

**OPINION 6**  
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REBELS IN PAKISTAN

**WORLD 8**  
HEZBOLLAH FIRES OVER 200  
ROCKETS INTO ISRAEL

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX, NIFTY HIT NEW  
LIFETIME HIGHS

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11 SPORTS**



# CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS COME HOME

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team for breakfast here on Thursday during which, he said, there were "memorable" conversations on the side's experiences through the marquee event co-hosted by USA and the West Indies, the team went to Mumbai for victory parade.

The Rohit Sharma-led squad, that won the title after defeating South Africa by seven runs in the final last week, arrived in Delhi early morning after being stranded in Bridgetown, Barbados for five days due to a category 4 hurricane.

The victory parade of the T20 World Cup winning Indian team commenced after a two-hour delay as complete crowd chaos along the stretch of South Mumbai brought the traffic to a halt after Rohit and his men touched down little after 5 pm here on Thursday.

As per the itinerary shared by the officials here, the two-hour open bus parade started from the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Nariman Point till the Wankhede Stadium started little after 7:30 pm in the evening as the Maximum City's stretch along the Marine Drive was drowned in an 'Ocean of Humanity'.

The Wankhede Stadium here was thrown open to fans, who filled up the stands within minutes to celebrate the Indian



Players of the T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team with the championship trophy acknowledge fans during their open bus victory parade, in Mumbai, on Thursday PTI

cricket team's title triumph last Saturday.

After arriving in the city, Rohit's team and its support staff made their way to the southern tip of the city which houses the

Wankhede Stadium. But not before their aircraft — a Vistara flight — got the famous 'Water Salute' after arriving here at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport's

Terminal 2. The players walked out of the airport with a sea of fans and media waiting for them for last several hours.

Meanwhile, here at the iconic

Wankhede Stadium which witnessed India's last ODI World Cup triumph in 2011, the stands got filled to the brim by passionate fans as thousand others waited outside the gates

which were closed around 5:00 pm. As the gates closed amid intermittent rain, extreme humidity and chaos of several thousand people arriving in the vicinity, those fortunate ones who were able to find their places inside Wankhede remained fixated to their seats even if there was scarcity of food and water.

As the fans ran in all directions to take their places in the stands amid a heavy burst of rain, several pairs of footwear got left behind in the rush while debris of all kind was also thrown around along the way.

While the wait extended, rain kept pelting down with breaks but it could not force the fans off their seats inside the stadium. The DJ kept entertaining with songs of all genres and at one instance it felt like Wankhede was hosting a rain-dance party with the stadium's speakers blurring out Vengaboys' party hit 'To Brazil' and country's unofficial sports anthem 'Chak de India'. Soon after, Wankhede came alive with its customary chants of 'Sachin... Sachin' followed by 'Mumbaicha Raja, Rohit Sharma' and 'India... India'.

Earlier in the day after meeting the world champions, Modi posted on 'X' along with pictures of him with the team.

"An excellent meeting with our Champions! Hosted the World Cup winning team at 7, LKM and had a memorable conversation on their experiences through the tournament," wrote Modi.



## India script cricket history in England

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

While the Indian Men's Cricket team basked in their well-deserved T20 World Cup glory in Barbados, the cricketers of the Indian Deaf Cricket Team were quietly achieving a remarkable success of their own in England. Last week, they defeated host England by six wickets in a thrilling seventh and final T20 to claim the series 5-2 in Leicester.

Their triumph not only highlights inclusivity in sports but also serves as an inspiration, showcasing that with determination and perseverance, no barrier is insurmountable, said experts and differently-abled individuals as they expressed immense happiness and pride over this achievement.

Sumit Jain, president of the Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA), said, "The victory in this bilateral series against England is not just a win on the field but a testament to the perseverance and skill of our hearing-impaired players."

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## BJP vs Cong over Rahul's 'incorrect' remarks in LS



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the Centre on Thursday said any MP trying to mislead Parliament will not get away easily and the "rules will get them", a war of words between the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress escalated. This comes after the Congress wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP MP Anurag Thakur made "factually incorrect, inaccurate and misleading statements" in the Lok Sabha and sought appropriate action in the matter.

The BJP has already submitted a notice against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha over alleged inaccuracies in his speech. Congress Lok Sabha MP Manickam Tagore has written to Speaker Birla, requesting that provisions of direction 115(1) be invoked over the statements made by Modi and Thakur.

"Nobody can expect to escape. There is no special privilege for anyone just because he comes from a privileged family. If anybody wants to misuse the position in the House to mislead the House, he will not easily get away. Rule will get them," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said. Rijiju was in fact referring to a notice submitted in the Lok Sabha by BJP member Bansuri Swaraj urging the Speaker to take cognisance of her notice against certain inaccuracies in Rahul's speech on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address.

"When the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha kept on lying on many things, including facts and figures, a notice was put to the Speaker and we have requested the Speaker to take appropriate action. We are waiting for the action," Rijiju said in response to questions on the issue.

The Minister said rules apply equally to everyone as no

member is above the Chair in the House.

In his letter to Speaker, Tagore flagged that Prime Minister Modi in his reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address had said the Congress made a "false promise" of ₹8,500 per month to women, when the party's promise was conditional to victory and Government formation.

He also challenged Modi's claim that the Congress vote share has gone down in 16 States in which it had contested alone. "This is factually incorrect. The Congress vote share increased in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Telangana etc.," Tagore was quoted as saying in the letter.

He also termed as "grossly misleading" Modi's remarks that "no bullet proof jackets [were provided] for the Army during the Congress' time." "There was a shortage of jackets, not that jackets were not there. Even police had bullet proof jackets like in Mumbai attacks," Tagore said.

He also challenged the Prime Minister over the claim that the Congress didn't give fighter jets to the Army. "We had Jaguar, Mig 29, SU-30, Mirage 2000," the letter read. Tagore also pointed out alleged inaccuracies in Thakur's July 1 speech in the Lok Sabha.

The Congress MP said Thakur claimed that the Army was not given arms and fighter jets when the party ruled the country.

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## CBI files first FIR under new laws in Capital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered its first FIR under newly enforced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against two Delhi Police officers for allegedly demanding ₹10 lakh bribe to help the release of a person lodged in Tihar Jail. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has replaced the British era Indian Penal Code (IPC). The FIR registered on Wednesday evening booking Head Constables Ravindra Dhaka and Parveen Saini both posted in Narcotics Cell, Maurice Nagar, under BNA 61(2) related to alleged criminal conspiracy and provisions of bribery under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

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## Naidu bats for raise in Andhra's Central aid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the full annual Budget of third tenure of BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national Capital on Thursday and described their discussions on key development issues concerning the State as "constructive". Naidu's assertion has come a week after another significant ally of the NDA, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) had pressed for special package and grants for Bihar during the meeting of party's national executive.

Sources said during the



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

meeting at the PMO, Naidu advocated for increased assistance to Andhra Pradesh

in lieu of special category status. The Chief of Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which is

an important ally in the BJP-led NDA Government, presented several crucial proposals for the State's development and sought the Union Government support, sources said.

Following the meeting, he expressed confidence in Andhra Pradesh's potential to "re-emerge as a powerhouse among States" under Modi's leadership. "Today, I had a constructive meeting with the Prime Minister to address important matters concerning the welfare and development of Andhra Pradesh. I am confident that under his leadership, our State will re-emerge as a powerhouse among States," Naidu took to social media to share the details.

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## Hathras stampede site reeks of death, destruction

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ HATHRAS

A teddy bear, a few lunch boxes, slippers and handbags lying on the ground at the spot where the Hathras stampede tragedy unfolded on Tuesday continue to tell of the horrors of the day when devotion to a self-styled godman Narayan Saakar Hari alias 'Bhole Baba' turned into a ghastly affair as more than 120 devotees lost their lives. However, locals, who were witness to the mayhem, said the number of the dead is not less than 400.

In the sobbing town of Hathras many are seen grieving for their loved ones who lost their lives in one of the worst stampedes in the country, cursing the cop-turned-godman who claims to heal and even bring the



Family members sitting at a house after the Hathras stampede. Over 120 people were killed and several injured in the stampede, according to officials Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

dead back to life.

"Itne hi bade bhagwan the to wapis kyo nahi aaye apne bhakto ke liye? (If he is such a big God why didn't he come back for his devotee?)," said a man identified Ramesh Kashyap who lost his mother

in the tragic incident. Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday arrested six 'sevadar' including two women in connection with the Hathras stampede. However, the preacher has not been

### Victims rue medical neglect

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ HATHRAS

Relatives of those injured in the tragic stampede incident at a 'satsang sabha' led by self-styled godman Narayan Saakar Hari, also known as 'Bhole Baba', have voiced their grievances at the Sikandrarao district hospital in Hathras. They complained of inadequate medical treatment for the injured, with many patients being discharged prematurely despite still experiencing significant pain.

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mentioned as accused in the FIR lodged at the local Sikandra Rao police station. The only accused named in the FIR is at large. The preacher 'Bhole Baba' will be questioned if required during investigation, a senior officer said.

"A reward of ₹one lakh will be announced soon and non-bailable warrant (NBW) will also be issued against the key accused Devprakash Madhukar," Inspector General of Police (Aligarh Range) Shalabh Mathur said. In the village of Sokhana, four people lost their lives including three from a single family. Binod, a 40-year-old labourer, was in Bareilly in search of a job when he heard the news of his mother's death in the stampede.

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## Jaishankar for isolating countries harbouring terrorists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/ASTANA

With tension persisting at the border for the last five years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday that the Line of Actual Control (LAC) must be "respected." He also asked the international community to "isolate and expose" those countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone



terrorism, saying if left unchecked, terrorism can become a major threat to regional and global peace, in a veiled jibe at China and Pakistan. Delivering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State Summit in the Kazakhstan capital Astana, Jaishankar, who was physically present at the meeting, recalled that one of the original goals of the SCO is to combat terrorism.

"Many of us have had our experiences, often originating beyond our borders. Let us be clear that if left unchecked, it can become a major threat to regional and global peace. Terrorism in any form or manifestation cannot be justified or condoned," he told the summit, which was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Russian President Vladimir Putin among others.

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## Hemant Soren back in saddle

PNS ■ RANCHI/NEW DELHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) executive president Hemant Soren on Thursday took oath as the 13th Chief Minister of Jharkhand, a day after Champai Soren stepped down from the post months ahead of the Assembly election. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by



Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren takes the oath of office and secrecy as the 13th Chief Minister of Jharkhand during the swearing-in Ceremony at the Raj Bhavan, in Ranchi PTI

Governor C P Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan here. Hemant's father and JMM supreme Shibu Soren, his mother Rupsi Soren, wife Kalpana Soren and senior leaders of the JMM-led alliance were present at the swearing-in ceremony. Chamapi Soren, who resigned as the Chief Minister on Wednesday, was also present on the occasion.



# Team India gets rousing welcome at IGIA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After being stuck in Barbados since winning the T20 World Cup, courtesy Hurricane Beryl, Team India finally landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport and greeted by a rousing reception as they stepped out of the airport. Hundreds of fans, holding placards congratulating their favourite players and waving the national flag, gathered outside the IGI airport to welcome the victorious players. Frenzied crowds shouted "India, India" after they landed at the Delhi airport. Whistles and wild cheers greeted the players as they walked out from the arrivals area with gold medals around their necks, some giving a thumbs-up to their fans. Vice-captain Hardik Pandya who emerged first wearing a Caribbean hat, and the crowd erupted when captain Rohit came out carrying the glittering trophy, which he hoisted into the air. Rohit and Player of the Final Kohli, were among the last to come out of the VIP exit. Rohit raised the coveted trophy for the fans to catch a glimpse before boarding the bus. Kohli,



on his part, gave a thumbs up to acknowledge the support. Star batsman Virat Kohli, whose hometown is Delhi, was given some of the loudest cheers as he waved to hundreds of fans. There was dancing, there were multiple cakes, and there were fans on streets showing just why cricket is the most passionately followed sport in the country. The energy rubbed off

on the weary players, who joined in the fun after arriving at the hotel from airport to complete the party atmosphere. "We have waited for this moment for the past 13 years. The team has made us proud by winning the World Cup," a fan, who claimed to have been waiting since 4:30am in the morning said, referring to India's last World Cup triumph which came back in

2011. "It's a dream for me to witness India return home from a World Cup," said a shirtless fan with a Kohli tattoo emblazoned on his chest. The Air India special charter flight AIC24WC -- Air India Champions 24 World Cup -- arrived in Delhi at 6am (IST) on Thursday after a 16-hour non-stop journey. Heavy security was deployed to keep the

crowd in check at the Indira Gandhi International airport but that did little to dampen the spirits as fans cheered enthusiastically holding up posters of star batter Virat Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid. Two buses were stationed outside the T3 Terminal to ferry the players to ITC Maurya Sheraton, where they were greeted by dhol and traditional Bhangra dancers. Most of them, including skipper Rohit Sharma, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav and Rishabh Pant, shook a leg with the assembled dancers, giving them a memory that would last a lifetime. Anmol Chadha, a fan expressed happiness and said, "... We came to T3 because we are very excited. We came to the airport at 3 am." Even the on-duty security personnel had smiles on their faces as the players let their hair down after the long journey, shook hands with everyone who wanted to and moved into their rooms after cutting yet another cake, this time in the shape of the trophy they had brought back.

# LG lauds DDA for building Airport Drain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has lauded the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for its efforts in constructing the Airport Drain, as a result of which, despite the recent record downpour, the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport remained free of water-logging. Giving details here on Thursday, officials said right after taking over, Saxena had taken up the task of constructing the Airport drain from IGI Airport to PWD Trunk Drain No.2, on the southern side of the Airport in a mission mode. The Airport had faced flooding even during the floods in the Capital last year. After the infamous flooding of the Airport Runways and Terminal in 2019, that had brought international disrepute, IGIA had approached DDA, which in turn had started construction of the drain connecting the Airport to TD-



2 in 2020. However, the same had gotten stuck due to lack of permissions by the GNCTD for more than 02 years. After taking over, the LG had asked DDA to move the Delhi High Court which in turn had directed GNCTD to give the required permissions, which finally came in August, 2022. Thereafter, the DDA working in mission mode under direct supervision of the LG, who visited the site on 20 occasions, completed the works in a record time of 15 months, with the drain getting inaugurated in December, 2023. In a recent review, the LG was informed that the drain flowed to its maximum capacity of 80 cumec on the day of the heavy

downpour i.e. on 28.06.2024 and successfully carried the water discharged from the Airport and its neighbouring areas, which helped the Airport and the areas remain free of water-logging for the first time in several years. Similar intervention by the DDA in East Delhi, helped large areas in Trilokpuri and MayurVihar, etc., prone to flooding every year, remain largely flood-free this year. In his visit to the area last year, the LG had instructed DDA to construct channels from the Highway, from where water used to flow down into the residential localities, into the Sanjay Lake owned by DDA, in the neighbourhood. He had also asked for large pipes to be positioned by making large holes in the boundary wall of the neighbouring residential areas, so as to ensure water flows from these areas into the Sanjay Lake. This served the dual purpose of not only draining out water from the areas suffering from flooding for years together, but also recharging the Sanjay Lake with fresh rainwater.

# PWD has become hotbed of corruption: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Thursday charged that Public Works Department of Arvind Kejriwal Government has become a hot bed of corruption while the non performing Health Department has totally failed Delhiites. Making this assertion, Sachdeva said it is shocking to see that even as the PWD and Health Department have failed Delhiites, the concerned Ministers keep themselves engaged in dirty blame game politics and they have time for doing everything except improving the performance of their Department. The LNJP Hospital Extension cost rise scam is a well thought over scam planned by the then PWD Minister Satyendra Jain. LNJP Hospital extension is a steel based structure and our inquiry shockingly reveals that



Satyendra Jain instead of giving a fixed tender gave a tender on rate contract basis, Delhi BJP chief claimed. As a result of tender being given on rate contract basis, every time price of steel and other building material goes up the rates go up, Sachdeva charged.

Manish Sisodia and Atishi, who have been PWD Ministers after Satyendra Jain, were very well aware of the scam as every time price got escalated the relevant file was put up before the PWD Minister, he said. Thereafter, the completion date of LNJP Hospital Extension was repeatedly extended to

allow further cost hikes, he added. Atishi needs to explain why Satyendra Jain allowed a tender for a hospital on rate contract basis and why despite escalating cost the completion date was allowed to be extended, Sachdeva said. Delhi BJP President said it is surprising that the PWD is in bad news for several reasons including water logging and hospital cost escalation but Minister Atishi is least bothered about it. Atishi is raising teachers transfer issue to divert attention from her Public Works Department's Rs. 670 crores scam in LNJP Hospital, he said. Delhi BJP President said even as on one hand we here of PWD's construction scam on the other hand we hear that one third of operation theatres in Delhi Government hospitals are dysfunctional.

# AAP urges LG to revoke school teachers' transfer orders

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has called on the Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena to revoke the transfer orders of teachers in Delhi government schools. Delhi Education Minister Atishi has instructed the chief secretary to immediately stop the mandatory transfer of 5,000 teachers who have been teaching in Delhi government schools for more than 10 years, following allegations of corruption in the transfer process. At a press conference, Atishi highlighted the detrimental impact of the transfer order on the education system. "This order is absolutely wrong and anti-education. It undermines the hard work of teachers who have transformed Delhi's government schools



over the last 10 years," she said. A circular was issued by the DoE on June 11, titled "Online requests for transfer of teaching staff of the Directorate of Education", wherein, vide Clause 16, it was directed that all teachers who have served for more than 10 years in the same school shall compulsorily apply for transfer, failing which they will be transferred to any school by the DoE. Atishi had ordered

on July 1 that no teacher should be transferred solely because he has spent more than 10 years in a particular school. The minister emphasised the crucial role these teachers play in the lives of their students, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds. "These children are mostly first-generation learners with no academic support at home. For them, their teachers are their

sole academic guides," she said. The minister also referred to the National Education Policy (NEP), which discourages frequent or large-scale transfers of teachers. Stability in teacher placement is essential for maintaining the quality of education, especially for vulnerable student populations, she said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader also raised serious concerns about "corruption" in the transfer process. "There are worrying reports that bribes have been taken to stop the transfers. This is extremely concerning as corruption within the education department threatens the future of our children," she said. The minister called for an immediate investigation into these allegations and strict action against any officials found guilty of accepting bribes.

# HC castigates MCD Commissioner over illegal constructions in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday castigated the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) commissioner over illegal and unauthorised constructions in the national capital and said courts were being used as "pawns" in the process. It said one of the reasons for flooding in Delhi is that water outlets are blocked due to unauthorised constructions and asked the civic body chief to take stern action against erring officers. The bench said it has noticed that some lawyers are also blackmailing and extracting money in unauthorised construction matters and the court process was being misused. "We are being used as a pawn in the entire thing. We want to break this nexus, it is a big nexus. The system is collapsing. You do something and take drastic action against your offi-



cers," the bench told the MCD commissioner. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela apprised Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Commissioner Ashwani Kumar, who joined the proceedings virtually in pursuance of the court's direction, about filing of motivated petitions which cannot be ignored as the

fact of illegal and unauthorised constructions is not in dispute. "Courts are being used as a strategic tool by both the petitioner and the officials of MCD for their ulterior purposes and for extracting money. Professional persons are filing a number of petitions on unauthorised constructions. We are stuck in a strange situation. If we take action, they tend to

extort money from the property owner. If we don't take action, then the unauthorised construction remains," the bench said. The court said, "The floods in Delhi are because outlets of water are blocked. Drains are choked. This is because of unauthorised constructions. Houses and buildings have been constructed on public lands and drains so there is no way left for water to flow." It questioned the MCD officials for turning a blind eye to unauthorised constructions coming up in the city and said it is not possible without the complicity of MCD officials. Responding to the concerns raised by the bench, the commissioner assured the court that strict action will be taken against erring officials, they will be sensitised, and a strong message will be sent out that such activities are not going to be tolerated. He assured the court that the

civic body will take action against unauthorised constructions and they will be removed. The court was hearing a petition filed by a 20-year-old woman seeking directions to the authorities to stop and demolish an illegal and unauthorised construction being carried out on a land in Paharganj here. During the hearing, the MCD counsel contended that the petition was motivated. The high court had earlier said though it was prima facie in agreement with the contention that the petition seemed to be motivated, it does not take away from the fact that the construction was illegal and unauthorised. "This court has been dealing with a number of similar matters where the bonafide of the petitioner is suspect, but the factum of unauthorised and illegal construction is not in dispute," it had said.

# Religious structure demolished amid protests in Rohini area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) carried out a demolition drive at a religious structure in North West Delhi's Rohini area, sparking protests by some locals. The MCD carried out the demolition drive following a court order to take action against unauthorised construction of a religious structure encroaching upon a park in the area. The removal of the unauthorised construction/encroachment was scheduled on various occasions but could not be carried out due to non-availability of police force, said a civic body official. The MCD along with a team of local police and paramilitary forces on Thursday morning reached the spot at Rohini sector 22 and carried out the demolition drive against the

illegal construction. The religious structure was built adjoining a park in the residential colony of Pocket 6 of Rohini sector 22. The action sparked protests by some locals but the situation was made under control, a police officer said. "The demolition was undertaken by the MCD's Horticulture department following a High Court order to remove the illegal encroachment adjoining the park in Pocket 6 of Rohini Sector-22. For the said work, the police force was provided by the Aman Vihar police station. There was a demand for the police force to remove the encroachment for a long time. It was removed when the police force arrived," the civic body official said. The High Court in response to a petition directed the MCD on March 27 to remove the unauthorised structure from the site.

# DMRC signs MoU with RVNL

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday to collaborate and jointly work as a Project Service Provider for Design, Construction and Consultancy Projects in India and Abroad. The MoU was officially signed by Dr. P.K. Garg, Director (Business Development) DMRC and Mr. Rajesh Prasad, Director Operations, RVNL in the presence of other senior officials. This partnership aims to synergize the joint efforts of DMRC and RVNL in the upcoming projects in India and abroad as Project Service Provider for Metro/Railways/High Speed Rail/Highways/Mega-Bridges/Tunnels/Institutional



Buildings/Workshops or Depots/S&T works/Railway Electrification. The MoU covers a wide range of infrastructure projects. The two organisations will work together to develop new projects by sharing their exper-

tise and capabilities as they have a strong track record of delivering complex infrastructure projects. This collaboration between DMRC and RVNL will help to develop new projects in India and abroad.

# Delhi-Meerut RRTS to get last mile transport services

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to improve last mile connectivity, the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) on Thursday said that it will make rental two-wheelers, cab services, autorickshaws and feeder bus services available at all RRTS stations from Delhi to Meerut. In a statement, the NCRTC also said that passengers at Sahibabad and Ghaziabad stations will get a 10 per cent discount on Rapido bike taxis. With the start of operations of Namoo Bharat trains, the NCRTC is also making efforts to provide the facility of rental two-wheelers, rental bicycles at the stations so that people get last mile connectivity, the statement said. Currently, Namoo Bharat trains are running in the 34-km section of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) from Sahibabad to Modi Nagar



North over eight stations. Electric buses of Ghaziabad City Transport Services Limited have been made available to all these operational stations for last mile connectivity. These electric buses are available at Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, DPS Rajnagar Guldhar, Duhai, Murad Nagar, Modi Nagar South, and Modi Nagar North stations, it said. Apart from this, passengers using Rapido bike taxi are being given a 10 per cent discount for those travelling in Namoo Bharat trains at Ghaziabad and Sahibabad stations, the statement said. Soon this facility will be available for passengers at other stations as well, it said. The NCRTC has now invited open expressions of interest from

service providers to improve last mile connectivity in the entire corridor, the statement said. Service providers for electric/CNG powered shuttle-bus service, pre-paid electric/CNG powered taxi services, app-based electric/CNG powered cab service, prepaid/metro electric/CNG powered autorickshaw service, electric/CNG powered sharing service, sharing e-rickshaw service, two wheeler bike taxi service for point to point mobility from stations, two wheeler rental service, rental cycle service from stations, electric/CNG rental car service from stations etc. Are being sought, it said. Additionally, expression of interest has also been invited to set up at least one battery swapping station for feeder e-rickshaw service operation at all stations of the corridor. Battery swapping station will not only promote electric vehicles but will also provide last

mile connectivity to the people, the statement said. The NCRTC has been working from the very beginning to provide last mile connectivity to maximum number of people so that people living far from the stations that may be operational in future can also reach RRTS and Meerut Metro stations without any hassle, it said. It said that there will also be provision of rental two-wheelers and rental bicycles around the stations to help passengers complete short-term tasks. The passengers will be able to avail this facility by paying on hourly basis and after the work is over, they can park their vehicle or bicycle back at the vehicle/cycle point built in the stations and travel further by Namoo Bharat trains. These efforts of NCRTC will create a better and friendly transport system, which will not only reduce pollution but will also reduce road accidents, it added.

2024 winners' average vote share down by 2 per cent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The winners of Lok Sabha elections 2024 won an average of 50.58 per cent votes, down by 2 per cent as compared to the last general elections, according to an analysis by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Winners in the 2024 elections secured an average of 50.58 per cent of the total votes polled, a decrease from 52.65 per cent in 2019. Notably, 279 winners (51 per cent) achieved more than half of the total votes in their constituencies, while 263 winners (49 per cent) failed to reach the half-way mark.



Among the elected MPs with declared criminal cases, 42 per cent won with a vote share of 50 per cent and above, the ADR report said. The ADR and National Election Watch (NEW) have released a comprehensive analysis of the vote share in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, examining 542 out of 543 constituencies.

average, 33.44 per cent of the total electorate, down from the 35.46 per cent in 2019. This indicates a decrease in the representativeness of elected candidates when compared to the number of eligible voters. Five winners had a margin of victory of less than 2,000 votes, and another five won with more than a 50 per cent margin of victory.

Modi to visit Russia, Austria next week: MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay an official visit to Russia and Austria on July 8-10 July, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Thursday. This will be the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Austria in 41 years, it said.



Indian Prime Minister to Austria in 41 years. He will call on President of Austria Alexander Van der Bellen and hold talks with Chancellor of Austria Karl Nehammer.

Modi and President Putin last held bilateral talks on the margins of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at Samarkand in Uzbekistan on September 16, 2022.

In the meeting, Modi had famously pressed Putin to end the conflict in Ukraine saying "today's era is not of war". "I know today's era is not of war. We discussed this issue on phone several times that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue touch the entire world," Modi had said.

UMMEED HOUSING FINANCE PRIVATE LIMITED. Corp. Off.: Unit No. 809-815, 8th Floor, Tower-A, Emaar Digital Greens, Golf Course Extn. Road, Sector 61, Gurugram, Haryana-122002.

UMMEED HOUSING FINANCE PRIVATE LIMITED. Corp. Off.: Unit No. 809-815, 8th Floor, Tower-A, Emaar Digital Greens, Golf Course Extn. Road, Sector 61, Gurugram, Haryana-122002.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Parvinder Kaur Chadha has acquired Third Floor Built-up property bearing WZ-38, Plot No. 96 area 83 sq. yds., Kharsa No. 26, situated at Village Nangli Jallo, Colony known as Krishna Park, Gali No. 6 & 7, New Delhi vice Sale Deed of 03.10.2011 executed by Mr. Kulvinder Pal Singh, Now Mrs. Parvinder Kaur Chadha is the undisputed owner of above said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Manoj Kumar Verma has acquired Plot No. 49 and 50 area 38 sq. yds., Kharsa No. 43/11, situated in the area of Village Hastal, Delhi, colony known as Mohan Garden, in Block-B, Extn. Uttam Nagar, New Delhi vice GPA dated 30.06.2011 along with AT&S & Will executed by Mr. Arvind Kumar Verma, Now Mr. Manoj Kumar Verma is the undisputed owner of above said property.

PETTY REPAIRING OF ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION OVER RANGIYA DIVISION. E-Tender Notice No. RNY-EL-T-02-2024-25. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: At Rangiya Division- Petty repairing of electrical installation over Rangiya division for a period of two years.

PUBLIC NOTICE. LOSS OF ID CARD. This is to bring to the notice of the general public that one ID card of Mr. Bharat Kumar issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. Having ID Card No. 2405591 has been found missing and/or lost on 04-07-2024.

ICICI BANK. The following borrower(s) has/have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest towards the Loan facility(ies) availed from ICICI Bank. The Loan(s) has/have been classified as Non-Performing Asset(s) (NPA). A Notice was issued to them under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, at their last known addresses. However, it has not been served and are therefore being notified by way of this Public Notice.

CORRIGENDUM NO. 1, 2 & 3 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO. N\_2\_HQ\_ABS\_2024-25 AGAINST TENDER NO. N\_2\_HQ\_EPC\_ABS\_2024-25 DTD. 11-06-2024. Corrigendum against Tender No.: N\_2\_HQ\_EPC\_ABS\_2024-25 has been modified as under.

सार्वजनिक सूचना. आदेशानुसार कार्यालय सच रजिस्ट्रार, बल्लभगढ़, जिला फरीदाबाद में अतःद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि श्री सुमित बोहरा (आधार नं 2495-5161-8402) पुत्र स्व. श्री रविन्द्र कुमार बोहरा वद श्री रामरिख पाल बोहरा, निवासी गैंगु मार्केट, बल्लभगढ़, तहसील बल्लभगढ़, जिला फरीदाबाद ने एक दरखास्त बराबर पंजीकरण वसीयत मरणोपरान्त अपने पिता स्व. श्री रविन्द्र कुमार बोहरा वद श्री रामरिख पाल बोहरा की वसीयत दिनांक 10.11.2022. इस कार्यालय में पेश की है। यह कि स्व. श्री रविन्द्र कुमार बोहरा वद श्री रामरिख पाल बोहरा की मृत्यु दिनांक 21.04.2023 को हो चुकी है। अतः सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि यदि किसी व्यक्ति को इस वसीयत या इस वसीयत को पंजीकरण बराबर किसी व्यक्ति को किसी प्रकार का कोई ऐतराज मनुजाजा हो तो वह खुद असाक्षरता या बकाएत इस कार्यालय में इस सूचना के प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिन के अन्दर अन्दर मंत्र पेश होकर अपने ऐतराज दाख करे, अन्यथा 30 दिन की अवधि के उपरान्त स्व. श्री रविन्द्र कुमार बोहरा वद श्री रामरिख पाल बोहरा निवासी गैंगु मार्केट, बल्लभगढ़, जिला फरीदाबाद की वसीयत दिनांक 10.11.2022 को उनके मरणोपरान्त कानून अनुसार फीजिकल कर दी जायेगी। कार्यालय सच रजिस्ट्रार /संयुक्त सच रजिस्ट्रार बल्लभगढ़

PM pays tribute to Vivekananda on his death anniversary



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to Swami Vivekananda on his death anniversary on Thursday and said that "we reiterate our commitment to fulfill his dream of a prosperous and progressive society".

Thursday and said that "we reiterate our commitment to fulfill his dream of a prosperous and progressive society". In a social media post, Modi said, "I pay homage to Swami Vivekananda on his Punya Tithi. His teachings give strength to millions. His profound wisdom and relentless pursuit of knowledge are also very motivating." "We reiterate our commitment to fulfill his dream of a prosperous and progressive society," he said.

JAMIA CO-OPERATIVE BANK Ltd. Balance Sheet As at 31st March, 2024. (Amount in Rupees). Particulars: Capital & Liabilities, Assets, CONTINGENT LIABILITIES, Significant Accounting Policies, Notes on Accounts. Profit & Loss Account For The Year Ended 31st March, 2024. (Amount in Rupees). Particulars: INCOME, EXPENDITURE, Net profit/(loss) for the year.

REPORT ON AUDIT OF THE STANDALONE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF JAMIA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED. As part of an audit in accordance with SAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also: Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Litmus test

With the UK deeply divided on key issues, the outcome of this election could alter its direction and shape its future

The UK voted yesterday to elect 650 representatives to the House of Commons who in turn would elect its next prime minister. The UK is at a crucial juncture. It is battling myriad issues ranging from economic downslides, healthcare and post Brexit hardships. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made a fervent appeal to voters, urging them to put an end to what he describes as Labour's dominance in British politics. Interestingly, for the last 14 years, the Conservative Party has been in power but has not delivered on its promises in full measure. The centre-right Conservatives took power amid the global financial crisis. However, their tenure has been plagued by economic stagnation, declining public services, and multiple scandals, leaving them vulnerable to criticism from both the left and right. The general election marks a pivotal moment in UK politics, with the Conservative Party, led by Rishi Sunak, pitted against the Labour Party under the leadership of Keir Starmer. The two parties have diametrically opposite views on tackling the country's problems. The UK is still coming to terms with Brexit which did not go well for it and led to many hardships for the Government and the people. Besides, once a world power, the UK is reduced to just another ally of the US in the world arena seriously jeopardizing its international standing. So the battle is not just for seats in Parliament but for the very direction of the nation.



Rishi Sunak's campaign has centred on themes of stability and continuity. He has emphasised the need for a steady hand to navigate the complex challenges facing the UK, including economic recovery post-COVID-19, ongoing trade negotiations, and maintaining national security.

Sunak's message to voters is: build a stronger, more prosperous Britain together. Sunak has vehemently criticised Labour's policies, which left the country vulnerable and economically fragile. He has positioned himself as the leader capable of delivering a balanced approach that protects jobs, supports businesses, and ensures a sustainable path to growth. The Conservative manifesto promises tax cuts, increased investment in infrastructure, and a commitment to maintaining a firm stance on immigration and national security. This of course is a litmus test for Rishi Sunak himself. He became the first Prime Minister of colour itself speaks volumes about his calibre as a politician. But right now the biggest challenge for him is to manage the economy and relieve people of tax burden. On the other side, Keir Starmer's Labour Party is campaigned for change and renewal. Starmer has highlighted the need for comprehensive reform of the welfare system and has promised to tackle the cost-of-living crisis through targeted support for low-income families and significant public sector pay rises. For Rishi Sunak, the election is a chance to solidify his leadership and set a course for a post-Brexit Britain that he believes can thrive globally. The results of this election will not only determine the next government but will also shape the trajectory of the UK for years to come.

### PICTALK



Villagers catch fish in flood water, in Morigaon district

# The rise of radical rebels in Pakistan

This alarming rise in extremism has prompted Pakistan to initiate Operation Azm-i-Istehkam, an ambitious effort aimed at eradicating terrorism



BHOPINDER SINGH

Clergy has always played a pivotal role in the Pakistani narrative. The indelible impact of the 'Mullahs' has historically cut across institutions of power like the Military establishment, political parties, civilian society, academia et al. Each has, in their own way succumbed to puritanical displays and appropriations to posture alignment befitting the 'land of the pure' or Pakistan. However, it must be said that many of these institutions have also privately harboured the exact opposite instincts and preferences, from what has been prescribed by the clerical order. These institutions have pandered to religiosity only to tick in the box their own false, and publicly fronted sense of piety to legitimise their relevance, whilst indulging in vices, degeneracies, and excesses. A cursory look at the long list of the Pakistani infamous in the Pandora Papers or Panama List is a veritable who's-who of the Pakistani elites, who posture simplicity, austerity, and god-fearing honesty in the public sphere. This has led to the elites leading notoriously duplicitous lives with ill-gotten properties and excesses across the world, whilst injecting toxic-religiosity and religious extremism back home.



The bunny of religion is essentially for public consumption to be invoked whenever everything else fails e.g., beseeching Arab Sheikhs or Turkey for life-sustaining aid in the name of a 'brotherly muslim nation'. The personal lives of the ruling Sharif family and the feudal Bhuttos are hardly the modicum of religious idyls, and the same discomfort applies to the Westernised Generals who are increasingly facing the wrath of the angry, long-bearded, armed, and madrassa-educated tribals. Today, it seems the ability of Pakistan's ruling elite to successfully play the patented double game has run its course. Not only have the radicalized masses (generously fanned by the elites in 'Olive Green' or 'Servants') refused to take orders, but far worse, they have turned on their begetters! Creations like the 'Taliban' which was a joint project between the wily politicians, amoral Generals, and unhinged clergy, simply refuse to take orders from their progenitor. The product i.e., Taliban, which was made for the export market, is getting unwelcomed back to its original source. The elite finally realise that it cannot differentiate between 'Good Taliban' and 'Bad Taliban', for at the end of the day it is 'Taliban', an unhinged outcome of affording extra generous space to religion in governance. Terrorism has gripped Pakistan with elements 'within', going rogue. Elites now sense that not only must they take on the terror elements directly (as they have done multiple times, still terrorism worsened), but it must also snuff out the oxygen that breeds and nurtures the terror industry i.e., religious insurances and outreach, in every sphere of Pakistani reality. Pakistani dispensation has come up with Operation Azm-i-Istehkam which seeks to eradicate terrorists, and religious extremism, and deradicalize society, in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It is easier said than done, given the deep-rooted grip of religiosity. This refreshing acceptance (though time will tell if it is sincere or posturing) of religious overload needs to be unloaded. For starters, it will diminish the role of Islamist political parties like Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), or even the various militias and formations of sectarian denominations who have contributed to the morass. Such parties have not only imported strains of alien Wahhabism or Salafism but have been instrumental in ensuring that the Pakistani 'establishment' goes slow on anti-terror operations in restive areas. Caught between offering perfunctory platitudes towards the integrity of Pakistan and the safety of its citizens - they are also simultaneously offering mealy-mouthed suggestions to not partake in military operations. They are truly caught between the devil and the blue sea, for their wishy-washy stand will neither endear them to the frustrated Pakistani Government (which they are no longer a part of the ruling coalition), nor to organisations like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) who would want them to be bolder and indulge in plain-speak in favour of religious and radical bodies. Nonetheless, these religious parties are mulling putting together an ostensible 'resistance movement' against Operation Azm-i-Istehkam, and they are unlikely to find too many partners to go along with them. Forces that are key to bailing out Pakistan economically from sure 'failed-state' status e.g., China, international multilateral agencies (IMF, World Bank etc), Western Powers or even Arab Sheikdoms are pitted against the agendas and outcomes of religious parties. The so-called 'iron brother' Chinese have invested over \$62 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridors (CPEC) and they cannot allow the religio-extremist Baluch insurgents to attack Chinese interests as part of their 'sacred' duties. Middle Eastern countries too have had their own trust with the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood and their offshoots from Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, and have clamped down on the same. Now with the Taliban Government in Kabul thawing relations with outsiders and no longer surviving on Pakistani doles, Afghans also cock a snook at historical equations and madrassa-fed ranks from Pakistan. All this diminishes the relevance of religious parties in Pakistan and if the Pakistanis grasp the opportunity, they may just be able to overcome their history and instincts. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)



THE ELITE FINALLY REALISE THAT IT CANNOT DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN 'GOOD TALIBAN' AND 'BAD TALIBAN', FOR AT THE END OF THE DAY IT IS 'TALIBAN', AN UNHINGED OUTCOME OF AFFORDING EXTRA GENEROUS SPACE TO RELIGION IN GOVERNANCE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Bowing to elders is a sign of respect



Recently, political strategist Prashant Kishore criticized Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for touching the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, describing it as a 'sale of dignity' of the people of Bihar. While Kishore's comments reflect a certain perspective, it's important to recognize that showing respect to elders, even political rivals, is a personal choice deeply rooted in Indian culture. Touching the feet of elders is a gesture of humility and respect, irrespective

of the individual's public standing or knowledge. It's a tradition that underscores the significance of age and wisdom. Such practices are part of a cultural ethos that teaches younger generations to respect their elders. In a recent incident, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi criticized Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, for bowing before Prime Minister Modi, claiming it compromised the dignity of the Speaker's office. Gandhi cited Mahatma Gandhi's views on the impartiality and dignity of the Speaker. However, the gesture by Birla was a personal one, reflecting respect for an elder, not a political statement. It's crucial to separate personal respect from political actions. In Hindu culture, it's customary for the younger to show respect to the older, irrespective of their positions. Rahul Gandhi's criticism may stem from a place of political rivalry, but it overlooks the cultural context of such gestures. K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

selection, emergency response preparation, and public awareness initiatives. The lack of a culture of safety among authorities is evident in such incidents. Learning from this tragedy, it's imperative to adopt a proactive approach to safety and crowd management to prevent future incidents. This includes mandatory safety provisions and increased public awareness to ensure the well-being of participants at public events. Authorities must prioritize the safety of citizens to avoid repeating such devastating outcomes. K V Chandramouli | Mysuru

#### UNSUNG HEROES IN INDIAN CRICKET

Madam — Last Saturday, Indian cricket fans witnessed the celebration of Team India's T20 World Cup victory in Bridgetown, Barbados. Among the jubilant players, a lesser-known figure, Raghu Raghavendra, stood out. Known affectionately as Raghu, he has been a pivotal part of the Indian cricket sup-

port staff since 2011, specializing in throwdowns to help batsmen practice against fast bowling. Raghu's ability to deliver balls at speeds exceeding 150 km/h using a sidearm device has been instrumental in preparing Indian batsmen for international challenges. While his name may not be widely recognized, his contributions to the team's success are immense. Raghu represents the behind-the-scenes dedication and skill that supports every win by Team India. His work exemplifies the importance of support roles in sports, highlighting how essential unsung heroes are to the success of prominent athletes and teams. As India celebrates its cricketing triumphs, it's important to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of individuals like Raghu, who play a crucial role in these victories. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

## Balancing motivation and misuse in India's research landscape

Many students opt for PhD programme for reasons unrelated to research. This hinders the nation's intellectual progress



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

A higher academic degree like a PhD is often considered a symbol of quality. PhD training emphasizes innovation and the ability to tackle complex problems. Graduates are expected to think independently, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and propose novel solutions, making them valuable assets in both academic and industry settings. The more PhD holders a country produces, the more productive a country will be. Countries with more PhD holders tend to produce more scientific publications and patents. This intellectual output can lead to technological advancements and improvements in various industries, driving innovation and economic growth. Despite having the advantages of higher enrolments for the nation, the current system of registering for PhD as an escapism will not reap any benefits for the student or the country. Many students register for PhD as a stop-gap arrangement before their marriage, a permanent government job, or as a fashion to be called 'Dr.'. They never assess their moti-



vation for pursuing a PhD degree. Are they passionate about the research topic? Or Have they reflected on their career goals? If the alignment is strong, it might justify pursuing a research degree that is highly demanding and time-consuming. The most successful PhD candidates are often driven by intrinsic motivations such as intellectual curiosity, passion for their field of study, and a desire to contribute new knowledge. These motivations sustain them through the challenges of research work. Recently, it has been observed that many scholars registering for PhD through national-level competitive fellowships like CSIR, UGC etc, try to prolong their study for the sake of fellowship amount.

In many colleges in Tamil Nadu, college teachers work for a salary as low as Rs. 4000- 8000 per month. Qualifying for a national test will at least provide a scholar with a decent salary for 3 to 5 years. The sole motive of the scholar is financial support. For some, the academic environment may provide a refuge from societal expectations of marriage, family responsibilities, and other traditional roles. Unfortunately, even today, female students are not provided the freedom to make decisions. Our society gives a girl's marriage more importance than acquiring knowledge. Earning a doctorate requires extensive study, self-sufficiency, and intellectual development, which are priceless assets to the community. Even in a highly literate society like Kerala, many women, even after getting a PhD degree, are forced to stick to societal norms and move away from active research. Many students with PhD degrees ultimately land in job sectors where their research has no role, like clerical jobs in

government sectors, banks, or even as a school teacher, to cite a few. To change people's minds, we must keep fighting for equal rights for women, spreading the word that education should be accessible to everyone and dispelling myths about women's abilities and goals. It's essential for prospective PhD candidates to carefully consider their motivations and the potential impact of their research. Pursuing a PhD solely for recognition or prestige, without a genuine commitment to contribute meaningful research or knowledge, offers little benefit to society or the nation. People who do research for name sake are involved in many unethical practices, like outsourcing the work and outsourcing their thesis writing and paper writing to other agencies. Unfortunately, these people reach higher positions through their influence, overtaking genuine researchers who have toiled their lives for research. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

#### PM'S REMARKS ON MANIPUR

Madam — The Congress has strongly criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his remarks in the Rajya Sabha, where he claimed that the situation in Manipur was returning to normal. The Congress argues that this statement is far from the reality on the ground, pointing out that the Prime Minister has yet to visit Manipur since violence erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities in May of the previous year. Congress MP Jairam Ramesh accused the Prime Minister of making light of the situation and not acknowledging the continuing violence and tension in Manipur. Despite more than 200 deaths and thousands of people displaced due to ongoing ethnic violence, the Prime Minister's comments suggested a lack of serious engagement with the issue. The Congress also criticized the Prime Minister for not listening to voices from Manipur and for focusing more on political jobs than addressing the concerns of those affected by the violence. The party emphasized that the Prime Minister's response is insufficient given the severity of the crisis in Manipur and accused him of turning a blind eye to the plight of the state's residents. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

#### HATHRAS TRAGEDY

Madam — The recent stampede in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, resulting in numerous deaths, is a tragic reminder of the consequences of poor crowd management. A stampede, or crowd crush, occurs when an area becomes dangerously overcrowded and mismanaged, leading to fatal accidents. If crowd densities exceed four to six people per square meter, the risk of such incidents significantly increases. Authorities must not downplay their role in these tragedies by labeling them as mere accidents. Effective crowd management requires meticulous planning, including venue



## FIRST COLUMN STRATEGIC DYNAMICS AT THE SCO SUMMIT

As China asserts its influence within the SCO, the interplay of geopolitics becomes increasingly visible



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or SCO held its 24th meeting for heads of State this week. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, otherwise known for promoting Bharat to crucial allies at bilateral and multilateral forums, skipped this regional dialogue citing parliamentary responsibilities back home. However, many also point out that, the frosty relationship with Pakistan and China both of whose top leadership were present for the SCO summit, was one of the reasons PM Modi avoided travelling to Astana in Kazakhstan. India was represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for the summit, where he held separate bilateral meetings with several SCO Central Asian member countries.

The SCO as a Eurasian intergovernmental group was announced in China in June 2001. India and Pakistan joined the SCO as full members in 2017. Currently, SCO has 9 member states, 3 observer states and 14 dialogue partners, which represent an entire swathe of emerging economic geographies, that occupy the theatre of current geopolitical developments. Russia and China along with four neighbouring Central Asian states form the founding members. However with Iran later joining in as a member state along with Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bahrain, Myanmar, and Maldives as dialogue partners, one can see why, SCO is an important platform for shaping the current geo-political landscape. Russia is engaged in a long war with Ukraine, while much of Middle Eastern and West Asia nations are intimately engaged in the Israel-Hamas war. China has been trying to dominate the dialogue since its inception and could be seen by many, as one of the diplomatic extensions of its sovereignty-threatening foreign policy. In the past few years, it has managed to bring a weakened Russia under its wings and is portraying SCO as an alternate multilateral dialogue platform challenging the US control of world affairs. In the run-up to the Astana SCO summit, the Chinese state mouthpiece Global Times carried a few reports extolling the virtues of the summit. "It sends a message to the Western world that there are many different voices from the emerging economies that need to be heard and represented, and the mainstream trend of global cooperation won't



be reversed by their obstruction," wrote Zhou Rong, a senior researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. "Chinese President Xi Jinping also clubbed the SCO summit with two state visits to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, thereby, expanding its footprints in the Central Asian states. State media reminded global audiences that Kazakhstan, was where China's Belt and Road initiative was proposed in 2013, which in the past decade managed to get China to secure strategic infrastructure footprints in landlocked Central Asia. Quoting a few analysts Global Times reported "Central Asia, as one of the key areas in the implementation of the BRI, offers a vivid example of how the China-proposed global public good has been transforming the landlocked region into a land-linked region, transforming it into a bridge connecting the Eurasian continent." Central and West Asia has been PM Modi's focus in the past decade. Even though PM Modi avoided the Astana summit, he is expected to travel to Russia for a "post-Ukraine" bilateral meeting with President Putin, followed by a stopover in Austria, a first in nearly four decades.

The meeting with President Putin and PM Modi, both of whom have returned to power after elections would be closely followed, since, it would be one of the first face-to-face meetings post Russia's isolation by Western countries following the Ukraine war. It will also be the first, where regional issues including the ongoing Israel offensive on Gaza and, the evolving geo-political situation in a conflict-ridden, post-COVID world are likely to be taken up. From a regional platform perspective, India China and Russia, also interact closely at BRICS. The unfolding engagement in the next few weeks will be closely followed.

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

# Railway accidents expose neglect, systemic failures



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The latest report from the CAG highlights a troubling decline in funding for crucial track renewal projects amidst an alarming rise in train accidents



Railway accidents not only cause significant loss of lives and severe financial setbacks but also undermine public confidence in the system. A recent incident near New Jalpaiguri, where a train collided with another, resulting in eleven fatalities and 40 injuries, has once again highlighted the issue of signal failures. The railways have received less scrutiny since the decision to discontinue the presentation of a separate Railway Budget. This change has allowed many faults within the railways, including outdated equipment and complex signal failures, to go unnoticed. While accidents draw attention, derailments are equally frequent and damaging.

The full extent of the losses is challenging to estimate, as they not only impact the railways but also disrupt the movement of goods and people, with far-reaching consequences. The CAG audit found that while the Gross Budgetary Support of Rs 15,000 crore had been contributed, the Railways' internal resources fell short of the target for funding the remaining Rs 5,000 crore per year to Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK), set up in 2017. The report highlighted a decline in the allotment of funds for track renewal works, from Rs 9,607 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 7,417 crore in 2019-20. The railways' Rs 2.55 trillion budget is self-generated. Ignoring critical signal and track safety issues it has allocated Rs 24470 crore to be spent for 508 of the 1300 stations planned to be demolished and rebuilt in 16 states.

The buildings may need some repairs and refurbishing but demolition is outrageous under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Many stations are already on the block though these hardly need demolition. The railways should have prioritised its operational safety issues and utilised the station rebuilding funds for safety. According to the CAG report 2022, an Analysis of 1129 'Inquiry Reports' of derailment accidents in 16 Zonal Railways (ZRs) revealed 24 factors

responsible for derailments in the selected cases/accidents. The total damages/loss of assets in these cases was reported as Rs 32.96 crore. The report adds that nearly 75 per cent of the consequential train accidents between 2017-18 and 2020-21 were caused by derailments. Out of 217 consequential train accidents, 163 (around 75 per cent) were due to derailments. The goods train ramming into the Kunchenjunga Express between Rangapani and Chattar Hat, off New Jalpaiguri, has almost the same pattern as the triple train accident near Balasore that killed 296 persons and injured 1100 people a year back. Like the Balasore, this one is also blamed on manual failure at the initial stages.

It was routine for Rail Board chairman Jaya Varma Sinha and two zonal chief public relations officers to blame it on the deceased train driver for "disregarding" signals and speed limits. The signal failure in both cases is responsible for the accidents as scrutiny of the system reveals. The Rangapani goods train was issued a manual authorisation paper chit signal, called a paper-line clear ticket (PLCT). It allowed goods train drivers to pass all inoperative automatic signals.

As per procedure the driver should have stopped for a minute at each signal and restricted speed at 10 to 15 km. Now it is being told that restriction should have been imposed on each of the trains in the section. The document of the railways says that all trains had the PLCT issued suggesting major signal failure. The rail officials said that the track circuits had failed due to the lightning and thunderstorms,

rendering the automatic signals defunct since 5.50 am.

In such a situation absolute block comes under restriction. When signals are not operational it is covered with paper or a piece of cloth. Railway Minister Ashwani Vaishnav had told Rajya Sabha on July 21, 2023, that the rear collision at Balasore was due to lapses in the signalling-circuit alteration carried out in the past and during the execution of the signalling work related to the replacement of the electric lifting barrier for a level-crossing gate. Two months before this, the Railway Board had flagged the issue of signalling staff resorting to short-cut methods. Referring to five alarming incidents where trains entered the wrong path due to short-cut methods adopted by the signalling staff, the Railway Board in a letter to General Managers of Zonal Railways expressed "serious concern" that despite repeated instructions the ground situation was not improving and "signalling staff continue with short-cut methods for clearing signals".

In another incident of collision between two passenger trains, the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) has found the Indian Railways administration at fault for not implementing, and harmonising safety norms and protocols, the lack of which led to the collision of two passenger trains in Andhra Pradesh on October 29, 2023. The collision claimed 17 lives including three crew members. The CRS noted that senior officers continuously overlooked such violations in the recent past. The CRS found five flaws in the safety system:

1. Officials Overlooked Multiple Violations Earlier,

2. Employees in Crucial Safety Posts are Incompetent, and not aware of basic safety rules, and assistant loco pilots should be trained on simulators even on brake use,

3. Mismatch of Two Sets of Rules – general rules peg speed at 10km in case of signal failure and subsidiary rules at 15 km,

4. Every Passenger Train's Last Two Coaches Need Crash-Worthy Features,

5. Record Walkie-Talkie Conversations Between Station Masters and Loco Pilots. In yet another incident the South Western Railway Zone official wrote: "on 08.02.2023 the loco pilot of Up Train No: 12649 Sampark Kranti Express, had stopped the train before Point No: 65 A, while observing that the point was set to down main line (wrong line), while as per PLCT, the train was supposed to pass through Up main line."

An audit report of the last year flagged serious lapses in rail safety. In a 2022 report focusing on derailments within Indian Railways, the CAG sought to investigate how preventive measures were implemented by the railway ministry against derailments and collisions. The Kavach system of bringing the trains to a halt has a cost of Rs 50lakh per km and Rs 70 lakh per locomotive. It may take longer than the railway has planned. The eastern region alone needs Rs 3000 crore. Even if Kavach implemented the railways to improve on signal and track maintenance, accidents would not be easy to prevent. Even now it is not too late to divert funds from station demolitions to safety aspects.

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



THE KAVACH SYSTEM OF BRINGING THE TRAINS TO A HALT HAS A COST OF RS 50LAKH PER KM AND RS 70 LAKH PER LOCOMOTIVE. IT MAY TAKE LONGER THAN THE RAILWAY HAS PLANNED

# Women suffer in silence as violence against them keeps increasing

Despite the high prevalence of such crimes, many women are unable to report these incidents due to societal pressures and lack of support

Violence against women remains a critical issue in our society, hindering both their physical development and mental well-being. According to the 2022 annual report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against women increased by four per cent in 2022 compared to 2021. Over 5.8 million cases of crime were registered across the country in 2022, with nearly 450,000 involving crimes against women. This translates to an alarming average of around 51 FIRs registered every hour for violence against women. The report highlights that the highest number of cases of violence against women were recorded in Delhi, the capital city, while Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan,



KAVITA DHAMEJA

was listed as the fourth most unsafe city for women. Rajasthan is the third state with the highest number of cases of violence against women in 2022.

Notably, Rajasthan had the highest number of recorded rape cases, with over 31,000 incidents reported across the country and 5,399 cases registered in the state. The report also reveals that most incidents of violence or discrimination against women are

perpetrated by their husbands or close relatives. Gender-based violence encompasses physical, mental, sexual, and economic abuse, with intimate partner violence being the most widespread form. Women often experience sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

Despite the prevalence of violence, many women do not report these incidents due to several factors. First, the burden of the family's honour is disproportionately placed on women, instilling fear and preventing them from reporting the abuse, even to close family members. Second, many women lack access to support groups where they can confide and seek help. Third, and perhaps most crucially,

there is a widespread unawareness of the support systems and legal frameworks established by the government to aid women affected by violence. However, some women – who are a little aware and have found support groups – raise their voices against the violence they face and report it to the police.

One example of this courage is found in Baba Ramdev Nagar Kachhi Basti in Jaipur, Rajasthan, where gender discrimination and violence are prevalent. Meena Devi (name changed), a 38-year-old resident, shared her experience: "I collect trash, and my husband works as a laborer. We have six children, including four daughters. Our financial situation is dire, and my husband sometimes does not find work.

To contribute to the household income, my two daughters and I collect trash daily, and I had to stop their schooling." She further revealed, "My husband used to beat me after getting intoxicated, which also affected my daughters.

One day, I gathered the courage to call the police, and since then, he has significantly reduced the violence." This settlement, predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, is located about 10 kilometres from the city in the Gurjar Ki Thadi area.

With a population of over 500 people, many residents engage in occupations such as blacksmithing, scavenging, drumming at weddings, bamboo crafting, and daily wage labour.

Meena mentioned that it is so common for women to be subjected to violence by their husbands that it does not bother anyone in the settlement. Most men indulge in substance abuse and mistreat their wives.

Although several non-government organizations are working in the area to raise awareness among women to stand up against this violence, the problem has not been completely eradicated. Another woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, recounted her story: "My husband works as a scrap dealer, while I stay busy with household chores." She explained that her husband gets intoxicated every day and abuses her. Her hands bore burn marks, evidence of the physical violence she endured. She said that other women in the settlement often protect her from her husband's violence and have advised her to seek help from the police, but she does not wish to do so. Such control by partners leaves women without access to a safe space to share their experiences and seek advice.

Social worker Akhilesh Mishra, who has been working on the health of women and children in this area explains, "The government has enacted several laws to protect women from gender-based violence and women can file complaints against the violence they face. Various NGOs are also working here to raise awareness among women about gender discrimination and violence."

This effort has started showing results, as women in the settlement have now started to stand up against the violence and seek support from the police. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach. Cultural norms that place the burden of family honour on women must be challenged and redefined.

Efforts to increase awareness of support groups and governmental resources must be intensified, ensuring that all women have access to the help they need. Only through collective societal effort can we hope to build a capable, equal, and violence-free society for all women.

(The author is a social worker; views expressed are personal. Charkha Features)







# Sensex, Nifty hit new lifetime highs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher to scale fresh all-time high levels on Thursday, following buying in market heavyweights ICICI Bank, Infosys and TCS amid a largely positive trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 80,049.67. During the day, it rallied 405.84 points to hit a fresh all-time high of 80,392.64.

The Nifty rose 15.65 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 24,302.15. Intra-day, it surged 114.5 points to hit a fresh lifetime high of 24,401.

Among the Sensex pack, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Mahindra and



Mahindra were the gainers. In contrast, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended in the positive territory, while Shanghai closed in the red. European markets were trading in the green territory in mid-session deals.

US markets ended higher on Wednesday during the

shortened trading session. Stock exchanges will remain closed on Thursday on account of Independence Day.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 0.52 per cent to USD 86.89 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 5,483.63 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

On Wednesday, the 30-share index hit the historic 80,000 mark for the first time intra-day trade. It surged 632.85 points or 0.79 per cent to a record intraday high of 80,074.30. The index later closed near the 80,000 level at 79,986.80, up by 545.35 points or 0.69 per cent over the last close.

The Nifty climbed 162.65 points or 0.67 per cent to end at an all-time high of 24,286.50. During the day, it zoomed 183.4 points or 0.76 per cent to hit a fresh intraday record peak of 24,307.25.

# Sebi mandates institutional mechanism for fraud prevention in stock broking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday issued a circular requiring stock brokers to establish an institutional mechanism for prevention and detection of fraud or market abuse in a bid to protect the interest of investors in securities market.

The circular mandates the implementation of systems for the surveillance of trading activities and internal controls, introduction of a whistle-blower policy, among other obligations.

These requirements are part of Sebi (Stock Brokers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024, which aim to ensure higher standards of market integrity and investor protection.

The standards for implementation of the same, including operational modalities will be formulated by the broker's Industry Standards Forum (ISF), in consultation with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), the regulator said in the circular.

The implementation will be based on the size of the stock brokers. Brokers with more



than 50,000 active Unique Client Codes (UCCs) are required to comply by January 1, 2025.

Further, those with 2,001 to 50,000 active UCCs have to comply by April 1, 2025, and brokers with up to 2,000 active UCCs must comply by April 1, 2026.

In addition, qualified stock brokers must comply with these requirements by August 1, 2024, considering their existing obligations for governance and client behaviour surveillance.

Sebi directed the stock exchanges to bring the provisions of this circular to the notice of stock brokers and also disseminate the same on their websites.

It also directed them to amend their bye-laws, and ensure that brokers notify the obligation/ requirement on the stock brokers to follow the standards adopted by the ISF, and issue a joint notice which indicates the date of applicability of the circular to various stock brokers based on the criteria.

The provisions of this circular shall come into force in a risk-based, staggered manner to ensure smooth adoption, and effective implementation for all the stock brokers by providing enough time for stock brokers, based on their size, for making necessary changes, Sebi said.

# Coal recorded 10.2 per cent growth among eight key infra sectors in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The coal sector has registered a growth of 10.2 per cent among all eight core industries of the economy in May, the government said on Thursday.

The index of coal industry has reached 184.7 points during May as compared to 167.6 points during the same month last year.

"The coal sector has demonstrated highest growth of 10.2 per cent (provisional), following the electricity industry among the eight core industries for the month of May, 2024 as per the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) (Base Year 2011-12) released by Ministry of Commerce & Industries," the coal ministry said in a statement.

The driving force behind growth can be attributed to a considerable rise in coal production during May.

This increase in production underscores the sector's capacity to meet growing demand of energy and manufacturing industries.

# SBI announces initiatives to mitigate risks in agri loan portfolio

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest lender SBI on Thursday announced 11 new initiatives -- including enhancement of its digital banking features and opening of 35 new Agricultural Centralised Processing Cells -- to mitigate risks in its agricultural loan portfolio.

On the occasion of the 69th Foundation Day, State Bank of India announced these initiatives to widen the bank's accessibility to address the banking needs of its potential customers, the lender said in a statement.

SBI has enhanced its digital payment

experience, with the introduction of two exciting features like tap-and-pay on the BHIM SBI PAY app and end-to-end digital loans against mutual funds on the YONO app, it added.

The bank has also announced an initiative, which is a fully digital end-to-end journey for SBI Surya Ghar Loan, it said, adding that the users can opt for credit to install solar rooftops under the central government's PM Surya Ghar Scheme, offering loans for up to 10 KW capacity.

The entire process will be managed on SBI's digital platform from applicant registration on the MNRE/REC portal to



loan disbursement.

Acknowledging the significant contributions and global presence of the Indian diaspora in shaping the nation's growth story, SBI opened a second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala, Punjab.

To enhance its service to NRI clients, its Chairman Dinesh Khara inaugurated the second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala on Bank Day.

SBI's dedicated GNCs reflect the bank's unwavering commitment to strengthening its ties with the global Indian community.

"These centres serve as hubs of

excellence, providing specialised services to NRI customers. With a network of 434 specialised NRI branches in India, foreign offices in 29 countries, and partnerships with 45 exchange houses and 5 banks in GCC countries, SBI is well-equipped to offer comprehensive services to its NRI clientele worldwide," the statement said.

In another move, SBI has launched comprehensively redesigned High Court branches aimed at enhancing services for the legal community.

This initiative underscores SBI's commitment to providing tailored financial solutions that cater specifically

to the unique needs of lawyers and legal professionals, it added.

The redesigned branches are equipped to offer top-tier services, including financial management, transaction facilitation, and personalised financial advice.

With regard to home loans, the bank has made processing such loans more transparent. Home loan borrowers will now receive automated email and SMS notifications regarding the status of their loan application at various processing stages.

This initiative aims to enhance customer satisfaction and convenience, it said.

# Rupee falls 1 paisa to close at 83.50 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day on an almost flat note at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, resisting pressure from elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices touched all-time high levels, and significant foreign fund inflows supported the rupee and restricted the fall.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.52 and hit the intraday high of 83.48 and a low of 83.56 against the American currency during the session.

It finally settled at 83.50 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa lower than its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on softness in the US dollar amid weak economic data and rise in risk appetite in global markets," said Anuj



Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"However, elevated crude oil prices may limit the gains. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the US non-farm payrolls report tomorrow," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.80.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.15 per cent lower at 105.24.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.47 per cent lower at USD 86.93 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, Sensex breached the historic 80,000-mark and

Nifty scaled a fresh lifetime high. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day 62.87 points, or 0.08 per cent, up at its all-time high of 80,049.67 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 15.65 points, or 0.06 per cent, higher at a fresh peak of 24,302.15 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Wednesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 5,483.63 crore, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, according to an official of S&P Global Ratings, a sovereign rating upgrade for India in the next 24 months is possible if the central government is able to prudently manage its finances and bring down the fiscal deficit to 4 per cent of GDP.

S&P Global Ratings Director, Sovereign Ratings, YeeFarn Phua, said the trigger for an upgrade would be the government (Centre + states) deficit falling below 7 per cent of the GDP, and a lot of this would have to be driven by the Central Government.

# Bright future for air cargo sector; need to ensure faster turnaround time: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To tap the potential of the country's air cargo sector, the focus should be on further improving processes as well as ensuring faster turnaround time, a senior government official said on Thursday.

The government is working on developing logistics hubs. Piyush Srivastava, Senior Economic Advisor at the Ministry of Civil Aviation, said the air cargo sector has a bright future and the number of freighters in the country is expected to rise.

Currently, Indian carriers have around 18 freighters. There will be a focus on further improving the ease of doing business and faster turnaround time in the air cargo sector, he said while speaking at the conference organised by the ACFI (Air Cargo Forum India) in the national capital.

While passenger traffic has recovered after being hit by the coronavirus pandemic, air cargo is yet to fully recover to the pre-Covid levels.

In 2023-24, the air cargo handled in the country was a little over 3.36 million tonnes.



Surendra Kumar Ahirwar, Joint Secretary at DPIIT, a lot of movement is happening on the logistics side, including the skilling of people.

He also said there is sub-optimal utilisation of existing air cargo facilities and emphasised the need for developing hubs as part of the logistics infrastructure.

According to ACFI President Yashpal Sharma, the air cargo sector accounts for nearly 10 per cent of domestic carriers' revenues.

Citing market research reports, he said the country's air freight market is estimated to grow to USD 16.37 billion by 2027.

Also, the plans to establish air transport shipment hubs at major airports are expected to drive the industry's growth, he added.

# Kolkata office leasing absorption in April-June jumps 33 per cent

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Office space leasing absorption in Kolkata surged 33 per cent year on year to 0.4 million square feet in the April-June quarter of 2024, according to the CBRE India Office Figures Q2 report. The key sectors driving absorption in Q2 2024 were technology (40 per cent), BFSI (21 per cent), and flexible space operators (10 per cent).

"The office space leasing absorption in April-June 2024 was 0.4 million square feet against 0.3 million square feet in the YoY period, a CBRE official said.

Another real estate consultant, Knight Frank India, also said that Kolkata's office market saw a significant increase in office leasing volume, with 0.7 million square feet of office space transacted in H1 2024 (January-June 2024).

This represents a 23 per cent growth compared to H1 2023, according to Knight Frank India's report "India

Real Estate: Residential and Office" (January-June 2024).

Average office space rents increased by 6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) during H1 2024, it said.

Knight Frank also reported that Kolkata's residential real estate market experienced strong homebuying demand, with 9,130 residential units sold in H1 2024, marking a 25 per cent YoY growth in sales volume.

The continued stamp duty rebate and new launches across various price segments contributed to the market's sustained upward sales momentum. However, the state government withdrew the stamp duty and 10 per cent rebate in circle rate effective July.

According to CBRE, pan-India office leasing remained robust, with gross office leasing reaching 32.8 million square feet during Jan-Jun'24, a 14 per cent increase year-on-year across nine cities.

# Healing hands, caring hearts



On the occasion of National Doctor's Day Anil Agnihotri RH (Delhi South) visited Lady Harding Medical College and met with Dr Sarita Beri, director of institute, Rajeshwar Lal, Dy Director (Admin), Dr Anupam Parkash (CMO) many other doctors, greeted them with a flower bud and a small gift as a token of love.

# India among most active countries for Meta's Threads

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is one of the most active countries for Threads, which has notched over 175 million monthly active users globally, according to social media giant Meta.

The update assumes significance as it marks the completion of nearly one year since Meta officially launched rival to Twitter (now X).

"With a 175 million actives, we're seeing Threads become a place where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. India is one of the most active countries for Threads globally," the release said.

Among the other major takeaways are creation of 50 million topic tags on Threads till date, globally.

popular tags and topics on Threads are centred around film, TV and OTT content, celebrity-related conversations and sports.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that Threads has over 175 million monthly active users as the social media giant asserted that Threads was launched with the belief that "everyone has something valuable to say".

"It's been a year now, and we're seeing it become a place where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. In fact, India is one of the most active countries for Threads globally," the release said.

Among the other major takeaways are creation of 50 million topic tags on Threads till date, globally.



"Cricket has been reigning on Threads in India, with players from the current Indian squad like Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja, to

former cricketers like Akash Chopra and Suresh Raina, experts like Riddhima Pathak and international cricketers like AB de Villiers sharing their passion for the game," Meta said.

The T20 Cricket World Cup, IPL, and Women's Premier League 2024 have been some of the moments that have sparked cricket conversations on Threads this year, it further said, adding that over 200 creators shared updates about the concluded IPL season on Threads. Threads scaled highs immediately after it was unveiled in July 2023 — it snapped up 100 million user sign-ups within a week of its launch.

The initial euphoria, however, wore off and according to industry watchers, the app struggled subsequently with steady decline in engagement metrics.

# AI-powered ROI calculator introduced

PNS ■ Mumbai

Jaro Education, a name in online higher education and upskilling, recently introduced a game-changing tool: The AI-powered ROI (Return on Investment) calculator for upskilling.

This innovative feature is designed to help working professionals make informed choices about their upskilling journey. This is one of the first innovations of its kind launched by any online higher education and upskilling company in India.

In today's fast-paced world, staying updated with the latest skills is more important than ever, according to the company.

# Office leasing in Gurugram

PNS ■ New Delhi

Leading real estate developer M3M has leased 220,000 sq ft in Gurugram to Flexible workspace provider Incuspaze in their boutique office project - M3M Urbana Premium on the Golf Course Extension Road, people aware of the deal said.

"M3M is looking at Office leasing as a major drive this year and aims to lease 20 lakh sq ft of Grade-A office space in the most sought after locations in Gurugram. As part of this focus, we have signed a mega deal with Incuspaze - a leading flexible workspace provider where 2,20,000 sq ft space has been provided on lease to them," said Sudeep Bhatt, president M3M.

# RONALDO VS MBAPPÉ: CLASH OF GENERATIONS AT EURO 2024

**AP ■ HAMBURG (GERMANY)**  
A clash of soccer icons. A clash of generations. They'll go head to head when Portugal plays France in the Euro 2024 quarterfinals on Friday, and this heavyweight meeting might have got just that little bit bigger. "It is, without doubt, my last European Championship," the 39-year-old Ronaldo said after his tearful, emotionally charged performance in Portugal's penalty-shootout victory over Slovenia in the last 16. That may have just confirmed what many were presuming anyway. Still, there's now a definitive specter of finality to Ronaldo's long, headline-grabbing Euros adventure that could be brought to an end by Mbappé, the heir apparent to Ronaldo and Lionel Messi after their long-time dominance of the sport. Mbappé grew up with pictures of Ronaldo on his bedroom wall. A photo is inevitably

doing the rounds on social media of what is apparently their first ever meeting, at Real Madrid's training ground at Valdebebas in 2012 when a 13-year-old Mbappé stood beside Ronaldo after a visit to the Spanish club where his sporting hero was the star player. In 2020, Mbappé posted on Twitter, now X, that Ronaldo was his "idol." And only a few months ago, Ronaldo reacted to Mbappé clinching a highly anticipated move to Madrid by writing on Instagram: "Excited to see you light up the Bernabeu." That Mbappé can now end Ronaldo's European Championship career - who knows, it might even be his last ever major tournament - adds an intriguing subplot to a match that will be watched around the world. "Let's go, let's go to war," Ronaldo said of the match against France, whom he considers as the top contender at Euro 2024 along with Spain.

He said he was driven to tears against Slovenia not at the prospect of elimination but because his main motivation these days is "making people happy" and he had a penalty saved in extra time.

"I'm moved by all that football means - by the enthusiasm I have for the game, the enthusiasm for seeing my supporters, my family, the

affection people have for me. "It's not about leaving the world of football. What else is there for me to do or win?" Ronaldo heads into Friday's game having failed to score in

eight straight matches at major tournaments - Portugal's last four at the 2022 World Cup and its four games at Euro 2024 - and with growing concerns about

whether he deserves what appears to be a guaranteed spot in the team under Roberto Martinez. Things haven't been straightforward for Mbappé, either, at Euro 2024.

He sustained a broken nose in France's group opener against Austria and has since been wearing a vision-limiting protective facemask during games. Mbappé has scored one goal and that was from the penalty spot against Poland - it's the only goal scored by a France player at these Euros. "He will have to get used to it," France coach Didier Deschamps said of Mbappé and his mask, "because, to protect (his nose), he will have to wear it for a few weeks - or even a few months." Few would have predicted the top scorer at the last World Cup (Mbappé) and the record scorer in men's international soccer (Ronaldo) to have just one goal between them heading into the quarterfinals. But no one will be surprised if they come alive in Hamburg, with the pressure on and the occasion so big. Mbappé, remember, scored a hat trick in the World Cup final and has been logging Ronaldo-esque scoring numbers in the first part of his career. He's already on 48 goals for France at the age of 25, and is also on 48 goals in the Champions League from 73 appearances. He is chasing down Ronaldo's scoring records at both international (130) and Champions League (140) level and will likely only succeed by showing the same undimmed passion and desire as the player he used to copy as a kid. As their countries' respective captains, they'll shake hands and embrace before kickoff. You can bet they'll do the same after the match. By that time, one of them will be on his way home. For Mbappé, there will surely be more European Championships down the road.



## Germany star Kroos aims to disappoint Real Madrid teammates at Euro 2024

**AP ■ BERLIN**  
Germany great Toni Kroos hopes the next game isn't his last. Heavyweights Germany and Spain clash at the European Championship on Friday, when the winner will advance to the semifinals. Kroos is ending his playing career after Germany's last game at Euro 2024. He hopes that will be the final in Berlin's Olympiastadion. But he knows it could be as soon as Friday if Spain - the most impressive team so far - knocks out the host nation in Stuttgart. "I'm not nostalgic at all," Kroos said Wednesday at potentially his last press conference as a player. He said he wasn't assuming Spain "will be my last game. So, I think we can all look forward to seeing each other again." Kroos has played a key role in lifting the pre-tournament gloom surrounding the German team and turning it to optimism that the hosts can go on to win Euro 2024. It would be a fitting sendoff for a player who has already signed off on a glittering club career by winning the Champions League and Spanish league with Real Madrid. "It's pretty difficult to plan a European

Championship title but having it as a goal is of course the case," Kroos said. "I think it will be really difficult to finish more successfully than I left it with Madrid. And now of course I'm trying to do the same here." Kroos retired from the national team

already in 2021, after Germany lost to England in the last 16 of the pandemic-delayed Euro 2020 tournament. But one of the first things Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann did after his appointment in September 2023 was ask the cool-headed midfielder if he'd consider returning to help Germany's title bid in its home tournament. Fortunately for Germany - which was really struggling with two defeats and a draw from Nagelsmann's first four games - Kroos said yes. It's arguably the single biggest factor in the team's upturn as Kroos' experience and calmness under pressure gave confidence to the players around him. The 34-year-old returned to help Germany beat France and the Netherlands in friendlies in March, and Greece before Euro 2024, then he helped Germany progress from the group stage with wins over Scotland and Hungary, and a draw with Switzerland. Kroos maintained a calm, assured presence in a turbulent win over Denmark in the last 16, helping Germany get further than it had in the last edition. "We're now finally in the stages of the

tournament that we really wanted to be in, and we can be happy with that," Kroos said. "We're motivated, however, in the team and in the locker room, to get much further. And we're convinced we can manage that." Kroos will face former Real Madrid teammates Dani Carvajal, Nacho and Joselu on Friday. The latter said he wants to send him into retirement, but Kroos took it with good humor. "I know him very well. I know how he meant it," Kroos said. "So, I'll let him wish and do everything I can so that it doesn't come true." Kroos said his future involves kids, both his own and young players at an academy he plans to open in Madrid. Seemingly unflappable on the field, Kroos appeared at peace with the fact that Friday's game could be his last, comforted because the decision is not dependent on the whims of anyone else. "There will never be anything I can do as well as playing football. And this phase will be over," Kroos said. "On the other hand, I'm really looking forward to this new phase, because at some point this day comes for every active player. And I'd rather pick this day out for myself."

analysis for international events to assist current grandmasters and up-and-coming players. Alongside the support committed to elite players, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will provide GBP 250,000 to 85 local authorities across England to install 100 new chess tables in public parks and outdoor green spaces to allow more people to play, connect, tackle loneliness, and develop problem-solving skills. In addition, the outgoing Sunak-led government set out plans to encourage more primary school children, particularly girls, to learn to play the game. The UK Department for Education offered grants of up to GBP 2,000 to at least 100 schools in disadvantaged areas across England, subject to interest.



## I am going to Olympics at 14, all sacrifices were worth it: Swimmer Dhinidhi

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
At times, she misses the carefree pleasures her peers enjoy and occasionally experiences a sense of solitude, but all of that has been worth it for 14-year-old swimmer Dhinidhi Desinghu, who is gearing up to fulfil her dream of competing at the Olympics later this month. The Bengaluru swimmer, who studies in class ninth, is set to be the youngest member of the Indian contingent at the Paris Olympics. "Sometimes I miss the fun generally kids of my age have. I do not go out much with friends and feel lonely. But then I wanted to swim and I wanted to go to the Olympics," Dhinidhi told PTI Bhasha in an exclusive interview at her residence. "I am the one who chose this path for me. With that comes a lot of sacrifices but I do feel different, extraordinary and proud. At 14, I am going to the Olympics, so all the sacrifices are worth it," she added. The Olympic cycle has been an underwhelming one for Indian

swimmers as none of the swimmers were able to breach either the 'A' or 'B' qualification time. But Dhinidhi has been on a roll, winning medals at the National Games and the senior National championships last year. Her performances this season made her the top-ranked Indian female swimmer with the Swimming Federation of India handing her one of the two Universality places and an opportunity of a lifetime. "I knew that I had a chance (of making the Olympics) because I have been working really very hard but it was surprising that I got this chance so early in my career. Being the youngest one in the Indian contingent is a big honour." "I am super excited to be a part of the Indian Olympic contingent as I will get a chance to meet the greatest athletes," said Dhinidhi, who will compete in the women's 200m freestyle event. Having got the opportunity to compete at the Olympics at such a young age, Dhinidhi wants to soak in everything and gain experience.

"This is just the beginning and I have a long long way to go. I am really excited to know what more I can do in 2028 and 2032. "I want to experience the feeling of staying at the Olympic village. What kind of races are being held there as the competition in India is totally different from what we get at international level. I want to see the dedication, the focus and the preparation of world class athletes. "I am not thinking about performance as it is just about learning this time. I am sure whatever learnings I have here, that will make me a better athlete." She is excited to meet her idol - seven-time Olympic gold medalist swimmer Katie Ledecky. "I made a greeting card last year for her. I used to think that whenever I get a chance to meet her, I will give this to her. I looked up at her from a very young age and luckily, I got this chance. Hopefully I can give it to her in Paris. I will be on the seventh moon if I get a chance to even see her," she said.

## Indian-origin schoolgirl chess prodigy to be youngest in England team

**PTI ■ LONDON**  
Bodhana Sivanandan, a nine-year-old Indian-origin schoolgirl is set to make chess history after she became the youngest person selected to represent England internationally in any sport. Bodhana, from Harrow in north-west London, will join the England Women's Team at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest, Hungary, in September. The others in her team are all in their 20s, 30s or 40s. "I found out yesterday after I came back from school when my dad told me. I was happy. I hope I'll do well and I'll get another title," she told the BBC on Wednesday. Malcolm Pein, manager of the England chess team, described the schoolgirl as one of the most remarkable British chess prodigies he has ever seen.

"It's exciting - she's on course to be one of the best British players ever," he said. Her father, Siva Sivanandan, says he remains mystified about where his daughter got her talent. "I'm an engineering graduate, as is my wife, but I'm not good at chess," he said. Bodhana first picked up chess during the pandemic lockdown when Siva's friend was going back to India and gave her a few bags which also had a chess board. "I was interested in the pieces, so I started playing," she recalls. Last December, Sivanandan won the European Blitz Chess Championship in Zagreb, Croatia, and was dubbed "super talented" at the time. Soon after, she was among a group of young chess enthusiasts



invited by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to 10 Downing Street to mark the government's major new GBP 1 million investment package for the game. The package has since been in place to support children attending schools in disadvantaged areas across England to learn and play chess, improve the visibility and availability of the

game, and fund elite playing. As part of the package, the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) said it would invest GBP 500,000 in the English Chess Federation (ECF) over two years to develop the next generation of world-class talent. Funds will support expert coaching, training camps and cutting-edge computer

analysis for international events to assist current grandmasters and up-and-coming players. Alongside the support committed to elite players, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will provide GBP 250,000 to 85 local authorities across England to install 100 new chess tables in public parks and outdoor green spaces to allow more people to play, connect, tackle loneliness, and develop problem-solving skills. In addition, the outgoing Sunak-led government set out plans to encourage more primary school children, particularly girls, to learn to play the game. The UK Department for Education offered grants of up to GBP 2,000 to at least 100 schools in disadvantaged areas across England, subject to interest.

## Haas F1 team signs teenage British driver Oliver Bearman on multi-year deal from 2025

**AP ■ KANNAPOLIS (US)**  
Oliver Bearman has been signed on a multiyear deal by the Haas Formula 1 team from 2025 onward. Haas announced the signing in a statement Thursday, without giving more details. The 19-year-old British driver will take the seat vacated by German driver Nico Hulkenberg, who is joining Sauber at the end of the year ahead of its rebranding to Audi for 2026. "It's hard to put into words just how much this means to me. To say out loud that I will be a Formula 1 driver for (the) Haas F1 Team makes me so immensely proud," Bearman said. "To be one of the very few people who get to do the thing that they dreamed of as a child is something truly incredible." Bearman impressed with a stunning seventh-place finish at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix in March, when he stood in for Carlos Sainz Jr. He got the



unexpected F1 debut after Sainz was diagnosed with appendicitis and needed an operation. Bearman, who was 18 at the time, became the third-youngest driver in F1. He had only had two practice sessions with Haas - in 2023 - yet produced a commanding drive on a tricky circuit that was way beyond his limited experience. He is currently competing in the F2 championship and is a reserve driver for both Ferrari and Haas - which uses a Ferrari engine. He won the Austrian GP sprint race last weekend driving for Prema Racing in F2.

Bearman signed for the prestigious Ferrari academy in 2021 after being earmarked as a rising star. "I wouldn't be here without you," he told Ferrari. "Thank you for preparing me since F4 for this incredible opportunity and know I will give it everything I have." Haas team owner Gene Haas has high hopes for Bearman. "He's undoubtedly an exciting rookie prospect, not just based on what he showed in Saudi Arabia but also through his time developing his relationship with our team," Haas said. "I'm personally excited to see how he grows as a driver, and we look forward to seeing him deliver for (the) Haas F1 Team next season and beyond." Bearman's promotion means there will be four British drivers on the F1 grid next year, with Lewis Hamilton (who is joining Ferrari), George Russell (Mercedes) and Lando Norris (McLaren) the others.

## Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Andy Murray, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff lead the Olympics entry list

**AP ■ LONDON**  
Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray all were included on the entry list for tennis at the Paris Olympics released by the International Tennis Federation on Thursday, as was Daniil Medvedev, who technically will be competing as a "neutral" athlete rather than representing Russia because of that country's ongoing war in Ukraine. Djokovic (Serbia) and Murray (Britain) are both 37, and Nadal (Spain) is 38, and all own multiple Grand Slam titles. Djokovic holds a men's record of 24 major trophies - but has never won a gold medal at the Olympics. Nadal, next on the men's Slam list with 22, won golds in singles in 2008 and in doubles in 2016. He skipped Wimbledon, which is currently being played, to prepare for the Olympics. Murray won three major championships and is the only tennis player with consecutive singles gold medals at the Summer Games. He has said he plans to retire after the Paris Olympics, which will hold tennis



matches from July 27 to August 4 on the clay courts at Roland Garros, the site of the French Open - where Nadal is a 14-time champ. The leading women on the entry list are No. 1 Iga Swiatek (Poland), No. 2 Coco Gauff (United States) and No. 4 Elena Rybakina (Kazakhstan). No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka decided not to go to the

Olympics; her nation, Belarus, aided Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. So, she would have competed as a "neutral" athlete, like Medvedev. Swiatek is a five-time Grand Slam champion - including at the French Open in four of the past five years - and Gauff and Rybakina have won one major apiece. Gauff made the US team

for the Tokyo Games three years ago. But, she did not go because she tested positive for COVID-19. There are 64-player draws for women's and men's singles, and 32 teams each in women's and men's doubles. The 16 entries for mixed doubles will be determined on July 24. The draw to determine the brackets will be in Paris on July 25. Among the other players announced Thursday are three-time major champion Carlos Alcaraz - who will play doubles alongside Nadal for Spain - No. 1 Jannik Sinner (Italy), Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Alexander Zverev (Germany), 2008 doubles gold medalist Stan Wawrinka (Switzerland), four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka (Japan), 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu (Canada) and 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki (Denmark). Osaka lit the cauldron at the Tokyo Olympics. Lebanon will debut in Olympic tennis, with Benjamin Hassan entering in singles and also partnering with Hady Habib in doubles.



# Rajawat stuns Gemke, enters second round of Canada Open

**PTI ■ CALGARY (CANADA)**  
Promising Indian shuttler Priyanshu Rajawat stunned higher-ranked Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in a hard-fought three game contest to advance to the second round of men's singles event at the Canada Open here. World No.39 Rajawat had to dig deep to get the better of eighth seed Gemke of Denmark 17-21 21-16 21-14 in

# Moreeng appointed as USA women's cricket team coach



**PTI ■ NEW YORK**  
Former South Africa cricketer Hilton Moreeng has been appointed as the coach of USA's national women and Under-19 teams, the country's governing body announced. Moreeng will take over from West Indian legend Shivnarine Chandernaul, and will prepare the team for the T20 World Cup which will be held later this year in Bangladesh. The 46-year-old, who served as South Africa women's team coach for over a decade, said he wanted to contribute to the growth of cricket in the USA. "I am eager to collaborate with both current players and emerging talent. My goal is to methodically build a competitive squad capable of



# Plenty of intrigue, even if Messi, Vinicius can't participate

**AP ■ LOS ANGELES**  
Lionel Messi's leg injury was the only major obstacle that fell into Argentina's path while it rolled through group play and into the Copa America quarterfinals. Bigger challenges await the defending champions, and they're hoping Messi will be there to lead the way in perhaps his final international tournament. The 15-time Copa America champion Albiceleste are still the undeniable favorites in the Americas' biggest soccer tournament when quarterfinal play gets underway, but the other 15-time Copa champs - Uruguay - top the list of challengers capable of taking them down. With the host Americans and Mexico eliminated in group play, the spotlight shifts firmly to the South American powerhouses determined to raise the trophy. ARGENTINA VS ECUDAOR In Houston, it's unclear whether Messi will play in the opening quarterfinal due to a leg injury that sidelined him in the team's most recent match against Peru. Coach Lionel Scaloni said Messi's availability will be a game-time decision. "Depending on how he responds, we will decide," Scaloni said Wednesday before training. "There are ramifications when Leo is not able to play. We'll try to make sure that he can play. If not, we'll try to find the best solution for the team. I will talk

# Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag signs contract extension until 2026

**AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)**  
Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag has signed a contract extension through to 2026, the Premier League club said Thursday. The Dutchman has won back-to-back trophies in his first two years at Old Trafford, but faced uncertainty over his position after leading it to its worst league finish in 34 years last season. After a performance review, United decided to stick with Ten Hag and he has now agreed on a new deal, which is a one-year extension on his previous contract, which was due to expire at the end of the upcoming season. "Looking back at the past two years, we can reflect with pride on two trophies and many examples of progression from where we were when I joined," Ten Hag said. "However, we must also be clear that there is still lots of hard work ahead to reach the levels expected of Manchester United, which means challenging for English and European titles. "In my discussions with the club, we have found complete unity in our vision for reaching those goals, and we are all strongly committed to making that journey together." Ten Hag joined United from Ajax in 2022 and won the English League Cup in his first year in England. He followed that up last season with a victory over Manchester City in the FA Cup final.



He stays on in the face of a major overhaul of United's soccer operations by new co-owner Jim Ratcliffe. British billionaire Ratcliffe bought a 27.7% stake in the club in February and has hired a new CEO, sporting director

and technical director in a bid to return the 20-time English champions to the top of European soccer. "With two trophies in the past two seasons, Erik has reinforced his record as one of the most consistently successful coaches in European football. While the club's review of last season highlighted areas for improvement, it also reached a clear conclusion that Erik was the best partner for us to work with in driving up standards and outcomes," said United Sporting Director Dan Ashworth. "This group of players and staff have already shown they are capable of competing and winning at the top level; now we need to do it more consistently. "With our strengthened football leadership team now in place, we are looking forward to working hand-in-hand with Erik to achieve our shared ambitions for this football club.

# Spain face hosts Germany in quarterfinals with potential record on line

**AP ■ STUTTGART (GERMANY)**  
Spain meet host nation Germany on Friday in the quarterfinals of the European Championship in an eagerly-anticipated match between two of the best performing sides at the tournament. There is also a potential record on the line as Spain and Germany have each won three European Championships, better than any other nation. Two of the most exciting talents will be on show in Spain teenager Lamine Yamal and 21-year-old Germany forward Jamal Musiala. MATCH FACTS: The winner will advance to face France or Portugal in the semifinal in Munich on Tuesday. □ Spain and Germany are the leading scorers at Euro 2024, having netted nine and 10 goals respectively in their four matches. They have also conjured the most attempts on target. □ Spain has never eliminated a host nation, either at a European Championship or at the World Cup. □ La Roja is the only team to have won all its matches at Euro 2024, beating Croatia, Italy and Albania in the group stage before thumping Georgia 4-1 in the round of 16. Germany beat Scotland and Hungary but drew against Switzerland before eliminating Denmark. □ Germany hasn't beaten Spain in a major tournament since a group-stage victory at Euro '88. TEAM NEWS: Lamine Yamal, Nico Williams and Fabian Ruiz all missed Spain's training session on Tuesday, while Aymeric Laporte only jogged once around the field. However, all are expected to be fit for Friday's match. □ Germany defender Jonathan Tah returns from suspension and coach Julian Nagelsmann has reported no injury concerns. BY THE NUMBERS: Spain and Germany have only conceded three goals between them. The only time Spain goalkeeper Unai Simón had to pick the ball out of his net was against Georgia, while Germany conceded against Scotland and Switzerland. □ The teams have met 26 times, with Germany winning nine to Spain's eight. Spain edges Germany slightly on goals scored with 32 compared to 31.



□ Three of the last four encounters have finished in a 1-1 draw with the exception being a 6-0 thrashing of Germany by Spain in a UEFA Nations League match in November 2020. □ Germany has won all six of its European Championship quarterfinals. Spain has lost five of its nine. □ Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will likely make a national record 39th appearance in a major tournament, having matched Bastian Schweinsteiger's mark in the previous round. □ Germany has won the last six penalty shootouts it has been involved in, losing only its first in the 1976 final. Spain has won seven of its 13. WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: "I am not at all nostalgic and I don't feel like this will be my last-ever match." - Germany midfielder Toni Kroos, who will be retiring after the tournament. "We're aiming for the trophy and even though it's been a pleasure playing with Toni Kroos - because he's been a teammate (at Real Madrid) and a friend - I'd still like to retire' him on Friday!" - Spain forward Joselu. "I don't know if Spain are all that happy having to face Germany; likewise, there could have been easier opponents for us. If you want to win this tournament, you have to go through Spain." - Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich. "Both are amazing players, they are young talents who will be the best in the world in the future. The wrong thing that everybody does is compare players, I think we only have to enjoy them.

# Tvesa T-24, Diksha T-46 in London Aramco Series

**PTI ■ LONDON**  
Tvesa Malik Sandhu was unable to hold on to her early gains and finished at even-par 73 to be tied-24th at the end of the first round of the Aramco Team Series London here. Fellow Indian Diksha Dagar, who will play in the Major Evian Championships next week, shot 2-over 75 to be tied-46 at the Centurion Club, while Pranavi Urs carded a disappointing 7-over 80 and looks unlikely to make the cut. Tvesa, who lost a play-off last week and missed out on a maiden win on the Ladies European Tour (LET), began well from the 10th tee. She had a bogey on 12th but it was followed by an eagle, her third in her last three rounds. She had eagles in the second and third rounds of last week's Swiss Ladies Open. She added a birdie on the 18th to turn in 2-under. She dropped three shots on the second, third and seventh but got one back with a birdie on



the eighth to close at 73. Diksha had three birdies, three bogeys and a double-bogey. Ireland's Leona Maguire led the individual standings, while her team comprising Solheim Cup winner, England's Liz Young, Spain's Marta Sanz Barrio and amateur Yana Wario, was joint leader after day 1 at 14-under. Leona's team shared the lead with Team Nuria Iturriz and Team Georgia Hall. Leona sits at the top of the leaderboard after producing a bogey-free first round. The two-time LPGA winner rolled in back-to-back birdies on her fifth and sixth holes, before making three on the trot from holes 8 to 10 before adding further birdies on the 13th and 15th for her round of seven-under par.

# Bopanna-Ebden move to second round

**PTI ■ LONDON**  
India's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden moved into the second round of the Wimbledon men's doubles event with a smooth win over Robin Haas and Sander Arends here. Bopanna and Ebden sailed past their Dutch opponents 7-5, 6-4 in an hour and 11 minutes in a rain-interrupted match on Wednesday. The second seeds, who are the current Australian Open champions, will face Germany's Hendrik Jebens and Constantin Frantzen in the second round. The Indo-Australian pair had reached the semifinals of the season's third Grand Slam last year. Earlier on Wednesday, India's Sumit Nagal and his Serbian partner Dusan Lajovic were ousted in the first round by



Spaniards Pedro Martinez and Jaume Munar. Martinez and Munar won 6-2, 6-2 in one hour and seven minutes. India will have further representation in men's doubles first round through N Sriram Balaji and Yuki Bhambri later on Thursday. Balaji will partner Britain's Luke Johnson and will face fourth seeds Mate Pavic of Serbia and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador. On the other hand, Bhambri and France's Albano Olivetti will take on the Kazakh duo of Alexander Bublik and Alexander Shevchenko.

# Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz advance at Wimbledon. Naomi Osaka loses

**AP ■ LONDON**  
Coco Gauff likes No. 1 Court Cat Wimbledon. It's where she beat Venus Williams back in 2019 when Gauff made her Wimbledon debut at age 15. On Wednesday, Gauff beat qualifier Anca Todoni 6-2, 6-1 to advance to the third round at the All England Club. "This is the court where I first started here at Wimbledon. Court 1 is always a special place for me to play on," the 20-year-old Gauff said in her on-court interview. The victory also allows Gauff, the No. 2 seed, to move another step away from last year's first-round exit. "Overall, I just learned about life a lot," the U.S. Open champion said when asked about putting

that three-set loss to Sofia Kenin behind her. "I just realized that, yes, what I do I'm very passionate about, but it's not ever that serious and sometimes the world can make you feel like there's so much pressure, there's so much expectation," she said. "At the end of the (day), it's a game. It's sport." The 19-year-old Todoni is from Romania and was making her Grand Slam debut. "I do think I could have played cleaner at some moments," Gauff said. Five years ago, Gauff beat



Williams - a five-time Wimbledon champion - 6-4, 6-4 in the first round and eventually reached the last 16, all in her Grand Slam debut. Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz trailed 6-5 in the first set Wednesday before coming back to beat Aleksander Vukic 7-6 (5), 6-2, 6-2, setting up a third-round meeting with No. 29 Frances Tiafoe after the American eliminated Borna Coric 7-6 (5), 6-1, 6-3. When told by the on-court interviewer that Tiafoe said he's "coming after you," the 21-year-old Spaniard replied with a smile: "I'm going for him." "We played a really good match in the U.S. Open," the No. 3 seed said of their 2022 semifinal that Alcaraz won at Flushing Meadows. In other results, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was eliminated in the second round by No. 19 Emma Navarro by a score of 6-4, 6-1, while No. 1 Jannik Sinner got past 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (4) at Centre Court in an all-Italian contest.