.A. Colony, Vasant Vihar 2, New Delhi 57, who was the original allottee of Residential house no. D-117, Sector-20, Noida, District G.B. Nagar U.P.(201301) has sold through GPA (general power of attorney) basis in favour of Smt. Jatinder Kaur W/o Shri D.P. Singh R/o D-117, Sector 20, Noida, G.B. Nagar U.P. GPA Duly registered on dated 08/10/1982, registered with sub registrar-II Delhi and the agreement to sell was not registered. Because the agreement to sell is not registered it is inform to all concerned that the said residential house no. D-117, Sector-20, Noida, is going to be sold and transferred in favour of Mr. Navjot Singh S/o Late Sh. D.P. Singh R/o D-117, Sector 20, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. if anyone have any objection, they can file their objection to the D.G.M. in the housing department Noida authority, along with sufficient proof within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Snail borne pathogen threat to life of children: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

Five-year-old Rahul's (name changed) symptoms with complaints of persistent headache, fever, and irritability initially seemed innocuous, akin to common childhood ailments. However, upon examination, doctors diagnosed him with life-threatening eosinophilic meningocencephalitis (EM), a snail-borne pathogen. A study spanning 14 years by doctors from Kochi-based Amrita Hospital doctors reveals that more than half of the examined children with EM reporting from South India had a history of direct contact with snails. The study findings underscore the urgency for healthcare professionals, parents, and policymakers to address this emerging threat.

Ensuring cleanliness and hygiene in residential premises and properly cleaning vegetables consumed raw, such as in salads, are essential preventive measures," said Dr Vinayan hospital in the paper published in the journal Paediatric Neurology. According to the health experts, humans are incidental hosts of the worms, getting infected through direct consumption or contaminated water and vegetables. Children become vulnerable to this infection by coming into direct contact with snails or by consuming contaminated food or playing with toys that carry infective larvae. The larvae can then travel from the gut to the brain, causing EM. Another route of transmission is by consuming salads containing uncleaned raw vegetables and by eating the raw flesh of monitor lizards, crabs, frogs, and shrimps as part of socio-cultural practices or particular culinary habits, said the experts from the hospital. "In a paradigm shift, our study reveals that EM is not as rare as previously thought, particularly in Kerala during post-monsoon months. The increase aligns with the surge in giant African Snail (Achatina fulica) population over the past 1-2 decades, highlighting the heightened risk for children living in regions abundant with these snails," added Dr Vaishakh Anand, Department of Paediatric Neurology, Amrita Hospital.

JASCH GAUGING TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED

Regd. Office : 502, NDM-II, NSP, Pitampura, Delhi - 110034 CIN: U33111DL2021PLC381513

Extract of Reviewed Ind AS Financial Results for the Quarter Ended on 31st December 2023. (Standalone Financial Results under Regulation 47 (1)(B) of Listing Regulations) (₹ in Lakh)

Table with 7 columns: SI No, Particulars, Quarter Ended (31.12.23, 30.09.23, 31.12.22), Standalone (Nine Months Ended, Year Ended), and Audited. Rows include Total Income from Operations, Profit before Interest, Depreciation & Taxes (EBITDA), Net Profit for the Period (before Tax and Exceptional Items), Total Comprehensive Income for the period, Equity Share Capital, Reserves, and Earnings Per Share.

Notes: 1) The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly and nine monthly financial results filed with BSE under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the aforesaid results is available on the website of the BSE i.e. www.bseindia.com and also on the website of the Company i.e. www.jasch.net.in 2) The financial results of the Company have been prepared in accordance with Indian Accounting standards (Ind AS) Sonipat, 24.02.2024 Jai Kishan Garg, Chairman



# World leaders stand in solidarity with Ukraine

**TWO YEARS SINCE RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION**

**AP ■ KYIV**  
Western leaders descended on Kyiv on Saturday to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.  
European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen travelled overnight to Kyiv by train along with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.  
They arrived shortly after a Russian drone attack struck a residential building in the southern city of Odesa, killing at least one person.  
Three women also sustained severe burns in the attack Friday evening on a residential building, regional Governor Oleh Kiper said on his social media account. Rescue services are still combing rubble looking for survivors. The foreign leaders are

in Ukraine to express solidarity as Ukrainian forces run low on ammunition and weaponry and Western aid hangs in the balance.  
"More than ever we stand firmly by Ukraine. Financially, economically, militarily, morally. Until the country is finally free," von der Leyen said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, after she arrived in Kyiv.  
But, at the front line in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian soldiers pleaded for ammunition.  
"When the enemy comes in, a lot of our guys die. ... We are sitting here with nothing, said Volodymyr, 27, a senior officer in an artillery battery.  
"In order to protect our infantry ... we need a high number of shells, which we do not have now," said Oleksandr, 45, commander of artillery unit.

The war has also come to Russia. Drones hit a steel plant in the Lipetsk region in southern Russia Saturday, causing a large fire, regional governor Igor Artamonov said, adding there are no casualties. Independent Russian media said the Novolipetsk Metallurgical Plant is the largest steel plant in Russia. Videos shared on Russian social media showed several fires burning at the plant, and an explosion could be heard.  
Independent Russian news outlet Mediazona said Saturday that around 75,000 Russian men died in 2022 and 2023 fighting in the war.  
Working with journalists from other outlets, it said the rate of Russia's losses in Ukraine is not slowing and that Moscow is losing around 120 men a day. Based on a statistical analysis of the recorded deaths of soldiers

compared with a Russian inheritance database, the journalists said around 83,000 soldiers are likely to have died by Saturday, the second anniversary of the full scale invasion.  
According to Mediazona's analysis, regular Russian troops sustained the heaviest losses in the first months of the war.  
But, after prisoners were offered their freedom in exchange for fighting and after President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial mobilization, those groups started to sustain more casualties, particularly in the early months of 2023.  
A somber mood hangs over Ukraine as the war against Russia enters its third year and Kyiv's troops face mounting challenges on the front line amid dwindling ammunition supplies and personnel challenges. Its troops recently withdrew from the strategic eastern

city of Avdiivka, handing Moscow one of its biggest victories.  
Earlier this month, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired top military commander Valerii Zaluzhnyi, replacing him with Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, marking the most significant shakeup of top brass since the full-scale invasion.  
Russia still controls roughly a quarter of the country after Ukraine failed to make any major breakthroughs with its summertime counteroffensive. Meanwhile, millions of Ukrainians continue to live in precarious circumstances in the crossfire of battles, and many others face constant struggles under Russian occupation. Most are waiting for a Ukrainian liberation that hasn't come.  
Olena Zelenska, wife of President Volodymyr

Zelenskyy, said Saturday that more than 2 million Ukrainian children have left the country since the war began and that at least 528 have been killed.  
"The war started by Russia deliberately targets children," she said.  
In the US Congress, Republicans have stalled \$60 billion in military aid for Kyiv, desperately needed in the short term. The EU recently approved a 50 billion-euro (about USD 54 billion) aid package for Ukraine meant to support Ukraine's economy, despite resistance from Hungary.  
US President Joe Biden tied the loss of the defensive stronghold of Avdiivka in the Donetsk region after months of grueling battles to the stalled US aid. Fears have since spiked that Ukrainian forces will face similar difficulties across other parts of the 1000-kilometer (620-mile) front line as they come under mounting pressure from Russian assaults.

# Putin mocking Christianity, charges Yulia

**AP ■ MOSCOW**



The widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny accused President Vladimir Putin of mocking Christianity by trying to force his mother to agree to a secret funeral after his death in a penal colony.  
Yulia Navalnaya said in a video released Saturday that Navalny's mother, who wants her son's body returned to her, is being "literally tortured" by authorities who had threatened to bury Navalny in the Arctic prison. They suggested to his mother that she does not have much time to make a decision because the body is decomposing, Navalnaya said.  
"Give us the body of my husband," Navalnaya said. "You tortured him alive, and now you keep torturing him dead. You mock the remains of the dead."  
Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected allegations that Putin was involved in Navalny's death, calling them "absolutely unfounded, insolent accusations about the head of the Russian state."  
Musician Nadya Tolokonnikova, who became widely known after spending nearly two years in prison for taking part in a 2012 protest with her band Pussy Riot inside Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, released a video in which she also accused Putin of hypocrisy.  
"We were imprisoned for allegedly trampling on traditional values. But no one tramples on traditional Russian values more than you, Putin, your officials and your priests who pray for all the murder that you do, year after year, day after day," Tolokonnikova, who lives abroad, said. "Putin, have a conscience, give his mother the body of her son."

# WWII-era bomb safely detonated

**AP ■ LONDON**

A World War II-era bomb whose discovery prompted one of the largest peacetime evacuations in British history has been detonated at sea, the Ministry of Defense said on Saturday.  
The 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) explosive was discovered Tuesday in the backyard of a home in Plymouth, a port city on the southwestern coast of Britain.  
More than 10,000 residents were evacuated to ensure their safety as a military convoy transported the unexploded bomb through a densely populated residential area to a ferry slipway, from which it was taken out to sea.  
"I think it is fair to say that the last few days will go down in history for Plymouth," said Tudor Evans, the leader of Plymouth City Council.

# Indian mission raises Jaahnavi case with Seattle officials

**Family shocked and disappointed over decision of authorities**

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON**

India's consulate in Seattle has raised with authorities the case of Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula after the prosecution attorney said an overspeeding Seattle police officer who struck and killed her while responding to a drug overdose call will not face any criminal charges citing lack of "sufficient" evidence.  
Kandula, 23, from Andhra Pradesh, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle on January 23 last year. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 km/h) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call.  
Kandula was thrown 100

feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle.  
In bodycam footage released by the Seattle Police Department, Officer Daniel Auderer laughed about the deadly crash and dismissed any implication Dave might be at fault or that a criminal investigation was necessary.  
On Wednesday, the King County Prosecutor's Office said they would not move forward with criminal charges against Dave due to a lack of evidence to prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt.  
India's consulate in Seattle also said it was monitoring the progress in the case and will extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Kandula and her family.

"On the recently released investigation report of the King County Prosecution Attorney on the unfortunate death of Jaahnavi Kandula, the Consulate has been in regular touch with the designated family representatives and will continue to extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Jaahnavi and her family," the mission said in a post on X.  
"We have also raised the matter strongly with local authorities, including Seattle Police for appropriate redress. The case has now been referred to the Seattle City Attorney's office for review," the post said on Friday.



It also said the mission was waiting for the completion of Seattle Police's administrative investigation and will continue monitoring the progress in the case.  
Kandula's family in a statement following the announcement said: "We are shocked and disappointed that the King County Prosecutor's office has failed to criminally charge the Seattle police officer whose reckless behaviour killed Jaahnavi Kandula."  
"We are pursuing our legal rights to obtain justice for Jaahnavi even though the City of Seattle has failed to do so," the statement added.

# 15 killed in China fire

**PTI ■ BEIJING**

At least 15 people were killed and 44 others injured when a building caught fire in China, a month after 39 people died in a similar accident.  
The building fire broke out in Nanjing, the capital city of east China's Jiangsu Province, the municipal government said on Saturday. Forty-four injured in the fire that broke out on Friday morning are receiving treatment at a local hospital. A preliminary investigation found that the fire erupted on the building's first floor, where electrical bicycles were placed, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.  
This is the second major fire accident in China in about a month. Thirty-nine people were killed and nine others injured in a building fire that broke out in Xinyu City in east China's Jiangxi Province on January 24.

# Oil slick in Red Sea from Houthi's-hit cargo ship

**AP ■ CARGO**

An attack by Yemeni Houthi rebels on a Belize-flagged ship earlier this month caused an 18-mile (29-kilometer) oil slick, the US military said on Saturday. It also warned of the danger of a spill from the vessel's cargo of fertilizer.  
The Rubymar, a British-registered, Lebanese-operated cargo vessel, was attacked on February 18 while sailing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, US Central Command said.  
The missile attack forced the crew to abandon the vessel, which had been on its way to Bulgaria after leaving Khorfakkan in the United Arab Emirates. It was transporting more than 41,000 tons of fertilizer, CENTCOM said in a statement.  
The vessel suffered significant damage, which led to the slick, said the CENTCOM statement, warning that the ship's cargo "could spill into the Red Sea and worsen this environmental disaster."  
"The Houthis continue to demonstrate disregard for the regional impact of their indiscriminate attacks, threatening the fishing industry, coastal communities, and imports of food supplies," it said.  
The Associated Press, relying on satellite images from Planet Labs PBC

of the stricken vessel, reported on Tuesday that the vessel was leaking oil in the Red Sea.  
Separately, CENTCOM said it launched attacks on Houthi-held areas in Yemen on Friday, destroying seven mobile anti-ship cruise missiles that were prepared to launch toward the Red Sea.  
It described the strikes as "self-defence", saying that the missiles "presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and to the US Navy ships in the region."  
CENTCOM didn't give further details. Houthi-run media, however, reported strikes by the US and the UK on the district of Durayhimi in the Red Sea province of Hodeida.  
The US military has in recent weeks launched waves of strikes on Houthi-held areas inside Yemen in response to the Houthis' attacks on shipping routes in the Red Sea.  
Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters. They claim to be acting over Israel's war targeting Hamas in the Gaza Strip, however they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe. The targeted vessels have included at least one with cargo for Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor.

# E-chips mandatory for Everest climbers

**PTI ■ KATHMANDU**

Nepal will soon be making it mandatory for all climbers headed to Mount Everest to carry an electronic chip that would be helpful in rescue in case of any emergency at the world's highest peak.  
The government will soon be formulating a rule for making such a chip mandatory starting from Spring this year when the climbing season starts for Mt. Everest with the opening of the narrow window available to climb extremely high altitudes.  
Thousands of climbers from all over the world, including India and Nepal, are attracted to the 8,849 metres (29,032 feet) high Mt Everest, a.k.a. Sagarmatha in Nepal. While scores of them do reach the summit, some either lose their lives or are seriously injured during the ascent or descent.  
Since 1953, 300 people have lost their lives, according to Nepal government data. In the 2023 Spring season, till May 22, Nepali officials said, as many as 12 climbers, including four Nepalese, one Indian, and one Chinese, died during their respective expeditions to Mt Everest.  
The Everest base camp is situated at an altitude of 18,000 feet. Any search and rescue operation from the base camp onwards to the Summit becomes a tedious job because of the snow storms, avalanches, and other extreme weather events.  
"All the climbers to Everest would be provided the electronic chip by the government after paying a certain amount. It will be fitted in the climber's jacket," Rakesh Gurung, Director at the Department of Tourism told PTI.

# US senator calls on Pak authorities to probe allegations of poll fraud

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON / ISLAMABAD**

A US Senator has urged the Pakistani authorities to fully investigate the claims of vote rigging in the country's elections, emphasising that without a credible investigation, a new government will struggle to bring the Pakistani people together.  
Taking to X on Friday, Senator Chris Van Hollen shared photos of a letter he wrote to Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Masood Khan on February 21 in which he praised the millions of Pakistanis who voted on February 8 in the country's elections.  
The significant turnout of Pakistani people from around the country and every walk of life speaks to the fundamental role elections play in democracies around the world, he said.  
"Unfortunately, these elections were marred by political violence, allegations of unfair restrictions on political expression, and accusations of vote rigging," the Democrat Senator wrote.  
The junior senator from Maryland, who was incidentally born in Karachi, further said,

"The State Department agreed with international and local election observers' assessment that 'these elections included undue restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.'"  
The letter also said Pakistani authorities shut down mobile telecommunications ostensibly as a security measure and the allegations made by a senior administrative official of Punjab province that he participated in fraud "converting losers into winners" and changing the results for 13 national parliament seats. Van Hollen urged Pakistan to "fully investigate the allegations of fraud and electoral interference."  
"Without a credible investigation, a new government will struggle to bring the Pakistani people together," he said.  
Meanwhile, a high-level inquiry committee constituted by Pakistan's top electoral body on Friday said the explosive allegations of election rigging levelled by the former senior bureaucrat were "false and based on lies".  
The report of the probe committee came a day after Rawalpindi's former

Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha on Thursday took a U-turn and withdrew his allegations, saying he had made the rigging charges at the behest of former prime minister Imran Khan's party which offered him a "lucrative position".  
Khan's Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party on Friday approached the Supreme Court challenging the outcome of the elections alleging widespread rigging.  
Khan has already declared the entire process as the 'Mother of All Rigging' and has been insisting that his party's mandate was stolen because of the rigging.  
The party has claimed that it won 180 seats in the National Assembly by way of independent candidates backed by the party, however, the rigging ensured that the number was reduced to 92 seats only, thus robbing its chance of coming back to power.  
The petition comes two days after the top court disposed of a petition seeking to annul the elections and imposed a fine on a petitioner, a former Army officer, for failing to appear in court after filing the petition.

# Iran-Pak gas pipeline gets govt approval

**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD**

The Pakistan government has finally approved the commencement of the much-delayed construction work on its segment of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline which will help address the increasing energy needs of the cash-strapped country.  
The approval, which came after a delay of several years, for the first phase of the 80-km segment inside Pakistan was given by the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) of the interim government just days before the new government takes office after the February 8 elections.  
"The Pakistan government has approved the start of construction work on its segment of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline," said an official statement.

Iran-Pak gas pipeline gets govt approval

# To escape conscription, many in Myanmar flee to Thailand

**AP ■ BANGKOK**

Thwel, a 25-year-old schoolteacher, saw very few options left to her after Myanmar's military announced it is implementing conscription to fill its ranks.  
"As a person living in this country, I only have two options: to go abroad illegally or die here," Thwel told The Associated Press by phone while travelling to a border area to try crossing into Thailand with a small group of like-minded people.  
Some observers believe a mass exodus of young talent is taking place and could become a social problem, with their exit heightening the instability that followed the military takeover that now amounts to a civil war.  
Thwel, whose home in Myanmar's southern Mon state is the scene of occasional com-

bat between the army and resistance forces, spoke on condition she be called by only one name as protection from the military authorities. Like many professionals, she joined the Civil Disobedience Movement that was formed to oppose military rule after the army's 2021 seizure of power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.  
Since then, the army's manpower has been stretched thin by increasing pressure from surprisingly durable pro-democracy resistance forces and ethnic minority armed organisations.  
Over the past four months, opposition groups scored significant victories and seized strategically important territory in northern Shan state where Myanmar borders China, and in Rakhine state in the west.  
On February 10, Senior

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, chair of Myanmar's ruling military council, ordered the 2010 conscription law be activated to replenish the ranks that have been depleted by the struggle to quash a nationwide pro-democracy insurgency. All healthy men ages 18-35 and women 18-27 are required to register for two years of military service.  
Evading conscription is punishable by three to five years in prison and a fine.  
Of Myanmar's 56 million people, about 14 million — 6.3 million men and 7.7 million women — are eligible for military service, according to Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson for the military government. The government will draft 60,000 people a year, with an initial batch of 5,000 to be called up soon after the traditional Thingyan New Year



celebration in mid-April, he said.  
After an uproar over the initial announcement, Zaw Min Tun said there is no plan to call women into military service yet — meaning school-teacher Thwel might actually be in the clear for the time being.  
But many people are actively looking for ways to escape.  
The street in front of Thailand's embassy in Yangon has been filled with visa applicants queued up to get numbered appointment tickets. Overwhelmed, the embassy announced it would accept

only 400 visa appointments per day, and they must be made online. According to the Thai Foreign Ministry, some 7,000 Myanmar nationals have applied for visas, Thailand's Bangkok Post newspaper reported Thursday.  
Each day at the state passport office in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, 4,000-5,000 people were lining up to get one of the 200-250 daily appointment tickets. Two women died and one was injured after they fell into a ditch in a pre-dawn rush to get a coveted early place in line.  
A 32-year-old news translator from Yangon said he made a snap decision to leave the country after the conscription announcement, and flew to Thailand a few days later. Like almost all persons willing to discuss their plans, he spoke on condition of anonymity for

fear of the legal consequences.  
He said he was very concerned because serving in the military is like entering a labyrinth with no way back out, giving the example of his uncle, who joined the army for a five-year enlistment but was not allowed to leave for more than 40 years.  
A 26-year-old journalist who has been working covertly in Mandalay, said the conscription law made his situation untenable. He also spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of the legal consequences; more than 150 journalists were arrested after the army sized power, and more than one-third remain locked up, according to the Paris-based press freedom group Reporters Without Borders.  
"I tried my best to stay inside the country in the past few years while other journal-

ists were fleeing abroad or to areas controlled by ethnic minority armed groups," he said. "But, this time, we can't hide anywhere. We can't stay out of sight. There is no choice."  
He is also planning to flee to Thailand.  
The Institute for Strategy and Policy, an independent think tank, said conscription could trigger a mass exodus, more widespread violations of human rights and increase corruption and extortion at all levels. It anticipates that young people close to areas where armed conflict is active could join the ethnic minority armed forces and pro-democracy resistance groups.  
There were around 160,000 soldiers before the army takeover, the institute said, and there are now fewer than 100,000 due to casualties, desertions and defection.



# Sebi using AI for probe: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi is using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for investigations, its Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney said on Saturday and emphasised that entities should keep track of technological developments. Against the backdrop of instances of manipulations in the stock market, he said the message is that abiding with the law will be more beneficial and violations will cause problems. In response to a question by



PTI on whether Sebi is using AI, Varshney said, "we are using AI for investigations... And also using for a lot of things".

He was speaking on the sidelines of the 13th international convention of the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) in the national capital. As long as the market is transparent and no manipulation is happening, that is fine with the regulator, he noted. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has been taking action against violators as well as measures to enhance transparency and curb misdoings.

# Road safety body calls for making seat belts must in passenger buses, heavy vehicles

PTI ■ JAMMU

New Delhi, Feb 24 (PTI) International Road Federation (IRF) -- a global road safety body -- has urged the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to make the use of seat belts mandatory in all heavy vehicles, including passenger buses and school buses, to minimise casualties and injuries in road accidents. IRF President Emeritus K K Kapila in a letter to MoRTH said there is an urgent need to provide seats belts in buses, which need to be made mandatory. "There have been heart-wrenching passenger bus accidents resulting in loss of innocent lives. Many of them



would have been saved, had they been wearing seat belts," he said. Kapila pointed out that according to the National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2021 data, only 14 individuals lost their lives in bus accidents in the USA. Similarly, based on the analysis of the accident propensity of Chinese bus drivers in 2022, China reported 215 fatalities. He pointed out that both developing and developed countries have achieved remarkable outcomes due to stringent safety standards for public transport like buses. "The contrasting and alarming data in India suggests a lacuna in mandating safety standards in buses, jeopardising the lives of school children, the poor, and the low income strata of the society," Kapila added.



# Brazil eyes deeper economic ties with India

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Ambassador of Brazil to India, Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega on Saturday said energy, defence and agro-processing are the three key pillars for strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries. Speaking at a session on 'India-Brazil Fostering Trade Partnership - Focus West Bengal' organised by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce here, the diplomat emphasised on business-to-business collaborations in iron and steel, milk production, leather, biofuels, and aquaculture. He also expressed optimism about the evolving defence sector alliance between the two countries. Ambassador Nóbrega said the first Brazil-India Defence Dialogue is expected to begin next week, focusing on strategic partnerships and technological cooperation. The interactive session



explored avenues to deepen economic ties and leverage West Bengal's potential in various sectors. The diplomat expressed interest in exploring partnerships and technological exchange in food processing and aquaculture sectors, highlighting West Bengal's potential in these areas. The two countries have been strategic partners since 2006. In 2022, the bilateral trade between the two countries expanded by 32 per cent to USD 15.2 billion.

# Sitharaman inaugurates new campus of BITS Pilani

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday inaugurated the fifth campus of the Birla group-run engineering institute BITS Pilani, with which the national institute of eminence also diversifies into law, management and design. Located in the nearby Kalayan area of the megapolis, the Rs

1,600-crore campus spread across 60 acres will accommodate 5,000 students at full capacity, said Kumar Mangalam Birla, the group chairman and the chancellor of the institute. Began in 1964 in Pilani, the native village of the Birlas in the Marwar region of Rajasthan, the institute, which was one of the six private institutes elevated as



an institute of eminence and houses 80,000 students across its five campuses in Pilani, Goa, Hyderabad, Dubai and Kalyan. The new campus moves away from its core focus of engineering to law, management and design. The design school was started just last week while law and management schools were functional from last year

from the temporary campus in Powai. Declaring the new campus open, Sitharaman said over the years, the institute has produced as many as 7,300 Fortune 500 CEOs, 300 academics of global repute and 600 civil servants. It has also produced 6,200 startups while its incubation centre has spawned 170 startups of which 30 have become unicorns.

# Under employment is problem for India, says Panagariya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Pitching for labour reforms, the chairman of the 16th Finance Commission and former NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya on Saturday said that "unemployment" is not a problem for India but "under-employment" is. Speaking at a session 'The Economic Whisper: how to fuel growth with jobs' at the concluding day of the two-day ABP Network's 'Ideas of India Summit 3.0' here, he also sounded optimistic that the jobs problem in the country will be solved over the next 10 years. "Unemployment is really not India's problem in my view. Our problem is underemployment, so productivity is low. So the job that can be done by one person often gets done by two people or maybe three people. And that is where I think, the real challenge of jobs is creating well-paid high-productivity jobs," he said. Stating that in the economy's jargon, India is a labour-abundant and capital-scarce country, he said, "What we have done is to put much of the capital in very selective sectors which are in any case very capital intensive". "We got the situation where much of the capital is working with very few workers. And then you have a host of workers in agriculture in micro and small enterprises where the capital is hardly present. So then you got a lot of workers working with very little capital. And when that is the case, it translates into low productivity," Panagariya said. The country still needs to fix labour and trade laws, he said, adding that, "compared to other countries, protection level is higher that needs to come down." "In India, building consensus is a part of the democratic reform process, which makes passing laws a slower process," he said.



"During (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee's Prime Ministership labour laws were tabled. Subsequently, no government showed the courage. With the Modi Government, the laws have been passed. It is now the states that have to write the rules and regulations to implement the laws," he stated. Talking about reforms, he said, "Implementation of labour laws, privatization of public sector enterprises and banks are some of the important reforms that need to be brought about." "Nevertheless, on the whole, we are in a fantastic sweet spot. These are problems. I think we'll get sorted out over the next 10 years. I am very optimistic that the jobs problem will be solved as well," Panagariya said. He said that since 1991 economic reforms "we have had upside down but the trend has been towards liberalization. If we take away COVID years, we have grown about 8.8 per cent in real dollars for the past 20 years, which we could not imagine in the 1980s." "The conditions are perfectly there for India to take the world by storm. India is now the only economy, which is growing strongly," he added. On the country's demographic dividend, Panagariya said, "The population is large and the population is young. The size of the population will help us. We don't have that kind of dependency ratio as China has."

# Brokers need to be cautious against manipulations in stock market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney on Saturday cautioned against manipulations in the capital market and urged brokers to keep an eye and prevent such instances. Clamping down on misdoings, the markets watchdog has been taking action against various entities for manipulations, including front running activities. Emphasising the importance of investor trust, Varshney said that if there is no trust of investors, "everything will fail". Manipulations are going on and Sebi cannot intervene in all of them. Some brokers are involved and the broker community should keep an eye as "bad elements can come in the system", he said. He was speaking at the 13th international convention of the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) in the national Capital.

# Rumours of my firing inaccurate: Byju Raveendran to staff

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A troubled edtech firm Byju's voted for a leadership change, Byju Raveendran has penned a note to employees saying he continues to remain CEO and the management remains unchanged, as he dubbed Friday's EGM as a "farce". The note to employees assumes significance as it comes after Byju's shareholders (prominent investors) on Friday voted for removing Founder-CEO Raveendran and his family from the board over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, but the company dug in its heels, calling the voting done in absence of founders as invalid and ineffective. In a note to employees on Saturday, Raveendran alleged that a lot of essential rules were "violated" at Friday's Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). "This means that whatever was decided in that meeting does not count, because it didn't stick to the established



rules... It is crucial for everyone to understand the specific issues that make this EGM a farce," he wrote. PTI has seen a copy of the letter. Raveendran said he firmly believes that the truth will inevitably prevail, despite the

board remains the same," he said, adding it is "business as usual" at BYJU'S. "To reemphasise, the rumours of my firing have been greatly exaggerated and highly inaccurate," Raveendran said. Outlining what he claimed were "key discrepancies" at the EGM, he said the meeting was convened without following the proper procedure set out by the law and the company's Articles of Association. "To pass any resolution the meeting needs to have a proper quorum, a set of people who are mandatory. Our articles are clear on the quorum requiring the presence of at least one founder director. Consequently, any resolutions taken at the meeting are not enforceable as per law," he said. He also stated, "The claims made by a small group of select minority shareholders that they have unanimously passed the resolution in the EGM is completely wrong. Only 35 out of 170 shareholders (representing around 45 per cent of

shareholding) voted in favour of the resolution. That in itself shows the very limited support that this irrelevant meeting received." BYJU'S Founder CEO Raveendran Byju, his wife and brother -- the only three members on the company board as of now -- stayed away from the EGM called by a group of six investors, who collectively hold more than 32 per cent in Think & Learn (T&L), the firm that operates online tuition platform Byju's. At the end, more than 60 per cent of the shareholders voted in favour of all the seven resolutions, which included removing the current management, reconfiguration of the board and a third party forensic investigation into acquisitions by the company, sources close to the investors said. However, sources close to Byju's put the number at 47 per cent on Friday. Prosus -- one of the six investors who had called the EGM -- in a statement on Friday said, "shareholders unanimously passed all resolutions put forward for vote".

# Kerala leads India healthcare talent migration: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kerala leads India's healthcare talent migration to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which witnessed a 3.3-fold increase in demand in 2023, said a report. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh emerged as the leading states contributing to the migration of healthcare workers, including nurses, doctors, and laboratory technicians, to MENA countries, according to data by blue-collar worker platform Huntr. Migration of healthcare workers from Kerala, in particular, witnessed a notable increase in migration to the

UAE, with a 3.3-fold rise in 2023, the report stated. The report is based on data on Huntr platform and employer organisations in the Middle East from 2022 and 2023. It further noted that the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are the most preferred destinations for Indian healthcare professionals seeking job opportunities. These countries offer attractive incentives, including extended residency visas, financial benefits, and state-of-the-art healthcare infrastructure, the report added. "The rapid globalisation has opened doors for extensive global mobility, and this report is a testament to the crucial role that India plays in meeting MENA countries' rising healthcare talent demands.



"The surge in migration from states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh reflects a significant shift in the region's healthcare landscape. With Huntr's innovative solutions and stakeholder collaboration, we're poised to drive further growth and development in the MENA healthcare sector," Huntr CEO Samuel Joy said.

The report further revealed that employers in MENA countries seek candidates with specific skills and qualifications, including experience in regional sales, distributor management, and project management. Additionally, there is also a high demand for healthcare professionals with qualifications ranging from diplomas to higher degrees in nursing and medicine. The healthcare workers migrating from India to the MENA region are predominantly within the early 30s age group, with a noticeable increase in the number of male nurses joining the workforce segment that is traditionally dominated by women, the report added.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### YASHODA HOSPITAL MEDICAL PARTNER OF MARATHON 2024

New Delhi: The 9th Edition of the New Delhi Marathon 2024, scheduled to take place on February 25 at the prestigious JLN Stadium in New Delhi, has been officially recognised by the Athletics Federation of India as the National Marathon, which will also be a qualifying event for the Paris Olympics. Yashoda Hospital is the official medical partner of this event at Yashoda Medical Base Camp, Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium.

### POWERGRID SIGNS MOU FOR IMPARTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME



New Delhi: POWERGRID, (Northern Region-I) a Mahারাna CPSE, Signed a MOU on February 22, 2024, with The Central Institute of Petrochemical Engineering & Technology (CIPET) (a premier National Institution under the aegis of the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers, Government of India) at RHQ, Faridabad Office for imparting skill development training programme for under privileged/unemployed youth of society, at CIPET, Murthal, Haryana under CSR initiatives of POWERGRID. The Estimated Project cost is approximately ₹1.5 crore. POWERGRID, CSR Department has always been working in line with the nation's plan for developing skills, opportunities, self-employment as well as development of entrepreneurs. To achieve this objective, POWERGRID has signed MOU with CIPET, Murthal for six months Skill Development Training Programme in the field of Plastic Engineering & Technology for the 160 underprivileged/unemployed youth on residential basis. Above tech skill development programme will have 40 students therein 10 per cent seats have been reserved for girl students.

# Foundation stone for POL & LPG project of HPCL laid in Assam

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The foundation stone for a first-of-its-kind combined petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) & LPG facilities of Hindustan Petroleum was laid at Kamardanga in Assam's Chirang district, an official statement said.. Union Minister of State for

Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Telu attended the programme.. "This visionary project, with an investment of Rs 540 crore and sprawling across an expanse of 78.68 acres, underscores Hindustan Petroleum's unwavering commitment to enhancing energy accessibility and fostering socio-economic



progress in the North East region," the statement said.. The LPG facility will boast 1500 MT mounded storage vessels, a cutting-edge 4 Bay tank truck Loading gantry, and tank wagon unloading capability, ensuring seamless operations and meeting the growing demand for LPG in the region. These facilities will ensure

energy sufficiency of a minimum of 15 days in Assam, the statement said.. The project will bolster the existing network of 332 retail outlets, with plans for future outlets slated for development.. The LPG installation will ensure continuous LPG availability to 78 distributorships and 9.2 lakh

customers.. This will also benefit around 7 lakh beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).. Furthermore, the project will facilitate direct product availability to satellite depots in the North Eastern states, ensuring enhanced energy accessibility across the region.



# SWIATEK STUNNED BY KALINSKAYA IN DUBAI SEMIFINALS

**AP ■ DUBAI**  
World No. 1 Iga Swiatek was stunned by qualifier Anna Kalinskaya 6-4 6-4 in the semifinals of the Dubai Championships. Swiatek was up 4-2 on Friday when Kalinskaya broke straight back. Swiatek's consistency began to desert her and Kalinskaya rattled off four straight games to take the first set. Swiatek saved two match points to break for 5-3 in the second and had another chance to break for 5-5 but hit wide. Kalinskaya gave Swiatek her first straight-sets loss in almost a year. The first qualifier to reach the Dubai final has defeated three top-10 players in a row, starting with No. 9 Jelena Ostapenko, then No. 3 Coco Gauff for her first top-five win, then Swiatek in their first meeting. The 40th-ranked Kalinskaya will play 26th-ranked Jasmine Paolini of Italy in

Saturday's final. It's the first WTA final for Kalinskaya and Paolini's shot at a second title, easily her biggest. Kalinskaya said the key to beating Swiatek was to stay calm yet aggressive. "I know if I don't stay calm and I don't stay aggressive she is going to destroy me," Kalinskaya said in her on-court interview. "That was my plan, to stay aggressive and move her a lot. She's unbelievable. I'm happy I had the chance to play against her. "I feel physically much better than last year. That gives me a lot of confidence to play at such a high level." The last qualifier to beat two top 3 players in a tournament was Amelie Mauresmo in 1998 in Berlin with wins over Lindsay Davenport and Jana Novotna. Paolini held off Sorana Cirstea 6-2 7-6 (6) in their semifinal. She has beaten three top-30 players in a row for the first time. Paolini saved six set points in the



second set. "I gave you a little bit of drama at the end of the match," she said on court. Paolini and Kalinskaya have one win against each other. Kalinskaya beat Paolini just a month ago in the Australian Open fourth round. "When I played against her in Australian Open, she was also returning really deep and I couldn't start the point well," Paolini said. "She was really also consistent, not many mistakes. "If you want to beat her, I guess you have to play deep and to try to do not too many mistakes, but also to try to hit winners, to hit the ball, to push her away from the court because if not, she's going to move you." Reaching the final has assured Paolini of a top 20 debut when the rankings are updated on Monday. Kalinskaya will rise into the top 30 for the first time and could crack the top 20 with the title.



## Taha makes it to CCI Snooker Classic main draw

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Pune's Taha Khan recorded a 4-0 win against Siddharth Khemani in a best-of-7-frame final round qualifying match to make it to the main round of the CCI Snooker Classic here on Saturday. Khan raced past Khemani with a 54-43, 72-58, 58-34, 56-9 victory at CCI's Sir Wilson Jones billiards hall.

Earlier in the day, Aditya Agarwal fired two substantial breaks of 51 and 56 to beat Sameer Chabaria 3-0 (55-6, 74-16, 77-16) in the second round. In another second round contest, Vinay Swaminathan got the better of Anupama Ramchandran, charging to a 3-0 win. Chennai's Anupama, who won the U-21 title in the Women's

World Snooker Championship last year in Thailand, was beaten 91-0, 54-44, 54-30 by Swaminathan. **RESULTS:** Final qualifying: Suraj Veer bt Saad Sayed 4-2 (66-47, 22-81, 25-55, 58-32, 50-42, 80-42); Taha Khan bt Siddharth Khemani 4-0 (54-43, 72-58, 58-34, 56-9); Round 2: Aditya Agrawal bt Sameer Chabaria 3-0 (55-6,

74(51)-16, 77(56)-16); Shailendra Dungal bt Saqlain Mushtaq 3-2 (76-20, 30-55, 80-16, 23-59, 58-19); Rafat Habib bt Saifuddin 3-0 (73-34, 55-33, 68-54); Nalin Patel bt Rohan Pal 3-2 (22-63, 60-13 56-43, 70-87(49), 74-37); Mahesh Jagdale bt Adarsh Verma 3-0 (63-41, 66-14, 75-32); Vinay Swaminathan bt Anupama Ramchandran 3-0 (91(69)-0, 54-44, 54-30).



## Norrie beats Wild to reach Rio Open semifinals

**AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO**  
Defending champion Cameron Norrie beat Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild 6-1 3-6 6-2 to reach the semifinals of the Rio Open. The second-seeded British player will take on either Brazil's teenage sensation João Fonseca or Argentina's Mariano Navone on Saturday. The 23rd-ranked Norrie became the favourite to win the clay court tournament again after Carlos Alcaraz retired with a right ankle injury and Stan Wawrinka and Nicolás Jarry were defeated. Earlier on Friday, two players from Argentina won their quarterfinal matches and will face off for a place in the final of the clay-court tournament. Fourth-seeded Francisco Cerúndolo beat Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 3-6 6-4 6-4. His semifinal rival will be Sebastián Báez, who beat Brazil's Thiago Monteiro 6-4 1-6 6-2.

## Yathiraj, Pramod, Krishna in finals of Para Badminton World Championships

**PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)**  
India's Suhas Yathiraj, Pramod Bhagat and Krishna Nagar progressed to the men's singles finals in various categories at the Para Badminton World Championship here on Saturday. World No. 3 Yathiraj, a Paralympic silver medalist, upset world no. 1 Lucas Mazur of France 21-16 21-19 in the men's singles SL4 semi-final to reach the finals for the first time in his career. Lucas is a reigning world champion and paralympic gold medalist. The 40-year-old Indian, who hails from Karnataka, is an IAS officer of the 2007 batch of Uttar Pradesh cadre. Yathiraj, who is currently the Secretary and Director General of Youth Welfare and Prantiya Rakshak Dal in the UP government, will square off

against Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan in the final. In another SL4 semifinal, Sukant Kadam lost 13-21 19-21 to Fredy Setiawan. In men's singles SL3 class, Paralympic gold medalist Pramod Bhagat outwitted fellow Indian Manoj Sarkar 23-21 20-22 21-18 and will face England's Daniel Bethell in the finals. Bethell beat India's Nitesh Kumar 21-18 20-22 21-14 in the other semifinal. In SH6 category, Krishna Nagar, a Paralympic gold medal winner, beat Vitor Tavares of Brazil 21-16 21-17 to set up a meeting with China's Lin Naili. In women's singles SU5, Manisha Ramadass beat France's Maud Lefort 19-21 21-14 in the semifinals to set up a summit clash against China's Yang Qiu Xia. In SH6 women's doubles,

Rachana Shaileshkumar and Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan also entered the finals with a 21-16 21-17 win over Indonesian pair of Daria Bujnicka and Oliwia Szmigiel. The men's doubles pair of Chirag baretha and Raj Kumar, and women's combination of Mandeep kaur and Manisha Ramadass, advanced to the semifinals of SU5 and SL3-SU5 class to assure medals for themselves in the tournament. Among others, Nithye Sre, Palak Kohli and Manisha Girishchandra lost their respective semifinals in SH6, SL4 and SL3 class in women's singles to sign off with bronze medals. Pramod and Sukant also settled for bronze in men's doubles SL3-SL4 after losing 16-21 16-21 to Thai pair of Mongkhon Bunsun and Siripong Teamarrom.

## Diksha 4th, Pranavi 13th in Morocco after second round



**PTI ■ RABAT (MOROCCO)**  
Diksha Dagar placed herself for a good finish as she moved into the tied fourth spot at the end of the second round of the Lalla Meryem Cup on the Ladies European Tour here on Saturday. Diksha, third on the LET Order of Merit in 2023, shot 2-under 73 and moved to 4-under 142 total. Fellow Indian Pranavi Urs, playing her first full season on the LET, seemed set for a high position after the second hole as she

was 3-under through the front nine and 5-under for the event at that stage. Pranavi then dropped a double bogey on the 14th and a bogey on the 17th to drop back to even par 73. At 2-under total, she was tied 13th at the Par-73 Royal Golf Dar Es Salam course. Mexico's Maria Fassi continued to dominate the event after producing a strong second round of 69 (-4). Fassi has held the lead since the start of the tournament carding a round of 65 (-8) on day one.

Diksha, who shot 2-under 71 in the first round, opened the second round with five pars before finding a birdie on the sixth. She gave that shot back on the ninth, but birdies on the 10th and the 18th saw her finish at 2-under. Pranavi, who had six birdies against two bogeys and a double bogey, birdied second, fourth and seventh. She dropped a double bogey on the 14th, and it was her second double, as she had one on the first day, too. She also had a bogey on the 17th on the second day. Despite a shaky start, a double bogey on hole two, Fassi, an LPGA player, dusted off her nerves to roll in three birdies on the front nine on holes five, six and eight. At the turn, Fassi continued her fine form by rolling in a further four birdies with only a bogey on the 17th to blemish her back nine scorecard. Home favourite Ines Laklalech sits in solo third after a round of 73 (par). The Moroccan got off to a strong start carding two birdies in her first four holes before dropping shots on holes nine and fifteen. Six players are tied for fourth on four-under-par; Czech Republic's Sara Kouckova and Klara Davidsson Spilkova, England's Bronte Law, Diksha, Norway's Madeleine Stavn and Spain's Fatima Fernandez Cano.



## Nagal handed wildcard for Dubai Championship main draw

**PTI ■ DUBAI**  
Indian tennis star Sumit Nagal has received a wildcard for the main draw of the Dubai Championship, an ATP 500 event. While the qualifiers of the tournament began on Saturday, the main draw matches get underway on Monday. Nagal will be up against Lorenzo Sonego of Italy, currently world number 49, in the opening round. The 26-year-old Indian has had a remarkable run this year, qualifying for the main draw of the Australian Open last month, where he made it to Round 2 after beating Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan. He became the first Indian since 1989 to

knock off a seeded player in a Grand Slam. He attained his career-high ranking of 98 earlier this month, but dropped to 101st, despite having won the Chennai Open last week, an ATP Challenger event. As for the Dubai Championship, Daniil Medvedev of Russia is the top seed, followed by his fellow countryman Andrey Rublev, Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, Karen Khachanov of Russia, Ugo Humbert and Adrian Panatta of France, Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain. Other players who were handed wildcards include Gael Monfils of France and Abedallah Shelbayh of Jordan.

## Leverkusen extends Bundesliga lead to 11 points

**AP ■ BERLIN**  
Granit Khaka scored his first goal for Bayer Leverkusen as the Bundesliga leader defeated Mainz 2-1 and set a German record of 33 games unbeaten across all competitions. Leverkusen, which hasn't lost a match since last season, stretched its lead to 11 points before 11-time defending champion Bayern Munich hosts Leipzig on Saturday. Eleven rounds remain after this weekend. "We deserve to be where we are," Khaka said. "When you're eight points, now 11 points, ahead of second-place Bayern, there is a lot to lose. But we'll keep working day by day, game by game, stay positive, and I'm sure we'll be able to keep getting our wins." The buildup to Friday's match was dominated by speculation over the future of Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso, with his former clubs Bayern and Liverpool looking for new coaches for next season. Alonso has no lack of suitors after taking Leverkusen from the relegation zone when he took over in October 2022 to a genuine title candidate in his first senior management job. "It's all just speculation, my head is totally here," Alonso repeated on Friday. "We have so much to do, we're in such a super position. So enjoying it, preparing, and that's all that's going on in my head." Supporters celebrated the German soccer league's midweek decision to scrap its plan to bring in an outside investor for a share of media rights income by displaying a



banner saying "Football belongs to the fans." They didn't have to wait long to celebrate again when Khaka fired Leverkusen into a third-minute lead. The Swiss midfielder let fly from outside the penalty area for his first goal on his 31st appearance for the club. But Dominik Kohr replied for the visitors with a header at the other end four minutes later. Leverkusen went on to dominate possession. The home team's urgency grew toward the end of the half, when Alex Grimaldo drew a good save from Robin Zentner with a free kick. Leverkusen's frustrations grew when

Jeremie Frimpong was booked for complaining after he'd been tripped by Mainz defender Philipp Mwene when he would have been through on goal. TV replays showed there was contact. Alonso was also booked for his complaints. The frustration remained after the break as Leverkusen failed to find a way through. Then the otherwise excellent Zentner failed to hold Robert Andrich's harmless-looking shot and the ball looped in over his head in the 68th. It proved enough for the win as Mainz's hopes were hit in the 80th when Jessic Ngankam was sent off after a VAR check for a dangerous tackle on Khaka.

## Odisha FC, Mohun Bagan Super Giant play out goalless draw

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Odisha FC and Mohun Bagan Super Giant played out a goalless draw in the Indian Super League here on Saturday. With competitors elevating their performance levels lately, the pressure has been built on the juggernauts to not drop points in their pursuit of the top spot of the points table. Mumbai City FC equalled them in points last night with their win over Chennaiyin FC, as only a superior goal difference keeping the Sergio Lobera-coached side ahead in the race. However, they were unable to make the most of the opportunity at home against an upbeat Mohun Bagan Super Giant, who converted their unbeaten streak to five games under Antonio Lopez Habas in the ISL. Contrary to what the scoreline suggests, it was an end-to-end contest that produced umpteen opportunities for either sides to break the deadlock. A total of nine shots were taken out of which six were on target, combined for both teams, with Isak Vanlalratfela and Albanian striker Armando Sadiku leading the charge for their respective teams. Isak, in particular, was a menace for the Mariners, coming close to bagging the first goal of the night for Odisha FC multiple times in the opening half. He

forced a mistake off Anwar Ali around the 20th minute mark and targeted the top right corner but the shot failed to trouble Vishal Kaith. He had a duel with Kaith in the third minute too, making a dazzling run on the left flank before shooting his shot at the goalkeeper who held his composure to make a critical save by staying in his line. It was not as if he lacked support from his senior striking partners Roy Krishna and Diego Mauricio. Just as the half was drawing to an end, Krishna laid up a pass for an onrushing Mauricio on the right flank. The Brazilian collected the pass in his stride before unleashing a fierce shot that deflected off the crossbar. Sadiku will be regretting not converting the several chances that came his way from close quarters. The striker had Asish Rai and Sahal Abdul Samad setting up deliveries for him both when he was at the edge of the box as well as at the centre in the 26th and 34th minute respectively. But, his efforts couldn't make it past Armirinder Singh, and so couldn't the ones made by Dimitrios Petratos just as the second half began. Even the substitutions, featuring the likes of Jason Cummings and Cy Goddard couldn't influence the proceedings abundantly to change the eventual outcome of the game.



# INDIA ON BACKFOOT AFTER JAISWAL GRITTY FIFTY

**PTI ■ RANCHI**  
Young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir scythed through the Indian line-up with an impressive four-wicket haul that left the hosts stuttering at 219 for seven on day two of the fourth Test here on Saturday.  
The 20-year-old Bashir, playing only his second Test, got rid of Shubman Gill (38), Rajat Patidar (17), Ravindra Jadeja (12) on a pitch that has uneven bounce and cracks to rattle the Indian top and middle order.  
He returned after the tea break in his marathon 31-over spell across two sessions to clean up in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal (73) with a ball that skid through the defence of the left-hander. With intermittent wickets pegging India back, they were forced to play a catch-up game and are still trailing by 134 runs.  
If it was not for a combative partnership between Dhruv Jurel (30 batting) and Kuldeep Yadav (17), India would have struggled to cross even 200-run mark. They had joined forces when the scorecard read 177 for seven.  
The two batters played late and

did not commit early into their shots, a ply that worked well in their unbeaten 42-run stand. This was after England's first innings folded for 353 after starting the day at 302 for seven. The total could have been bigger if Ollie Robinson (58) had not attempted an audacious reverse sweep off Ravindra Jadeja.  
The 22-year-old Jaiswal yet again produced a confident knock. He now has scored 618 runs with an average of 103 in this series. He looked for another big one before being done in by low bounce.  
Left-arm spinner Tom Hartley returned with figures of 2/47 that included the crucial breakthrough of Sarfaraz Khan (14) who had a frustrating stay. He also survived a run-out. India lost Rohit Sharma (2) cheaply when old warhorse James Anderson induced a faint-edge from the skipper in the third over of their innings. But thereafter, Jaiswal showed why he is India's latest run machine when he overcame some anxious moments to post his fourth fifty-plus score in this series.  
From a watchful start, India No. 3 Gill accelerated post-



lunch break, taking on Anderson with two elegant boundaries — one flick off the pads, and a punch straight back down the ground. But Bashir gave England the

breakthrough by trapping Gill, halting the fine 82-run alliance between Gill and Jaiswal. He delivered a ball that took off the crack just outside off stump, trapped Gill on the pad

as Indians reviewed unsuccessfully. It sort of triggered the Indian collapse as the batters failed to grind deep in, showing little application.

Having given a lifeline after sloppy displays in Rajkot, Patidar had a nervy and tentative stay. The only bright spot of his innings was driving down

Anderson past the gully for a boundary that brought up the 100 for India.  
It was just a matter of time before Bashir trapped him with a ball that skidded onto his pads.  
Post his century in Rajkot, Jadeja retained his No 5 spot and counter-attacked Hartley for successive sixes.  
But Bashir was in the thick of the action again as his ball came off the cracks with Jadeja managing to loop the ball straight to short leg.  
England added 51 valuable runs to their overnight total as the Indian attack failed to make early penetration. The last five England batters added 241 runs after being 112/5 at lunch on the opening day.  
Joe Root, who dug in deep with his classical century spanning a little more than six hours, remained stranded on 122 from 274 balls (10x4).  
Robinson gifted away his wicket after making a career-best 58 that resulted in England's first innings ending at 353. Root and Robinson's eighth wicket alliance yielded 102 runs for England.  
While Mohammed Siraj (2/78) erred in his line and length,

debutant Akash Deep could not add to his tally of three wickets to return with 3/38 from 19 overs. Jadeja took all the three wickets to return with 4/67 from his 32.5 overs.  
Robinson had a great start to the morning when he flicked one away from a wayward Siraj in the first ball of the day for a boundary through fine leg.  
There was no stopping him as he looked for every opportunity and took on Akash Deep with three boundaries that took him past his previous career-best Test score of 42. However a bizarre shot selection ended his gritty knock as he employed a grounded reverse sweep which was not necessary at that moment as Indian bowlers were hardly troubling the visitors.  
The ball missed the edge of the bat but touched the gloves of Robinson before being grabbed by 23-year-old Dhruv Jurel that ended a dogged 102-run stand with Root.  
England then fell in a jiffy with Bashir swinging his bat to the second ball and skied the ball to be caught at point. Jadeja trapped Anderson to end England resistance.

## Bazball is not about being arrogant but bringing best out of team: Root



**PTI ■ RANCHI**  
Senior England batter Joe Root said Saturday that his side's 'Bazball' approach in Test cricket is not about being arrogant but about getting the best result for the team.  
England's record 434-run loss to India in the third Test in Rajkot led to widespread criticism about their ultra-aggressive approach they have adopted under coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes.  
"There have been times recently when the best way to do that is by being a bit more aggressive. It's like if I connect with that shot and execute it better, (Jasprit) Bumrah will be under pressure and our outlook on the game is very different again."  
"It's not about being arrogant... Bazball is a word that's used a lot but that's your word, that's

not how we look at it," Root told reporters after the end of second day's play in the fourth Test here.  
"It's about how can we get the best out of each other as a team, how we're going to get better as a group. You're not always going to get it right but we'll continue to keep trying to improve."  
Root emphasised the importance of adapting and evolving as a batter to counter the skills of world class bowlers.  
"The reason I've played as many games as I have is that I've not wanted to stand still as a player, I have to try to keep evolving. If you keep on playing the same way over and over again, teams work you out, figure you out and find your weaknesses."  
"They are world-class bowlers for a reason and there's a lot of information out there. So if

you don't try to get better and find different ways of scoring runs, you'll get found out."  
"You're not always going to get it right but if you're not willing to make mistakes every now and then and sometimes get it wrong it doesn't matter anyway because they're still going to find you out."  
Root returned to form with an unbeaten 122 from 274 balls in a classical Test match innings that helped England recover from 112 for 5 at lunch on day one to post 353.  
In reply, India were 219 for 7 at stumps on Saturday, still trailing by 134 runs on a slow wicket with unusually low bounce.  
"It felt like it's been a long time coming, it's been a lean series individually for me. You pride yourself as a senior player, especially with the history I've had in this part of the world, to try and make contributions

that put you in positions to win games."  
"It's been disappointing but the fact I have got quite a lot of experience has been able to keep me calm and trust the stuff I am doing. The way I'm preparing meant it was going to come at some point. It was nice to do it yesterday when we were in the situation we were in at lunchtime."  
"BRILLIANT BASHIR": Young spinner Shoaib Bashir grabbed four wickets in a marathon spell of 31 overs that spanned across all three sessions. He bowled one before lunch and then operated non-stop in the remaining two sessions with a total of 32 overs under his belt.  
"The way he bowls is a great little insight into his character and personality, he is quite cheeky and great fun to be around."  
"There's clearly a huge amount of skill in what he does, as he proved with the way he bowled for not just small spells but a long period of time," Root said.  
"To be able to continually put pressure on some very good players of spin, I know the wicket was helpful at times, but he did an amazing job and it's a great sign for English cricket moving forward. You do have to work in partnerships and Tommy (Hartley) was excellent alongside him, too."  
Root is confident that England have the edge in the match.  
"We've got ourselves into a nice position at the end of the first innings. Obviously, it looks like it (pitch) is going to keep deteriorating and keep getting worse."  
"So if we can get three early wickets tomorrow, hopefully that puts us in a really strong position for the rest of the game," he signed off.

## Warner misses third T20I against NZ

**PTI ■ AUCKLAND**  
Dashing Australia opener David Warner is likely to be fit for the start of next month's IPL after missing the final T20I against New Zealand here due to adductor soreness.  
The 37-year-old, who retired from Tests and ODIs last month, will take seven to 10 days to regain his full fitness.  
"Warner will require a brief recovery period which is not expected to affect his availability for the upcoming Indian Premier League leading into the ICC Men's T20 World Cup," Cricket Australia



said in a statement.  
Warner had also sat out the second T20I as part of Australia's rotation strategy. He will quit the shortest format after the conclusion of the T20 World Cup in June this year.  
Warner had captained Delhi Capitals last year following Rishabh Pant's horrific accident and emerged as the highest run-scorer for the team with 516 runs, including six fifties.  
He was booed off the ground by the Kiwi supporters after scoring 32 in 20 balls in the opening T20 game against New Zealand in Wellington.

## Sawai Man Singh Stadium and RCA office sealed

**PTI ■ JAIPUR**  
One month before it hosts Indian Premier League matches, the Sawai Man Singh Stadium here has been sealed by the Rajasthan Sports Council which claimed that the state cricket body did not fulfil its liabilities, including payment of dues.  
Rajasthan Cricket Association's (RCA) office and its academy were also sealed, along with the stadium.  
Rajasthan Sports Council secretary Sohan Ram Choudhary had served a notice to the RCA for handing over the property to the state council on Friday, but it did not happen.  
Since the handover did not happen, the state sports council went on to seal the properties owing to RCA's alleged failure of not being able to fulfil its conditions as per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and non-payment of dues.  
"We had sent them (RCA) numerous notices but there was no reply from their end. They only replied to increase the MoU to 10 years (from eight years). They had liabilities and they did not fulfil them," Choudhary told the media.  
"We have sat down with RCA to find a solution. They received approximately Rs 200 crores but told us that they haven't received the sum. They had a lot of money during the Rajasthan Premier League but they did not adhere to the MoU and did



not deposit the money, that's why we had to take this step," he added. Choudhary, however, gave the assurance that the venue will host the IPL matches and all other games that are slated to be organised here.  
"This is our premise and we just took it back. The IPL matches will happen and all other national and international matches will also happen and the players will get all the facilities," he said.  
RCA president Vaibhav Gehlot, on his part, alleged that the move smacked of "political malice" and that his body was not given enough time to respond.  
"The pending dues are old one, Rs 8 crore is outstanding but suddenly sealing (because of) that old case and that too

before the IPL shows political malice. This should not have happened," Gehlot said.  
"We were not given full time, the time given was less than two days, there should not be politics in sports but politics is happening which is not right," he added.  
Gehlot said the RCA will consult its lawyers as to what steps it would take in this matter. The Sawai Man Singh Stadium will host the local team Rajasthan Royals' opening match against Lucknow Super Giants on March 24. The second game here will be on March 28 between Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals.  
The IPL 2024 schedule was announced only for the first two weeks and 21 matches, owing to the general elections.

## RANJI TROPHY QUARTERFINAL

### Nair shines as Vidarbha post 460 vs Karnataka

**PTI ■ NAGPUR**  
Karun Nair's 90-run knock was the highlight of the day as Vidarbha posted 460 all out in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Karnataka here on Saturday.  
Resuming the second day on 261 for three after Atharva Taide's century and Yash Rathod's 93, Vidarbha rode on Nair's innings to post a big first-innings total.

In reply, Karnataka were 98 for two at stumps with Ravikumar Samarth and Nikin Jose batting on 43 and 20, respectively. The visitors trailed by 362 runs.  
Vidarbha lost Akshay Wadkar (16) for the addition of just 23 runs to their overnight total, and were 319 for five, when Mohit Kale (16) was dismissed by Hardik Raj.  
Nair and Aditya Sarwate (26) added 55 runs before the latter



was dismissed by Vidwath Kaverappa, who picked up four wickets in all while giving away 99 runs.  
Kaverappa's victims also included the all-important wicket of Nair, who fell short of his 19th first-class hundred by 10 runs.  
Karnataka began their response on a jittery note, losing skipper Mayank Agarwal (0) to Aditya Thakare with just four runs on the

board.  
A 59-run partnership between opener Ravikumar Samarth (43 batting) and KV Aneesh (34) steadied the innings but Yash Thakur got rid of Aneesh with the score reading 63.  
**BRIEF SCORES:** Vidarbha 460 (Atharva Taide 109, Yash Rathod 93, Karun Nair 90); Vidwath Kaverappa 4/99) leads Karnataka 98-2 (Ravikumar Samarth 43 batting; Yash Thakur 1/22) by 362 runs.

### Madhya Pradesh fight back against Andhra

**PTI ■ INDORE**  
A collective bowling performance helped Madhya Pradesh stage a remarkable fightback and extend their overall lead to 83 runs at stumps on the second day of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Andhra here on Saturday.  
The 2021-22 winners MP resumed the day at 234 for 9 and they lost their last wicket without adding any run to their total. They had squandered a perfect start to their first innings when openers Yash Dubey (64) and Himanshu Mantri (49) put on 123 for the first wicket.  
For Andhra, KV Sasikanth took 4 for 37 while Nithish Kumar Reddy returned with figures of 3/50. Shoaib Mohammed Khan and Girinath Reddy also chipped in with a wicket each as Andhra had a platform set to capitalise on the game.  
But Madhya Pradesh bowlers joined forces to pull off a remarkable performance, bowling out Andhra for a mere 172 in their first innings to hand their side a 62-run lead.  
None of the Andhra batters could make a mark against a probing MP bowling line-up. Andhra skipper and current Ranji season leading run-scorer Ricky Bhui was dismissed for 32 (53 balls, 5x4s, 1x6s) by Kulwant Khejroliya.  
The damage, however, was done at the top by MP and India bowler Avesh Khan who removed Andhra opener DB Prashanth Kumar for a four-ball duck and also accounted for No. 3 Ashwin Hebbur for just one.  
Anubhav Agarwal trapped K Revanth Reddy leg-before for 22 and also pinned India batter Hanuma Vihari for 14 in front of the wickets.

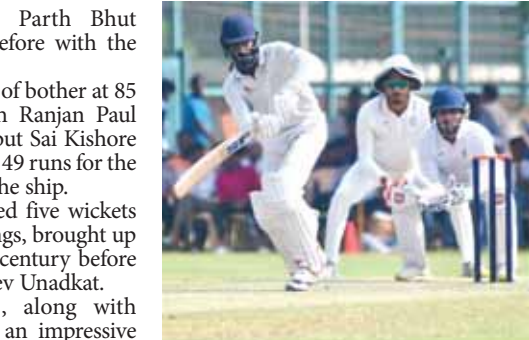


Late in the innings, Agarwal accounted for the dangerous Shoaib Mohammad Khan for 22 to return with a fine 18-6-33-3.  
Left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya also got into the act to return 3/41 from his 19 overs, accounting for the highest-scorer of the innings Karan Shinde (38), Nithish (7) and Sasikanth (12).  
The visiting side were bowled out for 172 in 68.3 overs, following which Madhya Pradesh reached 21 for no loss at stumps on the second day with an overall lead of 83 runs.  
Dubey was batting on six while wicketkeeper-batter Mantri reached 50 not out with the help of three fours to make it MP's day on Saturday.  
**BRIEF SCORES:** Madhya Pradesh 234 in 81.1 overs (Yash Dubey 64, Himanshu Mantri 49, Saransh Jain 41 not out; Nithish Kumar Reddy 3/50, KV Sasikanth 4/37) and 21/0 in 7 overs (Himanshu Mantri 15 not out) lead Andhra 172 in 68.3 overs (Karan Shinde 38; Anubhav Agarwal 3/38, Kumar Kartikeya 3/41) by 83 runs.

### Sai, Indrajith, Kumar hand Tamil Nadu lead vs Saurashtra

**PTI ■ COIMBATORE**  
Skipper R Sai Kishore led by example before Baba Indrajith and Boopathi Kumar struck useful half-centuries to hand Tamil Nadu advantage in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Saurashtra here on Saturday.  
Thanks to their efforts, Tamil Nadu reached 300 for six at stumps on the second day of the match, giving them a lead of 117 runs with four first-innings wickets in hand.  
Resuming the day at 23 for one, night-watchman Sai Kishore (60) and opener Narayan Jagadeesan (37) managed to put on a 54-run partnership for the

second wicket before Parth Bhut trapped the latter leg-before with the team score reading 63.  
The hosts were in a spot of bother at 85 for three when Pradosh Ranjan Paul (13) fell to Parth Bhut, but Sai Kishore and Indrajith (80) added 49 runs for the fourth wicket to steady the ship.  
Sai Kishore, who grabbed five wickets in Saurashtra's first innings, brought up his third first-class half-century before being dismissed by Jaydev Unadkat.  
Boopathi Kumar (65), along with Indrajith, then stitched an impressive 119-run stand for the fifth wicket to put their team in control.  
Indrajith was looking good for what



would have been his 17th first-class hundred but Dharmendrasinh Jadeja,

the visitors' highest wicket-taker of the season, got rid of the seasoned TN batter, with the team score reading 253 for five.  
For the addition 14 runs, Boopathi was cleaned up by Yuvrajsinh Dodiya. Vijay Shankar (14 batting) and Mohamed Ali (17 batting) saw the day out as Tamil Nadu finished the day with their nose well ahead.  
For Saurashtra, it has been a collective effort from their bowling unit with all five bowlers finding themselves among wickets.  
**BRIEF SCORES:** Saurashtra 183 trail Tamil Nadu 300-6 (Baba Indrajith 80; Parth Bhut 2/76) by 117 runs.



"I didn't finish university, I barely finished high school. All I know is from the books I've read, and the plays that I've read"  
— Jacob Elordi



**BOOKS**

The New Delhi World Book Fair is a celebration of the written word that transcends boundaries and bridges cultures. Here - as in others counties of the world - the significance of books reverberates with resounding clarity

**EXPLORING  
PAGES OF POSSIBILITY**

By  
**Rajdeep Pathak**

As the vibrant panorama of the New Delhi World Book Fair unfolded its final chapter on February 18, 2024, it bid a fond farewell to nine days filled with the symphony of literary marvels and cultural splendour. Nestled within the expansive embrace of Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan, this majestic event, inaugurated on February 10th, played host to a multitude of nearly 15 lakh book lovers, who traversed its labyrinthine corridors in search of enlightenment and inspiration. Here, amidst the grandeur of more than 1,000 publishers hailing from 40 illustrious nations such as India, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Spain, and beyond, over 2,000 enchanting stalls stood as beacons of literary excellence.

Organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) under the nurturing wing of the Ministry of Education, this year's fair unfurled its vibrant banner under the resplendent theme of "Bahubhashi Bharat - Ek Jeevant Parampara" (Multilingual India - A Living Tradition). With the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia taking part as the guest country, the air was suffused with the heady aroma of cultural exchange, literary discourse, and harmonious dialogues, weaving a rich flavour of mutual appreciation and understanding between the two nations. While traversing through the stalls with long overhanging signages guiding paths for visitors, one could also wonder at the very craftsmanship of the engineers who put up the display in a manner that attracted students, school children, writers, authors, guest speakers, men and women with their families alike from far end - thanks to the event management groups of companies who designed this panoramic extravaganza, the effect was spell-binding.

However, what really attracted once again is the versatility and the imaginative and creative manner of enticing the readers/visitors and capturing (read holding on) to their interest. There were many window shoppers who just passed by. While some stalls engaged children in solving different crossword puzzles through creative games, there were others like ours (Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti), where spinning on the traditional charkha became a centre of attraction for the young and the old who wanted to try their hands on spinning. What came as a surprise in this digital age where Kindle and other such forums have become the latest fad, is that the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, "My Experiments with Truth" was still a popular choice amongst the buyers.

The Children's Pavilion became a delightful sanctuary for young book enthusiasts, offering a diverse array of activities including storytelling, illustration workshops, calligraphy sessions, art demonstrations,

ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL BOOK TRUST (NBT) UNDER THE NURTURING WING OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, THIS YEAR'S FAIR UNFURLED ITS VIBRANT BANNER UNDER THE RESPLENDENT THEME OF "BAHUBHASHI BHARAT - EK JEEVANT PARAMPARA" (MULTILINGUAL INDIA - A LIVING TRADITION). WITH THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA TAKING PART AS THE GUEST COUNTRY, THE AIR WAS SUFFUSED WITH THE HEADY AROMA OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE, LITERARY DISCOURSE, AND HARMONIOUS DIALOGUES, WEAVING A RICH FLAVOUR OF MUTUAL APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS



drama classes, and explorations into the wonders of space. Notably, the fair has demonstrated its dedication to inclusivity and accessibility in literature through specialized events tailored for children with special needs, in line with its overarching 'Books-for-All' initiative. Further, amidst this vibrant mosaic of India's cultural panorama, as showcased at the World Book Fair, the symphony of myriad languages, dialects, and traditions harmoniously intertwined into a seamless expression of unity. Here, as one flapped through the pages of literature and glanced at the strokes of artistry, the feeling resonated with a profound testament to the nation's rich heritage. The unveiling of "Jaadui Pitara", an enchanting e-learning oasis, emerged as a beacon of enlightenment in consonance with the vision of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Overflowing with the treasures of puzzles, riddles, and tales, this marvellously inclusive repository, deftly translated into 22 languages through the marvels of (artificial intelligence) AI, stood poised to revolutionize the landscape of childhood education. Alongside, a constellation of specialized modules, meticulously crafted in alignment with NEP 2020, adorned this educational tableau, offering a cornucopia of resources and insights tailored to the modern learner. Embracing the noble vision of fostering a nation of avid readers, an ethereal e-library welcomed all with its boundless offerings, inviting one and all to immerse themselves in the splendour of knowledge.

In this timeless mosaic of human civilization, books stand as luminous threads weaving together the very fabric of knowledge, imagination, and cultural heritage. Like radiant beacons illuminating the path of enlightenment, books beckon us into realms of limitless discovery and profound insight. Amidst this vast literary landscape, book fairs emerge as vibrant marketplaces of intellect, where bibliophiles and seekers of wisdom converge in a harmonious symphony of literary delight. The English author Neil Gaiman once remarked, "Literacy is more important than ever it was, in this world of text and email, a world of written information. We need to read and write, we need global citizens who can read comfortably, comprehend what they are reading, understand nuance, and make themselves understood." His words underscore the contemporary relevance of literacy in an age dominated by digital communication. Maya Angelou, the celebrated poet and civil rights activist, aptly encapsulated the transformative power of literacy when she asserted, "Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him." She underscored the profound impact that exposure to literature can have on shaping young minds and nurturing a lifelong love for reading. Book fairs, with their wide array of offerings spanning genres and age groups, play a crucial role in instilling this habit of reading and nurturing a generation of literate and intellectually curious individuals.

Book fairs also serve as vital platforms for promoting diversity and inclusion within the literary world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the acclaimed Nigerian author, emphasized the importance of diverse representation in literature when she said that "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity". Therefore, by showcasing literature from diverse cultures, perspectives, and voices, book fairs contribute to a more inclusive literary landscape, fostering empathy, understanding, and interconnectedness among readers. Book fairs, by bringing together a diverse array of literature, empower individuals to engage with various forms of written expression, thereby fostering critical thinking and communication skills essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. The New Delhi World Book Fair is a celebration of the written word that transcends boundaries and bridges cultures. Here - as in others counties of the world - the significance of books reverberates with resounding clarity, underscoring the enduring relevance of organizing such transformative events with new creative engagements. It is time when we move beyond just literacy...

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Sansthan, views are personal)





# RISKS LURK BEHIND THE GLAMOUR

A recent tragic death during smile enhancement surgery of a 28-year-old man in Hyderabad highlights the risk of cosmetic procedures. In a chat with ARCHANA JYOTI, experts emphasise the need for thorough consideration before surgery, advocating stricter regulations, and increased awareness

From smoothing wrinkles to reshaping body contours, the allure of cosmetic procedures often promises transformative results and a boost in self-confidence. Cosmetic surgery has emerged as a popular option for individuals seeking to enhance their physical appearance and address perceived imperfections. However, there lies a landscape fraught with risks and complexities that warrant careful consideration. Consider a few cases of 2023: \*Chethana Raj, a promising young TV actor, who tragically lost her life after undergoing plastic surgery in Bengaluru. Her father, K Varadaraj, revealed that hospital authorities attributed her death to a cardiac arrest. \*The untimely demise of Luana Andrade, a 29-year-old Brazilian influencer, following liposuction surgery in São Paulo, serves as a chilling reminder of the risks inherent in cosmetic procedures. Complications during the surgery led to four cardiac arrests, ultimately claiming her life. \*Argentine model and actor Silvina Luna died due to complications related to a kidney illness associated with prior plastic surgery. These reported cases involve celebrities or in some others, complainants managed to reach out to media or vice versa. The recent one that has been reported this year is of LN Vinjam (28) who lost his life on February 18 while undergoing a 'smile designing' procedure, just weeks before his wedding. There are countless unreported instances of individuals suffering after cosmetic enhancements. Many endure silent pain as their pursuit of an ideal

## POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS

**Hematoma:** Hematoma, a pocket of blood resembling a bruise, can occur in 1 percent of breast augmentation procedures and is the most common complication after facelifts.

**Seroma:** Seroma, the pooling of sterile body fluid beneath the skin's surface, is a common complication following surgeries like tummy tucks.

**Blood loss:** While some blood loss is expected during surgery, uncontrolled blood loss can result in severe outcomes such as a drop in blood pressure.

**Infection:** Despite preventive measures, infections remain common after plastic surgery, affecting around 1.1 to 2.5 percent of individuals undergoing breast augmentation. Cellulitis, a skin infection, is one example, while severe cases may require intravenous antibiotics.

**Nerve damage:** Many surgeries carry the risk of nerve damage, leading to numbness or tingling sensations. While often temporary, nerve damage can sometimes be permanent, affecting sensitivity or function in the operated area.

**Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism:** Though relatively uncommon, these conditions can be life-threatening, with rates slightly higher in procedures like abdominoplasty.

**Organ damage:** Procedures like liposuction pose risks of visceral perforations, where surgical instruments inadvertently puncture internal organs, potentially leading to fatal consequences.

**Scarring:** Scarring is an inevitable outcome of surgery, with some individuals experiencing hypertrophic or keloid scars, which can be red, thick, and raised, causing aesthetic concerns.

**General appearance dissatisfaction:** Despite overall satisfaction rates, some individuals may experience dissatisfaction with their postoperative results, particularly if there are contouring issues or asymmetry problems.

**Complications of anesthesia:** Anesthesia carries its own set of risks, ranging from lung infections to strokes, heart attacks, and death.



**DR MANISH JANGRA**  
Consultant Dermatologist,  
Park Hospital

appearance is botched by incompetent surgeons. **Dr Manish Jangra**, Consultant Dermatologist from Park Hospital points out that craze for cosmetic procedures is rising day by day. Minimally invasive procedures have seen an even larger increase than surgical ones. "When it

comes to cosmetic dermatology, individuals often seek treatments to address a variety of concerns related to their skin's appearance and texture, correcting skin tone, smoothing wrinkles, removing hair on the face or body and reducing surface fat. "When we talk about Botox a lot of thing comes in our mind as it is widely used by various media platforms and many famous celebrities for various indications. Botox is a botulinum toxin obtained from bacteria. It is basically used in dermatology for various cosmetic issues like frown lines (Forehead) Crow footprints (Lateral to Eyes). These are basically used to smooth wrinkles over face. This is also used for

Hyperhidrosis of palms & for excessive sweating. "Then there are Fillers. These are used to fill the area that has lost tissue or to fill that gap. "Dermal fillers, sometimes called soft tissue fillers, are substances designed to be injected beneath the surface of the skin to add volume and fullness. The time they take to work, as well as how long they last, also vary. Some fillers last six months, while others last up to two years or longer. They can be used to enhance lips, enhance shallow area like undereye trough & to soften the static wrinkles. But they must be injected by dermatologist with great experience in aesthetic practice," warns Dr Jangra. He reiterates, this must be

injected by qualified dermatologist only as various quacks too are flourishing in market claiming to be cosmetologists leading to various complications. People must check qualification and experience of the doctor first and should cautious about the quacks using term "Cosmetologists." There is no such degree by this name approved by National Medical Commission (NMC), cautions Dr Jangra. "Also you must ensure to go to dermatologist with MD/DNB/DVD (Degree in Dermatology). A lot of dentists / M B B S / non medicos/nurse have started practicing as cosmetologists, playing with health of the common people."

**Dr Sachin Ambekar**, Director, Minimal Access Surgery and Medical Director at Mass Hospital, stresses on the necessity for hospitals to be equipped to handle emergencies and emphasizes the importance of thorough patient history-taking before any surgical procedure minor or major which he's had in the previous history. If he's had a surgery, what kind of anaesthesia, did he have any kind of complications and if there is any detailed notes discharge summary available with the patient. Before any surgery the medical teams get multiple tests done that



**DR SACHIN AMBEKAR**  
Director of Minimal Access Surgery and  
Medical Director at Mass Hospital



**DR MADHU GOEL**  
Director, Gynecologist and Obstetrics  
at Fortis La Femme

includes local anaesthesia test dose, IV antibiotic test dose. The anaesthetist or the surgeon takes a detailed history of the medical and surgical history. While it is mandatory for every centre involving dentists, oral maxillofacial, aesthetic ad plastic surgery to have qualified doctors on its panel but it is most important to keep a backup in case there is any emergency. **Dr Madhu Goel**, Director, Gynecologist and Obstetrics at Fortis La Femme highlights several key points surrounding the motivations, types, and potential risks associated with these surgeries. From addressing perceived flaws to enhancing confidence and conforming to societal beauty standards, rise of social media and celebrity culture have also contributed to the desire to emulate certain looks or features, she notes. While many cosmetic procedures are generally safe and backed by research, it's crucial for patients to be aware of the potential risks and complications involved. As with any surgical procedure, there are inherent risks such as anesthesia complications, infections, scarring, and changes in sensation. "Therefore, thorough consultation with a qualified healthcare provider and a realistic understanding of both the benefits and risks are essential steps," advises Dr Goel.

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## DOCTORSPEAK

### India's Over-the-Counter Topical Steroid Crisis

Topical steroids, initially designed for short-term use under medical supervision, are increasingly being used without proper guidance, with various factors contributing to this issue. The ease of availability and lack of stringent regulations contribute to the rampant over-the-counter sales, leading to misuse with Topical Steroid-Damaged Facies (TSDF) standing out as a visible consequence. While steroids are used for medical conditions like psoriasis and eczema, amongst others, their unsafe and unregulated use can lead to multiple problems. Let's delve deeper into the reasons behind this phenomenon:



**DR DIKSHA AGRAWAL**  
Consultant Dermatologist  
Ghaziabad Dermatology Centre

#### MISDIAGNOSIS AND SELF-MEDICATION

Many individuals lack proper medical knowledge and may incorrectly diagnose their skin conditions. This leads them to self-medicate with topical steroids without seeking professional advice. This practice not only exacerbates existing skin issues but also puts them at risk of developing dependence on these potent medications.

#### PROFIT-DRIVEN PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY:

Some pharmaceutical companies prioritize profits over public health by making topical steroids readily available without stringent regulations. This accessibility encourages indiscriminate use among consumers who may not be aware of the potential risks and side effects associated with these medications.

#### LACK OF AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

There is a general lack of awareness among the public regarding the appropriate use of topical steroids and their potential adverse effects. Consumers may be influenced by advertisements or recommendations from non-medical sources, further perpetuating the misuse of these medications. For instance, skin thinning occurs due to the inhibition of collagen synthesis by steroids. This can result in skin atrophy, making it more fragile and prone to injuries. Additionally, continuous application of topical steroids can lead to the development of stretch marks (striae) on the skin, highlighting the detrimental effects of steroids. This scenario urgently calls for collaboration between regulatory authorities, healthcare professionals, pharmaceutical companies, and the public to ensure the safe and appropriate use of topical steroids in India.

### WHO: Nations must step up tobacco control measures

Despite significant declines in tobacco consumption over the years, the South-east Asia region continues to be the home of the highest number of tobacco users, including smokeless tobacco. Moreover, the use of e-cigarettes is on the rise, particularly among young people, posing additional health risks. Highlighting the gravity of the menace causing health issues like cancer, respiratory issues, and heart disease, newly elected Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia, Saima Wazed, has called for heightened efforts in controlling both tobacco and e-cigarette usage within the region. Of particular concern is the increasing number of adolescent tobacco users, indicating a concerning trend among younger populations. Additionally, the rise in e-cigarette use among school-aged children, as evidenced by Thailand's experience, demands immediate attention, she said. Furthermore, she stressed the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of e-cigarettes for smoking cessation, underscoring the need for regulatory measures. Key statistics underline the gravity of the situation, with an estimated 411 million tobacco users in the region, accounting for a significant



**SAIMA WAZED**  
Regional Director of WHO  
South-East Asia

portion of global tobacco consumption. Smokeless tobacco usage is particularly prevalent, with the region hosting nearly 77% of global users. Furthermore, there are approximately 11 million adolescent tobacco users, indicating a concerning trend among younger populations. Regarding e-cigarettes, she said, despite efforts by some countries to ban or regulate e-cigarettes, more comprehensive measures are required. "Several countries in the region have set ambitious targets for tobacco control, with initiatives such as "Tobacco Free Bangladesh" and "Tobacco Endgame" in India. "Moreover, countries are implementing demand reduction strategies advocated by WHO, such as the MPOWER package, to further curb tobacco consumption," Wazed said.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Rhythm of the Ruins unveils emotional brilliance

Enter the world of 'Rhythm of the Ruins' by Mukul Kumar, a captivating collection of poignant poems that capture the essence of life's complexities, offering a profound exploration of the beauty found amid chaos and change. From the slums of Bombay to mythic realms, the book promises to touch the hearts and minds of all who dare to delve into its pages

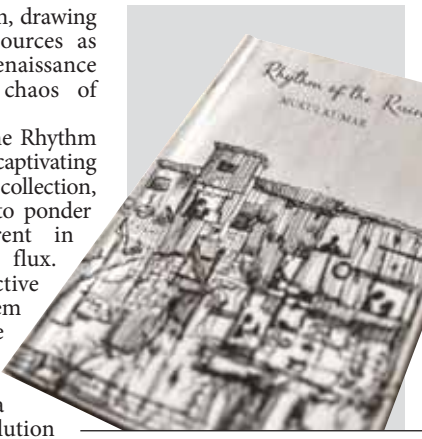
By **SWARN KUMAR ANAND**

*I miss you terribly, Papa  
My sky stretches, serene  
Within the fortress of his care,  
Deluge or draught draws from  
My shelter a joyous smug stare.*

Mukul Kumar's poetry collection "Rhythm of the Ruins" commences with an unwavering dedication to his late father, painting a vivid picture of the poet's profound connection to his Papa. The poem portrays the father as a

nurturing guardian, providing a sense of eternal peace and security. Evoking imagery of a serene sky sheltered within the fortress of paternal love, Kumar finds solace amid life's uncertainties. The phrase "joyous smug stare" hints at the comfort and pride derived from his father's strength and support. *Rhythm of the Ruins* offers a profound exploration of the human experience through thought-provoking poems. Mukul Kumar's mastery of personification infuses each piece with a unique blend of

romance and realism, drawing inspiration from sources as diverse as Renaissance paintings to the chaos of modern life. The title poem, "The Rhythm of the Ruins," sets a captivating tone for the entire collection, prompting readers to ponder the beauty inherent in disorder and flux. Through introspective exploration, the poem delves into the tumult of inner emotions, conveying a yearning for resolution



amid tumult. The vivid imagery of a cloud withholding its rain and the subsequent silence following a storm portrays the poet's struggle for catharsis. Despite the pervasive sense of emptiness, there emerges a resilient endeavour to impose order upon chaos, driven by a desire for rejuvenation symbolised by the invocation of "Gaia" and "Eros". "Will She Come Back?" is an exploration of longing and uncertainty, where time seems

to blur into an unintelligible haze. It delves into the universal question of whether someone departed will return, evoking themes of hope, longing, and the enigmatic nature of fate. With its emotive depth and evocative language, the poem invites readers to contemplate the intricacies of human relationships and the enduring quest for closure. Throughout the book, Mukul Kumar delves into a wide range of themes, from love and loss to the complexities of human nature and the beauty of imperfection. Each poem is

a journey in itself, offering readers moments of reflection and insight. "Not Missing the Rainbow" invites us to ponder the significance of common sights and experiences. What sets "Rhythm of the Ruins" apart is Mukul Kumar's ability to convey deep emotions with simplicity and clarity. His language is accessible yet rich, inviting readers to immerse themselves in the beauty of his verses. One of the most remarkable aspects of this collection is its ability to resonate with readers on a personal level. Kumar's

attention to detail and keen observation of life's nuances ensure that each poem feels like a deeply personal experience. These are poems to return to time and time again, each reading offering new insights and revelations. From its evocative title to its stunning cover design, *Rhythm of the Ruins* (The Browser) is a book that demands attention. Whether you are a lover of poetry or simply someone who appreciates the beauty of well-crafted words, this collection is sure to leave a lasting impression.



# Navalny's death marks Putin path to unchecked power

Aleksei A Navalny, the fiery Russian Opposition leader and critic of President Vladimir Putin, passed away last week. He was regarded as Putin's most significant political opponent to date and had sparked protests from the heart of Moscow to many other parts of the world. His death appears to be shrouded in mystery, according to various media sources. However, the Yamal Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service, where he was detained, issued an official statement regarding his sudden demise. It reads, "On February 16, 2024, in Penal Colony no. 3, the convict Alexei Navalny felt unwell after a walk, almost immediately losing consciousness, according to representatives of the department. Medical personnel from the institution arrived promptly, and an ambulance crew was called. All necessary resuscitation measures were carried out, but unfortunately, the steps did not yield positive results. The emergency medical team pronounced the convict dead. The cause of death is being investigated." Navalny died, leaving behind a legacy of resistance. It is worth knowing about the horrific prison he was kept in. Michel Foucault, the great French philosopher, in his famous work titled "Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison" (Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison in

French, published in 1975) strongly condemns the modern prison system. He argues that prison did not become the principal form of punishment solely because of the humanitarian concerns of the reformists. Probably, he is right; otherwise, the criminal justice system could have taken an ugly turn by now. Due to the continued fight of reformists, human rights activists, liberals, and many legal experts who advocated for alternative ways of punishment, capital punishment has become less prevalent. However, Putin's Russia still maintains a century-old prison system located in the deep Arctic Circle. And this was where Navalny spent the last days of his life. Commonly known as the "Polar Wolf," Penal Colony 3 (IK-3) or FKU-1K3 was established in the 1960s. It is located in the town of Kharp in the Province of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. It serves as a maximum-security corrective colony for men in Russia, although there are nearly 700 such prisons across the country. Initially established as part of the Gulag System of forced labour camps, it was built by Gulag prisoners during the notorious Stalin Era. Situated about 1900 km northeast of Moscow and about 60 km north of the Arctic Circle, the town of Kharp experiences hardly any difference between night and day, as it is mostly covered by snow year round.



Navalny wrote in one of his posts on X, "When I look out of the window, I can see a night, then the evening, and then the night again." This was a real hell where convicts were subjected to mental and physical torment, and Navalny too became a victim of the system last week. Navalny was first jailed in 2021 for 11 and a half years on fraud and other charges. In 2023, another term of 19 years was added to the previous ones for various offences, including funding extremism. The first known attempt by state agents to kill Navalny was in 2020 when he was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok, which was smeared inside his underwear, but he survived after receiving prompt medical treatment in Germany. Less than a year later, he flew back to Moscow to defy Putin, fully aware that

he would soon be jailed. During his trial in 2021, he boldly said in the courtroom, "I have morally offended him (Putin) by surviving. He will enter history as a poisoner. We had Yaroslav the Wise and Alexander the Liberator. And now we will have Vladimir the Poisoner of Underpants." He fearlessly spoke out about all the plans Putin made to kill him but stood his ground and did not flee Russia. As an individual, Navalny never embraced tragedies, and he was a fan of "Star Wars". While in prison in 2021, he wrote, "Prison (exists) in one's mind. And if you think carefully, I am not in prison, but on a space voyage... to a wonderful new world." At 47, when he passed away, he remained hopeful that one day Russia would witness a land of freedom. But alas! The dissident and born activist

Navalny could not see and experience the light of that day. On the way to that blissful voyage, he departed from this world. The saddest part of this tragedy is that so far Navalny's body has not been handed over to his family. His mother, Lyudmila Navalnaya, who immediately travelled to the remote IK-3 penal colony after his death, was barred from seeing his body. Investigators gave Lyudmila three hours to agree to forgo a public funeral or else they will bury him immediately on prison grounds. Meanwhile, Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, who vowed to continue the struggle against Putin, alleged that her husband might have been killed with a Novichok-style nerve agent. According to her, the authorities are delaying the release of the body because they want all traces of

the poison to disappear. But Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov completely rejects Yulia's allegations. Repression is at its peak in Russia as Putin prepares for the presidential election next month. He is virtually assured of winning the election as there is absolutely no Opposition in Russia today. He has been intensifying his efforts, either through his secret agents or by using state forces, since the beginning of his regime to eliminate almost all of his political rivals. Putin has been in power since 1999. He became President in 2000 and has remained in the Kremlin ever since, firmly holding onto power by eliminating all of his rivals. He aims to restore Russia's past glory in the face of the vast expansion and encirclement of the NATO-led West around his country. The traditional inclination to highlight the uniqueness of Russia stems from the moral and spiritual background of the "Russian Idea". Thus, there has always been a debate within Russia about whether it should align with the West or with the East. However, with Putin, it is well-established that today's Russia stands in opposition to the West (which is also strongly opposed to Russia) and aligns with the rest. In this prolonged and challenging journey, he has been striving to convey to Russians and the rest of the world the importance of his continued hold on power.

With the death of Navalny, Putin's game plan has become clear to the world. He is not only seeking to maintain his rule but also to assert Russia's glory against the West in the 21st century. Moreover, the bloody war with neighbouring Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has put Putin and his system in crisis. This war has inflicted significant damage on him. The longer it persists, the more casualties and losses of resources he will incur in the days ahead. However, his objective is straightforward — "the capitulation of Ukraine". He aims to restore the Russian Empire and its vast influence over Eurasia. So, 21st-century Russia under Putin is entangled in myths and faces challenges from within and outside. It can be best described with the prophetic words of Fyodor Tyutchev, a 19th-century poet: "With the mind alone Russia cannot be understood. No ordinary yardstick spans her greatness: She stands alone, unique, In Russia, one can only believe." It is evident that Russia, somehow beyond the rational understanding of a commoner, can no longer accept the geopolitical realities and global governance systems constructed by the West. Thus, the struggle continues between Russia and the West. However, it is better for the US and the rest of the West to engage with Putin.

**As Russia's defiance of Western norms continues, engaging with Putin remains crucial. However, Navalny's death highlights the need for accountability and space for Opposition voices within the regime**



MAKHAN SAINIA

While his vision of a new, powerful, and aggressive Russia may persist, Putin should provide a meaningful platform for opposition voices to point out the flaws in the regime. Whether natural or unnatural, Navalny's death paints a grim picture of Putin.

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## OUTLOOK

### Transforming public broadcasting



SHASHI SHEKHAR VEMPATI

international media such as the Wall Street Journal. The viewership records established by Ramayan set a high benchmark for Indian television for years to come.

The most significant reform in public broadcasting undertaken over the past ten years has been the phasing out of over 1200 obsolete analog terrestrial television transmitters. With this phase-out, Prasar Bharati has not only saved significant expenditure on electricity, but it has also freed up valuable spectrum for 5G and rural communication services. Redeploying the manpower from these transmitter sites towards managing its fast-expanding FM radio network, Prasar Bharati also undertook long-overdue convergence between its television and radio operations, breaking the silos within which Akashvani and Doordarshan had long operated. The expansion of Doordarshan's satellite channels from 23 in 2017 to 36 in 2021, including dedicated channels like DD Kisan, underscores a commitment to diversified content catering to the needs of every Indian. Similarly, Akashvani's footprint expanded significantly, ensuring the voice of India reached the farthest corners of the country and beyond. Digitalisation and the integration of IT systems across DD and AIR have made public broadcasting more accessible and inclusive. The introduction of a sign language commentary for major events and the digitisation of archival content preserve India's rich cultural heritage while making it accessible to all. Internationally, DD India's growth as a channel has been remarkable, becoming the number one English news channel in India and expanding its global footprint to over 190 countries through a combination of platforms such as myK in Korea, YuppTV in North America, apart from YouTube. This international outreach is critical for projecting India's perspectives and values on the global stage.

Financial sustainability has also been a focus, with Prasar Bharati achieving a 13 per cent revenue growth in 2021-2022 from commercial operations. This financial prudence, coupled with technological advancements, has established a strong foundation for a roadmap towards a self-

sustaining public broadcasting ecosystem.

Strategic interventions, such as broadcasting weather reports for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and expanding the digital footprint through platforms like the NewsOnAir App, reflect a bold and innovative approach to leveraging public broadcasting for national interest and global outreach. The impact of a decade of reforms in public broadcasting is clearly visible, with the Reuters Institute of Journalism Studies ranking Doordarshan and Akashvani as the most credible and trustworthy sources of news in India in its annual surveys. Yet, these reforms are not an end but a beginning.

To realise Prime Minister Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, public broadcasting must continue to evolve. It must serve as a platform for education, innovation, and dialogue, bridging the digital divide and ensuring that every Indian, irrespective of their socio-economic status, has access to information, education, and entertainment. This becomes apparent when one considers the diversity of India's languages across regions, many of which are either underserved or unserved by the private media. Akashvani's services spanning more than a hundred languages and dialects are a reminder of how challenging it is to disseminate developmental messages to the remotest regions of India in a consistent and accurate manner. Through Prime Minister Modi's Mann ki Baat, Akashvani has not only amplified developmental messaging across India but has also contributed to the technologies of the future. Today, AI models are being developed for these languages and dialects by leveraging the corpus of Mann ki Baat recordings and the archives of Doordarshan and All India Radio.

The journey from "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" to "Viksit Bharat" is long and challenging, but with the strategic use of public broadcasting, India is poised to achieve this vision, ensuring that the voice of every Indian is heard, and the story of India's development reaches every corner of the globe by amplifying these billion voices.

(The writer is a former CEO of Prasar Bharati)

## PERSPECTIVE

### Legal support to MSP hurts economy

The thirteen-month-long farmers' protest on the borders of the national capital in 2020-21 was called off when three farm laws were repealed. Now, Punjab farmers have demanded statutory guarantees for minimum support prices (MSPs) for 23 crops, loan waivers, pensions, amendments to trade policies such as withdrawing from the WTO, withdrawing criminal cases filed by agencies against them, free electricity, and also exemption from accountability for any pollution and environmental hazards caused by farm practices. In several rounds of discussions between the government and farm unions, government representatives have explained that a legal guarantee for the procurement of 23 crops at MSP could result in a fiscal disaster and damage the economy. Referring to the 2020-21 data, the total value of agricultural produce is ₹40 lakh crore, and no government can make a provision of this amount from the total outlay of ₹47 lakh crore. Hardly any money would be left for other development works and achieving social goals necessary for overall growth. The data reveals that the government spent ₹2.5 lakh crore in 2022-23 on procuring wheat and rice at MSP. The Union Government's proposal for a five-year contract with farmers to procure maize, cotton, and pulses — arhar, tur, masoor, and urad — at MSP has also been rejected by farm unions. Furthermore, farmers are demanding to work out MSP based on the formula C2+50 per cent (C2 is the comprehensive cost including the imputed cost of capital and rent on land), suggested by the Dr Swaminathan Committee, while at present, it is being worked out with all paid-out costs A2+FL, which includes costs incurred towards hiring human labour, leased rent for the land, cost of inputs like seeds, fertilizers, manure, depreciation on implements and buildings, irrigation charges, interest on working capital, and also the imputed value of family labor. Agriculture contributes 17 per cent to India's economy, while it employs 50 per cent of the workforce. Furthermore, only 2 per cent of Indian farmers own 25 per cent of the land, with the top 7 per cent of farming households owning 46 per cent of farmlands. These households are affluent and have a strong influence on policy decisions. However, the majority, comprising over 80 per cent of farming

households, have land holdings of less than a hectare. The total holding of this 80 per cent household group accounts for only 30 per cent of the agricultural lands.

The protest has garnered global support. Similar to the previous protest at the borders of Delhi in 2020-21, Claudia Webbe, a UK MP from Leicester East, has supported the Delhi Chalo protest 2.0, emphasising that Indian farmers are peacefully protesting but are met with spiked barricades and tear gas en route to Delhi. Dr Swaiman Singh's organisation, based in the US, which provided medical services to farmers at the Tikri border during the earlier protest, has urged volunteers to provide similar support this time too. Support is also pouring in from many other quarters for this edition of the protest.

In a viral video, Sanyukta Kisan Morcha leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal is heard saying, "cut Modi's graph." This indicates that the entire protest is politically motivated and lacks sincerity in pushing for the demands. It does not appear to be a genuine movement to save farmers; rather, it seems to be a movement to remove Modi from power. The main Opposition party, Congress, through its national president Mallikarjun Kharge, announced during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh, that his party would bring MSP under the purview of legal guarantee if voted to power in the forthcoming Lok Sabha election.

Rahul Gandhi also echoed similar sentiments. Clearly, the Opposition has a political agenda, and their only aim is to remove Modi and seize power at the centre. However, all the opinion polls suggest that Modi is poised for a strong comeback for a third term. Both jawan and kisan draw sympathy from everyone in the country. The former protects us from aggression and disasters, while the latter provides us with food and is considered Annadata (provider of food). The Food Corporation of India procures grain at MSP and utilises it in the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana to feed more than 800 million people at a rate of 5 kg of wheat or rice per month per person. The government heavily subsidises (80 per cent) in favour of consumers, with only one-fifth of the benefits going to producers for subsidised power, fertilizer, etc. Whenever the price of essential commodities

rises, the government either bans exports or increases imports, as the case may be. This is purely to help consumers. If farmers' demands for MSP are met, it would result in a 25 to 30 per cent increase in food inflation. No government will accept such high food inflation.

Ironically, the MSP of wheat and rice in north India is higher than the market price. Punjab has a procurement system at its mandis where Arhtiyas (commission agents) charge a 2.5 per cent commission, and the Punjab Government charges a 6 per cent fee. Procurement of wheat and rice in Punjab exceeds production; in fact, grains from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where market rates are 15 to 20 per cent lower than MSP, are transported and sold in Punjab. Punjab has a hundred per cent irrigation potential and provides free electricity up to 300 units for each farmer. Additionally, seeds, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides are heavily subsidised; farmers utilise all these to increase productivity.

Economic principles suggest that if MSP is artificially kept high, a large part of the produce will remain unpurchased, leading to hardship for small farmers. Commodities such as poultry, fisheries, fruits, vegetables, and milk are traded in the free market, and there is no demand to fix MSP for any of these.

The present AAP Government in Punjab has allowed 300 units of free power, which has had a devastating effect on agricultural lands. During my recent visit to Punjab, I observed that farmers switch on the water pump and keep it on auto mode, resulting in excess water being brought out. This causes a lowering of the water table and, more importantly, floods marginal lands adjoining agricultural fields. Consequently, the land becomes saline and less suitable for agriculture, making it impossible to grow food crops. The provision of free power is leading to desertification. Punjab's most eminent farm expert, SS Johl, has estimated that 80 per cent of the State's debt is due to free electricity. The debt-to-GDP ratio in the State is 48 per cent, the highest among all States in India, leaving very little money for infrastructure development. Furthermore, high farm income leads to higher land prices. No industrialist ventures into acquiring land at such high prices (ranging from one to five crores per acre), which is a reason for slow industrial growth in the State.

**The farmers protest is politically motivated and lacks sincerity in pushing for the demands. It does not appear to be a genuine movement to save farmers; rather, it seems to be a movement to remove Modi from power**



BK SINGH

Studies have revealed that the water table has declined by 25 meters in 20 years in Punjab. It is high time that farmers heed the government's suggestion and diversify agricultural lands for other crops that are less water-intensive. 2023 was designated as the International Year of Millets. Growing millets aligns with more natural agricultural practices and offers crops with higher nutritional value. To prevent overexploitation of the land, the cultivation of paddy needs to be minimised. Studies have shown that every hectare of paddy crop causes 5 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Given our efforts to reduce emissions to mitigate climate-related disruptions and catastrophes, it is imperative to shift our crop cultivation practices away from paddy and towards millets. Furthermore, if farmers continue stubble burning, it will take a toll on health and harm the environment.

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





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

You possess a creative and diligent spirit, often applying tried-and-true methods to ensure tasks are completed efficiently and on schedule. Your focus on detail and structure means you're likely to shoulder significant responsibilities. Embrace the satisfaction that comes from overseeing projects and steering them to completion. However, cultivating consistency in personal connections will be beneficial. Expect an uptick in professional opportunities, whether through expanded business ventures, a lucrative contract, or a job proposal. While you may encounter a mix of support and skepticism from those around you, and a family member might embark on a journey, rest assured that the initiatives you've launched are progressing well. As outcomes begin to materialize, the value of enduring friendships becomes ever clearer, marking a period ripe for both personal and professional growth.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Indigo  
Lucky day Monday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week embarks on a journey of progress and ambition. Feel the momentum guiding you forward, reminding you that although the path ahead is lengthy, the outcome will be immensely rewarding. For some, a period of acknowledgment and praise for their contributions is on the horizon. This recognition fuels a deeper drive to excel, accompanied by a surge of personal development and resilience. Navigate this time with ease, drawing on your inner strength. However, as the week draws to a close, a challenge to your self-assurance may arise, potentially impacting your creative flow. It's a pivotal moment to reassess responsibilities, inviting collaboration to ensure continued growth. Reflecting on your aspirations and strategies will be crucial in maintaining your course towards achieving your ambitions.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Amber  
Lucky day Thursday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you find yourself enveloped in a wave of romance, setting the stage for a significant connection that could blossom into something deeply fulfilling. The period ahead hints at the beginning of a bond brimming with promise, potentially evolving into a profound and joyous union. Your adventurous spirit shines brightly, guiding you fearlessly through any situation. Adventure may call your name, suggesting a journey; however, proceed with caution and mindfulness regarding your possessions. Your proactive and resolute nature equips you to face any hurdles with confidence, while your innate tendency to offer support showcases your compassionate and altruistic side. Your empathy drives you to assist those in need, reflecting your generous spirit. Additionally, this period may bring about a notable shift in your living situation, marking a significant change in your surroundings.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Teal  
Lucky day Thursday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This period marks a significant shift towards improvement in financial prospects and overall well-being. Expect an increase in your financial assets, possibly through unexpected gifts or familial contributions. With the approach of Valentine's Day, some may find themselves on the receiving end of romantic gestures, possibly including commitments of a lifelong nature. However, a segment might grapple with profound emotional challenges, experiencing feelings of remorse, unease, and sleep disturbances that disrupt the peace of night. These feelings could escalate worries and amplify perceived difficulties. Yet, as the week progresses, a newfound self-assurance in personal capabilities and talents emerges, fostering a shift from mere aspirations to tangible achievements. It's a moment ripe for transforming dreams into plans and ambitions into realities, heralding a phase of action and fulfillment.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Coral  
Lucky day Friday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week is set to be a period of significant challenges and triumphs. Your determination and clear-headed approach will guide you through any adversity. With an indomitable spirit and the strength to overcome any hurdles, you embody the essence of resilience. Your leadership qualities shine brightly, inspiring those around you to seek your guidance and emulate your fair and principled demeanor. You possess the remarkable ability to influence the direction of your journey positively. For some, an opportunity to assume a pivotal role or leadership position may arise, recognizing your competence and effective communication skills. Your adeptness in navigating complex situations and your talent in articulating your vision will be key assets in this period of growth and achievement.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Turquoise  
Lucky day Saturday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week may bring feelings of unease and frustration as your efforts seem unrewarded. You are on the verge of completing a significant phase, poised on the edge of achieving a goal that has demanded much from you. As the week progresses, a sense of fulfillment washes over you. Moments of joy, significant achievements, and the culmination of efforts lead to a satisfying sense of completion. This is a time for you to bask in a well-deserved break, embracing the peace and satisfaction that come with accomplishments. Your determination and creative spirit play pivotal roles in realizing your ambitions. Recognition for your hard work is on the horizon, affirming that your persistence is about to pay off. Additionally, this period holds the promise of new beginnings in personal connections, be it friendships or romantic endeavors.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Olive  
Lucky day Sunday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

You embody the essence of a liberated spirit, which illuminates your vibrant emotions and boundless creativity. At your core lies a profound capacity for love, marked by kindness and a deep appreciation for calmness and harmony. Your emotional landscape is rich, occasionally touched by shifts in mood, driven by a desire to share your insightful perspectives with the world. Incorporating practices like meditation and yoga into your daily life, you access a profound level of spiritual autonomy and strength. Your innovative mindset often leads you to reject conventional viewpoints, embracing instead a fountain of fresh thoughts and artistic expressions. This balance of mind and spirit is reflected in your joy for life, especially towards the week's end when social gatherings, celebrations, and the warmth of shared victories become your focus. These moments underscore the significance of joyous times with those closest to you, reinforcing the value of community and shared happiness.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Emerald  
Lucky day Wednesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week kicks off with a wave of joyous gatherings! Whether it's attending festive events, significant celebrations, or heartwarming reunions, these occasions promise an unforgettable experience. Immersing yourself in the warmth of companionship, you may find yourself reflecting deeply on life's pleasures. Indulging in delightful cuisine and the finer things, you're drawn to enhance your comfort through generous spending. However, it's a time to also be mindful of your expenditure, aiming to harmonize your desires with financial wisdom. Amidst this, a period of introspection may reveal inner truths previously unnoticed, encouraging a deeper connection with your inner essence. Embracing faith in higher principles and confidence in your capabilities will pave the way for these insights to enrich your life.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Maroon  
Lucky day Sunday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

Embrace a spirit of gratitude for the myriad of blessings surrounding you, recognizing the joy in sharing triumphs with those close to you. The coming days are filled with gatherings, from joyous celebrations to communal events, offering a welcome break from daily routines and a chance to revel in the warmth of companionship. Your feelings are profound and unique, leading you to seek moments of quiet reflection midweek. A serene approach, involving quiet contemplation, will bolster your resilience. As the week progresses, you may encounter challenges that prompt introspection regarding significant changes in your approach to life or work. It becomes apparent that clinging to outdated viewpoints may hinder progress, urging a thoughtful examination of what to release in favor of growth and renewal.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Golden  
Lucky day Friday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

At the beginning of the week, you may encounter challenges in your personal connections that could leave you feeling unexpectedly wounded. This setback may initially cast a shadow over your outlook, obscuring your ability to see the situation clearly. However, as the week progresses, you'll find a renewed sense of clarity and an unexpected resilience within yourself. You'll discover that your capacity for affection has not only endured but has grown, allowing you to overcome misunderstandings and negativity with ease. This newfound strength fosters open communication and sets positive developments in motion. Additionally, professional opportunities may arise from overseas engagements, offering significant prospects for advancement. You might also experience a profound personal revelation, marking a pivotal moment of growth. Any significant hurdles that previously seemed insurmountable will now appear manageable.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Lavender  
Lucky day Tuesday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you may find yourself deeply moved by your feelings, allowing your creative thoughts to soar. Your tendency to prioritize emotions over logic could lead to unrealistic expectations. Some may experience a disruption in their natural rhythms, leading to moments of frustration, yet they find solace and expression in creative or spiritual endeavors. Be wary of misleading situations or individuals, as you could be exposed to dishonesty. A sense of remorse may linger, stemming from a desire to undo past actions, yet the opportunity for change has passed. Nighttime may bring about unease, as fears and worries seem to loom larger in the quiet hours, making rest elusive. You may find yourself restless, hesitant to surrender to sleep, caught in a cycle of anxiety and reflection.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Mauve  
Lucky day Monday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

Your recent challenges and rivalries are behind you, paving the way for you to savor the fruits of your diligence. Your efforts haven't gone unnoticed, and while the acknowledgment you receive may vary in its expression, it's assuredly present. It's a signal that you're moving in the right direction, yet the journey ahead remains substantial. Embark on this path with optimism and assurance. Mindfulness in financial management is crucial; thoughtful expenditure is advised. This period may unexpectedly usher in new emotional journeys, hinting at significant life events such as welcoming a new family member. Your expenditure may reflect a playful detachment. However, the period also promises an increase in material well-being and contentment, enhancing your overall sense of satisfaction.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Sunday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Saraswati calls for being in harmony with all

Taking forward discussion from the previous issue, the first to make note of is Veena (a stringed musical instrument) in Saraswati's hands. Pleasing sound emanating from the musical instrument comes through harmony and symphony of varied sound notes excited by different strings. In an implied sense, Mother remains the beholder of all Shabda - spoken as well as written words carrying meaning. And the word carries meaning only when the letters are placed in an orderly fashion. It also implies that pleasing mannerism alone could help being in harmony with those around to enjoy a smooth run of life. Here, it will be interesting to look at the following verse, which throws light on the origin of the words with name and meaning: "Prajapatirva ida?asit; Tasya vaga Dwitiya asit, Vagvaiparama? Brahman". Literally it means that in the beginning was the Prajapati (the lord of all beings)

with whom was Vaka. Vaka is spoken of as second to Him, because She is first potentially in, and then as Shakti issues forth; and the word is Brahmana. The same concept resonates in the 4th Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Vaka is thus a Shakti or Power of the creator. Going by ancient India's philosophic perception, the sound that got excited when the first motion at the Primal-Source happened, was the primal-sound Om. Following which, when energy streams got excited out of the seeds of creation, emerged unaccounted number of differentiated sounds. Out of them, the ones audible to human ears, are termed as root syllables (Bija mantra). 50/51 alphabets of Sanskrit are all root syllables. The harmony and symphony of these root syllables led to the making of the words with name

and form. The words inherently rest in Akasha (the space filled with eternal element of consciousness). Akasha was the first to emerge in the process of creation of the Universe, which even modern science acknowledges. That provided the ground for further evolution of the energy chains excited in the process. Akasha is supposed to hold in its womb the supra-sensual power of sound, which flowing through the air comes in touch with the vocal cord to manifest words audible to human ears. Mother, thus, metaphorically symbolises being beholder of words. The mother is perceived holding a book (the Veda) in one hand, which symbolises being beholder of eternal truth - self-revealed design parameters underlying existence. And that remains beyond the scope of individual judgment. In this context Rumi's saying becomes imperative: "Somewhere beyond right or wrong, there is a garden." One could explore



truth only with this mind-set, which calls for moving beyond the sense of duality of mind. True knowledge and wisdom can be therefore acquired only by a pure uncorrupted mind, free from any limitation whatsoever.

The Mother is shown having a rosary in another hand. It implies that repeated reflection over knowledge acquired would be needed for realisation of the true import of the subject matter of learning. So runs the verse: "Shashtra sunishchit puni-puni dekhi", which means that repeated reflection firms up our insights. She is shown moving freely in a water body, having beautiful Lotus flower around. Lotus grows out of the mud lying in water body's bed. The Lotus flower here symbolises both creativity and lustre evident with knowledge. It needs to be appreciated here that though born in muddy water, not even a drop of water or mud particle can stick to the lotus flower leaves, thus implying a sense of detachment. So, true wisdom can be acquired only when explored with a sense of detachment. Otherwise, sense of duality driving a human mind will not let you figure out the thin dividing line between truth and untruth.

A peacock is also shown around Mother, which she uses as a carrier while moving up above in the sky. We cannot afford to lose sight of the forces routed through the infinite, inaccessible and indestructible Akasha either. And, obviously tracking down the information laid down there is no easy task. It needs to be remembered here that the prized feed of a peacock is poisonous snake. When the peacock digests the snake's poison, it leads to a change in its body chemistry, which results in the beautiful colour of its plumage. Similarly, knowledge acquisition cannot be an easy task. Only those who take on the pains associated with learning process kindly, would be able to acquire the knowledge and wisdom, vital to turning life into a beautiful experience. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

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