

OPINION 6 TRADITIONAL INDIAN MEDICINE GOES GLOBAL

WORLD 8 ECONOMY TO SEE STRONGER GROWTH IN 2023-24: RBI

SPORTS 12 WORLD CUP SQUAD NOT FINAL: ROHIT



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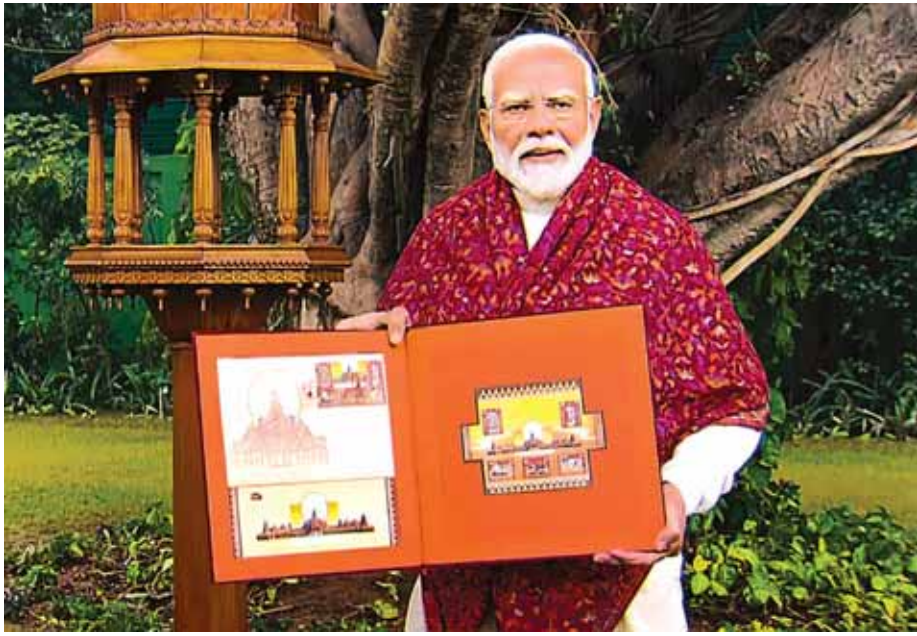
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# Modi travels with Ram, from Rameswaram to Ayodhya

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the consecration ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya just around the corner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is currently touring temples in south India to garner support for the upcoming event. These temples are of particular significance in the Ramayana, as they mark the paths traversed by Lord Ram during his vanvas.

In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit some significant temples in Tamil Nadu on January 20 and 21. On January 20, Prime Minister Modi will participate in a programme at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, around 11 am. He will also listen to various scholars reciting verses from the Kamba Ramayanam in the temple. Thereafter, Prime Minister Modi will reach Rameswaram around 2 pm and perform darshan and puja in the Sri Arulmigu Ramanathaswamy Temple. "This aligns with Bharatiya cultural ethos and bonding, which is at the core of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', the statement said. In the Sri Arulmigu Ramanathaswamy Temple, Prime Minister Modi will also participate in Bhajan Sandhya, where multiple devotional songs will be sung in the temple complex in the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi releases commemorative postage stamps on Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple and a book of stamps issued on Lord Ram around the world, in New Delhi, on Thursday

evening. Meanwhile, Modi on Thursday issued commemorative postage stamps on Thursday, honouring Ayodhya's Ram Mandir. Additionally, a book containing stamps dedicated to Lord Ram from around the world was released. The intricate design of the stamps captures the essence of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, featuring six distinct components. These include the Ram Mandir itself, the timeless Choupai "Mangal Bhavan Amangal Hari," a radiant depiction of the sun, the sacred Saryu river, and sculptures found in and around the temple. The release of the commemorative stamps comes days before the consecration ceremony at the Ayodhya temple on Monday. The commemorative stamp collection consists of six different stamps, each featuring

characters and symbols from Lord Ram's story. These include Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman, Maa Shabri, Kevatray, Jatayu, and the Ram Mandir. The use of gold leaf detailing for the sun rays and the Choupai adds a regal touch to the miniature sheet. Continuing the practice observed during the Prime Minister's visits to temples in the last few days, where he attends Ramayana chanting in various languages such as Marathi, Malayalam, and Telugu, he will participate in a program called 'Shri Ramayana Paryana' in this temple. In the programme, eight different traditional Mandalis will recite the Sanskrit, Awadhi, Kashmiri, Gurumukhi, Assamese, Bengali, Mithili, and Gujarati Ramkathas, recounting the episode of Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya, said the PMO.

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## Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra not over yet: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday that a transparent system implemented by his government, coupled with honest efforts and a focus on people's participation, has resulted in the upliftment of nearly 25 crore people out of poverty in the last nine years.

"Nobody could have imagined that poverty in India could decline, but the poor have demonstrated that it is possible when provided with resources," Modi said during a virtual interaction with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. The Prime Minister mentioned that the "Vikas Rath" has transformed into a "Vishwas Rath", instilling trust among the people that no deprived person will be excluded from its benefits. Referring to a Niti Aayog report highlighting the reduction in poverty numbers, Modi remarked that India has set a model for other countries in assisting the poor and has garnered global attention. He expressed satisfaction

with the encouraging findings of the report. The Prime Minister said that the Yatra has surpassed his expectations for success, and due to increasing demand from the masses, his government is considering extending its deadline beyond January 26. People are urging that the vehicles, intended to publicise welfare schemes and enroll more beneficiaries, should visit their areas as well. "It has evolved into a mass movement in just two months, and a study will recognise it as a great example of last-mile delivery," Modi added, noting that it has already reached 70-80 per cent of panchayats. He mentioned that health check-ups for over four crore people have been conducted during the Yatra, with more than 2.5 crore screened for TB. Additionally, over 50 crore Ayushman cards have been distributed, and nearly 35 lakh farmers have been included in the PM Kisan Yojna. These are not just statistics for him; they are a source of life.

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## Ram Lalla ready to open his eyes

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/BP SINGH ■ AYODHYA

In a historic event that resonates with the hearts of millions, the new idol of Lord Ram Lalla has taken its revered seat in the sanctum sanctorum of the majestic Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya. The sacred installation ceremony commenced with elaborate rituals, initiated by the Ganesh puja on Thursday afternoon.

Lord Ganesha was invoked to bless the proceedings, which included the ceremonial bathing of the idol with water from holy rivers and the application of various consecrated medicines. The journey of the silver statue of Ram Lalla to the sanctum sanctorum began late on Wednesday night, symbolically touring the Ram temple complex. Originally intended for a Janmabhoomi complex tour, the decision to use a smaller silver statue



Puja being performed at Garb Grih

was made for security reasons and due to the substantial weight of the immovable idol. Under the guidance of chief host Dr Anil Mishra, the 10 kg silver statue embarked on a palanquin journey through the city, accompanied by resonating Vedic chants that echoed through the temple complex. Flowers showered the procession from Acharyas, temple construction engineers, and security personnel.

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## CAPSULE

### JK insurance scam: ED attaches ₹36 cr assets

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday said it has attached fixed deposits and a land worth more than Rs 36 crore belonging to Reliance General Insurance Pvt Ltd and Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Private Limited as part of a money laundering probe linked to an alleged insurance scam in Jammu and Kashmir. P2

### Curbs on BS III, BS IV vehicles lifted in Delhi

NEW DELHI: The Central Government on Thursday lifted a ban on non-essential construction work and plying of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers in Delhi-NCR amid an improvement in air quality in the region. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) noted a significant improvement with an AQI of 316 at 2 pm, well below the threshold for invoking Stage-III actions under the air pollution control plan called the Graded Response Action Plan.

### Yasin Malik main shooter of 4 IAF men killing: Eyewitness

JAMMU: JKLF chief Yasin Malik lifted his 'pheran', pulled out his gun and opened fire at a group of IAF personnel, an eyewitness deposed before a special CBI court on Thursday while narrating what happened in Srinagar on January 25, 1990. Former IAF corporal Rajwar Umeshwar Singh, who survived the terror attack in which four IAF personnel were killed, pointed to Malik in the courtroom as the main shooter. Malik attended the court proceedings on video from Delhi's Tihar Jail where he has been incarcerated since 2019. P2

### Youth dies of heart attack in coaching class

INDORE: A 20-year-old man preparing for the civil services exam died after he fell unconscious at his coaching class in Indore in Madhya Pradesh due to a heart-related disorder, officials said on Thursday. In footage from the coaching class' CCTV, which went viral on social media, Raja Lodhi, a resident of Sagar, can be seen falling unconscious on a table.

# Indian Navy rescues crew from drone attack in Gulf of Aden

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian Navy warship came to the rescue of a merchant vessel that had come under a drone attack in the Gulf of Aden, rescuing all 22 crew members, including at least nine Indians. The commercial ship is now en route to its next port of call. Providing details on Thursday, Navy officials said that the guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam intercepted MV Genco Picardy a little over an hour after the Marshall Island-flagged ship came under a drone strike in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday night. The strike on the cargo vessel MV Genco Picardy, about 60 nautical miles south of Port Aden, occurred amid increasing global concerns over attacks on merchant ships in the Red Sea and Arabian Sea. There were no reports of any casualties, and officials said the fire on the vessel was contained. The Indian Navy's frontline warship INS Visakhapatnam responded within an hour to the distress call from MV Genco Picardy following the drone attack at 23:11 hours on Wednesday, they said. The Indian Navy's EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) specialists boarded the vessel early Thursday morning to inspect the damaged area, adding that the vessel was cleared for further transit following thorough scrutiny. The vessel is proceeding to the



next port of call. "The INS Visakhapatnam, mission-deployed in the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations, swiftly responded to a distress call by the Marshall Island-flagged MV Genco Picardy following a drone attack at 23:11 hours on January 17," the Navy said. It stated that the warship intercepted the vessel at 00:30 hours on Thursday to provide assistance. "Indian Naval EOD specialists from INS Visakhapatnam boarded the vessel in the early hours of January 18 to inspect the damaged area. After a thorough inspection, the EOD specialists

have rendered the area safe for further transit," the Navy said in a statement. Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said INS Visakhapatnam was undertaking an anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden. The Indian Navy thwarted an attempted hijacking of the Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk in the North Arabian Sea on January 5, rescuing all its crew members. "The Liberian-flagged vessel MV Chem Pluto, with 21 Indian crew members, was the target of a drone attack off India's west coast on December 23. In addition to MV Chem Pluto, another commercial

oil tanker en route to India came under a suspected drone strike in the Southern Red Sea on the same day. The vessel had a team of 25 Indian crew members. Meanwhile, Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar stated that the Navy has already enhanced the deployment of its frontline ships and surveillance aircraft for maritime security operations in view of the maritime environment in the critical sea lanes, including in the North and Central Arabian Sea. The Indian Navy has deployed its assets along the western coast to protect India's maritime interests and is committed to preventing

any "instability," said Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar. Addressing the situation in the Arabian Sea and Red Sea area, he mentioned that Indian assets are already deployed for two anti-piracy operations. Speaking at the fourth edition of the Global Artificial Intelligence Summit, he stated, "We are deployed to ensure that our national interest in the maritime domain is protected. We have our own deployments, including two ongoing anti-piracy operations and anti-drone support for merchant shipping." These remarks come amid growing global concerns over Houthi militants targeting cargo vessels in the Red Sea, particularly against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The Navy chief emphasised the Navy's role in preserving, protecting, and pursuing national interests in the maritime domain, highlighting ongoing anti-piracy operations since 2008. Operation Sankalp, near the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman, aims to counter piracy, with an adequate number of deployed assets to prevent any resurgence. Admiral Kumar reassured that no attacks have occurred on Indian merchant ships, stating, "Our message is that we are not going to permit any instability or insecurity to happen." He also mentioned that in the last piracy attempt on a ship with a high number of Indian crew, Indian assets were deployed promptly, and an effective response was provided.

## Kejriwal skips ED summons fourth time

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Reiterating his claim that the BJP was targeting him, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal refused to appear in person before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday. He asserted that the communication accompanying the fourth summons issued on January 12 was arbitrary, mala fide, and illegal. This marks Kejriwal's fourth notice from the agency, requiring him to appear on either January 18 or January 19. Sources indicated that the Chief Minister alleged the ED is summoning him at the BJP's behest, not for a specific investigation or statement recording, but to arrest him. The alleged motive is to prevent him from fulfilling his constitutional and statutory duties and campaigning in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Meanwhile, the BJP has criticized Kejriwal for consistently disregarding the Enforcement Directorate's summons, asserting that he fears arrest due to his alleged involvement as the "kingpin" in the excise scam. P2

# Pakistan retaliatory attacks on Iran kill nine

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Thursday used killer drones and rockets to carry out "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, killing 9 people, a day after Islamabad downgraded diplomatic ties with Tehran following Iranian attacks on terror bases in Balochistan. On Thursday morning Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement on Thursday.

It said a number of terrorists were killed during the intelligence-based operation - codenamed "Marg Bar Sarmachar" (Death to Sarmachar). In Persian, "marg bar" means "death to" while "Sarmachar" means guerrilla in the Baloch language. The precision strikes were carried out using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Pakistan military's media wing. It said that "hideouts used by terrorist organisations namely Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan

Liberation Front (BLF) were successfully struck." The two groups have carried out several deadly attacks in Pakistan in the past. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the attack and said that the Pakistani charge d'affaires was summoned by the ministry to convey Tehran's protest to Islamabad and provide an explanation about the attack, Iran's state-run Press TV reported. Quoting Deputy governor of the province Alireza Marhamati, official news agency 'IRNA' said that nine non-Iranian nationals - two men, three women and four children - were killed in the

attack, which is being investigated by the Iranian security officials. There was also an explosion near Saravan city, 347 km southeast of the provincial capital Zahedan, where there were no casualties, he added. Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi confirmed the figures later in the day. The strikes came two days after Iran launched unprecedented missile and drone attacks on what it said were directed at the bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group 'Jaish al-Adl' in the restive Balochistan province, prompting Pakistan to recall its ambassador to Iran and suspended all planned high-level bilateral visits.

Foreign Office spokesperson Muntaz Baloch Wednesday said the Iranian envoy to Pakistan who is currently visiting Iran may not return to Islamabad for the time being. The tit-for-tat attacks within two days have raised tensions in the volatile region, already roiled by Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the targeting of the merchant ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthis. In its statement on Thursday, the Foreign Office said Islamabad has consistently shared its serious concerns with Tehran about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani origin terrorists calling themselves Sarmachars inside

Iran. However, because of lack of action on our serious concerns, these so-called Sarmachars continued to spill the blood of innocent Pakistanis with impunity. This morning's action was taken in light of credible intelligence of impending large-scale terrorist activities by these so-called Sarmachars," it added. This action is a manifestation of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to protect and defend its national security against all threats," it said, adding that Pakistan will continue to take all necessary steps to preserve the safety and security of its people which is "sacrosanct, inviolable and sacred."



# BJP slams Kejriwal for skipping ED summons

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for repeatedly skipping the Enforcement Directorate's summonses and said he fears that he will be arrested as he knows he is the "kingpin" of the alleged excise scam.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged Kejriwal did not appear before the ED as he was "sweating" in winter and "shaking in fear" anticipating his arrest since he knows that he is the kingpin of the excise policy "scam".

Bhatia described the ED's summonses to Kejriwal as "justified" and asked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor why he doesn't approach the court challenging the probe agency's summonses, instead of writing letters and skipping them. "You are sweating in winter and shaking in fear. Former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, sitting behind bars, are asking Kejriwal when



will he join them (in prison)," he said. The BJP spokesperson said now it "seems certain" that the "kingpin" of the liquor scam will be put behind bars. "Now it's confirmed that Arvind Kejriwal knows that he committed this scam worth thousands of crores of rupees. Arvind Kejriwal has come to know that

withdraw its summons." "Kejriwal is synonymous with anarchy. Breaking the law, corruption, loot and kickbacks are in his DNA," he added.

The BJP leader likened Kejriwal to the protagonist of the Aamir Khan-starrer film "Ghajini" who suffers from amnesia and reminded the chief minister that he had said in the past that anyone facing allegations of graft should resign and return to his position only after getting a clean chit.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva has said that the way Arvind Kejriwal hiding from ED notice he looks like an economic fugitive. "It seems that Kejriwal knows that the investigation conducted by ED has established that he is the main brain behind the liquor scam and the beneficiary of the scam. Therefore, now he is trying to linger on the investigation as much as possible but he should know that the countrymen have now understood that the AAP government is immersed in corruption and Kejriwal will face the consequences in the upcoming Lok Sabha and assembly elections," Sachdeva said.



# LG nod for amendment in Delhi Prison Rules 2018

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved a draft notification for amendment in Delhi Prison Rules 2018, paving way for premature release of infirm prisoners aged over 70 years who have completed half of their sentences.

Giving this information here on Thursday, officials said the amendment was made in compliance of a Delhi High Court order, passed while hearing a writ petition that sought the premature release of infirm prisoners in terms of the reports of All India Committee on Jail Reforms (1982-1983 Mulla Committee) and model Prison Rules, 2003. The amendment seeks to ensure a humanitarian approach towards such old-age and infirm prisoners, while also decongesting Delhi's overcrowded jails at Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini that are housing over 20,000 inmates against their total capacity of 10,026 only. The amendment will however not be applicable to convicts serving life or death sentence or those convicted under treason, terrorism, POCSO charges. An Evaluation Committee will be formed to assess if a prisoner will be eligible for release. All eligible cases recommended by this committee will be submitted to the LG for approval of

remittance of remaining sentence for pre-mature release, they said.

As per the amendment, Rule 1246-A has been inserted in the Delhi Prison Rules 2018, as proposed by the Prison Department and concurred by the Home and the Law Department, they said. Presently, as per the Rule 1251 of Delhi Prison Rules 2018, only life convicts who have spent 14 years of their total sentence are pre-maturely released on the recommendations of the Sentence Review Board.

With the latest amendment in the prison rules, incapacitated convict — those aged 70 years and above and unable to perform their own daily tasks — could be released prematurely on the recommendations of a review committee set up for this purpose, they said.

The prisoners to be released under the amended rule will have to be certified "incapacitated convicts" by a medical board. The Evaluation Committee will evaluate the medical condition of the convict on the basis of certification of medical board, the officials said.

The Evaluation Committee will comprise: deputy inspector general (prisons), superintendent of the jail concerned as member secretary, resident medical officer of the jail and two specialist doctors from any government

hospital to be nominated by director general (prison) as members.

Further, a social investigation report including feedback from the victim(s) of the crime involving the convict, too will have to be submitted to the committee while deciding the remittance, they said.

The DG (Prisons) may also take opinion of any medical authority like AIIMS as it deems fit in this regard. The Evaluation Committee may also recommend whether convict is fit for premature release under this rule, they added.

This move will cover prisoners who are undergoing either rigorous or simple imprisonment for a fixed term of sentence and their appeals against the convictions have been decided by the appellate courts.

However, these rules shall not be applicable to any incapacitated convict or otherwise who has been sentenced to death or is a life convict or prisoner convicted under offences under NDPS Act, 1985, POCSO Act, 2012, Negotiable Instrument Act 1881, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985, or Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 or any offences relating to terrorism or cases investigated by the National Investigation Agency.



## Bhairon Marg underpass to open soon: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi PWD Minister Atishi has informed that the underpass constructed on Bhairon Marg will be opened to the public soon, providing relief from traffic congestion for hundreds of vehicles traveling daily from Central Delhi to Trans Yamuna and Noida. On Thursday, Atishi inspected the underpass and directed officials to expedite the remaining work, with instructions to open the underpass for traffic at the earliest.

The PWD Minister said, "After the underpass is operational, daily commuters from Central and New Delhi to destinations like Ring Road, Trans Yamuna, East Delhi, and Noida will find their journey more convenient. This will eliminate the need for a U-turn of approximately 1.5 km near the ITO depot, which is currently being used by the public. Vehicles can now travel directly from Bhairon Marg to Ring Road by using the underpass. This will reduce the traffic load on the Pragati Maidan tunnel, and evening traffic at this location will also be lessened. During this inspection, Atishi stated that with the underpass on Bhairon Marg being a significant effort in this direction. The underpass, constructed with exceptional engineering, will benefit daily commuters from Central Delhi to Trans Yamuna and Noida, saving time and fuel costs. People will now be able to reach home quickly, spending precious time with family and loved ones, while also contributing to traffic decongestion."

## 5 held for robbing trader of ₹75 lakh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested five people for allegedly robbing a businessman of around Rs 75 lakh in Shalimar Bagh of northwest Delhi, officials said on Thursday. Those arrested have been identified as the businessman's driver Vicky Kumar (33), his brother-in-law Robin (25), Mukesh (50), Mukesh's son Sudhanshu (23) and Abhishek (21).

On January 13, the businessman sent Vicky Kumar and another employee Vinod to bring Rs 75 lakh from the Janakpuri area. They were given a bag of money by a person and Vicky put it in the car. When they reached their office, four men on two motorbikes snatched the bag at gunpoint and fled, Special Commissioner of Police (law and order) Ravindra Singh Yadav said. The next day, an FIR under IPC sections 392 (robbery), 397 (robbery or dacoity, with an attempt to cause death or grievous hurt), and 34 (common intentions) IPC was registered



based on the businessman's complaint and an investigation was taken up.

"As the incident took place during the night, it was very difficult to locate the culprits even with the help of CCTV cameras. Dense fog coupled with low visibility was hindering the investigation," said the special CP. The accused were arrested from the Kirari Suleman Nagar area on Wednesday.

"During interrogation, it was revealed that Vicky was an employee of the complainant and worked as a driver for the last one-and-

half years. Vicky was facing financial hardship and wanted to earn more money in a short period.

"He had discussed his financial situation with his brother-in-law Robin, who was going through the same circumstances and had mortgaged his house by taking loans," the police officer said.

Police said Vicky told Robin about the monetary transaction. Robin in turn roped in Sudhanshu, his father Mukesh, a history-sheeter, and two others — Abhishek and Rohit. They together hatched a conspiracy and carried out the robbery, the officer said.

"Mukesh, previously involved in four criminal cases of attempt to murder, robbery, and under the Arms Act, provided vehicles and weapons to commit the crime. So far, we have recovered Rs 60.70 lakh. One more accused Rohit is still at large and will be arrested soon," Yadav said.

A motorcycle, an automatic pistol and a country-made pistol have been seized, he added.

## No relief from dense fog yet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's minimum temperature rose by a degree at most locations across the national capital on Thursday, even as dense fog persisted for nearly six hours. Early-morning foggy weather in north and northeast India has heavily impacted road, rail and air traffic over the last fortnight. The minimum temperature was settled at 6.6 degrees Celsius, one notch below the season's average. There is a possibility of dense fog on Friday morning and the maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 18.6 degrees Celsius, a notch below the normal, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The moderate sunlight gave much relief in the day time from the icy winds. The weather department has issued a "yellow alert" for dense fog in the national capital and adjoining areas for the next two days. The IMD said visibility at the Delhi airport oscillated between 50 and 100 metres between 12:30am and 6:30am, impacting

flight operations. However, it improved to 350 metres by 8:30 am. Due to foggy conditions, over 50 flights being delayed during that period, and at least five flights were cancelled in the early hours of the day. The maximum temperature was recorded in Palam 17.2 degrees Celsius, Lodhi Road 17.4 degrees Celsius, Ridge 17.8 degrees Celsius, Ayanagar 18.4 degrees Celsius, Jafarpur 16.2 degrees Celsius, Narela 16.1 degrees Celsius, SPS Mayur Vihar 14.2 degrees Celsius and Pusa 19.3 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, at least 18 trains—either originating from or bound for the capital, were delayed by over one hour. Several flights were delayed due to fog at airports. Delhi had recorded five cold wave days between Friday and Tuesday, with the minimum temperature recorded below 4°C on all five days. Mercury has risen by nearly three degrees in the last 48 hours, owing to warm easterly blowing towards the national capital. Delhi's minimum on Tuesday was 3.5°C and it was 5.7°C on Wednesday.

A layer of fog lowered visibility to zero metres at several places in north and northeast India, affecting rail traffic, officials said. Satellite imagery showed some reduction in fog over Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. However, 'dense' to 'very dense' fog prevailed in parts of Punjab, Haryana, west Rajasthan, Bihar, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Assam. In the plains, the MeT office declares a 'cold wave' if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius or when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees or below and is four-and-a-half notches below the normal. A 'severe cold wave' is when the minimum temperature dips to 2 degrees Celsius or the departure from the normal is by more than 6.4 degrees. A 'cold day' is when the minimum temperature is less than or equal to 10 degrees Celsius below normal and the maximum temperature is at least 4.5 degrees below normal. A 'severe cold day' is when the maximum is 6.5 degrees Celsius or more below normal.

# Business Blasters to be added in curriculum: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said the 'Business Blasters' programme will be introduced in Delhi Government-funded colleges and grants for the curriculum are being sanctioned. Addressing the students and teachers at the Excellence in Education Awards of the Delhi government, Kejriwal said, "Business Blasters programme shaped the students' mindset of becoming job givers and not seekers." "We aim to introduce the same curriculum in the colleges funded by our government. Funds are being sanctioned to those colleges to begin this curriculum," he said. The programme is an extended practical component of the Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum that provides Class 11 and Class 12 students with Rs 2,000 each in seed money for developing business ideas. Fifty-one government and private schools were awarded the 'Excellence in Education Award'



of the Delhi government under seven categories by the chief minister and Education Minister Atishi.

Kejriwal further said the credit for the "education revolution" in the national capital should be given to the teachers of the government schools. These schools have surpassed the private schools in all aspects, he said. "We haven't changed the teachers, we only gave them an environment to excel. Even the underprivileged children get the best education in Delhi today," the chief minister said.

Twenty schools were awarded 'Zonal best schools', and 12 schools were awarded for best management committee.

Speaking at the event, Delhi Education Minister Atishi said more than 23,000 children with special needs are studying in Delhi government schools and specialised teachers have been provided by the government for them.

"Children with special needs get special treatment in our schools now. There are more than 23,000 children studying in Delhi government schools and we have also provided specialised teachers for them too," Atishi said. She further said that parents and school management committees played a crucial role in development of the government schools in the last nine years.

"Not just academic performance, children get a vast range of curricular activities in Delhi government schools. Parents and school management committees also played a crucial role in the development of these schools," Atishi said.

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**E-AUCTION OF CAFÉ BAMBOO OASIS AT BAANSERA, SARAI KALE KHAN ON LICENCE FEE BASIS**

**IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS**

**22.01.2024 (Monday) from 10.00 AM**  
Opening of Helpdesk, Commencement of Registration & EMD Submission

**17.02.2024 (Saturday) up to 06:00 PM**  
Closing Time of Registration & EMD Submission

**20.02.2024 (Tuesday)**  
E-Auction for CAFÉ BAMBOO OASIS

- For details about plots/properties and procedure, kindly visit our e-auction website <https://ddaland.etender.sbi> or click the e-auction link available on our site [www.dda.gov.in](http://www.dda.gov.in) and download the same through "E-AUCTION OF PROPERTIES" link available at home page of e-auction website
- Intending bidders may register themselves/their firms online at the above site through "REGISTER WITH US" link. Kindly note that digital signature of all the intending bidders are mandatory to participate in e-auction of DDA
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Bloody Exchange

Sensex witnesses steepest one-day drop in nearly two years, and the scary story is far from over

It was mayhem at Dalal Street recently as both benchmark indices, the S&P BSE Sensex and the NSE Nifty, plunged sharply. In fact, the day marked one of the steepest drops in almost two years. The bears dominated every sector, except the technology pack, as weak global cues and disappointing performance by banking giant HDFC Bank fuelled a sharp decline in investor sentiment. This wiped out thousands of crores of money, most of it coming from small investors. The reasons for the decline were foreign rather than domestic, but losses were for the real. The global economic scenario plays a vital role in making or breaking market sense and this has been proved once again. European shares extended losses due to more hawkish remarks from European Central Bank (ECB) officials, dampening expectations of interest rate cuts. Additionally, discouraging Chinese growth data and rising US bond yields further fuelled concerns and triggered widespread profit-booking. According to market experts, the correction was triggered by elevated valuations. Optimism regarding earnings and GDP growth for Financial Year 2024 was already factored into the market, leading to profit booking. The correction, in this context, reflects a market reassessment of these optimistic projections.

The banking sector, particularly the high-beta Nifty Bank index, witnessed a nosedive correction. HDFC Bank's disappointing numbers, combined with broader concerns over delays in US Federal Reserve rate cuts, significantly impacted market sentiments. The Nifty Bank index, comprising major players like SBI, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank, sank 4.28 per cent, contributing significantly to the overall market decline. The Indian market, like any other market, is exposed to the interconnected world economy and even a slight negative sentiment can trigger a downslide. Two wars are already raging and the chances of these wars spilling across borders are quite real. Even the sea routes from where most Indian goods reach Europe are at risk and incidents of attacks on ships have been reported. This does not augur well for world economy in general and Indian businesses in particular. It could delay order deliveries and hit the profit margins and was likely to result in a choppy share market. In this scenario, small investors are at maximum risk as they do not have enough funds to hedge their investments. They need to diversify their investment portfolio across different sectors and asset classes can help mitigate sector-specific downturns. Besides, keeping abreast of global economic developments is crucial. Regularly monitoring international events, central bank policies and economic indicators can help investors make informed decisions. For its part, the Government must ensure that investor interests are safeguarded and SEBI must keep a close watch on the price movement and act before things get out of hand. Understanding the reasons behind market fluctuations and adopting prudent investment strategies can help investors navigate through challenging times.

### PICTALK



Students perform during Educational Excellence Awards at Thyagaraj Stadium, in New Delhi

# Traditional Indian medicine goes global

A pivotal shift is underway as the Ministry of Ayush spearheads a global medical revolution, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and modern healthcare



VAIDYA RAJESH KOTECHA

From ancient to the modern culture of human healthcare, aeons have witnessed the heritage of great Indian Traditional Medicine Systems. We have been living in a culture of a holistic healthcare system with a rich repository of various disease terminologies, data, and treatment formulae. Following multiple streams of ancient medicinal systems like Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani, our ancient Vaidyas, health professionals have transferred traditional healthcare values from one generation to the next. Ayush focuses on stimulating the body's natural healing abilities and restoring the balance between mind, body, and consciousness.

In today's era of globalisation, it has become the demand of time to create mechanisms of universally proven and evidence-based medical systems to cater to the global human population with similar methods of medical treatment. At the Ministry of Ayush, a strong framework has been structured to cater to this need. The recent establishment of the first and only Global Centre of Traditional Medicine at Jamnagar Gujarat by the World Health Organization has marked a milestone in the global acceptance of the traditional medicine system. The field of international healthcare has witnessed a significant paradigm shift in recent years, with a growing recognition of the potential benefits of traditional medicine (TM).

This time, the Ministry of Ayush is coming up with a wave of international medical revolution. Now the terminologies of various diseases in Ayush healthcare, Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani will be included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 11 prepared by the World Health Organisation. The International Classification of Diseases maintained by WHO is the key instrument for member countries like India to collect primary as well as secondary data on various communicable and non-communicable diseases and mortality statistics.

The Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) under the Ministry of Health and Family



Welfare acts as a WHO Collaborating Centre for ICD-related activities and facilitates morbidity and mortality data collection and dissemination. Previously, the collected data was predominantly based on the health conditions diagnosable through biomedicine only. The stats and glossaries about the disorder conditions based on Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani systems from Ayush were not part of the captured data. Although some countries have had national Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani classification systems for many years, the information from such systems has not been standardized nor made available globally. By including Ayush within the ICD, international standardization will be possible allowing for measuring, counting, comparing, formulating questions, and monitoring over time. With this initiative of the World Health Organisation and the support of the Ministry of Ayush, the collected data about the disease terminologies from Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha will be converted into morbidity codes and included in the international classification of diseases.

India is committed to implementing the ICD 11 TM2 module for the collection of morbidity statistics for public health care delivery, Ayush

THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF HEALTH INTELLIGENCE UNDER THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE ACTS AS A WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR ICD-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND FACILITATES MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

Insurance coverage, research and development, policy-making, and development of future strategies to curb different diseases in society. Infectious diseases like Malaria and lifestyle diseases like Chronic Insomnia are included in this classification. Diseases like Giddiness disorder with the acronyms in Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani as Brahm, Azal Kirukurippu, and Sadr-O-Duwar respectively are some commonly known diseases that are being released as a glossary of codes by WHO through ICD11.

By incorporating TM2 into ICD-11, the WHO encourages the rigorous scientific evaluation of traditional practices. This move can lead to more robust research on TM modalities, ensuring that effective and safe treatments are utilised in clinical settings.

The inclusion of TM2 in ICD-11 facilitates the exchange of medical knowledge between different cultures and healthcare systems. This cross-cultural collaboration can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of health and disease, paving the way for innovative and inclusive healthcare solutions. This integration can expand access to healthcare and promote cost-effective interventions. Continuous demand from different dimensions of Ayush systems across

the globe led to rigorous efforts in India and come up with Ayurveda-Unani-Siddha standardised terminologies and National Morbidity codes. The development of the National Ayush Morbidity and Standardised Terminologies Electronic (NAMASTE) Portal (2017) was a consequence of this effort only. The portal created a platform for testing and validation of Ayurveda-Unani-Siddha diagnoses and terminologies. The implementation of the same in the real-time clinical setting was initiated through the Ayush-Hospital Management Information System (A-HMIS) in the year 2018.

The Donor Agreement signed between the Ministry of Ayush and WHO for developing a second module in the traditional medicine chapter of the International Classification of Diseases-11, (ICD-11) on 11th February 2020 was a breakthrough development. It's a matter of satisfaction that the global reach of the traditional medicine system is intensifying many other member countries of WHO to apply the same format of inclusion of Traditional Medicine diseases terminologies to ICD. There is demand for a more holistic approach to patient care.

(The writer is Secretary, Union Ministry of Ayush; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PUCCA HOUSES FOR ALL

Sir — In pursuit of providing essential amenities to the first wave of beneficiaries, including the development of robust infrastructure such as pucca houses, power and water connections, the focus is on implementing 11 key interventions across ministries. This initiative aims to benefit approximately 22,000 individuals from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). Programs like PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) are instrumental in realising the aspirations of vulnerable groups and marginalized societies, facilitating their transition to permanent residences. Additionally, awareness campaigns are being conducted to raise awareness about the significance of essential documents like Aadhaar cards, PM-Jan Dhan cards, caste certificates, and Kisan Samman Nidhi cards.

Sustainable habitation in these houses is envisioned through collaborative efforts involving local, central, and state administrations. Ensuring last-mile connectivity through education about basic rights is crucial to prevent eligible individuals from being inadvertently excluded.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

### CASTE BIAS IS A REALITY

Sir — The paramount challenge in educating children in our nation is imparting the understanding that caste inequality is a stain on society that needs eradication, akin to sati. In certain schools in Tamil Nadu, students wear color-coded wristbands signifying their caste, exemplifying the pervasive nature of this issue.

Incidents such as a teacher from a lower caste being attacked with a firecracker in response to her teaching a class in a school dominated by upper-caste students exemplify the harm "caste-educated" children can inflict. Sensitising children to the dangers of caste inequality and fostering an environment free

### Glass-coated manja is killing birds



The much talked about Manja used for kite flying during Makar Sankranti in Mumbai and its suburbs caused great concern for birds in general and humans in particular. The sale of such threads and flying kites made of

such glass-coated threads have taken multiple human and bird lives this year too. Aarey Key Foundation (AKF) and Mumbai Animal Association (MAA) Foundation rescued over 100 birds in the last three days while 12 pigeons, a kite and an Asian koel couldn't survive the injuries and died.

The list includes pigeons, black kites, rose ring parrots, house crows, flamingos, parakeets, owls, Asian koels, common myna, falcons and many more who were found with their wings slit, their toes and tarsus cut such that they may never walk again, some have their throat slit, and some lose their ability to fly or fetch food for themselves and in such cases, the need to foster them for life. Most of the birds that have been rescued are from Andheri, Versova, Jogeshwari, Powai and Goregaon. In the last two years, we have had over 810 birds rescued of which 200 were injured by Manja. The Manja is causing fatal injuries and there must be high fines for misuse of Manja despite restrictions.

C K Subramaniam | Chennai

from hatred is a critical challenge for educators in India. The need for teachers to unlearn their own "caste education" is apparent, emphasising the urgency of addressing this issue.

Sujit De | Kolkata

### THE MENACE OF DEEPAKES

Sir — Recent instances of deepfake videos featuring cricketer Sachin Tendulkar underscore the vulnerability we face in the realm of Artificial Intelligence. Deepfakes, utilising AI tools to craft fabricated images, audio, and videos, pose a serious threat. Targeting individuals, including men, this not only impacts mental health but also damages self-esteem, strains relationships, and tarnishes reputations.

The inability to easily detect deepfakes due to the absence of traditional indicators used by visual forensic experts

poses a significant challenge. In the ever-evolving landscape of AI, where technology advances at an unprecedented pace, safeguarding against malicious applications becomes paramount. As India assumes a pivotal role in the global AI ecosystem, it is imperative for tech companies to not only enhance detection mechanisms but also proactively devise preventive measures.

The implementation of features like watermarks on AI-generated content could serve as a deterrent, mitigating the potential negative repercussions of AI on individuals and society at large. As we embrace the benefits of AI, a concerted effort towards responsible and ethical AI practices will be crucial in ensuring a secure digital future for all.

Gourja Soni | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Striving for gender parity in corporate India

Through data-driven insights and advocacy, gender parity can be given a boost. Government support is vital for an inclusive workforce



POOJA SHARMA GOYAL

Gender parity in corporate India faces numerous challenges that impede the progress towards a more inclusive and diverse workplace. One significant obstacle is the persistent gender bias prevalent in recruitment and promotion processes, leading to unequal opportunities for women. Stereotypes and cultural norms further contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. Discriminatory workplace structures, including gender pay gap, hinder the professional growth of women, creating a barrier to achieving parity.

To address these challenges, gathering data becomes a crucial tool in understanding and dismantling gender disparities within corporate structures. By collecting comprehensive data on hiring practices, promotion rates, pay scales, and overall representation, companies can identify specific areas of concern and implement targeted strategies. This data-driven approach allows organizations to establish benchmarks, track progress over time, and hold themselves accountable



for fostering an equitable environment. Moreover, transparently sharing this information helps raise awareness and encourages a collective effort from stakeholders, including employees, leaders, and policymakers, to actively contribute to achieving gender parity in corporate India. The NGOs like Udaiti Foundations have taken initiatives for data-driven gender parity in the corporate world. It is accelerating women's economic empowerment in India and aims to address the challenges hindering the growth of female participation in the workforce.

India stands at an exciting point in its economic history, with sustainable growth and ambitions to become a 5 trillion-dollar economy in the near future. However, achieving this goal is closely tied to addressing the country's low

female labour force participation rate, currently hovering around 27-28%. To tackle this issue credible data is required. Focused on building data-backed evidence, collaborating with state governments and businesses to understand the challenges is a must.

The "Close the Gender Gap" platform analyses annual reports of 2000 NSC companies and 450 Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSRs). This platform aims to provide insights into gender parameters, such as the representation of women in key management positions and on corporate boards. While some sectors, like services and healthcare, show improvement in women's employment, others like IT, Consumer Goods, and Financial Services remain stagnant.

In larger corporations, although there is an initial attraction to women's talent, there is a significant drop in the representation of women in key management positions as the company size increases. This suggests that women face challenges and

impediments to their growth within these organizations, hitting a glass ceiling that hinders their career progression. To drive change our focus must be on creating a network of champions, including CHROs, CXOs, and board members, who can lead efforts to make workplaces more gender-diverse. The organization aims to provide data that not only highlights the importance of diversity for its own sake but also demonstrates the positive impact on business outcomes.

The government initiatives like Mission Shakti and PM Swanidhi can make a vital difference. The conversation has shifted from questioning the need for gender diversity to figuring out how to implement it effectively. Many NGOs are actively working with state governments, leveraging successful case studies, and publishing white papers to guide the public and private sectors towards gender parity. Probably within the next decade, the initiatives for gender parity in corporate India will no longer be necessary, fingers crossed.

(The writer is a gender activist; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## INDIA-IRAN TIES ON A NEW HIGH

India needs Iran by its side to keep its maritime trade routes to Europe safe



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Indian external affairs minister S Jaishankar visited Iran this week, amidst the severe disruptions emerging in one of the busiest and crucial maritime trade routes the Gaza war zone bleeding into the sea. Mr Jaishankar had a fortnight back made a special five-day trip to Russia, which is unrelenting in its pursuit against Ukraine to have a greater say in Europe politics. Earlier this week Indian PM also spoke to President Putin on several geo-political issues and the two military combats in Europe and West Asia.

India's outreach to countries such as Iran and Russia, both of whom are from the non-US block, at a time of growing partnership between India and the US, is strategic, given, the damaging impact of the raging wars on India's economy. During his Iran visit, EAM Jaishankar, also nuanced India's Middle East (read Palestine) foreign policy outlook. India and Israel have been close allies and collaborate on several high-end defence technology projects, however, India hasn't distanced itself from Palestine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi shares a warm relationship with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Israel on October 23, had come out strongly in support of the nation. However, nearly five months after the Israel terror attack, the war has split beyond into the Red Sea, an important maritime trade route. The Houthis extremists (who unofficially enjoy Iran patronage) have fanned out into the Red Sea targeting multiple ships, moving billions of dollars in goods to Europe and further to the US. As per the Indian Ministry of Commerce, nearly 80 per cent of India's exports to Europe take place via the Red Sea route and the recent attacks on Indian ships have worsened the situation. Indian exports to Europe were already under pressure due to the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war and with the Red Sea route becoming another flashpoint, exports particularly of low-value items are facing higher shipping costs, which could India's export growth.



EAM Jaishankar in his joint statement with the minister of foreign affairs of Iran stated "There have also been recently a perceptible increase in threats to the safety of maritime commercial traffic in this important part of the Indian Ocean...This is a matter of great concern to the international community. Obviously, it also has a direct bearing on India's energy and economic interests. This fraught situation is not to the benefit of any party and this must be clearly recognised." Meanwhile, in a balancing act, he did mention the loss of civilian lives in Gaza and stated "India has a long-standing and uncompromising position against terrorism in all forms and manifestations. This remains so very much. At the same time, we strongly believe that it is imperative to avoid loss of civilian life in any conflict situation. The deeply concerning situation in Gaza was naturally a subject of our discussions. The loss of civilian lives, especially that of women and children was our primary focus. There is a visible humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed and the creation of sustainable humanitarian corridors is the need of the day. We welcome the international community's efforts in that direction. India itself has delivered shipments of relief material to Gaza and contributed to the UNRWA. On the issue of Palestine, let me reiterate India's long-standing support for a two-state solution, where the Palestinian people are able to live freely in an independent country within secure borders. I stressed the need for all parties to avoid provocative and escalatory actions, and to facilitate movement towards dialogue and diplomacy." Iran has a crucial voice in matters related to West Asia and ensuring the safety of Indian sailors and goods on ships, besides impacting the fate of exporters on ships. It was perhaps no coincidence that even as EAM was in Iran, the latter had launched massive strikes on terrorist sites in Pakistan.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

## India-China relations head towards a thaw

As the India-China border standoff enters its fourth year, diplomatic nuances and symbolic gestures hint at a potential thaw in bilateral relations



C K NAYAK



The India-China border standoff enters its fourth year and there are intermittent aberrations from both countries. Even problems in third-world countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka and now in Maldives have also become irritants for both the Asian giants. The most recent one is the avoidable situation created by a very small country like Maldives. There is also natural competition between the two rising economic powers especially in the neighbourhood. But as India's External Affairs Minister, Dr S Jaishankar recently said the rise of China is a reality but there is an equal reality that is the rise of India. During a conversation with a journalist at the High Commission of India in London, Dr Jaishankar emphasised that the rise of China is a reality but there is an equal reality that is the rise of India. "The rise may be different...quantitatively or qualitatively they may not be identical," he said. "The two (India and China) are among the oldest civilisations in the world...Some realities need to be recognised," he pointed out.

In between two small but important events took place in India which points out a possible detente if not now but in future. A group of top Chinese scholars visited Smruti Mandir (memorial of RSS founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar) in RSS headquarters, Babukuti, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University) in Nagpur and nearby Wardha. Though many foreign delegates visit Nagpur frequently, this visit was not that significant on the face of it. But it was the high-level visit of a group of scholars from China with whom India does not have a once excellent relationship after the 2021-22 clashes in the vast borders. Prior to this the leading Chinese media Global Times in an unusual article lauded India's foreign policy strategy under Modi, highlighting the nation's multi-alignment approach and bolstering ties with major global powers such as the US, Japan, and Russia. Normally, the official media in China do



FOR INDIA, ITS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ASIAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING CHINA ARE DEEPLY ROOTED IN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TIES. ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES LIKE THE SILK ROUTE CONNECTED INDIA TO VARIOUS PARTS OF ASIA, FACILITATING CULTURAL EXCHANGES

not comment in such a positive way with India.

Unlike frequent bonhomie between Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, diplomatic relations are not on good terms for over three years. But as the famous saying goes in international relations, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests. Bilateral relations between two countries who are both big in population, size, economy and many other fields are also governed by the same principle mostly - Economy. This trend is slowly but steadily becoming visible in the relationship between India and China in recent times despite the border standoff. One should also remember that the nearly four yearlong border impasse has not deteriorated further and there are regular talks even though there is not much progress. There are no further clashes. The year 2023 saw some stabilization in relations, which offers promise for the future. The two sides discuss resolving the border standoff and signal interest in restoring some normalcy in their relations, but their militarized border remained mostly quiet in the last year.

Symbolically, with momentum from the 2022 handshake and brief exchange between the Indian Prime Minister and Chinese President at the G-20 summit in Indonesia, disengagement in five areas on the border, and the fast and quiet resolution of the border clash at the Yangtze, the background seemed promising. There were also meetings between the defence and foreign ministers of the two sides as part of India's hosting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization allowed discussion of border tensions, while the 19th round of the

corps commander-level talks produced an agreement that the two sides should resolve the remaining issues on which they disagreed "in an expeditious manner."

India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks before their respective leaders were scheduled to meet and worked on disengagement in the two remaining areas of immediate tensions on the border. The Economist, a famous British weekly stated a "detente" between China and India, Xi and Modi discussed relations in person at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg and agreed "to intensify efforts at expeditious disengagement and de-escalation," according to the Indian side.

It was not that there was no damper. Xi did not attend the G-20 summit in Delhi in September through his Prime Minister. There is tension in the Indo-Pacific region and the emergence of QUAD, a diplomatic network between Australia, India, Japan and the United States. The personal chemistry between the top two is yet to be revived. Both countries keep on trying to spread presence and influence in the neighbourhood. But all these are natural trends for any country in today's complete world.

At the same time as former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, the world has enough space for the growth ambitions of India and China. In practice, both New Delhi and Beijing have maintained a status quo that has not worsened the situation. Moreover, the two sides are actively talking to each other and discussing their troubled relationship and the tense situation on the disputed border. This has been happening both between the military and diplomatic establishments of the

two countries and between their top leaders. Negotiations on stabilizing the border itself continue, most recently with the 28th round of talks that form part of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs.

Apart from all these factors, India, its diplomatic relations with Asian countries including China are deeply rooted in history and cultural ties. Ancient trade routes like the Silk Road connected India to various parts of Asia, facilitating cultural exchanges.

Buddhism, which originated in India, spread to several Asian nations, creating lasting cultural and religious connections. Such historical and cultural linkages prove to be strong foundations of diplomatic ties. India also has a lot to gain by forming regional alliances, such as economic opportunities, strategic partnerships and cultural diplomacy.

Economically, Asia is one of the fastest-growing regions globally and stronger ties could open new markets for trade and investment. Politically, a united Asian front could serve as a counterbalance allowing for a more multipolar world order where India plays a significant role.

India will be the biggest beneficiary of such a wonderful partnership as it will give a chance to cross borders more easily and explore their Asian culture through trade, travel and employment opportunities. But all depends on the result of the Parliament elections in India before this mid-year. But to put it in the words of late Atal Behari Vajpayee "we can change our friends but not our neighbours."

(The writer is former member of press council of India and presently coordinator of World Association of Press Councils; views are personal)

## The success of Indian scientists inspires young girls in rural areas

The achievements of Indian scientists have become a wellspring of inspiration for the country's youth, even in the remote villages of Uttarakhand

At the onset of 2024, when the entire world was celebrating the arrival of the new year, a historic moment unfolded at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh. At that very moment, scientists at ISRO successfully launched the 'X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite', making it the second in the world and the first in India to study radiation beyond the Moon, Mars, and the Sun. This satellite will be able to explore black holes, the cosmic web, and radiation spread throughout space. It will not only identify the sources of radiation and capture their images but also study the 50 most shining sources in the universe, such as pulsars, X-ray binaries with black holes, active galactic



SUNITA JOSHI

nuclei, and non-thermal supernovae.

The achievements of Indian scientists have not only enhanced India's global standing but have also become a wellspring of inspiration for the country's youth, particularly in regions where even the sight of an aeroplane in the sky is a rare occurrence. Baisani, nestled in the vast Himalayan hills of Uttarakhand's Bageshwar district, stands as

one such village, where young girls are now aspiring towards careers in space exploration. Mahima Joshi, a 19-year-old student in Class 12 from Baisani Village, expressed, "The consecutive successes of ISRO scientists have motivated me to delve into the realm of space exploration. Studying ISRO scientists revealed that they encountered failures despite their unwavering efforts. However, their resilience, ability to learn from mistakes, persistent dedication, and eventual triumph in creating history have left a lasting impact on me."

The growing interest in space science among children brings immense joy to parents. Chandra Prakash, a 52-year-old resident, emphasized that the impact of scientists' success



is so significant that girls, in particular, have now begun to take a keen interest in space. Observing them explore space-related information on social media is indeed a positive development. The strides made by Indian scientists in space research have not only captivated the curiosity of adolescent boys but also girls, encouraging them to delve

into the study of science. Gopal Joshi, a septuagenarian from the village, expressed that he had never witnessed such a keen interest in science among children in the village before. Remarkably, even girls, have now set goals to study and pursue careers as scientists. The surge in enthusiasm for science is particularly heartening for schoolteachers.

Uma Shankar Joshi, a geography teacher at the Government Middle School in Baisani, noted, "While there was limited interest in space science among children before, they now pose questions that go beyond our expectations. Children are eager to participate in science-related quizzes and competitions at school. As a teacher, witnessing this fer-

vor among children is truly gratifying. I am optimistic that the children of Baisani village will make significant progress in the field of science." This indeed highlights that the success of Indian scientists has inspired the children especially young girls of Baisani village towards science and technology. But several challenges mar their dreams of becoming a space scientist and the list is quite long. These girls face various challenges - a lot more than boys do. More specifically the social and cultural norms that do not allow girls to even fulfil their basic right to education. Early child marriages, preference given to sons in the family, social taboos, and poverty are some of the socio-economic factors that impact girls' lives more

than boys'. The challenges of remoteness, challenging geography, and harsh weather conditions significantly contribute to their exclusion from the country's progress. The absence of fundamental infrastructure, such as roads, education, healthcare, telecommunication, and internet facilities, poses a hindrance.

The challenges faced by youth, especially young girls, in the remotest villages of a country like India in pursuing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields are deeply rooted in the deficiencies of the educational system. The inadequacy of facilities in rural schools, such as the absence of advanced science laboratories and prolonged vacancies in science teaching positions, raises sig-

nificant concerns. Addressing these fundamental deficiencies is crucial for unlocking the true potential of these villages.

If the government and the education department collaboratively tackle not only the visible symptoms but also the root causes, the path can be paved for the emergence of the next generation of scientists, potentially from places like Baisani village. It is essential to nurture and empower the youth, ensuring that opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) are accessible to all, transcending geographical and societal barriers.

(The author is a young peer leader from Uttarakhand; views are personal. Charkha Features)





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Our Company was incorporated on April 20, 2019, as 'EPACK Durables Solutions Private Limited' in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, as a private limited company under the Companies Act, 2013, pursuant to a certificate of incorporation dated May 6, 2019, issued by the Registrar of Companies, Uttar Pradesh at Kanpur ('RoC'), upon the conversion of M/s E-Vision, a partnership firm (constituted in 2005 pursuant to the partnership deed dated July 16, 2005), into a private limited company. Subsequently, pursuant to a resolution passed by our Shareholders in the extraordinary general meeting held on July 30, 2021, the name of our Company was changed from 'EPACK Durables Solutions Private Limited' to 'EPACK Durable Private Limited', as part of the corporate rebranding of our Company to reflect the principal business being undertaken by our Company, and a fresh certificate of incorporation dated September 17, 2021, was issued by the RoC to our Company. Thereafter, our Company was converted from a private limited company to a public limited company, pursuant to a resolution passed by our Shareholders in the extraordinary general meeting held on June 13, 2023, and the name of our Company was changed to 'EPACK Durable Limited', and a fresh certificate of incorporation dated June 28, 2023, was issued to our Company by the RoC. For details of changes in the name and the registered office address of our Company, see 'History and Certain Corporate Matters - Brief history of our Company' and 'History and Certain Corporate Matters - Change in registered office of our Company' on page 212 of the red herring prospectus of our Company dated January 12, 2024 filed with the RoC read with the addendum to the red herring prospectus dated January 16, 2024 ('RHP' or 'Red Herring Prospectus').

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		NUMBER OF SHARES OFFERED / AMOUNT (₹ IN MILLION)		
Bajrang Bothra	Promoter	Up to 1,172,976 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		14.94
Laxmi Pat Bothra	Promoter	Up to 666,798 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		12.10
Sanjay Singhania	Promoter	Up to 748,721 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		11.04
Ajay DD Singhania	Promoter	Up to 748,721 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		17.16
Pinky Ajay Singhania	Promoter Group	Up to 286,351 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		Nil
Preity Singhania	Promoter Group	Up to 286,351 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		Nil
Nikhil Bothra	Promoter Group	Up to 442,905 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		10.00
Nitin Bothra	Promoter Group	Up to 442,905 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		Nil
Rajat Kumar Bothra	Promoter Group	Up to 379,633 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		11.57
India Advantage Fund S4 I	Other	Up to 4,630,284 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		101.36
Dynamic India Fund S4 US I	Other	Up to 631,402 equity shares of face value of ₹ 10 each aggregating up to ₹ [●] million		101.36

\* As certified by N B T and Co, Chartered Accountants, registered with the ICAI and bearing firm registration number 140489W, by way of their certificate dated January 12, 2024.

We manufacture room air conditioners and small domestic appliances, and its components.

The Offer is being made through the Book Building Process pursuant to Regulation 6(1) of the SEBI ICDR Regulations.

QIB Portion: Not more than 50% of the Offer | Non-Institutional Portion: Not less than 15% of the Offer | Retail Portion: Not less than 35% of the Offer.

PRICE BAND: ₹218 TO ₹230 PER EQUITY SHARE OF FACE VALUE OF ₹10 EACH.

THE FLOOR PRICE IS 21.8 TIMES THE FACE VALUE OF THE EQUITY SHARES AND THE CAP PRICE IS 23.0 TIMES THE FACE VALUE OF THE EQUITY SHARES.

THE PRICE TO EARNING RATIO BASED ON DILUTED EPS FOR FISCAL 2023 AT THE FLOOR PRICE IS 46.98 TIMES AND AT THE CAP PRICE IS 49.57 TIMES.

BIDS CAN BE MADE FOR A MINIMUM OF 65 EQUITY SHARES AND IN MULTIPLES OF 65 EQUITY SHARES THEREAFTER.

IN MAKING AN INVESTMENT DECISION, POTENTIAL INVESTORS MUST RELY ON THE INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THE RED HERRING PROSPECTUS AND THE TERMS OF THE OFFER, INCLUDING THE RISKS INVOLVED AND NOT RELY ON ANY OTHER EXTERNAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE OFFER AVAILABLE IN ANY MANNER.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Directors of our Company, pursuant to their resolution dated January 15, 2024, the above provided price band is justified based on quantitative factors/ KPIs disclosed in the "Basis for Offer Price" section of the RHP vis-à-vis the weighted average cost of acquisition of primary and secondary transaction(s) disclosed in the "Basis for Offer Price" section on page 130 of the RHP and provided below in the advertisement.

## RISKS TO INVESTORS

- Negative Cash Flows:** We have had negative cash flows in the past and our net cash used in operating activities for Fiscal 2022 is ₹ (289.41) million.
- Customer Concentration Risk:** The total contribution from top five customers in terms of revenue generation for a year / period shown as percent of revenue from operations for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, and Fiscals 2023, 2022 and 2021 is 79.62%, 82.66%, 76.82% and 71.22%, respectively.
- Supplier Concentration Risk:** We are dependent on third party suppliers for our raw materials. As on September 30, 2023, our supplier network comprised 342 suppliers. The raw materials used by us include copper tubes, steel, aluminium sheets, plastic granules, compressors, controllers and RAC motors. The percentage of total purchases from top 10 suppliers vis-à-vis total purchases for that year / period for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, and Fiscals 2023, 2022 and 2021 is 62.38%, 53.04%, 46.84% and 33.87%, respectively.
- Our Company will not receive any proceeds from the Offer for Sale.
- Growth risk:** We have experienced significant growth over the past three Fiscals. EBITDA for the six months period ended September 30, 2023 and the Financial Years ended March 31, 2023, 2022 and 2021, is ₹369.77 million, ₹1,025.25 million, ₹688.03 million and ₹420.33 million, respectively. We cannot assure that our growth strategy will continue to be successful or that we will be able to continue to grow further, or at the same rate.
- Seasonality of Products:** The demand for RACs typically peak during the first half of the calendar year and reduce in the second half of the calendar year. Erratic weather conditions impacting the warm weather during the peak sales season of summer, may adversely affect our sales volumes, and could therefore have a disproportionate impact on our results of operations and financial condition in the relevant year. The percentage of revenue from sale of RACs (including sale of RAC spares and RAC components) to total revenue from operations for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, and Fiscals 2023, 2022 and 2021 is 78.34%, 83.23%, 81.68% and 86.80%, respectively.
- Trade Receivables Risk:** In the ordinary course of business, we extend credit to our customers. Consequently, we are exposed to the risk of the uncertainty regarding the receipt of the outstanding amounts. As on September 30, 2023, trade receivables is ₹1,377.65 million. The trade receivable days for six months period ended September 30, 2023 are 95 days.
- MOU with East India:** We have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MoU") with East India Technologies Private Limited ("East India"), a member of promoter group and our group company. Pursuant to the MoU, only our Company may (and East India may not) engage in the manufacture of specified products such as air conditioning and refrigeration products, air handling products, kitchen appliances and washing and drying equipment, while only East India may (and our Company may not) engage in the manufacture of specified products such as audio equipment, camera equipment, desktop computers, laptops and computer accessories, renewable energy electronics, industrial engineering products, televisions and lighting equipment. In the event of any breach of the MoU by East India pursuant to which East India manufactures products similar to those manufactured by us, it may result in a material adverse effect on our business and results of operations.
- Import of Raw Material Risk:** We currently import certain of our raw materials from China where in the past there have been conditions imposed by the government in relation to the commerce and trade. China accounted for 34.05%, 21.02%, 17.01% and 14.05% of the total cost of raw materials purchased (including purchase of
- stock-in-trade) by our Company in the six months period ended September 30, 2023 and in Fiscal 2023, 2022 and 2021, respectively.
- Foreign Exchange Risk:** We import components and materials such as copper and aluminium sheets. The percentage of the cost of raw materials imported to total cost of materials purchased (including purchase of stock-in-trade) for six months period ended September 30, 2023 and the Financial Years ended March 31, 2023, 2022 and 2021 is 39.87%, 39.31%, 36.63% and 26.95%. The Profit / (loss) on foreign exchange fluctuation for six months period ended September 30, 2023 and the Financial Years ended March 31, 2023, 2022 and 2021, is ₹11.21 million, ₹(37.43) million, ₹19.00 million and ₹13.92 million, respectively.
- Competition Risk:** Our industry is competitive. While there are significant barriers to entry to the RAC and SDA manufacturing industry, our competitors may win market share from us by providing what may be perceived to be more advanced technologies, better designs and quality or lower cost solutions to our customers. Our competitors' actions, including expanding manufacturing capacity, expansion of their operations to newer geographies or product segments in which we compete, or the entry of new competitors into one or more of our markets could cause us to lower prices in an effort to maintain our sales volume.
- The Offer Price, market capitalization to revenue from operations multiple, market capitalization to tangible assets multiple and enterprise value to EBITDA multiple, calculated on the basis of Cap price, of our Company may not be indicative of the market price of the Company on listing or thereafter.

Particulars	Market capitalization to revenue from operations	Market capitalization to tangible assets	Enterprise value to EBITDA
Our Company	1.43*	1.57*	25.56*
Industry Peers			
Dixon Technologies (India) Limited	29.28	11.48	69.53
Amber Enterprises India Limited	1.51	1.84	26.86
PG Electroplast Limited	2.73	3.84	36.38
Elin Electronics Limited	0.70	1.03	11.28

\* To be updated in the Prospectus once the Offer Price is finalised. Source: The information for the industry peers has been sourced from NSE and the filings of the respective company available on the website of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

- Market capitalization has been computed based on the closing market price of equity shares on NSE on December 8, 2023.
- Tangible Assets = Total assets less intangible assets, intangible assets under development, right of use assets, goodwill and deferred tax assets (net), as applicable plus lease liabilities (non-current and current).
- Enterprise Value (EV) = Market capitalisation plus net debt as on March 31, 2023. Net debt is calculated as sum of current and non-current borrowings as reduced by cash and cash equivalents and bank balances other than cash and cash equivalents.
- EBITDA = Profit before tax, share of profit/(loss) of associate and exceptional items plus finance costs, depreciation and amortisation expense minus other income.

- The average cost of acquisition of Equity Shares held by the Selling Shareholders ranges from Nil to ₹101.36 per Equity Share, and the Offer Price at upper end of the Price Band is ₹230.
- Weighted Average Return on Net Worth for Fiscals 2023, 2022 & 2021 is 15.43%.
- The Weighted Average Cost of acquisition of all Equity Shares transacted in last



# Kunlavut, Yamaguchi, Li crash out of India Open

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
**W**orld champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn crashed out of the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament after losing his round of 16 men's singles match to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu on a day of upsets here on Thursday.  
 The 22-year-old defending champion, who has struggled to cope with expectations following his world championship title win, was edged out 21-16 20-22 21-23 by Yiu in an hour and 22 minutes.  
 Two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi and reigning All England champion Li Shi Feng too bit the dust.  
 While world No. 4 Yamaguchi was sent packing by Thailand's world no. 18 Busanan Ongbamrunphan 11-21 19-21, unseeded Japanese Koki Watanabe outwitted third seeded Chinese Li Shi Feng 32-24 13-21 21-9 in a 71-minute clash.  
 Later, Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia beat fifth seed Jonatan Christie 21-15 21-13 in another second round match.



It was a narrow loss for Kunlavut, who hasn't won any tournament since competing in Copenhagen.  
 "Today it wasn't a good performance from me. The last game there was pressure and I couldn't control things. The opponent played well and I need to learn again from every tournament," said world no. 8 Kunlavut, who had won the last edition here.  
 "I am getting better, but I am not yet good enough. I still feel the pressure in the game and I always tried to get stronger and better.  
 "The secret for me has always been to think about myself and not worry about others and play every point and just keep going."  
 "Now every player has a chance to beat top players. The Olympic is coming soon so that is the final target.  
 This win means a lot to me: happy and excited to beat him. I have lost some tough matches and I always tried to get stronger and better.  
 "The secret for me has always been to think about myself and not worry about others and play every point and just keep going."  
 "Now every player has a chance to beat top players. The Olympic is coming soon so that is the final target.  
 This win means a lot to me:  
 Busanan Busanan had just one win in 11 meetings against Yamaguchi and said this victory will give her confidence in the Olympic year.  
 "I had a bad leg injury last season. My body is getting better and today me and my team tried to do more about game plan which was about control the game and it was working," she said.  
 "This year I am hoping to

make a good start. It's a wonderful memory for me here for me as I was a champion here. It is hard to beat her, she can get every shuttle but I kept telling myself that I can do it. This win means a lot to me.  
 "It will give me important points for Olympics. Our 4-5 players are competing for the Olympic spot. I just try to be the best version of myself, only focus on myself."  
 Koki Watanabe vs Li Shi Feng  
 Watanabe came into the match with a 1-3 deficit but dished out a superb performance to outwit the world number 3 Chinese.  
 "I was playing well, but I got tired in the second game, but once I was back on the winning court, I stepped up the pace and looked at placements as my opponent is a tall guy," said Watanabe, who started playing the sport at the age of 5 after being influenced by his elder sister who was also a shuttler.  
 Among others, top seed An Se Young, fourth seed Tai Tzu Ying, sixth seed He Bing Jiao progressed to the next round in women's singles, while sixth seed Shi Yuqi and Lee Zii Jia also entered the quarterfinals.



## USA beat Japan 2-1 to enter final of Olympic Qualifier

**PTI ■ RANCHI**  
**T**he United States of America produced a brave performance to register a come-from-behind 2-1 win over former Asian Games champions Japan to enter the final of the FIH Women's Olympic Qualifier, thereby securing their berth in the Paris Olympics here on Thursday.  
 Japan took the lead through Amiru Shimada in the 38th minute before the Americans produced two late goals through Ashley Hoffman (52nd) and Abigail Tamer (55th), both from penalty corners, to come out winners.  
 USA have booked their ticket to the Paris Olympics as the top three teams from this tournament will qualify for the quadrennial extravaganza to be held later this year. As suggested by their Indian coach Jude Menezes, Japan played attacking hockey from the onset.  
 Their play reaped rewards immediately as Japan bagged the first penalty corner of the match in the second minute, but wasted the opportunity. The Americans too made some circle penetrations but the Japanese defence was up to the task to thwart any danger to their goal.  
 In the 11th minute, USA secured their first penalty corner but their effort was kept at bay by Japanese goalkeeper Eika Nakamura.  
 Japan continued their attacking game in the second quarter and grabbed their second penalty corner in the 17th minute but they shot wide.  
 Japan continued to press hard on the American

defence and secured their second penalty corner in the 26th minute but wasted the chance as the deadlock continued at half-time.  
 The Japanese kept the pressure on the American defence after the cross-over and fetched another penalty corner in the 38th minute. This time they were successful in converting the chance through Shimada, who scored from a rebound after Kana Urata's slap hit was saved by American custodian Bing.  
 Trailing by a solitary goal, the Americans gave their all in the final quarter and exerted immense pressure on the Japanese defence, who seemed to have taken the game a bit lightly.  
 USA's plan worked wonders as they scored twice from as many penalty corners in a span of two minutes to turn the match on its head.  
 Japan conceded a penalty corner in the 52nd minute and Ashley Hoffman converted the chance with a powerful ground-flick to draw level.  
 Pepped by the equaliser, the Americans continued their attacking game and earned another penalty corner two minutes later and Tamer made no mistake while converting the chance to hand her side a 2-1 lead.  
 The Americans received another penalty corner just a minute from the final hooter with Japan withdrawing their goalkeeper for an extra field player, but failed to cash in on the chance.  
 Nevertheless, the lead was enough for the Americans, who are unbeaten in the tournament so far, to book their Paris ticket.

## Sneha flies on twin eagles to win

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
**S**neha Singh played a superb closing round to grab her first win of the season in the second Leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Thursday.  
 Sneha, winner of the Hero Order of Merit in 2023, opened and closed the final round with eagles on way to a card of 7-under 63. She rallied from four shots behind overnight leader Hitaashee Bakshi (68) to win by one.  
 Sneha with 68-73-63 totalled 6-under 204 and Hitaashee, who finished runner-up for the second time in as many weeks, finished at 5-under 205.  
 Ridhima Dilawari had a solid 2-under 68 and was third, while last week's winner, amateur Nishna Patel shot a 71. She was tied fourth with Khushi Khanijau (71) at 2-over 212.  
 Amandeep Drall (68-71-74) finished sixth and Vani Kapoor (76-69-70) was seventh.  
 Amateurs Mannat Brar (72) and Vidhatri Urs (73) emphasised the amateur strength in Indian women's golf by finishing tied eighth at 216.  
 Sneha and Hitaashee played in different groups but were engaged in a close tussle.  
 Sneha, who was four behind Hitaashee, got off to a super start with an eagle and added a birdie on the third. Hitaashee, playing in the lead group, also birdied the second and third and added a third birdie on the sixth.  
 Sneha eagled the final hole and joined Hitaashee at 6-under for the tournament.  
 Hitaashee needed a birdie on the Par-5 18th and a par would mean a play-off. She ended up dropping a shot to hand Sneha the win. Sneha and Hitaashee were tied for second last week behind amateur Nishna who won.  
 Sneha now takes the lead on the Hero Order of Merit after the first two legs of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour.

## IOA promises no stress Olympics for Indian athletes

### Announces measures to ensure comfort

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
**C**laiming to be wiser from past experiences, the Indian Olympic Association on Thursday unveiled a slew of measures to ensure "comfort" of its athletes at the upcoming Paris Games, promising that they would not face the stress of logistical challenges during the big event.  
 The measures include lodging athletes, specifically golfers, close to their competition venue, installing rehab equipment specific to the needs of Indian athletes at the Games village and engaging experts to ensure mental wellbeing of those bound for Paris.  
 "Learning from past experiences and taking athlete comfort into consideration, the IOA is implementing strategic measures to ensure that the athletes are at their peak performance during the prestigious event," the IOA said in a statement.



So far, 49 Indian athletes, including 17 shooters and the men's hockey squad, have qualified for the July-August Games. The number would go up in the coming months and expectations would be high after the stupendous performance in Tokyo where India won seven medals, including a first ever gold in athletics through javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra.  
 The IOA said the golfers would not be required to travel too far to get to the course, a hassle that they endured in Tokyo where they were lodged in the Games village, a good 75km from the competition venue.  
 Aditi Ashok, who missed a medal and finished fourth, had cited this as one of the major challenges during her campaign.  
 "Unlike the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, where Indian golfers faced the unique challenge of daily travel exceeding one hour to reach the golf venue...The

condition to compete at the highest level," it stated.  
 The IOA said it is also in dialogue with the Paris 2024 Organising Committee to implement "high-performance interventions" at the Olympic Village.  
 "This includes the strategic placement of additional rehabilitation equipment, catering specifically to the needs of Team India athletes."  
 The IOA is also advocating for the inclusion of traditional Indian meals in the menu, something that has been done in the past as well.  
 IOA President P T Usha said athlete comfort is topmost on the body's agenda.  
 "Our commitment is not just to participate, but to excel. We have learned from past experiences, and this time, we are leaving no stone unturned to ensure our athletes are comfortable, supported, and ready to make the nation proud," she said.

## Avani rallies on back nine to be placed seventh at Australian amateurs

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**  
**I**ndia's Avani Prashanth recovered from two double bogeys on the front nine with five birdies on the back nine before closing with a bogey in the third round of the Australian Amateur Championships here on Thursday.  
 Avani carded a second straight 2-over 75 at the Par-73 courses. Avani, ranked 50th in the world and the top ranked star from the Indian Golf Union, shot 72-75 on the first two days and is now 3-over 222 and tied seventh place.  
 The leader in the women's section is Amelia Harris, who had two eagles in her round of 5-



Only four players are under par after three rounds at the challenging course, where the conditions became tougher after rain on the second day.  
 The other Indian in the women's section, Heena Kang, missed the cut on the weather-hit second day. She shot 80-80.  
 In the men's section the lone Indian to make the cut was Varun Muthappa (74-73-77) who was 12-over and T-74, while Sandeep Yadav and Rohit Narwal missed the cut.  
 Avani opened with three pars and then ran into a disastrous stretch with a bogey and two double bogeys in a span of four holes between the fourth and the sixth.

## Mohun Bagan, East Bengal renew rivalry with eye on Super Cup semifinal

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
**B**itter foes Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal will renew their rivalry when they clash in the Super Cup with an aim to seal the semifinal spot here on Friday.  
 They have six points each in Group A and are also level on goal difference (+2), but East Bengal have a slight edge on goals scored.  
 A draw will do for Carles Cuadrat's side as they chase their first semi-final appearance in the Super Cup since the inaugural edition in 2018.  
 "Both teams must be very motivated. We know in football that when you're looking for a draw, you end up losing the game. So, for us, it's about winning. No question about that," said Cuadrat at the pre-match press conference.  
 East Bengal forward Cleiton Silva agreed with his coach's view.  
 "We cannot go for a draw, we must win the game. It's always interesting to play a derby. It's a big game, the biggest game in India. I'm happy to be a part of it," said the Brazilian.  
 Both teams are missing Indian players who are a part of the national team at the ongoing AFC Asian Cup.



"It's also going to be the first Kolkata Derby in Odisha since the 2017 Federation Cup semifinal in Cuttack, where Mohun Bagan ran out 2-0 winners.  
 "We are training well and are very focused. We have been working on our tactics. The only difference between here and other competitions like the ISL and the Durand Cup is that now we can play six foreigners.  
 "It can make a difference, but the rest is the same. Our players have the same never-say-die attitude, and I'm very happy to see that."  
 Friday's meeting is set to be the third Kolkata derby of the season.

## Nagal gritty run halted by Shang

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**  
**C**hinese tennis prodigy Juncheng Shang blunted Sumit Nagal's challenge at the Australian Open at the first major of the season here on Thursday.  
 Coming into the match after an inspiring win over a top-30 player, Nagal began in the same dominating fashion but the 18-year-old wild card entrant got better as the game progressed to walk out a winner with a 2-6 6-3 7-5 6-4 scoreline.  
 The second round contest lasted two hours and 50 minutes and it was clear that Nagal had run out of steam in the fourth set.  
 In contrast, Shang began to serve well from the third set onwards and was at ease in pocketing his service games despite being troubled by high

## Bopanna, Ebden pair moves to second round

backhand balls in the match. Nevertheless, the 26-year-old Nagal, who hails from Jhajjar in Haryana, will exit the Melbourne Park with cherishable memories, having made the main draw through the Qualifiers and scripting a win over world number 27 Alexander Bublik.  
 Nagal will take home AUD 180,000 (nearly 98 lakh) for his effort. The money should take care of most of his 2024 Tour budget.  
 Nagal got the Chinese engaged in baseline fight from the beginning and drew the first blood in the very first game of the match. It was a passing forehand winner from Nagal that helped set up the first break point and then a lucky net chord handed him his second chance which he converted with the Chinese making a backhand error.  
 Shang tried hard to get the break back by raising the intensity and power in his strokes but Nagal was ready to fight fire with fire and succeeded in opening up a 3-1 lead with consecutive holds.  
 The Chinese found himself in a spot of bother again when he



was down 0-30 in game five but pulled himself out of the hole by serving well.  
 A forehand error by Shang handed Nagal another break opportunity for a handsome 5-

2 lead but the Chinese saved that with a drop shot. Shang saved two more chances in a slugfest that saw six deuce points but a double fault gave Nagal his fourth breakpoint.  
 Shang's 17th unforced error of the match -- a wide backhand -- resulted in another break and it allowed the Indian to serve out the opening set in the next game.  
 The Chinese came out playing better and aggressive in the second set and had a chance to put Nagal under pressure but could not convert the two break points

in the second game.  
 Shang cut down on his errors, served well and the court coverage also improved and in no time, he was leading 5-2 with two breaks.  
 Coming out to serve to stay in the set, Nagal began with an unforced error but managed to hold. Shang was still troubled by the high backhand balls, but closed the second set in his favour with a powerful forehand, which Nagal could not return.  
 The third set was a tighter affair with no break of serve

until Shang cashed in on a flurry of backhand errors by Nagal at 5-5. At 15-all, Nagal buried backhand on net and then netted one more to be down by two break points.  
 Nagal saved both but handed another chance to the Chinese, who converted with a screaming down-the-line forehand winner.  
 Shang served out the set with an excellent serve.  
 As the match wore on, Shang's serve became better and better. He hardly conceded points on his serve. It put pressure on the Indian. A visibly tiring Nagal had his back on the wall after he lost serve at 3-3.  
 It was a backhand winner from Shang that earned him two break chances. At the net, Shang received a feeble return which he smashed for a winner to take a 4-3 lead and made it 5-3 with an easy hold.

# World Cup squad not final: Rohit

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The squad is not yet finalised but in his mind, India captain Rohit Sharma says he knows about 10 players who will be part of the side in the ICC T20 World Cup to be held this June in the Americas.

The series against Afghanistan was India's last T20 engagement before the World Cup. It also marked Rohit and Virat Kohli's comeback to the format after 14 months. Fringe players like Shivam Dube also got an opportunity to prove themselves in the series that India won 3-0.



'BUT YOU KNOW 8 TO 10 PLAYERS WHO WILL BE THERE'

the pitches are expected to be on the slower side.

"In the West Indies, the conditions are quite slow, so we have to pick the squad accordingly. Again I say, Rahul bhai and I have tried to maintain clarity in the team. The one thing I have learnt from captaincy is that you can't keep everyone happy. You have to focus on the needs of the team," said the skipper. After a couple of ducks, Rohit got back among the runs with a record fifth T20 hundred. In

his memorable effort, the skipper also attempted reverse hits multiple times with the surface playing out a few tricks in the powerplay.

"I have been practising it a lot in the nets. You have to play some shots in order to put the bowlers under pressure. When the ball is spinning and you can't hit straight, you have to try something new. "I have been practising reverse sweeps and sweeps for the past two years. You would have

seen me play them once or twice in Test matches. You have the options and it's up to you how you are using those options.

"The ball was spinning and gripping today so, I thought I'd play with the spin rather than step out and hit hard in front of the wicket," he said. With the three games, Rohit also got up to speed with the team's plans for the World Cup. "I had not played for one year,

so I discussed ideas with Rahul bhai (Dravid). Although I was watching the games, I was not playing. I got an understanding of a few things, so we wanted to implement them and also do something different. "We wanted our bowlers to bowl in a different way, someone wasn't comfortable bowling in the power play, so we had to use them there. Some were not comfortable bowling at the death, we asked them to bowl there," he added.

## England Lions pin India to mat despite Patidar quick 140

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England Lions continued to dominate India A despite a rollicking unbeaten hundred from Rajat Patidar on the second day of their first unofficial Test here on Thursday. Patidar made 140 off 132 balls with 18 fours and five sixes but India A could only make 215 for eight at close, replying to England's mammoth 553 for

eight declared in first innings. India A are still trailing by 338 runs. Pacer Matthew Fisher led England's bowling with a four-wicket burst (4/57) while he received strong support from fellow pacer Matthew Potts (2/26) and left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson (2/43). India A were, in fact, in all kind of trouble early on at 24 for four and later slipped to 95 for seven.

However, Patidar found some late support from Tushar Deshpande, who scored India's second highest individual score of 23, and Navdeep Saini as India A struggled past the 200-run mark. Earlier, England, starting from their overnight 382 for 3, motored on riding on a fine 125 off 182 balls by captain Josh Bohannon, who resumed the day from 93.

## U-19 WORLD CUP

# GenNext takes centerstage as rivals out to halt India unparalleled dominance

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN (SOUTH AFRICA)

Many dreams will take flight and futures will be shaped when the Under-19 World Cup begins here on Friday with rival teams looking to halt dominance of record five-time champions India.

The legacy of the Under-19 World Cup as a breeding ground for future cricketing stars is well established. The tournament has unearthed a bevy of Indian stars — Yuvraj Singh in 2000, Rohit Sharma in 2006, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja in 2008, Rishabh Pant and Ishan Kishan in 2016, Shubman Gill in 2018 — to name a few. At the world level also, the tournament has produced players who went on to become legends of the game. But at the same time, there have been many who have not been able to replicate the immense promise shown at the age group and they include the likes of Ravikant Shukla, Manish Pandey, Unmukt Chand, Yash Dhill, Manjot Kalra and Kamlesh Nagarkoti. All eyes again would be on India, who will be led by Punjab's Uday Saharan. They begin their campaign against neighbours Bangladesh in Group A on Saturday.



Group A also features the USA and Ireland who will set the ball rolling in the opening match of the tournament that will run till February 11 with the summit clash in Benoni. Sixteen teams are divided into four groups with top three making the Super Sixes where 12 teams will be divided into two pools. The top-two will then make the semi-finals, also slated in Benoni on February 6 and 8.

India this time did not have a proper build-up and have arrived here after a series of National Cricket Academy camps and just two tournaments — the Asia Cup and the recently concluded Tri-series in South Africa. The journey has been marked by setbacks, including a semi-final exit at the Asia Cup, where the Saharan-led side lost to hosts and eventual champions Bangladesh by four wickets. But the team's trajectory has seen a significant upswing since then, culminating in an unbeaten run to clinch the Tri-series in South Africa where Afghanistan were the third team. The honours were shared by India and South Africa after a wash-out in the final earlier this month. It remains to be seen if they're able to maintain their stranglehold on the coveted U-19 ODI trophy without extensive preparation. Australia are the next most successful side in the tournament with three titles in 1988, 2002, and 2010, while Pakistan secured the title in 2004 and 2006. Bangladesh (2020), South Africa (2014), West Indies (2016), and England (1998) have won the event once.

### THE GROUPS

Group A: Bangladesh, India, Ireland, USA  
Group B: England, Scotland, South Africa, West Indies  
Group C: Australia, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe  
Group D: Afghanistan, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan.



## Finn tells England to woo fans to win series in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For England to replicate their 2012 victory in India, their IPL superstars need to gain admirers by delivering entertaining performances, feels former pacer-turned-commentator Steven Finn. India have won 16 home series since their 1-2 reversal against England 13 years back, a series which Finn was part of. "I think the IPL superstar of some of the players will count to England's benefit," Finn told ESPNcricinfo. "Kevin Pietersen aside, that 2012 team, people weren't really superstars in India, whereas you have quite a few guys this time going over who have played in the IPL and are superstars in that. I think that will count." England have some IPL household names in the touring party with the likes of Ben Stokes, Mark Wood, Jonny Bairstow and Harry Brook part of the side. England will embark on their five-match series against India with the Hyderabad Test from January 25. "The three most memorable tours I went on, India 2012, Australia 2010-11 and South Africa 2016, all three of them, one of the motivations for us was to try and get the opposition public on side and turn them against their own team. "That's a huge benefit to you, and having Stokes and McCullum at the helm gives England an opportunity to do that. "If they play well and give a good account of themselves, as the series goes on that tide can turn, because we know how polarising the Indian cricket team can be to their public depending on how they are playing." SUPERHUMAN JIMMY: Finn further said veteran James

Anderson will be a "vital cog" despite a difficult Ashes last year. On his sixth tour to India, the 41-year-old Anderson has taken an impressive 34 wickets at 29.32, with 12 of them coming on that 2012 tour. "Jimmy is superhuman. People have been anticipating he will retire for about seven years now and he keeps surprising people and performing," Finn said. "He didn't have a fantastic summer last year, but I know from knowing him as a character that he wouldn't be doing this unless he felt he could make a difference. "I think a determined Jimmy Anderson well-managed is someone who will be important to England, especially making the most of the reverse swing because he is an absolute master at that. "He would have worked on his fitness, he would have trained hard, he has got the skills and has got the experience so I anticipate when he plays, he'll be an important cog." MEASURED AGGRESSION: Finn further urged the touring party to show measured aggression taking a cue of Alastair Cook and Kevin Pietersen's centuries in their 10-wicket win in the 2012 Mumbai Test. "Cook ground them down and then Pietersen came out and played this knock and everyone was like, 'oh my word, we're going to win this series.' That was the moment we all realised. "England can take some of the motivation from the way that affected the way India played and try to take that into this series, but it has to be a measured aggression. "If you go 100 percent aggression from the beginning, I think you can become unstuck. But if you've given yourself a chance and then assert pressure back on India, that could serve England well," he added.

## Warner, Boult, Bravo among stars to light up International League T20

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The likes of Australian big-hitter David Warner and New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult will headline the second edition of the six-team DP World International League T20, beginning on Friday in the UAE. A total of 34 games will be played in the league including the final in Dubai on February 17. Dubai will host 15 games, Abu Dhabi 11 and Sharjah will be the venue for the remaining eight games. Former India batter Ambati Rayudu has also signed up for the competition and will represent Mumbai Indians Emirates. The other IILT20 teams apart from MI Emirates (Reliance Industries) are Abu Dhabi Knight Riders (Kolkata Knight Riders), Desert Vipers (Lancer Capital), Dubai Capitals (GMR), Gulf Giants (Adani Sportsline), and Sharjah Warriors (Capri Global). Besides Warner and Boult, the other big games who will be a part of the tournament are Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Corey



Anderson, Dwayne Bravo, Dasun Shanaka, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Sam Billings, David Willey, Alex Hales, Tom Curran, Rowman Powell, Shimron Hetmyer, James Vince, Chris Woakes and Martin Guppitt. The recently-retired Warner, who would be captaining Dubai Capitals, is also the face of the league's marketing campaign alongside former India spinner and the event's official ambassador Harbhajan Singh. Boult, who is an active international cricketer but has opted out of New Zealand's central contract pool, will play for MI Emirates. "As I gear up for my debut in one of the world's most competitive

T20 leagues, it's truly an honour to be the face of this season's marketing campaign," Warner said. The competition will be shown live on Zee's 10 channels — &Pictures, &Pictures HD, Zee Cinema HD, Zee Anmol Cinema, Zee Zest, Zee Ganga, Zee Cinemalux HD, &Flix, &Flix HD and Zee Zest HD — and streaming app ZEE5. "We are delighted to have David Warner along with league's ambassador and commentator Harbhajan Singh to kick off DP World IILT20 Season 2 marketing campaign," said Rahul Johri, President - Business, ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Limited

## FIR against gaming site, FB page as Tendulkar raises concerns over his deepfake video

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have registered a case against a gaming site and a Facebook page after Sachin Tendulkar raised concerns over a deepfake video that falsely showed that the cricketing legend was promoting its gaming app, an official said on Thursday. An FIR has been registered under section 500 (defamation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 66 (A) (sending offensive messages through communication service) of the IT Act on a complaint filed by the former cricketer's personal assistant at the West Region Cyber police station on Tuesday, the official said. Earlier, a deepfake video, carrying a digitally manipulated clip and voice of Tendulkar, was shared on Facebook in which it was falsely shown that the former ace batsman was promoting a gaming app. The deepfake also sought to create an impression that Tendulkar and his daughter

Sara had won large sums of money by playing a certain online game. According to the complaint, the video was edited and posted on Facebook. It said deepfake technology was used to mimic Tendulkar's gesture and voice. At this stage, the police did not share details about the owner of the gaming site and the Facebook page. Tendulkar himself had flagged the fake video on his official X handle. He called the video a "disturbing" misuse of technology and stressed that it was fake. "These videos are fake. It is disturbing to see rampant misuse of technology. Request everyone to report videos, ads and apps like these in large numbers," Tendulkar had appealed on X. Social media platforms need to be alert and responsive to complaints, he said. "Swift action from their end is crucial to stopping the spread of misinformation and deepfakes," he had asserted.

## Australia set to end 1st test against West Indies early on Day 3 at Adelaide Oval

opener Steve Smith with his first ball in test cricket on the opening day Wednesday at the Adelaide Oval. Joseph added the wicket of Marnus Labuschagne before stumps Wednesday, when Australia was 59-2. On Thursday, Joseph had new No. 4 batter Cameron Green out for 14. Pace bowler Joseph, who made 36 batting at No. 11 - the second-highest score in the visitor's innings - had figures of 3-52 at the lunch break. Australia captain Pat Cummins



and Josh Hazlewood took four wickets each as Australia restricted West Indies to 188 all out and made good use of the Adelaide Oval pitch after winning the toss and bowling first. West Indies, which hasn't won a test match Down Under since February 1997, has brought only five players who appeared in the two tests against Australia in 2022-23 and added seven uncapped players to the touring squad. The second and final test in the series, a day-night match at the Gabba in Brisbane, begins Jan.