

# June 25: Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi Government on Friday decided, through a Gazette notification, to observe June 25 — the day the Emergency was declared in 1975 by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi — as “Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas” to commemorate the “massive contributions” of those who endured the inhuman pains of that period. Announcing this, Home Minister Amit Shah said the observance of “Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas” will help keep the eternal flame of individual freedom and the defence of the democracy alive in every Indian, thus preventing “dictatorial forces” like the Congress



Photo Credit: BCCL

from “repeating those horrors”. The gazette notification issued on Friday by the Union Home Ministry notes that Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975, following which there was “gross abuse

It is also a day to pay homage to each and every person who suffered due to the excesses of the Emergency, a Congress unleashed dark phase of Indian history

— Narendra Modi



File Photo

of power by the Government of the day and people of India were subjected to excesses and atrocities”. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said ‘Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas’ will serve as a reminder of what happened when the

Constitution was trampled over. “It is also a day to pay homage to each and every person who suffered due to the excesses of the Emergency, a Congress unleashed dark phase of Indian history,” said Modi. The people of India have abiding faith in the Constitution and the power of its resilient democracy, it said. “Therefore, Government of India declares June 25 as ‘Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas’ to pay tribute to all those who suffered and fought against the gross abuse of power during the period of Emergency to recommit the people of India to not support in any manner such gross abuse of power, in future,” said the notification. Continued on Page 2



## SC grants relief to Kejriwal in ED case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case lodged by the ED in the alleged excise policy scam but he will remain in jail as the CBI had later arrested him in a related matter. The top court said it is up to Kejriwal to decide if he should continue as Chief Minister. “We are conscious of the fact that Arvind Kejriwal is an elected leader,” a bench of Justices Sanjay Khanna and Dipankar Datta said while also noting that Kejriwal has suffered incarceration for over 90 days. It also referred the questions pertaining to legality of his arrest in the Enforcement Directorate (ED) case to a larger bench. The court said since the matter is concerned with the right to life and the issue of arrest has been

referred to a larger bench, Kejriwal be released on interim bail. The top court framed three questions related to power, necessity of arrest under section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and policy of arrest by the ED. It said Kejriwal will be released on interim bail in terms of the conditions in the order of May 10. While releasing Kejriwal on interim bail on May 10 for electioneering during the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the top court had imposed conditions on him that he will not visit his office or the Delhi Secretariat during the tenure of his interim bail. Besides imposing slew of conditions, it had asked Kejriwal to not sign any official file unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanction during the 21-day interim bail period. Continued on Page 2

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the Centre's decision on “Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas”, the Congress said from now on, every year on November 8, the day when demonetisation was announced in 2016, the people of India will celebrate “Aajivika Hatya Diwas” and a gazette notification will also be issued soon. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the move is yet another headline

## Congress calls for 'Aajivika Hatya Diwas'

grabbing exercise in hypocrisy by the non-biological Prime Minister who has imposed an undeclared Emergency for ten long years before the people of India handed him a decisive personal, political, and moral defeat on June 4, 2024 — which will go down in history as ModiMukti Diwas. “This is a non-biological PM

Three recent laws were passed when a large number of MPs were suspended. We do not support Emergency....(but) charity begins at home.

— Mamata Banerjee

who has subjected the Constitution of India and its principles, values, and institutions to systematic assault. This is a non-biological PM whose ideological parivar had rejected the Constitution of India in November 1949 on the grounds that it did not derive inspiration from Manusmriti. This is a non-biological PM for whom

democracy means only demo-kursi,” the Congress leader said. West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee said times associated with Emergency were being seen most during the tenure of Modi. The West Bengal CM said no one was consulted when “the three recent laws replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal

Procedure(CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act”. “It was passed when a large number of MPs were suspended. We do not support Emergency....(but) charity begins at home,” she asserted. Another Opposition leader and a Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi sought to know from Home Minister Amit Shah whether he is aware that emergency was applied on basis of a constitutional availability of the clause to declare emergency.



## Ex-Andhra CM Jagan booked in attempt to murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh police registered an “attempt to murder” case against former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, two senior IPS officers and two retired officials, following a complaint lodged by a TDP MLA, an official said on Friday. The complaint was lodged by the ruling party's Undi MLA K Raghurama Krishna Raju, who was a YSRCP Lok Sabha MP between 2019 and 2024 but had a fallout with Reddy at an early stage. Besides Reddy, police booked senior IPS officers PV Sunil Kumar and PSR Sitaramanjaneyulu and retired police officer R Vijay Paul and former Guntur Government General Hospital superintendent G Prabhavati, the official said. Vijay Paul and Prabhavati have superannuated. Raju, a former MP, also alleged that he was subjected to “custodial torture,” the official added. Police booked the five accused persons under IPC Sections 120 B, 166, 167, 197, 307, 326, 465 and 506 read with 34. Police invoked the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as the case is three years old. The case was booked at Nagarampalem police station in Guntur. TDP leader Raju's 2021 arrest case came to the fore in Andhra Pradesh after he lodged a complaint against Reddy and some officials over it on June 10. He accused the former CM and the senior officials of “plotting” a criminal “conspiracy” against him.

## IAS officer tantrums spark row, faces probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Centre has initiated a thorough probe into the induction of probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who is at the centre of a controversy over alleged misuse of power and privileges, and that her services may be terminated. They said all documents presented by her to secure her candidature in the Civil Services examination and then for selection in the service will be re-examined by a single-member committee constituted by the Centre on Thursday. “The officer may be terminated from the service if found guilty. She may face criminal charges also in case she is found to have misrepresented a fact or done any sort of manipulation in documents relied upon for her selection,” sources said. Khedkar, a 2023 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is under probation and currently posted in her home cadre Maharashtra. The 34-year-old officer is in the eye of storm over for allegedly misusing the disability and Other Backward Class quota to secure a position in the IAS. The single-member probe committee of Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, Additional Secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training, has been asked to submit its report within two weeks, the sources said. In the meantime, Khedkar had on Thursday assumed her new role as Assistant Collector at the Washim District Collectorate in the Vidarbha region after being transferred from



Probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar

Pune where she allegedly bullied everyone around and also placed a red beacon atop her private Audi (a luxury sedan) car. Khedkar has been under intense scrutiny for allegedly manipulating benefits under the physical disabilities category and OBC quota to secure her position in the Indian Administrative Service. The controversial officer was shunted out to Washim after Pune District Collector Suhas Diwase wrote to State Additional Chief Secretary Nitin Gadre requesting him to consider giving a posting to Khedkar in another district to avoid “administrative complications”. Diwase had sought action against Khedkar for her behaviour, including alleged aggressive treatment of junior staff, illegal occupation of the ante-chamber of Additional Collector Ajay More, and violations pertaining to sporting a red beacon

on the Audi and flashing it during the day, among others. Also, a video showing Khedkar's mother threatening a group of men with a gun has gone viral has added to the woes of the controversial bureaucrat. A Pune Rural police official later in the evening said a probe would begin to ascertain facts, including if she possessed a licence for the firearm. An official said the incident in the video was about a land parcel bought by Puja's father Dilip Khedkar, a retired Maharashtra Government officer, in Dhadwadi village in Pune's Mulshi tehsil. Locals had claimed the Khedkars had encroached on the land of neighbouring farmers. The two-minute video shows Khedkar's mother Manorama Khedkar, accompanied by her security guards, engaged in a heated argument with the neighbours. Manorama can be seen yelling at a man with a pistol in her hand. She walks up to him and waves the gun in his face before concealing it in her hand. “We have taken cognisance of the video that is circulating on social media platforms. Once facts are ascertained, we will start a probe. We will investigate if Manorama has a licence for the firearm,” a senior Pune Rural police official said. In connection with the episode, farmer Kuldeep Pasalkar claimed Manorama was forcefully trying to usurp his land. “She has been threatening other farmers as well. She visited my plot along with some security guards and started threatening us while holding a firearm in her hand,” Pasalkar alleged.



Representative Image

## Modi announces projects bonanza for Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Mumbai on Saturday and launch, dedicate to the nation and lay foundation stone for multiple projects worth more than ₹29, 400 crore. The projects are related to road, railways and ports sector, it was announced here on Friday. Giving details, officials said Modi will lay the foundation stone for Thane Borivali Tunnel Project worth ₹16,600 crore. This Twin Tube Tunnel between Thane and Borivali alignment will be passing below Sanjay Gandhi National Park which will create direct connection between Western Express Highway at Borivali side and Thane Ghodbander Road at Thane side. Total length of the project is 11.8 km. It will reduce the journey from Thane to

Borivali by 12 km with a saving of about 1 hour in travel time. Modi will lay the foundation stone for tunnel work at Goregaon Mulund Link Road (GMLR) Project worth over Rs. 6,300 crore. The GMLR envisages road connectivity from Western Express Highway at Goregaon to Eastern Express Highway at Mulund. The total length of the GMLR is approximately 6.65 km and will provide direct connectivity for Western suburbs with the New proposed airport at Navi Mumbai and Pune Mumbai Expressway. The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for Kalyan Yard Remodelling and Gati Shakti Multi Modal Cargo Terminal at Turbhe in Navi Mumbai. Kalyan Yard will help in the segregation of long distance and suburban traffic. Continued on Page 2

## LoP Rahul Gandhi calls US Veep Harris

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and US Vice President Kamala Harris had a telephonic conversation on Thursday, sources said. Though the specifics of the conversation were not known, this comes in the run-up to the US presidential polls later this year. There is talk in Democratic party circles that Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage, could step in as a challenger to Donald Trump as questions remain over whether President Joe Biden should continue as the nominee for the November 5 presidential election. A defiant Biden has insisted that he is “determined” and fit to seek re-election and defeat his Republican rival Trump. Harris, 59, is the first woman, the first Black American, and the first South Asian American to be elected as US Vice President in 2020. Meanwhile, Biden on Thursday said his deputy, Harris, is “qualified” to lead the country. At a high-stake Press conference here on Thursday, Biden said, “From the very beginning, I made no bones about that. She is qualified to be the president. That's why I picked her.” When asked about the reasons for this, he said “Firstly because of the way she's handled the issue of freedom of women's bodies, to have control of their bodies and secondly, her ability to handle almost any issue on the board.”



## Seven Indians missing after landslide in Nepal

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least seven Indian nationals are among over 60 passengers who are believed to be missing after two buses were swept away by a landslide and pushed into a swollen river in Nepal early Friday, officials said. The two buses carrying 65 passengers were missing in the Trishuli River in the landslides at Simalta area along the Narayanghat-Mugling road in Chitwan district, myRepublica news portal reported quoting officials. Chief District Officer of Chitwan, Indradev Yadav, confirmed the incident.



According to Yadav, the Kathmandu-bound Angel bus and Ganpati Deluxe, en route to Gaur from the Capital, met with the accident at around 3:30 am. Twenty-four people were onboard the bus travelling to Kathmandu and 41 on the bus travelling to Gaur, police said.

## Textiles queen takes eco-friendly turn

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Silk industry — the Indian Queen of textiles — is embracing a transformative shift towards eco-friendliness! Indian researchers have for the first time identified eco-friendly solvents to replace the hazardous chemicals traditionally used in silk protein extraction processes that not only promises to revolutionise silk production but also addresses pressing concerns related to environmental impact and human health associated with conventional methods. Traditionally, chemicals such as sodium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, sulfuric acid, and lithium bromide have been

integral to the extraction of silk proteins from raw silk fibers. However, these chemicals not only are health hazardous for those involved in the process but also contribute to carbon emissions and environmental pollution as the chemicals are released in the water. In response to these challenges, the research team led by Dr Kamatchi Sankaranarayan at Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) Guwahati, an autonomous institute of Department of Science & Technology explored Ionic Liquids (ILs) as sustainable alternatives. Ionic Liquids are salts that remain in a liquid state at relatively low temperatures



Representative Image

and are known for their low toxicity and ability to dissolve a wide range of materials. This study, published in Chemistry Select by Wiley Publishers, marks a significant advancement in sustainable silk processing. The researchers identified

four ILs that effectively extract silk proteins from both mulberry (Bombyx mori) and non-mulberry silks such as Muga (Antheraea assamensis) and Eri (Philosamia ricini), which are native to Northeast India. Among these ILs, 1-Butyl-3-methylimidazolium

chloride (BMIM.Cl), 1-ethyl-3-methylimidazolium tetrafluoroborate (EMIM.BF4), and Tetraethylammonium bromide (TEAB) showed particularly promising results. TEAB, in particular, demonstrated the ability to efficiently destabilise sericin proteins while preserving the integrity of silk fibroin, essential for maintaining the quality and strength of the silk fibers, said Dr Sankaranarayan. This breakthrough not only aligns with global efforts to combat climate change but also highlights India's commitment to sustainable development in its industrial practices.

Continued on Page 2



# Exodus of students from Kerala to other countries increasing: Cong

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The claim by the ruling CPI (M) that Kerala is the country's knowledge hub and role model for other countries in the field of higher education fell like a pack of cards as the Congress-led Opposition churned out facts and figures in the Assembly exposing the hollowness behind the Government's stance.

Mathew Kuzhalsadan, a first time MLA of the Congress party while introducing a calling attention motion on the total failure of the State's higher education sector told the House that the exodus of students from Kerala to other countries is increasing by leaps and bounds. "The year 2016 saw 1.5 lakh students leaving the Kerala shores to Europe, America and Australia while the figure shot up to 2,50,000 by 2023. This data was prepared by the Government's own Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) and Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation and speaks a lot about the setback suffered by the institutes of higher learning in the State, said Kuzhalsadan. .

While the Congress leader was firing on all four cylinders, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan delivered a knockout punch by issuing an order as the Chancellor of the Universities asking the



dismissed vice-chancellors who had challenged their removal in the High Court as well as Supreme Court to fight the cases with their money. The Governor also asked them to return Rs 1.13 crore spent by them from University funds as court expenses because "this has no justification of any kind". R Bindu, minister for higher education and spouse of CPI (M) polit bureau member A Vijayaraghavan, belittled Kuzhalsadan by alleging that the member was trying to make a mountain out of molehill. "Kerala's higher education sector is the best in the country and is drawing thousands of students from abroad to our State. The Chandrayaan mission became a success only because of 95 per cent of scientists and engineers working in it were from

Kerala. There is nothing surprising in students leaving for foreign countries for their studies. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar had their education in Great Britain while Muslim League leader Panakkadu Mohammed Ali Shihab Thangal had his higher education in Cairo," said the minister. The legislative assembly debate was held in the backdrop of girl students in Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) complaining to the University authorities and Police about sexual abuse by PK Baby, Students Welfare Director and syndicate member. "The UGC has not sanctioned any post like student welfare director but Baby was appointed to these posts

flouting all norms by a powerful minister from Ernakulam who has set his eyes on the chair of chief minister," said RS Sasikumar, chairman, Save University Campaign. Kuzhalsadan said the falling standards of education in Kerala is because of the outdated ideological interagency. Neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are way ahead of Kerala even as our youth leave the state saying that any country is better than this state. Persons with IT qualification get Rs 5,05,000 per year as salary in Kerala while their counterparts in other states earn twice and thrice this amount. No purpose will be served by pushing these issues under the carpet," said the Congress leader. While the minister told the Speaker that there was no need to discuss the matter as an urgent motion, Leader of the Opposition VD Satheeshan expressed his shock over the Government's refusal to discuss a report prepared by its own departments. Sasikumar said that the marks awarded to SFI leaders, the granting of Ph D degrees for sub-standard thesis and the high handed behavior of CPI(M) youth wing have made the universities in the State a Augean stable.

# Former BJP president Dilip mulls quitting party in WB?

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Much like the Pradesh Congress there is turmoil in the Bengal State BJP too. As the leaders engage in passing the buck and blaming each other for the party's defeat at the hands of the Trinamool Congress in the recently concluded parliamentary elections there are rumours that senior leaders like former State BJP president Dilip Ghosh are looking for "more honourable options." Ghosh who is credited with building the BJP's organisation — almost from nothing — in Bengal which saw the saffron outfit climb to 18 seats in 2019 general elections up from two seats that it could manage in 2014 has recently dropped indications of quitting politics. However he will not take a knee-jerk decision notwithstanding the alleged "humiliation" that he has been subjected to for the past several years, "particularly after he was removed from the post of State party chief and more particularly when he lost his place as a national vice president," his close confidants say. Known for calling spade a spade in public often to the chagrin and even embarrassment of others including the party mates Ghosh said a few days ago, "I am not taking any decision immediately ... I will prefer to wait for some time ... may be a few months to see how things shape up ... and then I will decide ... because you don't take anything for final in



politics and you don't take decisions impromptu." Ghosh apparently referred to the organisational revamp that is in the offing after present State president Sukanta Majumdar was promoted to the rank of a Union Minister post polls. Primarily an RSS recruit Ghosh who was loaned by the Sangh to the BJP to build up the part is never known to have enjoyed good relationship with Majumdar and Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari both of whom came from the TMC. He was replaced by Sukanta Majumdar as state unit chief in 2021 almost at a time when Adhikari, then a powerful minister in Mamata Banerjee cabinet quit TMC to join the saffron outfit. A 'cadre' to the hilt and a 'man of the masses', Ghosh who is travelling districts to gauge the public mood earlier complained how he was not given organisational programmes for the past several years. "I have not been given organisational programmed ... nor I was called to meetings

... I was an MP and was on my own ... so I think if there is no work for me, it means the party doesn't need me anymore. There is no point in hanging around," he said. Regarded the crafter of the BJP in Bengal, Ghosh is also not happy with the way some other State leaders like Raju Banerjee and others have been dealt with, insiders say. Ghosh holds the present State leadership for his defeat at the hustings. "I was an MLA and an MP from Midnapore which is my home turf ... I was shifted for nothing from that area to Durgapur ... what happened as a result the Midnapore seat was lost ... same thing was done to Debashree Chowdhury who was shifted from Raiganj to South Kolkata," Ghosh said holding the "back-biting in the party responsible for the poor performance in the parliamentary elections." Ghosh however is non-committal about his joining the TMC or for that matter the Congress. "I have been brought up in the RSS ... have no financial interests or any craving for any post ... I am a free bird as I am not a people's representative now ... I love to be with the people and will continue to work for them," he says. When asked about Ghosh's politics or the politics around Ghosh, senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said, "one should not talk about other parties ... but it is true that a leader of his stature and qualities should find respect everywhere ... he deserves a better dealing."

# Videos of terror attack on gurdwara fake: Delhi Police



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Friday clarified that the two videos, claiming to be of a terror attack on a gurdwara, being circulated on social media are fake. The videos are not from any religious place in Delhi, it said. Two videos of around two minutes each showed a pickup truck chasing people and hitting some of them outside what appears to be a gurdwara. Angry people at the spot are then seen beating up the driver of the vehicle.

An X user posted photos and said, "Terror attack outside Gurdwara Seesganj Sahib, New Delhi. Allegedly one "H" extremist ran over his SUV over numerous Sikh men, women & children."

Taking to X, Delhi Police on its official account said, "Some videos are being circulated on social media handles claiming that it was a terrorist attack at Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib. These videos are completely false and are being propagated with some malicious intent, on which legal action is being taken." A case may be registered for spreading fake news, a police officer said.

# NIA chargesheets two including Libyan in Aurangabad terror plot

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A Libyan national is among the two accused named in the charge-sheet filed by the NIA in a Mumbai Special Court in the sensational ISIS terror conspiracy busted by it in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar (erstwhile Aurangabad). In its charge-sheet filed before the NIA special court, the central investigating agency named Mohammed Zoheb Khan of Maharashtra, who was arrested in February this year, and Libya-based Mohammed Shoeb Khan as the key conspirators in the terror plot linked with a module in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar to the ISIS' global networks.

The accused persons had conspired to endanger the safety and security of India, its secular ethos and culture, and the democratic systems of

governance," the NIA stated its charge-sheet, alluding to the findings in its investigations. Together, Zoheb and Shoeb had conspired to recruit vulnerable youth to carry out terror attacks at sensitive installations across India. The charge-sheet has exposed international linkages between the accused in the conspiracy and the handlers of ISIS/ IS. The NIA probe has already revealed the web of anti-India activities involving Zoheb and Shoeb, who had taken 'bayath' (pledge of allegiance) towards the self-appointed Khalifa of ISIS. They were also actively involved in developing a website to promote extremist and violent ideology of ISIS. They had also allegedly planned to attract youth from across the world into the ISIS fold through their website.

The investigations by the NIA have revealed that after targeting India with a series of terror strikes, Zoheb and Shoeb had planned to flee to either Turkey or Afghanistan. According to the investigations, Zoheb had already formed a WhatsApp group having more than 50 youth from Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar with the intention to radicalise them further, recruit them and then further the ISIS' nefarious activities in India. Both Zoheb and Shoeb were exchanging videos pertaining to manufacture of explosives and fabrication of IEDs for the planned terror strikes. The duo had also prepared a detailed plan of action, which included planning, preparing and executing terror hits at multiple locations in India, and the follow-up action in the aftermath.

# NDA Govt will not remain in power for long: Mamata

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Expressing serious concern over the stability of the current BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said here on Friday that the Narendra Modi dispensation would not remain in power for long. Talking to media persons after meeting former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray, Banerjee said: "This (central) government is not stable. It is not strong. It may not continue for long. My best wishes to them." Alluding to the fact that the winning margin in one of the Mumbai Lok Sabha in Mumbai (Mumbai North West) was mere 48 votes, "They (BJP-led NDA) have done like this in many other areas... otherwise this time (2024) they would not have returned to power. I am sure of that". Banerjee is in the city to attend the wedding of Anant



Ambani, the youngest son of Reliance Industries Limited Chairman and MD Mukesh Ambani, and Radhika Merchant, daughter of industrialist Viren Merchant, at the Jio World Convention Centre on Wednesday. At the meeting she had with Uddhav, the latter's wife Rashmi Thackeray and their sons Aditya and Tejas, were present at Thackerays' Bandra residence 'Matoshri'. Banerjee, who is in Mumbai for the first time after the Lok Sabha poll outcome, called on Nationalist Congress Party

(SP) president Sharad Pawar later in the evening, at the latter's 'Silver Oak' in south Mumbai. Banerjee, who enjoys personal rapport with Pawar Sr. and Uddhav, makes it a point to meet both of them, whenever she visits Mumbai. The Trinamool Congress, the NCP (SP) and the Shiv Sena (UBT) are constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc. In Maharashtra, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) -- comprising Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) -- won 30 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats, handing a humiliating defeat to the ruling Mahayuti -- of which the ruling BJP, the Shiv Sena and the NCP are constituents. The MVA constituents are members of the INDIA bloc at the national level. She is also likely to meet Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav and other leaders who are expected to attend Anant Ambani's wedding later in the night.

# 'Samvidhaan...

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Shah said on June 25, 1975, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in a "brazen display of a dictatorial mindset, strangled the soul of India's democracy by imposing the Emergency on the nation". Lakhs of people were thrown behind the bars for no fault of their own, and the voice of the media was silenced, he said."The Government of India has decided to observe the 25th of June every year as 'Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas.' This day will commemorate the massive contributions of all those who endured the inhuman pains of the 1975 Emergency," he said in a social media post.

# Water levels in 150 main reservoirs low despite heavy rainfall: CWC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



As of the latest data, despite heavy rains in various parts of the country recently, the water levels in 150 main reservoirs remain disturbingly lower at 46.311 billion cubic meters (BCM), compared to the same period last year when the live storage was 58.864 BCM, as per the Central Water Commission (CWC).This presents a critical concern, especially for a country heavily dependent on agriculture, providing livelihoods to millions and ensuring food security for its vast population. The reservoirs being monitored have a combined total live storage capacity of 178.784 BCM, representing 69.35 per cent of the overall estimated live storage capacity in the country. Despite the extensive storage capacity, the current figures reveal that the available storage is only 79 per cent of last year's levels and 90 per cent of the normal storage, which is calculated based on the average storage over the past 10 years.

In the Northern Region that includes states like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, the current storage of 5.979 BCM represents 30% of the total capacity. This is notably lower than the 63% storage recorded last year and the normal level of 35%. The shortfall in storage indicates potential implications for agriculture, particularly in states heavily reliant on irrigation from these reservoirs. Similarly, in the Eastern Region, States such as Assam, Jharkhand, and West Bengal too face a current storage of 4.132 BCM, which is just 20 per cent of the total capacity. Comparatively, last year's storage was slightly higher at 22 per cent, while the normal level stands at 24 per cent.

The lower storage levels highlight challenges for maintaining adequate water supply for agricultural and domestic needs. States like Gujarat and Maharashtra, prominent States in Western Region, currently hold 9.398 BCM, representing 25% of their total capacity. This is a decrease from 32 per cent recorded last year and slightly below the normal storage level of 27 per cent. The region's reliance on reservoirs for irrigation and industrial purposes makes efficient water management crucial amid fluctuating rainfall patterns. Central Region encompassing States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have a current storage of 13.035 BCM, accounting for 27% of the total capacity. This is lower than the 39% recorded last year and the normal storage level of 32%. The disparity underscores the region's vulnerability to water scarcity, affecting agricultural output and rural livelihoods dependent on irrigation.

# Modi announces projects bonanza...

From Page 1

The remodelling will increase the yard's capacity to handle more trains, reducing congestion and improving the efficiency of train operations. The Gati Shakti MultiModal Cargo Terminal in Navi Mumbai will be built in an area of more than 32600 sq mtrs. It will provide additional employment opportunities to the local people and will cater as an additional terminal for handling Cement and other commodities. Modi will dedicate to the nation the New Platforms at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and Extension of Platform no. 10 & 11 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Station. The new longer platforms at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus can accommodate longer trains, allowing for more passengers per train and improving the station's capacity to handle increased traffic. Platform no. 10 & 11 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus

Station have been extended by 382 meters with a cover shed and washable apron. It will help in augmentation of the trains up to 24 coaches thus increasing the number of passengers carried. Prime Minister will also launch the Mukhyamantri Yuva Karya Prashikshan Yojana with an outlay of around Rs. 5,600 crore. It is a transformative internship program aimed at addressing youth unemployment by providing opportunities for skill enhancement and industry exposure for youth aged 18 to 30 years. Modi will also visit the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) Secretariat at Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai to inaugurate the INS Towers. The new building will fulfil the evolving needs of Members of INS for a modern and efficient office space in Mumbai, which would serve as the nerve centre for the newspaper industry in Mumbai.

# Textiles queen...

From Page 1

By adopting ILs, the silk industry can move towards greener production methods, thereby promoting a cleaner and more sustainable future for silk manufacturing, he said.Moreover, the extraction of sericin from non-mulberry silks using ILs opens up new possibilities for utilizing these unique fibers in various applications, including textiles, cosmetics, and biomedical products, said the researchers. The green solvents are answers to the health menace for the workers involved in the silk processing. The chemical compounds create respiratory issues and are carcinogenic to humans, as indicated by dermatitis, skin lesions, back aches, bronchial asthma, coughs, gastrointestinal pains, ulcers, throat infections, thinning nails, dry skin, and hand and eye burning. According to a study "Agrochemicals in sericulture and silk industry, and their effects on the human health and environment" published last year, "in addition to human concerns, persistent chemicals endanger the ecosystem and contribute to the overall chemicalization of aquatic and terrestrial environments. As a result, whenever possible, the discharge of toxic compounds into the natural environment should be reduced."

Unfortunately, in developing countries like India, where large quantities of these chemicals are generated and dumped into the environment,

they are not properly managed because little is known about their potential risks and benefits if properly managed, said the study authors J Harishkumar , R. Ravi Kumara, MS Santhosh and K Ravikumara from University of Mysore, Mysuru. In fact, according to reports, scientists and innovators across the world are working towards creating a new generation of silk fabrics that can match the textile's positive attributes without harming the environment, according to the latest report from the Material Innovation Initiative (MII). India, as the second-largest producer of raw silk globally, holds a unique position for its diverse silk production. The country stands out as the sole producer of five distinct types of silks worldwide. Mulberry silk, primarily cultivated in states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, dominates the production landscape, comprising nearly 70% of India's total silk output. Karnataka leads the production of mulberry silks, including Tussar from states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. The northeastern region contributes significantly with Muga silk from Assam and Eri silk from Meghalaya and Nagaland, each prized for their unique qualities and traditional significance.

# Remove barricades at Shambhu border, SC asks Haryana

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Haryana Government to clear the barricading at the Shambhu border near Ambala, where farmers have been camping since February 13, and questioned its authority to block the highway. The Haryana government had set up barricades on the Ambala-New Delhi national highway in February after the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha announced that farmers would march to Delhi in support of various demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops. A bench of justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan made the observation after the Haryana government counsel said the state is in the process of filing an appeal against the Punjab and Haryana High Court's July 10 order which had directed it to open the highway within seven days. "How can a State block a highway? It has a duty to regulate traffic. We are saying open it but regulate," Justice Bhuyan said after the counsel informed the bench about filing of the appeal in the apex court.

# SC grants relief to Kejriwal...

From Page 1

On May 17, the top court had reserved its verdict on Kejriwal's plea challenging legality of his arrest by the ED on March 21 in the case. The apex court had on April 15 sought a response from the ED on Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest in the money laundering case. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief has challenged in the top court the April 9 order of the Delhi High Court that had upheld his arrest in the case. The high court had upheld Kejriwal's arrest in the case, saying there was no illegality about it and that the ED was

left with "little option" after he skipped repeated summonses and refused to join the investigation. On June 20, he was granted bail by a trial court here on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh in the case. However, the ED had moved the Delhi High Court the next day and contended that the trial court's order granting bail to Kejriwal was "perverse", "one-sided" and "wrong-sided" and that the findings were based on irrelevant facts. The high court, on June 21, imposed an interim stay on the trial court's bail order till passing of an order on ED's

application for interim relief. On June 25, the high court had passed a detailed order staying the trial court order.Kejriwal was also arrested by the CBI on June 26 in connection with the corruption case related to the alleged excise policy scam. The plea challenging his arrest by the CBI is pending before the Delhi High Court. The matter relates to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which has now been scrapped.



# BJP leaders protest over AAP’s support of discoms hiking power tariff

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP leaders and workers on Friday staged a protest against the AAP government near the Secretariat over supporting the discom companies for hiking electricity prices in the national Capital. The protesters including representatives from Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) burnt their electricity bills and tried to march towards the Delhi Secretariat from Shaheedi Park at ITO but were stopped by police. Police detained Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and took him to I.P police station, after which he was released after a warning. Addressing the protesters, Sachdeva claimed that it was Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who brought power purchase

adjustment charge (PPAC) to Delhi and raised it without touching the per unit cost of electricity for political benefit. He said, “PPAC was introduced in Delhi only because of Arvind Kejriwal. In 2011, under the pressure of the then citizen organisation ‘Urja’ and Kejriwal’s new movement, Sheila Dikshit government imposed 1.5 per cent PPAC instead of increasing electricity rates. BJP strongly opposed it, some citizen organisations even went to court.” PPAC is a surcharge to cover fluctuations in power purchase costs incurred by the discoms. “In 2014, when President’s rule was imposed in Delhi, a delegation of Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) along with the then Delhi BJP President Satish Upadhyay went to the then Power Minister Piyush Goyal who talked to the Power



Ranjan Dimri

Discom and stopped the collection of PPAC,” he claimed. The Delhi BJP chief claimed that from August 2014 to September 2015, PPAC was not applied in the electricity bills in Delhi, but the Arvind Kejriwal government again implemented it. He added that from 1.7 per cent in 2015, it has now gone up to 46 per cent. Further, Sachdeva said, “Kejriwal gave legal sanity to PPAC by making it a part of the business regulation plan for calculating power traffic in Delhi. Similarly, the pension surcharge which was one per cent in 2015 is 7.5 per cent now. Metre charge and load surcharge have increased three times in 10 years of Kejriwal.” He added that the people of Delhi are paying the price for the Kejriwal government not making a plan to buy advance electricity from the power grid

by making prepayment on time. Northwest Delhi BJP MP Yogendra Chandolia claimed, “The people of Delhi are facing a financial crisis due to the continuous increase in the prices of electricity. On one hand, the people of Delhi are facing problems due to water in Delhi and on the other hand, Kejriwal has made the people of Delhi suffer by giving false promises of free electricity.” Former South Delhi BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri claimed that Kejriwal is looting the people of Delhi and said, “Kejriwal, who is looting the people of Delhi in the name of electricity, had promised to halve the electricity bills and waive off water bills upon coming to power, but today, if poor people run even a small shop from their home, their electricity bills run into thousands.” President of East Delhi RWAs

Joint Front Federation B S Vohra said, “We strongly oppose the hidden PPAC hike in our electricity bills. While some people get free 200 units, others are being forced to pay PPAC charges of upto 37.75 per cent as well as 40.35 per cent, alongwith exorbitant fixed charges, while Delhi government keeps claiming no hike in the electricity bills.” In view of the protest, traffic remained heavy on several routes including Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg (BSZ Marg). “In view of a protest by a political party near Shaheedi Park, BSZ Marg Delhi, traffic will remain heavy at BSZ Marg, IP Marg, and BSZ Marg may be closed for traffic movement between 10.30 AM to 12.30 PM. Kindly avoid these roads and plan your journey accordingly,” the Delhi Traffic Police said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

# Truth has won: AAP expresses happiness over interim bail to Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP on Friday expressed happiness over the Supreme Court granting interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering scam, stating that ‘the truth has won and the conspiracy of the BJP has lost’. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi said, “Truth can be troubled but cannot be defeated. This bail of Arvind Kejriwal makes it clear to the entire country that Arvind Kejriwal stood with the truth, is standing with it and will continue to do so.” She claimed that whether it is the decision of the Rouse Avenue court or the decision of the Supreme Court, it proves that the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, the witch hunt of the AAP leaders and ministers for the last two years, the investigation of this fake liquor scam



that has been going on for the last two years is a conspiracy of the BJP only. “The BJP is conspiring to stop the work of the AAP, the Delhi government, the people of Delhi and hence they put the elected Chief Minister of Delhi in jail in a fake case, without any evidence,” the minister stated. AAP’s General Secretary (Organisation) and Rajya Sabha MP Dr. Sandeep Pathak said, “This decision of the Supreme Court is historic for

the entire country. Some decisions of the court are such that they determine the direction of the country. The court’s order has demolished the so-called liquor scam hatched by the BJP.” Further, he claimed, “This entire case is fake. Also, the court has also significantly raised questions on the intentions of the ED, which is a big thing. When an agency deals with a party with malicious intent, it becomes a serious matter.”

## BJP slams AAP for celebrations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday hit out at the AAP leaders for celebrating Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s interim bail by the Supreme Court in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering scam, demanding his resignation. “The AAP leaders who have been celebrating Arvind Kejriwal’s interim bail since morning should read the order given by the court. If they do it they will be forced to introspect instead of celebrating,” Sachdeva stated. Demanding Kejriwal’s resignation, he said, “The order clearly states that Arvind Kejriwal can no longer go to the Secretariat, sign any files, or fulfil any duties as Chief Minister.



After the court’s order, if Arvind Kejriwal has any morality left, he should consider whether he has any right to remain in the Chief Minister’s position.” Further, the Delhi BJP chief claimed that now even the court has raised doubts about whether Kejriwal can continue as Chief Minister. He questioned whether Kejriwal has the right to receive government allowance, use a government car, or live in the palace home

which is a prime example of corruption, when he cannot fulfil any duties as Chief Minister. “Kejriwal, who always talks about morality, emerged from a movement but has now become obsessed with salary, facilities, and the palace,” he said, adding that getting interim bail does not exonerate Kejriwal from his crimes. He called Kejriwal ‘a criminal and a corrupt person’ and claimed that “he has committed fraud in the liquor policy”. “Arvind Kejriwal is a fraudster in the liquor policy case, embezzling 100 crore with a money trail of 45 crore revealed by the CBI. Just like Lalu Yadav, who received interim bail but was later sentenced and had to go to jail, Arvind Kejriwal will also go in and out of jail repeatedly,” he said.

## AAP, BJP playing shadow boxing: Congress

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav on Friday said that they will wait for the final decision of the larger bench of the Supreme Court on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s bail plea, stating that their stand has been very clear that innocent should get bail, and the corrupt should be in jail. Hitting out at the BJP and AAP, Yadav said, “While Delhi Congress has always highlighted the voice of the people against corruption, AAP and BJP have been playing shadow boxing, as when ‘one commits corruption, the other

remains silent.” He claimed that the Congress, in the run up to the Delhi Assembly elections next year, will forcefully expose the corruption and failures of the Kejriwal Government. “Kejriwal came to power on the anti-corruption plank, but now two former Ministers and the Chief Minister himself were in jail on corruption and money laundering charges, while many AAP Ministers were forced to quit on corruption charges, and many MLAs were facing corruption charges, yet the AAP Government was deflecting the corruption issue to mislead the people,” he alleged.

# Water pumped out of areas flooded after Munak canal breach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the break in one of the sub-branches of the Munak Canal, which supplies water from Haryana to Delhi, led to knee-deep waterlogging in several parts of the Bawana area, residents breathed a sigh of relief on Friday as water has been pumped out from the affected areas and officials are on-site to monitor the repair work on the canal. The breach, which was reported late Wednesday night, also affected the water supply in different parts of the city. “Water has been pumped out from the colonies and repair work is currently underway, with officers on-site monitoring the situation,” Gopal Kumar, a local resident, said. Informing about the development in the repair work, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi said, “The repair work of Munak Canal is going on at a war footing. The broken part of the embankment has been filled with soil; its levelling and compaction has been done. Now the RCC work of lining the canal is going on. It is like-



Ranjan Dimri

ly to be completed by 9 pm.” “After that water will be released from Haryana. It takes 5-6 hours for water to arrive. It is expected that the Dwarka Water Treatment Plant will start operating from tomorrow morning,” she stated. The embankment of Munak canal’s career line channel (CLC) breached between 12 midnight and 2 am on Thursday. This caused water from the Munak canal to enter many areas of Bawana, Atishi earlier said in a digital briefing from the spot on Thursday. Due to the breach, the water treatment plants in Dwarka,

Hyderpur, Bawana and Nangloi were affected, the minister said. The water production from Bawana, Nangloi and Hyderpur treatment plants will normalise by Thursday evening but the Dwarka plant that completely depends on CLC for water supply will remain affected till Friday evening, she added. Taking cognizance of the situation, Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena on Thursday advised the chief secretary to take up the matter with Delhi ministers to ensure that the channel is restored at the earliest.

# BJP MP writes to LG, shows concern at MCD fee increase

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chandni Chowk BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal on Friday wrote a letter to Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena regarding the increase in licensing fees of various categories of business by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) from 20 per cent to 150 per cent in April 2023, appealing to take immediate cognizance of it. Describing this increase as ‘unethical’ in his letter, the founder and general secretary of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) stated, “Business in Delhi is already facing many challenges, in such a situation this increase will break the back of the traders. While this unexpected increase is putting an unnecessary financial burden on the traders of Delhi, on the other hand, the licence fees of very small businesses like paan-pansari, confectionery, small big confectioners, barbers, dry cleaners, etc. have also been increased.” Further, he claimed that on



the other hand, the licence fees of Dharamshala and auditorium used for social work and hotels and guest houses for the residence of people coming to Delhi from outside have also been increased, which is not right. Khandelwal alleged that due to the uncontrolled increase in the licensing fees of various categories, a large number of businesses and other establishments are shying away from renewing the corporation licence or getting a new

licence. “The rates implemented last year are about one and a half times more than the licensing rates applicable in South Delhi Municipal Corporation till the year 2022, which has no justification. This is an additional financial burden on Delhi’s trade which has no basis, therefore, attention should be paid to this issue and this increase should be withdrawn to provide relief to all small and big traders of Delhi,” he stated.

# Exhibition to commemorate Kargil Vijay Diwas inaugurated at Rajiv Chowk metro station



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An exhibition commemorating the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas was inaugurated on Friday at Rajiv Chowk metro station. Delhi Metro’s Principal Executive Director of Corporate Communications Anuj Dayal stated, “To commemorate the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, an exhibition was inaugurated today at the Rajiv Chowk Metro station, one of the biggest interchange stations of Delhi Metro network. The exhibition has been

organised by National Book Trust (NBT) in association with DMRC.” The exhibition installed at the Rajiv Chowk viewer’s gallery showcases details about the Param Vir Chakra, Mahavir Chakra and other gallantry award winners in the Kargil war. “It will be on display till the Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26. NBT in association with DMRC is organising a number of activities including drawing competitions for children to celebrate this special occasion,” Dayal said.

# SC rejects plea seeking protection of doctors from violence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a Delhi Medical Association plea seeking directions for the protection of doctors from violence, saying laws already exist to deal with such instances. However, a bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna, Sanjay Karol and Sanjay Kumar gave liberty to the Delhi Medical Association (DMA) to approach appropriate forums in case of any particular instance of violence. “I had to visit a hospital recently, I saw placards placed there saying violence against doctors is a serious offence. You see laws are already there to deal with such instances,” Justice Khanna told senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, appearing for the DMA. The apex court was hearing the DMA’s petition which also sought directions to the authorities to ensure adequate security at hospitals and medical centres to prevent attacks on doctors and healthcare workers by patients’ relatives and oth-



ers. Hansaria submitted that the concern is about preventive measures to be put in place as incidents of violence against doctors are occurring quite often. Justice Khanna said the court cannot direct legislation and nowadays, every hospital has a police officer or security in place to thwart any such incident. The senior advocate said this is not the situation in all hospitals and most of the medical institutions in rural areas lack such security apparatus. Observing that anybody who indulges in violence can be dealt with under the Indian Penal Code, the bench said the

only question is the implementation of the law. “We are not inclined to entertain the petition. In case of any difficulty in any particular case, the petitioner association of doctors is at liberty to take up the said issue before the competent court,” it said. On September 5, 2022, the top court, while hearing the petition which was filed in 2021, said the Centre and state governments cannot be expected to provide security cover to private hospitals. It had observed that private hospitals and medical centres are business enterprises and must make their own security arrangements and in so far as government hospitals are concerned, security is arranged by the concerned hospitals. The top court said that a large number of hospitals, nursing homes and medical centres in the country are private ones. It had also questioned the petitioners on what kind of norms could be laid in the matter and asked the association why it had not approached the high court on this issue.

The plea, filed through advocate Sneha Kalita, also sought directions to the Centre and states to have a distress fund to grant compensation to the victim or the family of the deceased healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses, in case of such violence. The petition says there is an increase in the number of such assaults and verbal abuse, and “extreme incidents of public lynching” that have led to the death of doctors and health workers. “The petitioners are seeking appropriate directions in the form of guidelines to have a security system in place to ensure a safe working environment for the medical service personnel/professionals and the health care workers,” it said. “At present, there is no substantial central legislation which has a holistic mechanism of preventive, punitive and compensatory measures which can address the above-mentioned issues of violence against medical service personnel/professionals and the health care workers,” the plea claimed.

## Constable, associate held for being part of drug cartel

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi Police constable posted with the traffic unit and his associate have been arrested for allegedly being part of a cartel involved in supplying narcotics in the national capital and its neighbouring cities. According to the police officials on Friday, the accused were arrested from near the North East Delhi’s Jaffrabad metro station by a team of the Delhi Police’s Special Cell on Thursday. A senior police officer stated that the accused police constable has been identified as Manish and his associate as Ravi. The accused were caught supplying a kilogram of MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy, worth around one crore in the international market, in a luxury car, a police officer said and added that they are being interrogated.

# Man held for defrauding engineer of ₹12 lakh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An alumnus of the Jodhpur University was arrested by the Delhi Police from Jodhpur for allegedly duping a 34-year-old engineer of almost Rs 12 lakh on the pretext of providing good returns by investing in the share market and cryptocurrency through online platforms. According to the police on Friday, the victim Ankit was impressed after receiving high returns in a short time. The accused has been identified as 24 year old Subhash Bishnoi, who worked for an online media firm, and is a part of the nexus which cheated the victims. Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Joy Tirkey said, “On January 2, a complaint was received from Ankit, who is an engineer by profession, regarding cyber fraud of almost Rs 12 lakh.” Ankit told police that on

October 31, he received a proposal on social media to earn high profits in a short time by trading in the share market and cryptocurrency. “As he showed his interest, he was initially advised to invest Rs 10,000, for which he received Rs 15,000 after a few days... He again invested Rs 15,000 and received Rs 20,000 as return in lieu of that. Now, as his trust was established, on the advice of the fraudster, he invested Rs 11.93 lakh within three days, but this time he didn’t get anything,” said the DCP. Police said that an FIR was registered under section 420 (cheating) of the IPC and further investigation was taken up. During the course of investigation, the team followed the money trail and it was found the whole cheated amount was deposited in four different banks, out of which Rs 9 lakh was credited in a private bank in Jodhpur, said

the DCP, adding that the amount was further transferred in other bank accounts and withdrawn. “On a detailed analysis, the team managed to procure details of the bank account and one person was identified, who accessed the account online through net banking credentials in Jodhpur. A raid was conducted and accused Bishnoi was apprehended,” said the DCP. The officer further said that Bishnoi allegedly confessed his crime and disclosed that he is a postgraduate from the Jodhpur University and works for an online media firm. “He further revealed that he is a part of a gang that used to cheat innocent people, using social media applications on the pretext of (providing) high returns within a short time. We have freed four bank accounts with 8.66 lakh cheated money.



# People demand accountability after Lok Sabha polls: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi “used PR” to keep the Government away from basic issues but people were now demanding accountability after the June Lok Sabha poll results. Kharge took a swipe at the Prime Minister, saying that while he is holding meetings under the shadow of cameras for the upcoming Budget, he must pay attention to the basic economic issues of the country. In a social media post in Hindi, the Congress president said, “Narendra Modi ji, Your government has ruined the lives of crores of people by pushing them into the pit of unemployment, inflation and inequality.” Listing the “failures” of the government, Kharge said that due to the unemployment rate of 9.2 per cent, the future of the youth is staring at naught. “For people aged 20-24 years, the unemployment rate has



risen to 40%, highlighting the serious crisis in the job market among the youth,” Kharge said. The promise of doubling the income of farmers and MSP of cost plus 50 per cent has turned out to be false, he said. Recently, on the MSP of 14 Kharif crops, the Modi government has again proved that

it wants to use the MSP recommendation of the Swaminathan report only as an “election gimmick”, he claimed. The Congress leader said, “3.84 lakh government jobs have been lost in the 7 PSUs in which the majority of government stake has been sold! This has also led to the loss of jobs for SC, ST, OBC,

EWS reserved posts”. He said 1.25 lakh people have lost government jobs in the 20 years, while wage growth in rural India is negative. “Unemployment has increased significantly in rural areas and it has now increased from 6.3% in May to 9.3%. The average number of days of workers employed in MNREGA has decreased,” he said.

pointed out. “Private investment has also fallen drastically in the last 10 years. New private investment plans, which are an important part of GDP, fell to a 20-year low of only Rs 44,300 crore between April and June. Last year, private investment of Rs 7.9 lakh crore was made during this period,” he said. Kharge also alleged that the havoc of inflation is at its peak. The prices of flour, pulses, rice, milk, sugar, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and all essential food items are skyrocketing, he noted. The result is that the household savings of families are at the lowest level in 50 years, he added. Kharge said economic inequality is the highest in 100 years, while wage growth in rural India is negative. “Unemployment has increased significantly in rural areas and it has now increased from 6.3% in May to 9.3%. The average number of days of workers employed in MNREGA has decreased,” he said.

## Be mindful of climate change, President tells MES recruits



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday asked a group of Military Engineering Service (MES) probationers to take into account adaptation and mitigation related to climate change while building infrastructure. Addressing the officers, who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, she said MES is one of the important units associated with the country’s security as it not only serves the three services of the Indian Army, but also provides its services to many other units of the Ministry of Defence. The president told the

MES officers that while building infrastructure, they also have to take into account adaptation and mitigation related to climate change. “She said the carbon footprint of the work they will be doing should be minimal. She was happy to note that MES is making efforts in this direction,” according to a statement issued by the president’s office. President Murmu said the aim of the MES is to ensure that “our defense forces continue to have strong infrastructure and good facilities. Therefore, the test of MES officers’ success will be the infrastructure or facilities they

provide to meet the standards of reliability and quality.” She advised the MES officers to always remain vigilant. President Murmu said they have to earn their respect by maintaining the highest quality in their services. The president said the responsibility of MES officers is not only technical, but also ethical and managerial. “They should have the resolve that in their every work, there should be an efficient and effective use of the country’s resources,” she said. President Murmu said their efficiency and morality will strengthen the security of the nation.

## Karnataka Govt diverting SC/ST welfare fund, alleges BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday charged the Congress Government in Karnataka with diverting the fund meant for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to fulfil the guarantees promised by Rahul Gandhi during the state elections. Addressing a press conference, Law Minister Arjun Meghwal said what the Congress government is doing in Karnataka is in violation of the Constitution and demanded action. “People are being deceived in Karnataka,” he said, claiming that Gandhi’s double standards have been exposed. On the one hand Rahul Gandhi is moving around carrying a copy of the Constitution, while Constitutional values are being violated in the state, he said. Citing a report, he claimed over Rs 14,730 crore out of Rs 39,121 crore meant for the SC and ST welfare has been diverted to implements various sops the Congress has promised under its guarantees during the 2023 assembly polls. Meghwal accused the Congress of spreading a fake narrative during the recent Lok Sabha polls, an apparent reference to the opposition’s charge that the Modi Government wanted to change the Constitution by seeking a big mandate. “They might have succeeded in winning a few seats but can never win people’s hearts,” he said. Asked about the Supreme Court’s recent verdict which said a divorced Muslim woman has the right to seek maintenance from her husband, he said the apex court’s judgment should be respected by everyone.

# SC clears names for appointment of eight High Court CJs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has recommended the appointment of chief justices for the high courts of Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Madras and Meghalaya. The collegium headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and also comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna and B R Gavai made the recommendations after considering the names of judges from different high courts by taking into account their seniority and performance, and the need to provide representation in the different high courts. Justice Manmohan, who is the acting Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, has been recommended as the chief justice of the court. “He was appointed as a Judge of the High Court of Delhi on March 13, 2008, and is due to retire on December 16, 2024. Justice Manmohan ranks at SI No 3 in the All India Seniority list of High Court Judges. “Bearing in mind the Memorandum of Procedure, Mr Justice Manmohan can be appointed as the Chief Justice of his parent High Court, at this stage. The Collegium, therefore, recommends that Mr Justice Manmohan be appointed as Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi,” a resolution passed by the collegium said. The collegium recommended the name of Justice Rajiv Shakhder for appointment as the chief justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court. “On the transfer of Mr Justice M S Ramachandra Rao, Chief Justice of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh as Chief



Justice of the High Court of Jharkhand, consequent upon the retirement of Dr Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi on July 19, 2024, there would be a vacancy in the office of the Chief Justice of that High Court,” it said. “Mr Justice Rajiv Shakhder was appointed as a Judge of the High Court on 11 April, 2008 and ranks at SI No 4 in the All India Seniority list of High Court Judges. He is one of the senior-most Judges in the country,” the resolution said. “The Collegium, therefore, recommends that Mr Justice Rajiv Shakhder be appointed as Chief Justice of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh in the vacancy caused by the transfer of Mr Justice M S Ramachandra Rao to the High Court of Jharkhand, consequent upon the retirement of Dr Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi,” it said. By a separate resolution, the collegium has recommended the appointment of Justice Nonmeikapam Kotiwar Singh, chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court as a judge of the Supreme Court. “On his appointment, there would be a vacancy in the office of Chief Justice of the High

Court for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Mr Justice Suresh Kumar Kait is a senior Judge of the High Court of Delhi, who was appointed on 5 September 2008. He belongs to the Scheduled Caste category,” the collegium said. “Mr Justice Suresh Kumar Kait ranks at SI No 5 in the All India Seniority list of High Court Judges, including Chief Justices. He is due to retire on May 23, 2025. The Judges of the High Court of Delhi who are senior to Mr Justice Suresh Kumar Kait are due to retire in the near future,” it said. Bearing in mind the position of Mr Justice Kait in the All India Seniority list, the collegium is of the view that he should be recommended for appointment as the chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court, the collegium said. The collegium recommended the name of Justice G S Sandhawalia as the chief justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, noting that he is the senior-most puisne judge of the high court. The name of Justice Nitin Madhukar Jamdar has been recommended as the chief justice of the Kerala High Court and Justice Tashi Rabstan as the chief justice of

the Meghalaya High Court. “Justice Tashi Rabstan is the senior-most puisne Judge of the High Court for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. He was appointed as a Judge on 8 March 2013 and is due to retire on April 9, 2025. He hails from Ladakh. Mr Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, who is presently serving as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, was appointed as a Judge of the High Court for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh,” the collegium said. “Bearing in mind that Mr Justice Tashi Rabstan would be the first Chief Justice from the region of Ladakh which has otherwise little or no representation among the Judges of the High Court and no representation at all so far in the office of Chief Justice, the collegium recommends his appointment as Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya on the retirement of Mr Justice S Vaidyanathan, Chief Justice of that High Court, who is due to retire on August 16, 2024,” it said. The collegium noted that there is a vacancy in the office of the chief justice of the Madras High Court after the retirement of Justice Sanjay V Gangapurwala on May 23, 2024, and recommended name of Justice K R Shriram as its chief justice. “Justice K R Shriram is the second senior-most puisne Judge of the High Court of Bombay. He was appointed on June 21, 2013. Bearing in mind that Mr Justice K R Shriram is a senior Judge of the High Court of Bombay with experience on the judicial and administrative side, the Collegium recommends his appointment as Chief Justice of the High Court of Madras,” it said.

## SC agrees to consider PIL for court-monitored electoral bonds probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to consider listing a public interest litigation that urged a court-monitored investigation into the electoral bonds scheme. The PIL, filed by NGOs Common Cause and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), alleges an “apparent quid pro quo” between political parties, corporations, and investigative agencies. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of lawyer Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the NGOs, that despite his several visits to the apex court registry in the last few months, the pleas are yet to be listed. “Please send an email,” the CJI said. Bhushan said he has sent emails as well. “Send it today. It will be listed,” the CJI said. Terming it as a “scam,” the plea sought a direction to the authorities to investigate the source of funding of “shell companies and loss-making companies” which made donations to various political parties, as has been disclosed by the data released by the Election Commission (EC). The petition has also sought a direction to the authorities to recover the money donated by companies as part of “quid pro quo arrangements where these are found to be proceeds of crime”. A five-judge Constitution bench had on February 15 scrapped the electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political



funding introduced by the BJP government. Following the top court’s judgement, the State Bank of India, the authorised financial institution under the scheme, had shared the data with the EC, which later made it public. The electoral bonds scheme, which was notified by the government on January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of its efforts to bring in transparency in political funding. “The electoral bond scam has a money trail unlike the 2G scam or the coal scam, where allocations of spectrum and coal mining leases were arbitrarily made, but there was no evidence of a money trail. Yet this court ordered court-monitored investigations in both those cases, appointed special public prosecutors and formed special courts to deal with those cases,” the plea said. It claimed that several firms which were under investigation by these agencies have donated large sums of money to the ruling party, to potentially influence the outcome of probes.

## Centre sanctions ₹493 cr to build roads, bridges in North East

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to strengthen rural connectivity in the north-eastern region, the central government on Friday sanctioned the construction of roads and bridges in Assam and Tripura with an estimated investment of ₹493 crore, the Rural Development Ministry said. In a statement, the ministry said 78 roads measuring 563.67 km and 14 bridges under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)- III got the government’s approval in Assam, with an estimated investment of Rs. 378.68 crore. The government sanctioned 42 roads measuring 118.75 km in Tripura under the connectivity component of Pradhan Mantri Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), with an estimated investment of Rs. 114.32 crore. The construction of roads will improve access to essential services, enhance connectivity in rural areas, bridging the gap between remote villages and urban centres, and foster economic development, trade, and commerce in the region, the ministry said. In Tripura, the roads will provide all weather road connectivity to 47 PVTG (particularly vulnerable tribal groups) habitations in the state, it said. The ministry said the projects under the third phase of PMGSY and the PM-JANMAN will have a transformative impact on the region, contributing to its growth and prosperity. It will cement the government’s commitment to inclusive development, and contribute to the growth and prosperity of the tribal groups, the ministry added.

# DEPwD inks MoU to advance training programmes on accessibility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has inked a MoU with a Gujarat-based NGO to advance training programmes on accessibility in an effort to create more inclusive spaces for those suffering from disabilities. The MoU between the department and the NGO EnableMe Access Association (EMA) was signed on July 9. A copy of the MoU, shared with PTI, outlines two initial training programs: “Advanced Training in Accessibility” for empanelled accessibility auditors and Central Public Works Department engineers. These programs aim to educate participants on Indian accessibility standards, universal design perspectives, and the National Building Code and Harmonized Guidelines and



Space Standards (HGSS). Training will be conducted in offline, online, and hybrid formats, featuring instructors with disabilities to offer first hand insights and foster empathy. To support these training initiatives, DEPwD and EMA will develop and maintain software tools for accessibility education. These tools will play a critical design perspectives, and the National Building Code and Harmonized Guidelines and

Accessible India Campaign 2.0 and enhancing the functionality of the Sugamya Bharat Application. The EMA will also lend its expertise to bolster the Accessible India Campaign 2.0. This support includes creating action plans to improve the accessibility of both existing and new infrastructure, advising on app enhancements to streamline data collection and complaint resolution, and conducting accessibility assessments on establishments flagged through the Sugamya Bharat App. Effectiveness of the training programs will be evaluated through various metrics such as participant satisfaction, increased knowledge and skills related to accessibility standards, and a reduction in unresolved accessibility complaints. Periodic reviews will ensure continuous improvement and adaptability of the training initiatives. DEPwD will provide logistical support for the training programs, including accessible venues, internet connectivity, and other necessary facilities. The EMA will cover the costs of training facilitation and expert feedback, funded through corporate social responsibility initiatives, individual donations, or collaborations.

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## Modi reaffirms India’s commitment to BIMSTEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reaffirmed India’s commitment to seven-nation grouping BIMSTEC and stressed on its role as an engine for economic and social growth. The foreign ministers of the BIMSTEC member states made a joint call on Modi on the second and final day of their retreat in Delhi. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), brings together seven countries of South and Southeast Asia for multifaceted cooperation. Besides India, the BIMSTEC comprises Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. “Glad to meet BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers. Discussed ways to strengthen regional cooperation, including connectivity, energy, trade, health, agriculture, science, security and people-to-people exchanges. Conveyed full support to Thailand for a successful Summit,” Modi said in a social



media post. “A readout by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said Modi reaffirmed India’s commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, resilient and safe BIMSTEC region and highlighted its significance to India’s ‘Neighbourhood First and Look East Policies as well as in its SAGAR vision. “The PM had fruitful discussions with the group of ministers on further strengthening the regional cooperation in diverse areas including connectivity, energy, trade, health, agriculture, science, security and people to

people exchanges,” it said. “He stressed on the role of BIMSTEC as an engine for economic and social growth,” the readout noted. It said Modi expressed India’s full support to Thailand for the upcoming BIMSTEC Summit to be held in September. “India hosted the BIMSTEC foreign ministers’ retreat to review various initiatives to expand cooperation among the grouping’s member nations. “In his inaugural address at the retreat, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on the group-

ing to infuse new energies, resources and a fresh commitment to bolster cooperation. “India has been making concerted efforts to make BIMSTEC a vibrant forum for regional cooperation as initiatives under SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) were not moving forward for a variety of reasons. “India has been cooperating with the countries of the Indian Ocean region under the broader policy framework of SAGAR or Security and Growth for all in the Region.







## Do Democrats have a Plan B?

With Biden increasingly under attack for his lacklustre performance, Democrats must be exploring alternatives

The Democratic Party have to take a make-or-break decision— to continue with Joe Biden as presidential candidate or find an alternative. Both choices are difficult and have their pros and cons. Biden's age and performance might push the party to consider a Plan B. But the time is running out for Democrats and so are the options. It all began much earlier but the presidential debate was the proverbial last straw when Biden performed below par. However, Despite the challenges, there are strong arguments for sticking with Biden. He has overseen a period of significant legislative achievements, including the passage of a massive infrastructure bill, ambitious climate change initiatives, and a robust COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Biden's administration has also navigated complex international relations, working to rebuild alliances and address global threats, especially China and Russia. His centrist approach has aimed to unify a deeply divided nation, seeking to appeal to both progressive and moderate Democrats, as well



as independents and even some Republicans. However, concerns about Biden's age and cognitive abilities persist. At 81, he is the oldest president in US history, and questions about his stamina and mental acuity have been fodder for both political opponents and media speculation. Polls indicate a significant portion of the electorate is uneasy about his capacity to serve another four-year term. Furthermore, his handling of certain issues, such as the withdrawal from Afghanistan and ongoing economic challenges, has drawn criticism from both sides of the political spectrum.

These controversies have fueled speculation about whether Biden is the best candidate to lead the Democrats to victory in 2024. But with elections barely four months away Democrats would find a replacement rather hard. Even invoking the 25th Amendment, which allows for the removal of a president deemed unfit to serve, remains an extreme and unlikely scenario. Given the potential political fallout and the necessity for clear, indisputable evidence of incapacity, this route is rather a precarious one. If the Democrats decide to explore alternatives, several high-profile figures could emerge as potential contenders. As the sitting vice president, Kamala Harris is the most obvious choice. Her historic candidacy as the first female, first Black, and first South Asian vice president offers a compelling narrative, but her leadership and policy effectiveness will be under intense scrutiny. Next in line would be Pete Buttigieg, the Secretary of Transportation and former mayor of South Bend, Indiana. His youth, eloquence, and policy acumen make him a viable candidate. Then of course you have Gavin Newsom, the governor of California has been a vocal advocate for progressive policies and has shown resilience in the face of political challenges. The Democrats are caught between the devil and the deep sea. Ultimately, the decision will hinge on the party's assessment of Biden's ability to lead effectively and win re-election.

### PICTALK



Priests of Shiva Temple perform 'pooja' at the reception of container ship San Fernando, in Thiruvananthapuram

## Young philanthropists ushering in new age of giving in India

With a burgeoning startup ecosystem, India is witnessing a new generation of wealth creators who are passionate about funding impactful projects

Young philanthropists are playing a catalytic role in ushering in a new age of giving that underscores the need for scalable change and long-term impact. Having the third-largest startup ecosystem, and being home to 100 unicorns, India has given rise to a new generation of wealth creators who are young, tech-driven, and passionate about change. These 'new-age' philanthropists are transforming the country's infrastructure and bringing about long-lasting growth. Their efforts are not just about giving back; they are about driving systemic and sustainable impact across communities. For instance, initiatives like the Karnataka Model School Pathways Programme are redefining India's education system. In a world where socioeconomic challenges are pervasive, these young change-makers are bringing fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to philanthropy, making it not only a trend but also a powerful force for social change. Moving away from the traditional approach of philanthropy being seen as a post-retirement task, this genera-



tion of philanthropists is starting early, leveraging their wealth, influence, and technological savvy to drive meaningful change within their lifetime. Instead of adhering to traditional models of charity, young philanthropists are adopting a more entrepreneurial approach, seeking out innovative solutions and investing in new focus areas like climate change, mental health, sports for development, etc. The India Philanthropy Report 2024 shows how emerging issues like climate change and Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) have become the top three areas of interest apart from traditional causes for this new cohort of young entrepreneurs. Nikhil Kamath, CEO of Zerodha and one of the

youngest philanthropists is a strong advocate of climate change. A founder of YIPP which brings together young entrepreneurs to address pressing societal issues collectively, Kamath had started investing in environmental problems way back in 2019 with the launch of Rainmatter Foundation and recently invested in a charity that combats climate change in India. These new age givers are using technology to tackle some of India's most pressing problems, combining data-driven insights with a deep understanding of social issues to create long-term, scalable impact. Their approach has been guided by a blend of head and heart making their philanthropy more strategic and forward-thinking. Their willingness to collaborate and pool time, talent and treasure for collective impact is another characteristic of this new generation of philanthropists. Recognizing the complexity of social challenges and the need for coordinated action, they are forging partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations to amplify their efforts. Collective philan-

thropy presents a dynamic approach to otherwise traditional models of philanthropy, opening avenues for innovative solutions to India's unique problems. This spirit of collaboration is exemplified by initiatives such as the YIPP which was started in 2021 to bring together young change makers below the age of 45 to create new-age solutions collectively. With a clear focus on accountability and scalability, this 15-member group aims to make their giving more structured, bold and innovative. Hailing from diverse backgrounds, experiences and philanthropic aspirations, they are collectively a motivated force keen to showcase the power of collaboration and strength in working together towards a set common goal. With their entrepreneurial spirit, technological acumen, and commitment to collective action, they are leading the charge towards a brighter tomorrow for India and the world.

(The writer is founding member, Young India Philanthropic Pledge and chief inspiration officer, Yuva Unstoppable; views are personal)



AMITABH SHAH

# The Taliban's war on Afghan women

Despite denials by Taliban officials, the bravery of Afghan women coming forward underscores the severe and dehumanising treatment they endure

A piece in *The Guardian*, bylined Zahra Joya, Chris McGreal, Khodadad Poladi, Annie Kelly and Tom Levitt, datelined July 6, 2024, and published under the heading "Video appears to show gang-rape of Afghan woman in Taliban jail," makes horrifying reading. According to the report, the video recording, seen by *The Guardian* and Rukhsana Media, an online news agency focused on covering issues affecting women in Afghanistan, shows a young woman, a human rights activist, being gang-raped and tortured in a Taliban jail by armed men. It shows her being told to take off her clothes and then raped multiple times by two men. She is seen as standing naked, her face visible, and is identifiable during the attacks. The report cites the woman as saying that she was arrested for participating in a public protest against the Taliban and was raped in a Taliban prison.

The video was sent to her after she had fled Afghanistan and spoken out against the Taliban, with the threat that it would be shown to her family and released on social media if she spoke against the Islamic Emirate in public. It also cites other examples of sexual abuse, beatings, and torture, including by electric shocks, of not only those protesting against the Taliban's squelching of women's rights but of young women and teenagers accused of violating hijab rules. Zabihullah Mujahid, Chief Spokesman and Deputy Minister of Information and Culture of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has, according to *The Guardian* report, denied the allegations of widespread sexual assaults on incarcerated women. While he could not have done otherwise, one can hardly doubt the women's versions, given the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence in countries like Afghanistan. It takes a massive amount of courage and resolve for a woman, or her relatives, to state that she had been raped or molested in custody. Even the UN has commented on the arrests and detentions. Under the heading "Permanent Darkness," Ajit



Kumar Singh has written in the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATPOR, Volume 22, Number 18) dated March 11, 2024, that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had expressed grave concern over the arrest and detention of women and girls for alleged non-compliance with the Islamic dress code. He has quoted Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and head of UNAMA, as observing that enforcement measures and physical violence were "especially demeaning and dangerous for Afghan women." Detention, she continued, carried "an enormous stigma that put Afghan women at even greater risk." The Taliban's war on women—perhaps the most diabolical feature of their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001—continues in their second innings with rape and molestation as a part of it. The process started in September 2021 when the Taliban removed the signboard of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul and replaced it with that of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the earlier incarnation of which had



IT TAKES A MASSIVE AMOUNT OF COURAGE AND RESOLVE FOR A WOMAN, OR HER RELATIVES, TO STATE THAT SHE HAD BEEN RAPED OR MOLESTED IN CUSTODY

earned widespread notoriety during their first stint in power, for arbitrary and savage enforcement—with particular harshness towards women—of the government's obscurantist diktats. A series of measures has followed. Women are not allowed to travel more than 70 kilometres without a male escort who is her husband or a mahram, a close blood relative—father, son brother, grandfather, great-grandfather, nephew with whom marriage is prohibited and, in whose presence, she need not wear a hijab. They are to wear "proper" hijabs, loose black garments, covering their bodies and faces, in public places and their male relatives have been made responsible under pain of punishment. They are excluded from education above the primary level and virtually every kind of employment. Worse, in a voice message broadcast by Afghanistan's state television on March 23, 2024, the Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, had said, "We will flog the women ... we will stone them to death in public [for adultery]." The Taliban had started flogging women even before the announcement, administering at least 30 strokes for

"offences" like using cell phones, talking to men or being in love or relationships. All this was not unexpected given the Taliban's obscurantist beliefs and record in power during its first coming from 1996 to 2001. What is surprising is the silence—to say nothing of the absence of effective action—of the rest of the world, even the Western democracies, in the matter. The UN too seems to be falling in line. This is suggested by its surrender in the case of the recent conference of global envoys, held in Doha, Qatar, and attended by envoys of 25 countries including the US, Russia, China and the European Union. The conference, to promote engagement with the Taliban on a variety of issues, was the third of its kind. The Taliban, which had not attended the earlier two, attended it only after the organisers accepted their condition that women would not attend it. The UN's capitulation has been widely condemned by human rights organisations which rightly believe it would encourage the Taliban to further trample on women's rights. But who cares? (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FARMERS TO REIGNITE PROTESTS

Madam — The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), India's largest farmers' organization that led the historic 2020-21 protests, has announced plans to resume their agitation against the BJP-led NDA government to push for their pending demands. These demands include a guaranteed MSP law, loan waivers, and pensions for farmers and farmworkers. The General Body has decided to restart the agitation, demanding the implementation of the agreement signed on December 9, 2021, by the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and other key demands affecting farmers' livelihoods. The SKM plans to campaign against the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections and intends to expose, oppose, and punish the party. The farmers' movement has significantly impacted Lok Sabha elections, defeating the BJP in 38 rural seats across Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. Clearly, all is not well for the BJP.

Bhagwan Thadani| Mumbai

### PRIORITIES OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam — Madam, This is in reference to the report, "Namami Ganga: Rs211 Crore Splash to Keep Maha Kumbh Eco-Friendly" (July 10). Whether the state government spends money on the Maha Kumbh Mela (MKM) at Prayag or not, the Modi government at the Centre is ready to pour money into the coffers of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's government months ahead of the function. The Government of India, which delayed the payment of flood relief money to Tamil Nadu for many months and finally released a small amount with great reluctance coinciding with the Lok Sabha elections, has now 'splashed' Rs211 crore to the UP government quickly for the Mela scheduled for January-February 2025. This money is intended for preserving the purity of the Ganga river and ensuring cleanliness throughout the mega event. Just a week ago, another annual global event, the Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra, was celebrated by the

## World Population Day



World Population Day is observed with various programs aimed at achieving overall population control worldwide, and India is no exception. The focal theme

emphasises family planning to significantly improve the health of mothers and children. However, in India, discussions about controlling the population of over 1.35 billion people often meet with resistance from both the public and political leaders. Given the current growth rate, India is expected to surpass China's population by 2025, ahead of the earlier projection for 2028. This year's World Population Day on July 11 coincides with the anticipated birth of the Earth's eight billionth inhabitant. While this milestone celebrates our diversity and advancements in health that have extended lifespans and reduced maternal and child mortality rates, the uncontrolled population increase poses a significant threat. The situation demands urgent attention and action to avoid potential dangers.

Jayanthi Subramaniam| Mumbai

ISKCON organization in Odisha. It was also a mega Hindu festival, but the Centre did not choose to fund this festival. However, the core issue I wish to point out is the fate of the Clean Ganga project introduced by the BJP government in its first tenure, for which Rs 5,000 crore was allocated. It is not known if the cleaning project was completed, as no report was presented in Parliament. It is unclear whether sustained maintenance is regularly done by the UP government, whether a system has been put in place to guard against the misuse and overcrowding of the Ganga river, and whether steps are taken to prohibit the immersion and floating of dead bodies in the river. Protecting the holiness and purity of the Ganga river is the foremost duty of both the Centre and the UP government.

Manoharan Muthuswamy| Ramnad

### SUPREME COURT'S ALIMONY VERDICT

Madam — The Supreme Court's decision on alimony for divorced Muslim women is significant. The court determined that every woman, regardless of faith, has the

right to alimony. Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Augustin George Masih, though making independent decisions, ultimately reached the same conclusion. Both indicated that a divorced Muslim woman could file a lawsuit against her husband under Section 125 of the CrPC to receive alimony. The Supreme Court's ruling is admirable and consistent with the duties of a welfare state. This verdict mirrors the one handed down in the Shah Bano case on April 23, 1985. Previously, alimony for divorced women was determined by Muslim Personal Law, which allowed alimony only during the Iddat period. However, the Supreme Court declared that Section 125 of the Indian Penal Code is equally applicable to all women, allowing them to claim alimony even after Iddat. Many divorced Muslim women do not remarry, and receiving alimony only during the Iddat period does not resolve their issues.

Abhijit Roy| Jamshedpur

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FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING EMPATHY AND PROFESSIONALISM

While layoffs are challenging, there is room for improving how they are managed



RACHNA LAKHPATI

Layoffs are never easy. The impact on the affected employees will be deep and most often devastating; it is a turning point in their professional and personal lives—a stressful one, of course. But what the majority of people are not aware of is that those tasked to deliver the message—the HR professionals—also carry an emotional burden. It may be the senior leadership making tough decisions, but HR bears the heart-wrenching job of communicating them. HR professionals are often the stoic face of the company during these times. But behind the professionalism of that stone exterior is a very real understanding of the weight of their actions. They, too, are humans.

They also carry the burden of those decisions. The difference lies in their need to balance empathy with the requirement of upholding company policies and procedures, often concealing their feelings in the process. When an HR professional sits down with an employee to discuss a layoff, how complicated the emotions in that moment can be is beyond measure. They know they are delivering news that will change a life. However, how that news is conveyed does indeed have an impact.

There are no ideal words to cushion the blow, but compassion can help ease the transition. Difficult situations present an opportunity for HR professionals to think of effective strategies. They can understand and relate to the challenges faced by their staff, while also providing a positive outlook and potential for growth. They could say, "I do appreciate that this job may be a priority to you, but on the other hand, this could be one of those opportunities for upskilling to do something you are passionate about." I mean, such words, though they don't diminish the hardship—can usher in a glimmer of positivity.

This compassionate attitude toward the situation epitomises how such initiatives can give hope and dignity to the employees during this painful process of transition. It is important to keep in mind that neither the employee nor the organisation wants to end their



relationship on a sour note. By approaching layoffs with professionalism laced with humanity, HR can help ensure a transition to be as respectful and supportive as possible, even while it remains painful.

That being said, while layoffs can be one of the more challenging aspects of corporate life, there is certainly room for improvement in how these transitions are handled. Showing empathy, fostering clear communication, and providing support can greatly improve the experience for those undergoing layoffs. In times of uncertainty and change, it's important to remember that even small acts of kindness can make a difference.

Moreover, providing outplacement services, career counseling, and job search assistance can help laid-off employees find new opportunities more quickly. Encouraging networking and offering workshops on resume writing and interview skills can also make a significant difference. HR departments can collaborate with local businesses and employment agencies to create a support network for those affected.

By taking these extra steps, companies can demonstrate a genuine commitment to the well-being of their employees, even in difficult times. This holistic approach not only aids in the immediate transition but also helps maintain a positive company reputation in the long term.

*(The writer is a motivator; views are personal)*

# NATO: A legacy of conflict and controversy

As the alliance celebrates its 75th milestone, it faces scrutiny for its violations of international law and its failure to protect civilians in numerous conflicts

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), widely regarded as the most notorious and venomous military alliance in history, celebrated its 75th anniversary in Washington this week, amidst claims of establishing global peace. However, NATO's actions have often spread war across continents in pursuit of supremacy. Following a disastrous performance in the presidential debate, President Joe Biden unsurprisingly announced increased military aid to Ukraine, targeting their 'designated enemy' at the expense of this small European nation. NATO's ambitions are clear: to weaken Russia through proxy wars and to provoke China into potential conflict in Asia.

However, finding examples where NATO has truly ensured peaceful lives for ordinary people, rather than pursuing its broader goal of supremacy through alliances with enemies of its enemies, remains challenging. NATO must be held accountable for its violations of international law and its failure to protect unarmed civilians in nearly every conflict it has engaged in since its inception. While NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary, mainstream media barely acknowledged the 25th anniversary of NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia—a glaring failure of this war-oriented alliance. June 10 marks the 25th anniversary of the end of NATO's bombing campaign in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, initiated without UN Security Council approval and lasting 78 days. NATO dropped 22,000 tonnes of bombs, including 15 tonnes of depleted uranium, resulting in over 2,500 deaths, including 79 children, and displacing over a million residents. The aftermath included long-term health and environmental impacts from depleted uranium munitions. In the decade following the bombing, approximately 30,000 people in Serbia developed cancer, with over 10,000 deaths. Studies indicate increased cancer rates and other serious health issues among children born after 1999. Three thousand victims have filed lawsuits against NATO, despite the alliance claiming immunity based on agreements with Serbia and Montenegro.

Serbian experts dispute this, stating that no agreements grant NATO immunity for past war crimes. NATO's attempts to evade accountability only accentuate its war crimes and the suffering it caused. Since its establishment, NATO's military operations have frequently resulted in chaos and trauma rather than peace and stability. From April 1992 to December 1995, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina erupted among its three main ethnic groups over their future and territorial divisions. Shortly before the outbreak of war in Bosnia, NATO hastily recognised Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence, exacerbating ethnic conflicts in the region. NATO launched extensive airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs, eventually compelling the three ethnic groups to sign the Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a consequence, 278,000 civilians perished, over 2 million people became refugees, and the war inflicted more than \$5.1 billion in direct economic losses, with the majority of economic facilities destroyed. The Kosovo War, ignited by ethnic tensions and led by the US-backed NATO without UN authorisation, lasted from March 24, 1999, to June 10, 1999. The three-month bombing campaign caused 1,800 civilian deaths, 6,000 injuries, and sub-



AMIDST THE CELEBRATION OF THIS MILITARY ALLIANCE, ASIA FACES THE DAUNTING TASK OF SAFEGUARDING ITS POSITION AGAINST A COALITION ADEPT AT LEVERAGING PROXIES TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES

stantial infrastructure damage, amounting to economic losses of \$150 billion. This marked NATO's first offensive war against a sovereign state without UN approval, marking a shift towards interventionism and expansionism. NATO's actions violated international law, including the UN Charter and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, through the use of force against Belgrade. Despite this, no NATO member has been fully held accountable for their actions, in stark contrast to incidents involving their erstwhile 'puppets', such as the swift hanging of Saddam Hussein of Iraq by Western forces or the extrajudicial killing of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, famously remarked on by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with, 'We came, we saw, he died.' In Afghanistan, the US-led NATO coalition launched a war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban on October 7, 2001, in response to the September 11 attacks. The two-decade-long conflict ended abruptly with the withdrawal of US and NATO forces in May 2021, resulting in 241,000 deaths, including 71,000 civilians, and displacing millions.

The war generated significant economic losses, averaging approximately \$45 million per day, and led to social disorder in Afghanistan, with 72% of the population living below the poverty line and 3.5 million children deprived of education. A new report issued this Monday by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) revealed shocking statistics: over 24% of Afghan children aged 5-17 experience anxiety, while 15% suffer from depression in this war-torn country.

This is the legacy left behind by those who claimed they could guarantee a peaceful life under a rule-based system founded on democratic norms. During this period, terrorist networks such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and Al-Qaeda expanded, worsening regional instability. This pattern of devastation persisted in Iraq and Libya, where NATO interventions

resulted in substantial civilian casualties and prolonged instability. NATO's actions consistently undermined peace and security, earning it a reputation as a war machine rather than a force for peace. However, in Ukraine, NATO finds itself in disarray, having underestimated Russia's determination to defend its interests while overestimating its ability to expand its military alliance to Moscow's doorstep. The strategy of flooding Ukraine with weaponry for swift victory has backfired, with Russia proving resilient in defence.

As the conflict drags on, NATO member states face escalating costs and inflationary debt, while Ukraine depletes its fighting-age soldiers. Western leaders, deeply invested in the conflict, encounter diminishing confidence in Ukraine's capacity to reclaim territories without escalating the conflict and potentially involving NATO troops—a move that lacks public support. In recent months, Russia has made incremental territorial gains, advancing in the Kharkiv Oblast and compelling Ukrainian forces to retreat from a neighbourhood in Chasiv Yar, Donetsk.

However, the lack of significant progress has raised doubts about Russia's capabilities. While struggling to maintain the frontline, Ukraine has targeted Russian ships, energy depots, and border regions with drones, resulting in casualties. Two and a half years into the conflict, neither side appears capable of achieving a military solution. Ukraine faces substantial challenges in reclaiming captured territories, while Russia's aggression has bolstered NATO's resolve, which now pledges long-term support for Kyiv. A viable resolution entails bringing both parties to the negotiating table. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have expressed support for dialogue. Russia's allies should urge President Vladimir Putin to cease hostilities and engage earnestly in negotiations, while Ukraine's supporters should encourage Kyiv to consider peace talks—although NATO vehement-

ly opposes this idea. With American elections looming, a Trump victory could pave the way for a negotiated settlement, whereas a Biden re-election might prolong the conflict, potentially transforming Ukraine into another Afghanistan or Vietnam. Meanwhile, Russia's economy has strengthened despite sanctions, buoyed by trade partnerships with China and India.

Historians might view the US-led NATO expansion as a strategic failure that catalysed the formation of an alliance among BRICS nations to counter NATO. President Xi Jinping perceives Putin as pivotal in opposing the United States and its allies, although a new Trump administration could potentially avert broader conflict and repair relations with adversaries. The summit's news report highlighted NATO and its Indo-Pacific partners—Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand—launching four joint projects aimed at deepening cooperation, announced by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan at the NATO Defence Industry Forum. Amidst the celebration of this military alliance, Asia faces the daunting task of safeguarding its position against a coalition adept at leveraging proxies to achieve its objectives. This historical pattern resonates with poignant examples throughout history.

Asia's imperative now is to cultivate robust trade relationships and settle territorial disputes through constructive dialogue, preempting external interference. History presents a stark choice: yield to foreign ambitions, akin to the post-World War II tragedies and subsequent killing fields from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and West Asia to present-day conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria, or thrive together in dignified coexistence. The path to a peaceful future hinges on a unified commitment to peace and saying no to NATO and its proxies. Better the devil you know than the angel you don't.


*(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)*

## Modi-Putin summit revives India-Russia relations amid global tensions

The meeting underscored India's strategic balancing act between global powers while prioritising its own economic and security needs

Just when there was a growing perception that ties between India and Russia were losing momentum, even stagnating, the summit-level meeting between PM Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin should help impart a fresh impetus to bilateral relations.

Held after a gap of over two years, amid the ongoing geopolitical churn, the 22nd summit saw the two sides resolve to unlock the full potential of their strategic partnership. The summit's outcomes conveyed New Delhi's intent to continue to forge closer ties with Moscow, notwithstanding the widespread Western opprobrium Putin has drawn after Russia invaded Ukraine and the consequent sanctions slapped on



PARUL CHANDRA

his country. With Putin preoccupied with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, now into its third year, the summit-level meetings had fallen by the wayside. The last summit was held in New Delhi in December 2021. The summit indicated eagerness on the part of both sides to not just reinvigorate the 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership', but also make economic cooperation

the lynchpin of the relationship. This was reflected in a separate joint statement spelling out nine key areas for economic cooperation, with a new bilateral trade target of \$100 billion being set for 2030. While the Modi-Putin Summit left Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressing "disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal", it's unlikely to hurt New Delhi's close ties with Kyiv. India may not have condemned the invasion, but Modi did tell Putin "there is no peace on the battlefield" while reiterating India's position on the need for dialogue. While Washington also expressed its displeasure over the Modi-



Putin meeting, it is unlikely that will allow this to impact the trajectory of its ties with Moscow, propelled as they are by India's strategic imperatives. One of them, of course, is the tightening Russia-China embrace. The thrust on closer ties with Russia will also help address Moscow's concerns over New Delhi's decidedly pronounced tilt towards Washington. India has so far managed to do a fine balancing act between the two geopolitical rivals and should continue to do so.

India sees Russia as a time-tested trusted partner. Much as the Western world would like to keep a sanctions-hit Russia isolated over the Ukraine war, India's push for broader and deeper economic linkages reflects its own strategic

ity. Fertilizer imports from Russia, too, are seen as vital for India's agriculture sector. Russian oil imports have helped push the bilateral trade figures to \$65.70 billion. But while Indian imports were worth \$61.44 billion, its exports accounted for a mere \$4.26 billion.

While happy to import Russian oil at discounted rates, New Delhi will need to address this trade imbalance by widening the trade basket with Russia. Among the major export items from India are pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, iron and steel and electrical machinery.

That the two sides agreed to look at the possibility of eliminating non-tariff trade barriers and the setting up of a Eurasian Economic Union

(EAEU)-India Free Trade Area shows the seriousness of intent to promote bilateral trade. The nudge to begin full negotiations for a free trade agreement between India and the EAEU too should lend a fillip to trade ties.

Connectivity too remains a priority for both sides. It would mean access for Indian goods to the Eurasian markets. However, the proposed INSTC (International North-South Transport) Corridor is still a long way away from becoming a reality. While there is renewed interest between the two sides to establish a Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor, which was first mooted in 2019, it also remains to be seen whether it will fructify. The summit, of course, also emphasized

the importance of robust cooperation in the defence sector, which is an important element of India's security paradigm. Russia remains India's biggest arms supplier despite New Delhi's continuing efforts to diversify by turning to others like the US, France and Israel to meet its requirements. India would have undoubtedly sought to address its concerns over the delays in the supply of Russian military hardware and spares owing to the Ukraine war. The Modi-Putin Summit may have left the West fulminating, but it's fairly obvious New Delhi will plough its furrow so long as it serves its strategic priorities. The writer is a senior journalist who writes on foreign affairs.

*(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)*



# ‘Determined to run in re-election, will defeat Trump’

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Defiant US President Joe Biden has insisted that he is “determined” and fit to seek re-election and defeat his Republican rival Donald Trump in November, even as two excruciating gaffes marred his efforts to dismiss concerns over his age and fitness. During a high-stakes solo news conference on Thursday at the conclusion of the NATO Summit here, Biden said that no poll or person is telling him that he can't win reelection currently. That is the only way he would consider ending his presidential bid.

“I’m determined to run,” 81-year-old Biden, the oldest sitting US President, said. “The fact is that the consideration is that I think I’m the most qualified person to run for president. I beat him (Trump) once, and I will beat him again. Secondly.. the idea that senators and congressmen are running for office worrying about the ticket is not unusual and I



might add, there were at least five presidents running or incumbent presidents who had lower numbers than I have now later in a campaign,” Biden said. “So there’s a long way to go in this campaign, and so I’m just going to keep moving, keep moving,” he said. Toward the beginning of the question-and-answer session, Biden mistakenly referred to Vice President Kamala Harris as former President Trump amid mounting questions surrounding his mental acuity.

He said Harris was qualified to be president as well, although he misnamed her in the endorsement. “I wouldn’t have picked vice-president Trump to be vice-president if she’s not qualified to be president,” Biden said. He made a similar mistake earlier in the day, accidentally calling Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky “President Putin” while introducing him during a NATO event. He continued to defy the pleas from a growing number of Democrats to step down from the Democratic ticket. Asked if he was determined to stay in the race despite the fears of some Democratic lawmakers, Biden said, “I’m determined on running, but I think it’s important that I realise allay fears by seeing - let them see me out there. Let them see me out.” He said his campaign was strong and working hard in “toss-up states.” “..look, I got more work to do. We’ve got more work to finish.

We made so much progress. Think about where we are economically relative to the rest of the world. Name me a world leader who wouldn’t want to trade places with our economy. We created over 800,000 manufacturing jobs, ...so things are moving. We’ve got more to go,” the president said. “Working-class people still need help. Corporate greed is still at large. Corporate profits have doubled since the pandemic. They’re coming down and so I’m optimistic about where things are going,” he asserted. Biden added that he is seeking his re-election not for his legacy. “I’m in this to complete the job I started. As you recall, understandably, many of you and many economists thought my initial initiatives that I put forward can’t do that because it’s going to cause inflation. Things are going to skyrocket. The debt’s going to go up. What are you hearing now from mainstream econo-

mists?” “Sixteen economic Nobel laureates said I’ve done a hell of a job, that under my plan so far and what’s going to happen in the future if I’m reelected, that things are going to get much better. Our economy is growing. I was determined when I got elected to stop the trickle-down economic theory that if the wealthy did very well, everybody else would do well,” the president said. Biden refuted reports that he told his aides that he needed to go to bed earlier and end meetings around eight in the evening. “That’s not true... what I said was, instead of my every day starting at seven and going to bed at midnight, it’d be smarter for me to pace myself a little more. And I said, for example, the 8:00, 7:00, 6:00 stuff, instead of starting the fundraiser at 9:00, start at 8:00. People get to go home by 10:00. That’s what I’m talking about,” he said. When asked about what

changed his mind when in 2020 he said that he would be the bridge candidacy for a younger, fresher generation of Democratic leaders, Biden said: “What changed was the gravity of the situation I inherited in terms of the economy, our foreign policy and domestic division.” Biden also offered extensive remarks on thorny foreign policy issues, including competition with China and the Israel-Hamas war. He said he had warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu away from an occupation of the Gaza Strip. He said he was directly in contact with Chinese President Xi Jinping to warn him not to offer further support for Russia’s war in Ukraine, but not with Vladimir Putin, whom he said: “I have no reason to speak to him right now.” Biden said he was totally opposed to the occupation and trying to unite Afghanistan. He said that the US should have left the coun-

try after killing Osama bin Laden. “There’s no need to occupy anywhere. Go after the people who did the job. You may recall I still get criticized for it, but I was totally opposed to the occupation and trying to unite Afghanistan,” he told reporters at a news conference. “Once we got bin Laden, we should have moved on because it was not in our — and no one’s ever going to unite that country,” he said. “I’ve been over every inch of that — not every inch, the entirety from the poppy fields all the way to the north. I said don’t make the same mistake we made. Don’t think that’s what you should be doing is doubling down,” he said. Meanwhile, three House Democrats — Representative Jim Himes of Connecticut, Scott Peters of California and Eric Sorensen of Illinois — on Thursday joined others to call on President Biden to step aside from the 2024 race following the news conference.

## ‘Kamala Harris is qualified to be president’

Washington (PTI): US President Joe Biden on Thursday said his deputy, Vice President Kamala Harris, is “qualified” to lead the country. At a high-stake press conference here on Thursday, Biden said, “From the very beginning, I made no bones about that. She is qualified to be the president. That’s why I picked her.” When asked about the reasons for this, he said “Firstly because of the way she’s handled the issue of freedom of women’s bodies, to have control of their bodies and secondly, her ability to handle almost any issue on the board.”

“This was a hell of a prosecutor. She was a first-rate person and in the Senate, she was really good. I wouldn’t have picked her unless I thought she was qualified to be the president,” Biden said.

Harris, 59, is the first woman, the first Black American, and the first South Asian American to be elected as US Vice President in 2020.

Biden’s remarks on Harris came amidst growing calls for the 81-year-old to step aside from the race for the White House in November since he stumbled through a TV debate with his Republican rival Donald Trump last month. The president mistakenly referred to Kamala Harris as former president Trump during the press conference. He said, “I wouldn’t have picked Trump to be the vice president, did I think she was not qualified to be president...” “The fact is that the consideration is that I think I’m the most qualified person to run for president. I beat him once and I will beat him again,” Biden said.

“The idea that senators and congressmen are running for office worrying about the ticket is not unusual. And I might add, there were at least five presidents running or incumbent presidents who had lower numbers than I have now later in a campaign,” he said. So, there’s a long way to go in this campaign and so I’m just going to keep moving, Biden, the presumptive candidate of the Democratic Party, said.

# Emergency crews recover bodies in Gaza City as negotiations continue

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Dozens of bodies collected throughout Gaza City’s Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood arrived at Al-Ahli Hospital on Friday morning while civil defence workers said they continued to recover the dead from destroyed streets and buildings. Hospital director Fadel Naem told The Associated Press that people both dead and wounded had been brought from Tel al-Hawa to the hospital less than a day after it resumed operations following the evacuation earlier in the week due to the fighting in the area. About 60 bodies have been recovered, including entire families who appeared to have been killed by artillery fire and aerial bombardment, Mahmoud Basal, the director of Civil Defense in Gaza said. “There are homes that we cannot reach, and there are those

who were burned inside their homes,” he said, noting many of those who were killed had left nearby shelters after being ordered to evacuate. The Israeli military said it could not comment on Tel al-Hawa. The scenes mirror those in another Gaza City neighbourhood, Shuja’iyyah, from which Israel’s military has withdrawn in recent days. On Thursday, civil defence workers found an additional 60 bodies in Shuja’iyyah under similar circumstances, with more believed to be buried under rubble. Basal said bodies in Tel al-Hawa were found decomposing or partially mauled by dogs. The latest announcements of casualties comes as the United Nations estimates that about 300,000 Palestinians were still in northern Gaza, as of earlier this week, despite being ordered to evacuate. Much of the population left earlier in the war. Most of Gaza’s 2.3 million

people are now experiencing widespread hunger while crammed into squalid tent camps. Israel launched the war in Gaza after Hamas’ Oct 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250. Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,300 people in Gaza, according to the territory’s Health Ministry. It does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Meanwhile in Cairo, mediators continue to push to narrow gaps between Israel and Hamas over a proposal deal that would include a cease-fire and hostage release in Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said on Thursday that Israel would send a delegation for further talks as US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators attempt to seal an agreement. Obstacles remain, however as

Hamas insists that talks continue until a permanent cease-fire is reached while Netanyahu says Israel won’t agree to any deal that would stop its military campaign before Hamas is eliminated. Netanyahu is under growing pressure both domestically and internationally. Large segments of the Israeli population are demanding an agreement to release the hostages after nine months of war, though Netanyahu has insisted that the offensive won’t end until Israel achieves its goal of eliminating Hamas. Relatives of hostages are marching to Jerusalem to demand a deal and the release of their loved ones as Israeli politicians, including Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, call for a broad government investigation into the conduct of Israel’s leaders. A risk of regional escalation remains. Israel’s military said Friday one of its soldiers was killed in combat in northern Israel as the country’s army and

# Hungary’s Orban faces backlash over his rogue ‘peace mission’ meetings

Budapest (AP): Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has made a Trumpian vow to “Make Europe Great Again” during his country’s six-month presidency of the European Union. As a first step last week, he astonished his allies by making a surprise trip to Ukraine — his first since Moscow invaded the country — followed by similarly unannounced visits to Russia and China for talks with two of the EU’s primary adversaries. The EU’s longest-serving leader — who has endorsed former President Donald Trump and is known as having the warmest relations with Vladimir Putin in the bloc — wrapped up a NATO summit in Washington on Thursday before travelling to Trump’s Mar-a-Lago compound — his latest stop on what he calls a “peace mission” aimed at brokering an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine.



Orban shared a photo of himself and Trump on social media with the caption: “We discussed ways to make peace. The good news of the day: he’s going to solve it!” On his own social media site, Trump posted: “Thank you Viktor. There must be PEACE, and quickly.” But Orban’s talks with Putin last week in Moscow, the first such visit by any EU leader since 2022, and his meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing,

have angered the bloc’s leaders and prompted attempts to contain Hungary during the next six months of its EU presidency. “As the president country, one must act as an honest broker and not give the impression that you are speaking for other countries,” Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told reporters at the NATO summit on Thursday. “(Orban) in reality is abusing the EU presidency and hijacking it for his own purposes,” Peter Kreko, an analyst with the Budapest-based think tank Political Capital, said that Hungary’s rotating presidency has thus far been an exercise in “troll diplomacy,” and that Oban’s self-declared “peace mission” will only isolate him further from his Western partners who increasingly regard him as working against EU and NATO interests and undermining their efforts to assist Ukraine.

## Teen held after UK gurdwara attack with ‘bladed weapon’

London (PTI): A 17-year-old boy remains in custody after two women were injured in a suspected religiously aggravated incident involving a “bladed weapon” at a gurdwara in Kent, south-east England, local police said on Friday. Kent Police said its officers were called to the Sri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara on Thursday evening to investigate reports that a male had entered the place of worship and attempted to assault members of the gathering. The gurdwara, among the largest in Europe, said that ‘Guru Granth Sahib Ji’ was not present in the Darbar Hall at the time of the incident. “It was reported that a male had entered the location and attempted to assault those in attendance whilst armed with a bladed weapon. Nobody was seriously injured during the incident but two women required medical attention for cuts and bruises,” Kent Police said in a statement. The officers arrested the teenage boy on suspicion of attempted murder and a religiously aggravated public order offence and also recovered the bladed weapon from the scene. The police have described it as an “isolated incident” and nobody else is currently being sought in connection with the attack. “We understand the community’s concerns in relation to the events at the gurdwara, however we are treating it as an isolated incident,” said Detective Superintendent Ian Dyball of Kent Police. “Patrols will remain in the area for reassurance and we thank the community for their ongoing support and assistance,” he said. According to the gurdwara’s management team, the suspect was spotted by its security team and police were called immediately. “A person has been arrested by Kent Police on suspicion of attempted murder, after entering the gurdwara and creating an incident in one of the Darbar Halls. We can confirm that the incident happened after Sukhasan and ‘Guru Granth Sahib Ji’ was not present in the Darbar Hall,” read a gurdwara statement.

## 4 migrants die while attempting to cross English Channel

Paris (AP): Four migrants have died while trying to cross the English Channel on an inflatable boat from France to the UK, French authorities said on Friday. The migrants’ vessel capsized and punctured off the coast of Boulogne-sur-Mer, in northern France, the prefecture responsible for the region said in a statement. Sixty-three people were rescued by the French coast guard. A French navy patrol boat spotted the overcrowded vessel early Friday as it deflated off the French coast. Several people were “drifting in the water while others were still clinging to the broken rubber dingy,” the statement said. Navy vessels, a fishing boat and a Navy helicopter joined the effort. Survivors were brought to the shore in Boulogne to receive medical attention and temporary shelter, the statement also said. Migrants trying to reach the UK risk drowning as they

try to cross the busy English Channel, often aboard crowded, unseaworthy boats. French maritime officials responsible for the Channel and the North Sea warned anyone who plans to cross the Channel to reconsider due to the many risks involved in the perilous journey. The channel is one of the busiest waterways in the world, with more than 600 commercial ships sailing through it daily, and weather conditions are often difficult due to strong winds that prevail 120 days a year, their Friday statement said. “It’s dangerous even when the sea seems calm,” they said. Friday’s tragedy in the channel comes amid a continuing flow of people making the journey to the UK. The latest figures from Britain’s Home Office, which deals with immigration issues, show that 62 people travelled across the Channel in one boat on Thursday, taking

# X’s blue checks deceptive, transparency falls short under social media law

AP ■ LONDON

The European Union said Friday that blue checkmarks from Elon Musk’s X are deceptive and that the online platform falls short on transparency and accountability requirements, the first charges against a tech company since the bloc’s new social media regulations took effect. The European Commission outlined the preliminary findings from its investigation into X, formerly known as Twitter, under the 27-nation bloc’s Digital Services Act. The rulebook, also known as the DSA, is a sweeping set of regulations that requires platforms to take more responsibility for protecting users and cleaning up their sites, under threat of hefty fines. Regulators took aim at X’s blue checks, saying they constitute “dark patterns” that are not in line with industry best practice



and can be used by malicious actors to deceive users. After Musk bought the site in 2022, it started issuing the verification marks to anyone who paid \$8 per month for one. Before Musk’s acquisition, they mirrored verification badges common on social media and were largely reserved for celebrities, politicians and other influential accounts. An email request for comment to X resulted in an automated response that said “Busy now, please check back later.” Its main spokesman reportedly

left the company in June. “Back in the day, BlueChecks used to mean trustworthy sources of information,” European Commissioner Thierry Breton said in a statement. “Now with X, our preliminary view is that they deceive users and infringe the DSA.” The commission also charged X with failing to comply with requirements on ad transparency. Under the DSA platforms must publish a database of all digital advertisements that they’ve carried, with details including who paid for them and the intended audience. But X’s ad database has “design features and access barriers” that make it “unfit for its transparency purpose,” the commission said. The company also falls short when it comes to giving researchers access to public data, as required by the DSA, the commission said.

# Trump lawyers press judge to overturn hush money conviction after SC immunity ruling

New York (AP): Donald Trump’s lawyers are urging the judge in his New York hush money case to overturn his conviction and dismiss the case in the wake of the Supreme Court’s recent ruling on presidential immunity. The former president’s lawyers wrote in papers made public Thursday that prosecutors rushed to try Trump in April and May while the high court was still considering his immunity claims. “Rather than wait for the Supreme Court’s guidance, the prosecutors scoffed with hubris at President Trump’s immunity motions and insisted on rushing to trial,” Trump’s lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote. “Your Honor now has the authority to address these injustices, and the court is duty-bound to do so in light of the Supreme Court’s decision.” Trump was originally scheduled to be sentenced Thursday,



but that’s on hold until the trial judge, Juan M. Merchan, rules on whether to set aside Trump’s felony conviction for falsifying records to cover up a potential sex scandal. Merchan has said he’ll rule on the defense’s request on Sept. 6 and will sentence Trump on Sept. 18, “if such is still necessary.” Prosecutors have until July 24 to respond to the defense’s arguments.

# US, S Korea sign joint nuclear deterrence guidelines in face of N Korean threats

AP ■ SEOUL

The US and South Korea signed joint nuclear deterrence guidelines for the first time, a basic yet important step in their efforts to improve deterrence toward North Korea’s evolving nuclear threats. Meeting Thursday on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Washington, President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol commended what they called “the tremendous progress” that their countries’ alliance have made a year after creating a joint Nuclear Consultative Group. The two leaders authorized “the US-ROK Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula” that was signed by their defense officials earlier Thursday, according to South Korea’s presidential office. ROK stands for the Republic of Korea, South Korea’s official name.

Last year, the US and South Korea launched the consultative body to strengthen communication on nuclear operations and discuss how to integrate US nuclear weapons and South Korean conventional weapons in various contingencies. The US has long promised to use all its capabilities, including nuclear weapons, to defend South Korea if it is attacked, but faced suspicions that it lacks plans on how it would exercise its extended deterrence for its Asian ally. The consultative body was established as North Korea has sharply accelerated its missile testing activities and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons preemptively in potential conflicts. South Korea has no nuclear weapons. “The presidents underscored that the Guidelines document provides a solid foundation for enhancing US-ROK extended deterrence cooperation in an integrated manner,” said a joint

statement by Biden and Yoon. Du Hyeon Cha, an analyst at Seoul’s Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said the guidelines mark substantial progress in deterrence plans, but the allies will still need to fill in the details and conduct military exercises to test them. Kim Tae-hyo, a deputy national security director in South Korea, told reporters that South Korea and the US will conduct joint military exercises to help implement the deterrence guidelines. He said the US would commit specific nuclear assets to a role in deterrence plans, but experts added that this does not mean it would place nuclear weapons in South Korea. Specifics of the guidelines, which Seoul called confidential, were not available, though the US will certainly retain control of its nuclear weapons. “The key is how to integrate South Korea’s conventional

weapons and America’s nuclear weapons to launch joint, massive retaliation to North Korea, when it carries out nuclear strikes on South Korea,” said Kim Yeol Soo, an expert at South Korea’s Korea Institute for Military Affairs. He said prospects for South Korea-US coordination are bright if Biden is re-elected in the November election, but could suffer a setback if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House. North Korea is expected to respond angrily to the announcement, as it has previously accused its rivals of using the consultation group to plot a nuclear attack on the North. Worries about North Korea have further deepened since North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin in June signed a deal requiring each country to provide aid to the other if it is attacked, and vowed to boost other cooperation.

# Sudan’s warring parties arrive in Geneva for UN-hosted talks on local cease-fires

AP ■ GENEVA

Sudan’s warring parties have arrived in Geneva at the invitation of the United Nations to discuss the protection of civilians through possible local cease-fires. U.N. officials said Thursday. But one side did not show up for the talks on the first day. Senior representatives from the Sudanese army and rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces accepted invitations to meet separately with the U.N. secretary-general’s personal envoy, Ramtane Lamamra, Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman at U.N. headquarters in New York, told reporters. Lamamra invited both parties to separate “proximity talks” on Thursday morning but “regrettably one of the delegations did not come to the session,” he said. Dujarric would not say which delegation showed up, but he

said Lamamra and his team met with those representatives, and invited both delegations to continue discussions on Friday. “We urge the Sudanese delegations to rise to the challenge and engage in constructive discussions with the personal envoy for the sake of the Sudanese people,” he said. Sudan plunged into conflict in mid-April 2023 when long-simmering tensions between its military and paramilitary leaders broke out in the capital, Khartoum, and spread to other regions including Darfur. The U.N. says over 14,000 people have been killed and 33,000 injured. Rights activists say the toll could be much higher. The war has also created the world’s largest displacement crisis with over 11 million people forced to flee their homes as well as allegations of rampant sexual violence and possible crimes against humanity, and international experts

recently warned that 755,000 people are facing famine in the coming months. Talks in Saudi Arabia’s port city of Jeddah between the Sudanese military and the Rapid Support Forces broke down at the end of last year. After months of failed efforts to restart talks, Dujarric said the United Nations didn’t publicize the meeting because it doesn’t want to raise expectations. “We and others have been trying to move this process forward,” he said. “We need to give it a little bit of breathing room and that’s why we’re not trumpeting all of this.” Alessandra Vellucci, the U.N. spokeswoman in Geneva, said in an email that “The discussions seek to identify avenues for the advancement of the identified humanitarian and protection of civilian measures through possible local cease-fires, as requested by the Security Council.”



# PTI eligible for reserved seats in Parl, provincial assemblies: Pak SC

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In a major legal victory for Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party, the Supreme Court on Friday ruled that his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party is eligible for the allocation of reserved seats for women and minorities in Parliament and in the provincial assemblies. The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) had filed a plea challenging the Peshawar High Court (PHC) decision upholding the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) move to deny its share in reserved seats in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. A 13-member full bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the case and the ruling in the keenly awaited judgment is viewed as a major set-back to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition. Candidates backed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, who had contested and won the

February 8 elections as independents after their party was stripped of its election symbol, had joined the SIC to form a coalition of convenience. The apex court on Friday annulled the decision of the PHC and also declared the decision of the election commission "null and void", terming it "against the Constitution of Pakistan". "[The] withdrawal of election symbol cannot disqualify a political party from elections," the court declared, referring to the election commission not allowing the PTI to use the cricket bat as its election symbol. "The PTI was and is a political party," the bench ruled. Khan, a cricketer-turned-politician, founded the PTI in 1996. The decision, announced by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was made based on a majority of eight judges. Meanwhile, reacting to the apex court's verdict, PTI said that the party "has been hopeful that the justice will be served in the end, given there



Chairman of Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party Gohar Khan talks to the media while party supporters react after a Supreme Court decision in a case of reserved seats for women and minorities in parliament, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Friday

AP/PTI

was no provision in the constitution of Pakistan, that could strip a party off its proportionate quota neither the quota could be allotted to other parties". A post from the PTI's official X

account also demanded the immediate resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja for "violating [the] Constitution of Pakistan". Imran Khan's former aide

Fawad Chaudhry echoed the party account's sentiments, also demanding the resignation of the chief election commissioner in a post on X. He said the PTI should "demand ECP resignation after SCP has now

official charge-sheeted ECP". The party spokesman Raouf Hassan also extended his "hearty congratulations" to the PTI on X, lauding the Supreme Court for "breaking the barriers of intimidation". "This is only the beginning of a long haul till we reach the final destination when Imran Khan shall take over as the Prime Minister of Pakistan," he said. "Soon, very soon." Earlier, after concluding the hearing on Tuesday, the 13 judges spent two days in mutual consultations before announcing the verdict. The court initially announced that a three-member regular bench headed by the chief justice would announce the verdict at 9 am, but shortly after that, the timing was changed and the bench announcing the verdict was changed when it was announced that the original 13-member bench would issue the judgment at noon. The dispute about the reserved seats was related to the rejection of a SIC plea by the ECP

to award its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial assemblies. The PTI party could not contest the February 8 elections as the ECP rejected its intra-party elections and deprived it of the bat symbol for contesting the elections as a party. Hence it was not eligible to claim the seats reserved for women and minorities that are awarded to the winning parties based on proportional representation. So its candidates, who had won independently but with the support of PTI, were asked by the PTI leadership to join a SIC to form a parliamentary party to claim reserved seats. The joining of PTI lawmakers made the SIC prominent, which otherwise was a dormant entity. The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats on the pretext that it had not contested the elections as a party and only got strength when the PTI-backed independently

elected candidates joined its ranks after winning the elections. Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down in March, forcing the party to file a challenge in the Supreme Court. In a rare move, a 13-member full bench presided over the hearing and announced the verdict on the insistence of the SIC lawyers. Earlier, the Supreme Court on May 6 in a major relief to the PTI suspended the Peshawar High Court's decision about rejecting the SIC plea. Following the ruling, the ECP on May 14 suspended the victory notifications of 77 candidates, who belonged to other parties and were declared successful on the reserved seats. The final ruling by the top court in the case decided the fate of those 77 reserved seats. Though it may not change the current power structure, the changes in the overall number game in the assemblies may impact the law-making in the country.

## Japan punishes defence officials for mishandling classified data

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's defence ministry announced disciplinary action on Friday against more than 200 senior officials and service members over mishandling of classified materials and other misconduct, an embarrassment that could undermine Tokyo's efforts to work more closely with United States and other partners in the face of China's growing threat. The Ministry and its Self Defence Forces have been under scrutiny over allegations that members of the navy violated the sensitive information protection law, as well as other misconduct such as falsely claiming allowances for special assignments, or wrongfully claiming free meals at base cafeterias. Ministerial staff were also accused of abuses of power. Defence Minister Minoru

Kihara apologized, saying the problems "significantly damaging to the public trust" for the ministry and Japan's defense forces. "I'm keenly aware of my responsibility." He blamed a lack of discipline across the organization. Kihara said the ministry's investigation found that classified information was mishandled on 38 destroyers and submarines, but said no sensitive information leaked outside of military or caused any harm. People without appropriate clearances were were routinely assigned to duties that involved sensitive information. But the issue is an embarrassment and could undermine Japan's reputation as a trusted defense partner at a time Japan accelerates its military cooperation with the United States, Australia, UK and other western partners, in hopes of playing greater roles

in areas that involve intelligence. "Ensuring intelligence protection is extremely important for our cooperation with the ally and other like-minded countries, and we should never let this kind of problem happen again," Kihara said. He pledged to quickly and thoroughly carry out preventive measures "so that we will not breach trust with other countries." Earlier this year, Japan passed a new security law that tightened rules on handling sensitive information. Japan also plans to enact legislation to bolster its cyber security defenses. Kihara said he is giving up his salary for a month, but that his responsibility is to stay on and continue on the reform of the organization instead of stepping down. "At a time when we cannot let our guard down even for a sec-

ond ... it is my responsibility to do everything to rebuild the Defense Ministry and the Self Defense Force under my leadership as quickly as possible and regain the public trust," Kihara said. On Friday, the 548-page Defense White Paper warned of a worsening security environment, citing threats such as China's growing tension with the self-governed island of Taiwan, as well as North Korea's advancing missile and nuclear capabilities and its ballistic missile shipments to Russia to aide the country's war on Ukraine. Japan particularly worries about rising tensions between Beijing and Taipei because any conflict on Taiwan could quickly spill over to the southwestern Japanese islands. Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni sits only 110 kilometers (68 miles) east of Taiwan.

## Russian passenger jet crashes flying empty crashes near moscow; crew of 3 killed

AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian passenger jet crashed Friday while flying empty, killing its crew of three, officials said. The Sukhoi Superjet went down in the Moscow region, according to Russian emergency officials. The authorities said the plane belonged to Gazprom Avia, a carrier owned by the Russian state-controlled natural gas giant Gazprom. They said the plane was heading to Moscow's Vnukovo airport following repairs when it crashed. The Investigative Committee, the country's top state criminal investigation agency, has launched a probe into the crash.



A woman and children wade through a flood road during heavy rainfall in Lahore, Pakistan, on Friday

AP/PTI

## Prachanda loses trust vote, Oli set to be new PM

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Friday lost a vote of confidence in Parliament after coalition partner CPN-UML withdrew its support to him, a development that will lead to the formation of a new government led by ex-premier K P Sharma Oli.

Prachanda received only 63 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives (HoR) and there were 194 votes against the motion. At least 138 votes are needed to win the vote of trust. A total of 258 HoR members participated in the voting while one member abstained.

Prachanda, 69, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC), had survived four trust votes since he assumed the prime minister's post on December 25, 2022. He faced the same predicament yet another time because former prime minister Oli-led Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) withdrew support from the Prachanda-led government last week after

inking a power-sharing deal with the largest party in the House – the Nepali Congress (NC). Earlier, Speaker of the HoR Dev Raj Ghimire put Prachanda's Vote of Trust for voting according to Article 100 Clause 2 of the Constitution. After voting was completed, he announced that the Vote of Trust proposed by Prime Minister Prachanda was defeated with a majority vote.

Speaker Ghimire will now inform President Ram Chandra Paudel, who in turn, will invite two or more political parties to stake a claim for the new government according to Article 76 Clause 2 of the Constitution. This paves the way for the NC and the CPN-UML to form a new coalition government. The NC has 89 seats in the HoR, while CPN-UML has 78. Their combined strength of 167 is much more than the 138 required for a majority in the lower house.

Nepali Congress (NC) President Sher Bahadur Deuba has already endorsed Oli as the next prime minister. NC president Deuba and CPN-UML chairman Oli inked a 7-point deal on Monday to form a new coalition toppling Prachanda-

led government. According to the agreement, Oli and Deuba will share the premiership during the remaining period of the House of Representatives; in the first phase Oli will become the Prime Minister for one and a half years and then, Deuba will take the seat for the rest of the period.

Prachanda, whose party had 32 seats in the HoR, was elected the Prime Minister for the third time on December 25, 2022, with the backing of CPN-UML. Prachanda was elected the Prime Minister as per Article 76 Clause 2 of the Constitution of Nepal, which has a provision for electing a Prime Minister with the support of two or more parties.

As the HoR session began in the early afternoon, embattled Prachanda sharply criticised the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML for striking an alliance "out of fear" rather than shared principles and accused them of pushing the nation toward regression. Prachanda voiced concerns about potential regression and autocracy, asserting that the NC and the CPN-UML had joined forces as good governance began to take root in the country.

## China's iSpace rocket fails soon after launch, losing three weather satellites

PTI ■ BEIJING

A Chinese rocket start-up has suffered yet another launch failure, resulting in the loss of three satellites as part of a commercial constellation being assembled for global weather forecasting and earthquake prediction. Hyperbola-1 – a 24-metre (79ft) high solid-fuel rocket produced by iSpace – lifted off on Thursday from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in China's Gobi Desert. "The rocket's first, second and third stages flew normally, but the fourth stage suffered an anomaly and the launch mission ended in failure," the company said, adding that the specific reasons for the failure would be announced as soon as possible after detailed investigations, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Friday. The relatively small Hyperbola-1, which can deliver a 300 kg (661 pounds) payload into a 500 km (311 miles) sun-synchronous orbit, was carrying Yunyao-1 weather satellites 15, 16 and 17 for the Tianjin-based

Yunyao Aerospace Technology company. The satellites did not reach orbit. Yunyao Aerospace Technology had planned to launch nearly 40 satellites this year to complete its 90-satellite Yunyao-1 constellation by next year, according to the Post report.

"Our constellation will break a foreign monopoly and provide high-resolution, high-precision, and all-scale weather monitoring and earthquake early warning services to Belt and Road Initiative countries," a Yunyao Aerospace representative told Tianjin Daily in January. In 2019, iSpace became the first private rocket company in China to reach Earth orbit with Hyperbola-1. But since then, the rocket has failed on three consecutive occasions. Problems have ranged from a first-stage steering fin being damaged by falling insulation foam to a fuel leak in the altitude control system of the second stage. Early this month a powerful Chinese rocket crashed after an "accidental launch" during a ground test due to structural failure, its company Space Pioneer said.

## 7 Indians among 65 missing after landslide in Nepal

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least 65 people, including seven Indian nationals, are believed to be missing after two buses were swept away by a landslide in Nepal and pushed into a swollen river on Friday, according to media reports.

The two buses carrying 65 passengers went missing in the Trishuli River in the landslides at Simaltal area along the Narayanghat-Mugling road in Chitwan district, myRepublica news portal reported quoting officials. Chief District Officer of Chitwan, Indradev Yadav, confirmed the incident. According to Yadav, the Kathmandu-bound Angel bus and Ganpati Deluxe, en route to Gaur from the Capital, met with the accident at around 3:30 am.

Twenty-four people were onboard the bus travelling to Kathmandu and 41 on the bus travelling to Gaur, police said. Three of the passengers on the Ganpati Deluxe bus managed to escape after jumping out of the vehicle, The Kathmandu

Post reported. Details have been received of 21 passengers travelling from Birgunj to Kathmandu on Angel Deluxe. According to the latest information, police have said that there were seven Indian nationals among the passengers on the bus, myRepublica reported.

Yadav said that the rescue workers have started clearing the landslide debris. Expressing grief over the disappearance of the bus in the Trishuli River, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has issued directives for immediate search and rescue operations. "I am deeply saddened by the loss of nearly five dozen passengers and the loss of property due to floods and landslides in different parts of the country when a bus was washed away by a landslide on the Narayangadh-Mugling road section. I direct all agencies of the government, including the home administration, to search and effectively rescue the passengers," Prachanda posted on X.

The prime minister also expressed grief over the loss of life and property due to floods and landslides in different parts of the country. He urged citizens to take necessary precautions. Nepal Police and Armed Police Force personnel are heading towards the incident sites for rescue operations, Superintendent of Police Bhawesh Rimal said.

**Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar**  
**Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/53/2024**  
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:  
**Sr. No. 1**  
**Item:** Hiring of Fully managed dedicated secure Server  
**Quantity:** 02  
**Closing date & time:** 22-07-2024 at 5:00 P.M.  
**For details log onto**  
**www.eproc.punjab.gov.in**  
**Note:-** Any corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.  
**Assistant Registrar (General)**  
**Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar**  
**NA/12/24086/2023/35582**  
**Dated CHD :- 7/12/2024**

## UAE names road after 84-yr-old doc with Indian roots

PTI ■ DUBAI

A road in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi has been named after an 84-year-old doctor with Indian roots as a tribute to his significant contributions to the country's health sector. The Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT) has named a road in Abu Dhabi after Dr George Matthew to recognise his contributions as part of its "Honouring UAE's Visionaries: Commemorative Streets" project, which aims to honour individuals who have greatly contributed to the nation's development. The road near Sheikh Shakbooth Medical City in Al Mafraq will now be known as George Matthew Street.

Reflecting on his journey, Dr Matthew said, "When I first arrived in the UAE, the infrastructure was still evolving. Inspired by the late HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Father of the Nation, I dedicated myself to helping the people. I am deeply grateful that my efforts have been recognised." Dr Matthew arrived in the UAE in 1967 at the age of 26. Initially preparing to move to the US, he was persuaded by a missionary friend's description of Al Ain's beauty to stay. His application for a position as Al Ain's first government doctor was successful, leading to the opening of the first clinic under Sheikh Zayed's blessing. Starting his service as a General Practitioner, Dr Matthew, affectionately called Matyous



(Emirati pronunciation of Mathew) by the locals, witnessed and contributed to the growth of modern medicine in the UAE. He held several key positions, including Medical Director of Al Ain Region in 1972 and

Health Authority Consultant in 2001. His contributions significantly advanced healthcare services in the emirate and promoted a modern medical culture in the country. Dr Matthew went to England to learn management of tropical diseases, and later to Harvard for specialised studies in hospital management. His commitment to education and professional development has been instrumental in shaping the healthcare landscape of the UAE. He played a vital role in educating and training healthcare workers, and his dedication earned him the trust and admiration of his colleagues and the community. Known for his dedication and expertise, Dr Matthew has been a valuable source of medical knowledge for the Al Ain

community. In recognition of his service, the UAE granted Dr Matthew and his family citizenship 10 years ago. Dr Matthew continues to work in the Private Health department alongside Dr Abdul Rahim Jaafar, another leading healthcare expert in the country. Expressing his gratitude, Dr Matthew said, "I am ready to do whatever I can for the country and its citizens as long as I live. I pray that God will give me more time to serve." Dr Matthew grew up in Thumpamon, Pathanamthitta, in Kerala, and graduated with an MBBS in 1965 from Trivandrum Medical College. He moved to the UAE with his wife, Valsa, after their marriage. Their daughter also works in the government sector.

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| Sr. No. | Name of Work/Item   | Period/Tentative Qty                                  |
|---------|---|---|
| 1.      | <b>For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh</b><br>Regarding water proofing treatment of roofs of various sections at Verka Mohali Dairy.  | 03 Months   |
| 2.      | <b>For Verka Mohali Dairy</b><br>Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Thermoforming Machine for Vacuum Packing of Paneer.   | 01 No.  |
| 3.      | <b>For Verka Sangrur Dairy</b><br>Hiring of commercial insulated/ refrigerated vehicles for transportation of packed milk and fresh milk products.  | 1.7 Ton- 2 No's<br>3.0 Ton- 6 No's<br>4.0 Ton- 4 No's |
| 4.      | <b>For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy</b><br>Outsourcing of various activities of city supply dispatch dock.   | One Year  |
| 5.      | <b>For Verka Patiala Dairy</b><br><b>Hiring of :-</b><br>a) 03 MT, 4.5 MT, 7.5 MT, 09 MT vehicles for transportation of Plo, Ghee and cheese etc for different stations.<br>b) 1.5 MT Insulated vehicle for transportation of fresh milk and fresh milk products at Mandi Gobindgarh Area.<br>c) 04 MT insulated vehicle for transportation of fresh Milk and Milk products at Army Area Patiala.<br>d) 7.5 MT and 09 MT Refrigerator vehicle for Ahmedabad and Delhi area. | Annual  |

**NOTE:**  
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. **eproc.punjab.gov.in**.  
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

**NA/12/24088/2023/35586** Dated CHD :- 7/12/2024 **Dy. General Manager (Purchase)**



# India to clock GDP growth of 7% in FY25: NITI Aayog member

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy will grow around 7 per cent in the current fiscal year and is on track to maintain a similar growth rate for several years, NITI Aayog member Arvind Virmani said on Friday.

Virmani said there are new challenges facing the country and they will have to be dealt with.

“Indian economy will grow at 7 per cent plus minus point 0.5 per cent... I expect that we are on track to grow at 7 per cent for several years from today,” he told PTI in an interview.

Last month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pegged the FY25 gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate at 7.2 per cent.

Responding to a question on the decline in private consumption expenditures in the last fiscal year, Virmani said it is actually recovering now.”The effect of the pandemic was to draw down savings... And very different from previous financial shocks,” he said.Explaining further, Virmani said it is like what he calls a double drought



situation.

“We also had, of course, El Nino last year, but what the pandemic did was that it resulted in people having to draw down their savings... So, the obvious reaction is to rebuild your savings, which tend to reduce current consumption,” he noted.

If people were buying branded goods, they will buy less branded or ordinary goods and save part of that money, he said, explaining that this shows a slide in consumption.

Virmani said history shows

that coalition partners can slow privatisation in states in which the regional ally is in power, but that is not a big issue.

“I see no reason why privatisation cannot happen in the other states and it may also happen in these states (where coalition parties are in power). I am just giving you a historical example,” he said.

With support from N Chandrababu Naidu’s TDP and Nitish Kumar-led JD(U), along with other alliance partners, the NDA

crossed the halfway mark in the recently held Lok Sabha elections to form the government at the Centre.

On the decline in foreign direct investments (FDI) to India, despite it being the fastest growing economy, Virmani said riskless return of investment is much higher in the United States and other developed countries than in emerging markets.

“As soon as interest rates begin to come down in the US, I expect the FDI into emerging markets, including India, to increase,” he said.

## Sensex, Nifty hit record high on buying in IT stocks after TCS earnings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their fresh record high levels on Friday amid heavy buying in IT stocks after TCS announced its June quarter earnings.

The 30-share BSE Sensex zoomed 996.17 points to hit all-time high of 80,893.51. The NSE Nifty jumped 276.25 points to a new lifetime peak of 24,592.20.

Among the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services climbed nearly 6 per cent after the country’s largest IT services player reported 8.7 per cent growth for the June quarter net profit at Rs 12,040 crore.

Infosys, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were the other major gainers. Maruti, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints and ITC were among the laggards.

“The positive domestic cue is the better-than-expected numbers from TCS and positive management commentary which can lift most IT stocks,” said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.



In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong quoted higher while Seoul and Tokyo traded lower.

US markets ended mostly lower on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.59 per cent to USD 85.90 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,137.01 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Retreating from early highs, the BSE benchmark closed lower by 27.43 points or 0.03 per cent at 79,897.34 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty edged down 8.50 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at 24,315.95.

## FADA seeks vehicle depreciation benefits for income tax payers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automotive dealers body FADA on Friday urged the government to introduce vehicle depreciation benefits for individual taxpayers, saying it will not only expand the taxpayer base but also ignite automobile demand.

In its pre-budget wishlist, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) also asked the finance ministry to reduce corporate tax for LLPs, proprietary, and partnership firms.

“We urge the finance ministry to introduce the benefits of claiming depreciation on vehicles for individuals paying income tax,” FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement.

Allowing individuals to account for depreciation will not only increase the number of income tax filers but also ignite automobile demand, he reasoned.

Singhania also recommended reduction of corporate tax for LLPs, proprietary, and partnership firms.

“While the government has



already reduced corporate tax to 25 per cent for private limited companies with a turnover of up to Rs 400 crore, extending this benefit to all LLPs, proprietary and partnership firms is crucial, as most traders within the auto dealership community fall into these categories,” he noted.

FADA strongly appeals to the government to consider these two key measures in the upcoming budget to stimulate the automotive industry and broader economy, Singhania said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is slated to present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on July 23.

## Magicipin onboards over 1,000 big brands in a year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyperlocal e-commerce firm magicipin has onboarded over 1,000 multi-city and multinational consumer brands in a year, registering a year-on-year growth in onboarding prominent firms, the company said on Friday.

While it took magicipin four years to bring around 2,000 brands on board, it added over 1,000 of them over the past year alone.

“It has been a phenomenal last 12 months for us... There has been an exponential 100 per cent increase for us in terms of brands and merchants, thereby welcoming over 1000 new brands and over 75,000 local merchants to our platform,” magicipin CEO and Co-Founder Anshoo Sharma said in a statement.

The company has added new brands across fashion, quick service retail and fine dine category during the 12-month period ending June 2024. The new brands magicipin onboarded include Burger King, Domino’s, TacoBell, McDonald’s, Faasos, Subway, Behrouz Biryani, Meghna Biryani, Truffles, Chaayos, US Polo Assn, Louis Philippe, Puma, Levi’s, Van Heusen, Lee Cooper, etc.

Lightspeed Venture Capital firm backed magicipin is the biggest seller on government backed e-commerce platform ONDC, accounting for over 50 per cent of the total order per month.

The company in the last one year recorded a 37 per cent jump in its local merchant base to over 2.75 lakh from around 2 lakh a year ago, the company said.

## Hindustan may exceed capex target of ₹350 cr this fiscal year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

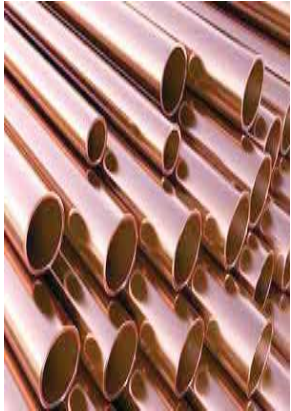
State-owned Hindustan Copper Ltd on Friday said it is likely to exceed its capex target of Rs 350 crore for the ongoing fiscal year.

“Although this year’s capex target is Rs 350 crore, it is expected that the company may exceed the target like last year,” the company said in a filing to the BSE.

The company is continuously investing in its ongoing mine expansion plan.

The PSU has floated tender for the appointment of developer for Rakha mine, it said, adding that once finalised, this will make way for fresh investment.

The domestic copper demand in the country will grow in



line with the growth of sectors such as renewable, transportation and construction sectors.

“Analysts suggest that there will be double-digit growth in these sectors in the short

term. Accordingly, copper sector growth is expected to be in double digit,” it said.

The current per capita refined copper consumption in India is around 0.5 kg, far less than the global average of about 3.2 kg per capita, leaving a huge gap.

As India is in an aggressive growth path and expecting double-digit growth, the copper demand in India will definitely outpace the global demand, the PSU said.

Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Mines. The company has facilities for production and marketing of copper concentrate, copper cathodes, continuous cast copper rod, and byproducts.

## Essar Energy Transition setting up Europe’s 1st hydrogen-ready power plant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Essar Energy Transition (EET) on Friday announced setting up of Europe’s first hydrogen-ready combined heat and power plant (CHP) at its Stanlow refinery in Ellesmere Port in the UK.

The building of the power plant is a key part of EET’s overall USD 3 billion of energy transition initiatives in the North West of England.

The company aims to complete the project, EET Hydrogen Power in 2027, it said in a statement.

The investment will support EET Fuels’ ambition to become the lowest carbon process refinery, globally and EET Hydrogen’s ambition to



become the leading low carbon hydrogen producer in the UK. It will also provide low carbon power to other industrial users in the region to support their decarbonisation targets.

EET Hydrogen Power will become an independent vertical under EET.

is integral to the decarbonisation of operations at EET Fuels’ Stanlow refinery, which plans to cut total emissions by 95 per cent by 2030, to become the world’s lowest carbon refinery.

Tony Fountain, Managing Partner of Essar Energy Transition, commented: “Launching EET Hydrogen Power shows the progress that EET is making in delivering against its commitment to put the UK at the forefront of low carbon energy. EET Hydrogen Power helps bring this commitment to life and demonstrates our intention to globally showcase the pathway to decarbonising vital high emitting industries.”

## Launches of affordable flats drop 21% annually in April-June to 1,32,77 units in top 7 cities: JLL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

New supply of affordable apartments — costing below Rs 50 lakh — declined 21 per cent in the April-June period across seven major cities as builders are launching more premium flats, according to JLL India.

Real estate consultant JLL India on Friday released data for housing market of major seven cities, showing a 5 per cent increase in fresh supply of apartments to 1,59,455 units during April-June 2024 from 151,207 units in the year-ago period.

The data includes only apartments. Rowhouses, villas, and plotted developments have been

excluded from the analysis.

Of the total new supply in the June quarter, the launches of affordable flats stood at 13,277 units, a fall of 21 per cent from 16,728 units in the same period last year.

The launches of flats, each costing Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore, declined 14 per cent to 47,930 units from 55,701 units.

In the Rs 1-3 crore price bracket, the new supply grew 3 per cent to 69,312 units from 67,119 units.

The launches of apartments, each priced Rs 3-5 crore, more than doubled to 19,202 units from 7,149 units.

Similarly, in above Rs 5 crore category, the new supply jumped more than two-fold



to 9,734 units from 4,510 units.

Commenting on the trend of rise in supply of premium homes and fall in supply of

affordable homes, Siva Krishnan, Senior Managing Director (Chennai and Coimbatore), Head-Residential Services, India, JLL, said, “This speaks about developers’ active response to the surge in demand for high value homes among the target clientele.”

On demand, the consultant said the sales of apartments across seven major cities rose 22 per cent to 154,921 units during April-June 2024 from 126,587 units in the year-ago period.

These seven cities are -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune. The MMR includes Mumbai

city, Mumbai suburbs, Thane city, and Navi Mumbai; Delhi-NCR includes Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, and Sohna.

“Interesting to note, sales momentum has successfully complemented the new launches with around 30 per cent of the H1 2024 sales (154,921 units) being contributed by projects that got launched during the last six months,” said Samantak Das, Chief Economist and Head of Research, India, JLL.

Listed and reputed developers, consistently bringing in a substantial supply over the past few years have played a key role in this growing trend, Das said.

## NE gas grid work in Tripura to be completed in March next year, says official

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Work under the Rs 9,265-crore North East Gas Grid (NEGG) project is expected to be completed in Tripura by March next year, an official said on Friday.

Under the NEGG project as part of a plan to synchronise gas supply in the region, 253 km of gas pipeline will be laid across seven districts in the northeastern state.

“The North East Gas Grid (NEGG) project in seven districts of Tripura is being undertaken by a joint venture

entity- Indradhanus Gas Grid Ltd (IGGL) having stakes of five companies- GAIL, IOCL, OIL, NRL (Numaligarh Refinery Ltd) and ONGC,” state Industries and Commerce Department’s Director Vishwasree B told PTI.

Of the total 253 km pipeline target in the state, around 105 km has been covered so far while the “remaining portion of the project, which is under various stages- land acquisition, pipeline welding and laying of the pipeline - will be completed by March 2025”, she said.

## Inaugural Session of ICANA-2024 begins

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

School of Advanced Sciences, VIT-AP University and University of Southern Denmark jointly organizing 2nd International Conference on Advanced Nanomaterials and Applications (ICANA-2024) from 10 — 12 July 2024 [Virtual Mode].

This conference was inceptioned jointly by the School of Advanced Sciences, VIT-AP University and the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), USA in the year 2022. Chief guest Prof BS Murty addressed the participants of the ICANA-2024. He emphasised the importance of collaboration for India’s development.

## Auto industry body SIAM seeks sops for EVs, additional incentives for vehicle scrapping

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Auto industry body SIAM on Friday sought sops to promote EVs and suggested the government to bring in additional incentives for scrapping of vehicles in the upcoming Budget.

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers emphasised on a growth oriented Budget with focus on greater allocation for capital expenditure.

“We are expecting that the government should come up with a FAME 3 like policy... Good schemes like PLI are already in place, which we are sure will continue,” SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal told reporters here. The FAME



3 (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) scheme, if unveiled, is expected to offer financial incentives to electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers as well as government-owned buses.

The FAME 3 scheme will succeed Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS), which was introduced when

FAME 2 scheme ended on March 31, 2024.

“We are also expecting that the government could do something more on the incentives for the scrapping of vehicles, because the scrappage policy is already in place but we have not seen much impact of that,” Aggarwal said.

He further said, “And so therefore, to give further boost to the scrapping of old polluting vehicles, I think something needs to be done.”

Aggarwal said the government should continue to take initiatives which are good for the economy.

“We anticipate that it will again be a growth oriented Budget...Which means it will

be more focused on the capital expenditure, because that has a multiplier effect on all segments of the economy,” he stated.

Allocation for the capital expenditure in the Interim Budget stood at Rs 11.1 lakh crore which was 11.1 per cent higher than the previous year allocation, Aggarwal stated.

“So, we are expecting that the focus on allocating more and more capex will continue,” he said.

Aggarwal also urged the government to come up with some policy initiatives to boost the rural economy.

It will be good for sectors like automotive and FMCG and others if the rural economy starts doping better, he added.

## Sandeep appointed Director (Finance) of PFC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government of India appointed Sandeep Kumar as Director (Finance) at Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC), effective 11 July 2024. Before this appointment, he was Executive Director (Finance) at PFC since 01.01.2020 and is holding the position of Chief Financial Officer (CFO), PFC.

Kumar has a distinguished career spanning over 34 years in the power and financial sectors. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Commerce (Honours) and is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.



### IMPORTANT NOTICE

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| Train No. 04494 Delhi Jn.-Gorakhpur Jn.-Delhi Jn. Special Express Train |       |      |               | 32 TRIPS        |       |      |
|---|-------|------|---------------|-----------------|-------|------|
| Train No. 04494   | ARR.  | DEP. | STATIONS      | Train No. 04493 | ARR.  | DEP. |
| ----  | 05:40 | ---- | Delhi Jn.     | 16:30           | ----  | --   |
| 21:15   | ----  | ---- | Gorakhpur Jn. | ----            | 00:15 | ---- |

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# SPAIN MEET ENGLAND IN EURO FINAL

AP ■ BERLIN

One is the best team in the tournament, on the brink potentially of a new era of success because of a teenage wonderkid, an outstanding midfield and a tweak in philosophy. The other is a survivor, limping to the end with big moments, resilience and an oft-criticized coach who has another chance to end his country's long wait for a major men's title. The European Championship final between Spain and England on Sunday is dripping with narrative - with one arguably standing out above the rest. Inside Olympiastadion, the historic venue in Berlin built by the Nazis for the 1936 Olympic Games, Lamine Yamal - a day after his 17th birthday - will look to crown his breakthrough as soccer's newest superstar by leading Spain to a first major men's trophy since the 2008-12 era, when it won back-to-back Euros either side of the World Cup in 2010. Yamal has been the shining light in a tournament where many of the high-profile figures - Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappé, even England's Harry Kane - have underwhelmed. If his three assists before the semifinals hinted at his undoubted promise, Yamal's spectacular curling shot that propelled Spain to a 2-1 win over France in the last four signaled a new star had arrived. While Yamal and fellow winger Nico Williams now offer their

national team a hitherto-lacking directness out wide, it's the central midfield that has given Spain the edge over all of its rivals. Rodri, perhaps pound-for-pound the world's most effective player, and Fabian Ruiz are the axis from which Spain thrives. Dani Olmo has joined them as the most attacking of pretty much a complete central-midfield three that England will struggle to contain. Spain topped a group containing defending champion Italy and 2022 World Cup semifinalist Croatia, before eliminating host nation Germany and Mbappé's France, for many the pre-tournament favorite. It's six straight wins for La Roja. No wonder they are being so heavily backed ahead of the final. "They have been the best team," England coach Gareth Southgate said of Spain. "... But we are there and from what we have shown to this point, we have as good a chance as they do." Indeed, Spain should not underestimate England, whose tenacity and character have stood out way above its quality of play at Euro 2024. The nation's most talented squad for 20 years has underperformed, looking unbalanced, short of ideas and in some cases fatigued, but has somehow scrapped through to a second straight European Championship final. Three years ago, England lost to Italy in a penalty shootout on home soil at Wembley Stadium, extending the birthplace of soccer's

IT'S THE BEST TEAM AGAINST THE MOST RESILIENT



painful wait for a major men's title since its one and only at the 1966 World Cup. Southgate's team is back in the title match - its first ever outside England - and is an increasingly confident underdog, with potential matchwinners dotted throughout the team in Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden, Bukayo Saka and Kane. Someone has always popped up with a crucial goal - Bellingham with the stoppage-time equalizer against Slovakia in the last 16, Saka with the 80th-minute equalizer against Switzerland in the quarterfinals, even backup striker Ollie Watkins pretty much exactly on 90 minutes against the Netherlands in the semifinals. Who will come to Southgate's rescue on Sunday - if indeed someone does? "They are able to inflict a lot of damage, even without playing in a very fluid way," Spain defender Dani Vivian said. "But they have that quality that makes them able to produce those sparks." The smart money, though, is on Spain winning a seventh straight game to clinch a record fourth European Championship title. It would be a just end to a tournament where few teams really clicked apart from the Spanish, who have dovetailed a more ruthless attacking edge with their longstanding possession game that perhaps peaked in the Euro 2012 final when a team of midfielders - notably Xavi Hernandez, Andres Iniesta, Sergio Busquets, Xabi Alonso and David Silva - ran over Italy in Spain's 4-0 win.

## Rodríguez enjoying stunning revival with Colombia at Copa América

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Luis Díaz was unable to control his excitement - and tears - when talking about James Rodríguez, the key player in Colombia's journey to the Copa America final against Argentina on Sunday. "From the moment I arrived at the national team, I let him know that he has always been my idol," Liverpool winger Díaz said. "I grew up watching him." Such is the admiration that the midfielder, who turns 33 on Friday, attracts within the Colombian camp. The 27-year-old Díaz was a teenager when James proved a sensation at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, where he won the Golden Boot as the tournament's top scorer and moved from Monaco to Real Madrid. But for this Copa América, little was expected of James. He arrived in the United States after a poor season at Brazilian club Sao Paulo, where he ended up being an afterthought and appeared to be on his way out of there. Colombia's aspirations of a second Copa title were placed on the shoulders of Díaz, along with Jefferson Lerma and Daniel Muñoz, another couple of players in England's top flight. Few expected that James, despite his prodigious left foot and craftsmanship on the field, would once again be the stepping stone for Colombia in a major tournament after disappointing stints with Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Everton, among other European clubs. But Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo put his faith in him and James has rewarded that by reemerging as, arguably,



the best player at the tournament, establishing himself as the main focus of a team that will play defending champion Argentina at Miami Gardens, Florida, in the championship match. It will be Colombia's first Copa final since winning the title as host in 2001. "I have been here for almost 13 years, wanting this very much," said James, recalling an international career that began in September 2011. "We are happy." James has a goal (a penalty) and six assists at this edition of the Copa América. The sixth - in the 1-0 victory against Uruguay in the semifinals - helped him surpass Lionel Messi's record (5 in 2021) for the most goal assists in a single edition of the tournament since records began to be kept in 2011. James will meet Messi in Sunday's final. "I want to be champion. We

know that they are a super complicated opponent, that they have experience playing in finals," James said. With his superlative performances in the past few weeks, a question has again been raised: What makes James shine so much when wearing the yellow jersey of Colombia? Brazil coach Dorival Júnior, who managed him in Sao Paulo, said that the transformation is because James feels comfortable in a known environment. "He really feels so good wearing the Colombian national team jersey... It's impressive in every aspect," Dorival said ahead of Colombia's 1-1 draw with Brazil at Copa America. "This is very interesting, because some players play well in their clubs and do not perform well on their national teams, the opposite happens with James. He feels

very good and integrated into a group that respects him, embraces him and make him feel more important." Since he took over as Colombia's coach in 2022, Lorenzo has not hesitated to make James an important piece of his project. "With me he has nothing, simply that he has continuity and has a great commitment," Lorenzo said before the semifinal against Uruguay. "With the national team it has always been the same, when a great player has minutes, it gives him the opportunity to show what he can do. If you give him just a few minutes you have little chance." The result? Colombia has just broken its unbeaten record that had lasted three decades by going 28 straight games without a loss. James is aiming for more. "The most important thing is still missing, which is to play that grand final," he said.

## Swimmer Ryan longs to reclaim top spot on medal podium at Olympics

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS (USA)

Ryan Murphy longs to reclaim the top spot on the medal podium at the Paris Olympics. America's backstroke star was relegated to silver and bronze in his individual races at Tokyo - a performance that still irks him just a bit. "There's definitely no shortage of motivation from my end," said Murphy, who will be competing in the men's 100 and 200-meter back for the third Olympics in row. "I feel like I've always got a fire under my butt." The 29-year-old Floridian, who trains at Cal-Berkeley, has been a worthy successor to the long run of backstroke success in the U.S. Picking up the baton from giants such as John Nabor, Rick Carey, Lenny Krayzelburg, Aaron Peirsol and Matt Grevers, Murphy has left his own impressive mark. At the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, he swept the men's backstroke events and added a third gold as part of the 4x100 medley relay. He followed up at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games with a runner-up finish in the 200 and a third-place showing in the 100, to go along with another gold in the medley relay. Murphy motivated to train harder To win any medal at the Olympics is quite an achievement, but it wasn't good enough for the demanding Murphy. Especially since the victories by Russia's Evgeny Rylov in both backstroke events ended an impressive American streak. The U.S. Men had swept every 100 and 200 back going all the way back to the 1996 Atlanta Games - a total of 12 gold medals in a row. "The world is getting faster,"



said Grevers, who came out of retirement to compete just for fun at this year's Olympic trials. "We won golds for a very long time, but the world has kind of caught up to the U.S." For Murphy, that pushes him to go ever harder. "I want to win every time I touch the water, whether that's a Monday morning practice or an Olympic finals," he said. While Tokyo was a bit of a disappointment, and stirred up talk of doping within the sport by Russia and other countries, Murphy's consistency over such a long period is impressive indeed. No American male has won backstroke medals over three Summer Games, which is what he hopes to achieve in the City of Light. "I always feel more for the veterans, especially people going for their third Olympics," said Grevers, who competed in two Summer Games but came up just short in his next two attempts to make the powerhouse U.S. Team. "You have to be on your game for a very long time, and the pressure stacks each time." While burnout and mental issues have plagued some of the world's top swimmers, Murphy has managed to stay on top of his game for nearly a decade. In addition to six

Olympic medals, he's won 17 medals, including seven golds, at long-course world championships and another 14 medals - nine of them gold - at the 25-meter worlds. "I try to be as consistent as possible every day," Murphy said. "I think the biggest thing in a sport like swimming, where we kind of have few opportunities to race at this level, you have to pull motivation from a lot of different parts of your life." Some days in training, he's just trying to get his hand to the wall faster than everyone else. Other days, he's concentrating on getting his technique as close to perfect as possible. Still others, he's fixated on sticking his routine. Even now, after all these years, "I'm really motivated to try to improve," he said. Where Murphy does his best work in the pool While it's not uncommon in swimming to bounce around from one coach to another, Murphy has maintained a more than decade-long partnership with Cal coach Dave Durden. "The biggest thing that you want as an athlete is to know that your coach is constantly thinking about how you can improve," Murphy said. "We want to work hard because we don't want to let Dave down.

He's the man. I've got a lot of love for Dave, and it's been a great ride." Murphy does some of his best work on the starts and in the turns. His reaction time off the blocks is quicker than just about anyone else in the world. And his work underwater is a sight to behold. Throughout the U.S. Olympic trials in Indianapolis, Murphy would go into the turn trailing another backstroke. Then, a powerful kick off the wall would send his body wiggling under the surface like a speedy dolphin. Inevitably, he would be ahead when he finally popped back up nearly halfway down the 50-meter pool. Murphy was born in Chicago but his family moved to the Jacksonville, Florida area when he was just a youngster. While he spends much of his time these days on the West Coast, he maintains close ties to his adopted hometown of Ponte Vedra Beach, especially through his love of the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars. He's already looking forward to the new season, with quarterback Trevor Lawrence - who recently signed a long-term deal - looking to lead the Jaguars back to the playoffs after they just missed out a year ago. "They have some more tall weapons on offense, so we'll see how it goes," Murphy said. Of course, his primary focus remains at the pool, Murphy isn't sure how long he wants to compete, but he's not ready to ponder his legacy. There's still races to win, medals to collect. "I've always thought that I'll appreciate my career a little bit more when I'm done swimming, and I can kind of zoom out," Murphy said. "For right now, I'm really zoomed in on everything I'm doing on a day-to-day basis.

## Surprise, surprise! Unlikely Wimbledon contenders Krejckikova and Paolini meet in women's final

AP ■ LONDON

Barbora Krejckikova had a bad back and just a handful of wins this season before Wimbledon. So, yeah, she's pretty surprised to have reached the final at the All England Club on Saturday against No. 7 Jasmine Paolini, who is equally amazed to be one step away from the title. Neither has played in a Wimbledon singles final before - Paolini was 0-3 at the grass-court major before this tournament started - and their meeting ensures there will be yet another new champion. Wimbledon has seen seven women win the past seven singles titles, dating to when Serena Williams won her seventh in 2016. "I have had many difficult periods. I never really imagined that ... I could reach

a Wimbledon final, that I can be a different player," said Krejckikova, who won the 2021 French Open for her only Grand Slam singles title. Both Krejckikova and Paolini dropped their first set in the semifinals before fighting back to reach the final. Krejckikova, the No. 31 seed, ousted 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Centre Court after Paolini outlasted Donna Vekic 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (10-8) in the longest Wimbledon women's semifinal on record. For both winners, the momentum turned when they started playing more aggressively, which they'll likely need to do again on Saturday. The 28-year-old Krejckikova dropped her first three service games, though she also broke the hard-serving Rybakina

twice in the first set to at least give her something to build on as she mounted her comeback. Krejckikova likes to come to the net - she's won seven Grand Slam doubles titles, including two at Wimbledon - and after just one approach in the first set, she won 11 points on 14 trips forward. "I felt that I had to maybe put a little bit more pressure on her. I was just looking first for some options. One of the options that I have is to serve and volley," she said. Before the semifinal, Krejckikova acknowledged: "I didn't really expect to get this far." She reached the quarterfinals of the Australian Open in January but was then slowed by a back injury and what she described as a series of illnesses. After Melbourne Park, she



played only nine matches - winning three - before coming to the All England Club. Two of the victories came at a grass-court tuneup tournament at Birmingham. The 28-year-old Paolini, who is Italian and has family ties to Poland and Ghana, is the first woman representing Italy to reach the Wimbledon final in the Open era, which began in 1968. She is also the first woman to get to the title matches at the French Open and Wimbledon in the same season since Williams in 2016. "The finals, Paris and here - these are things I didn't expect. It's all special," said Paolini, who lost to Iga Swiatek in the Roland Garros final. After getting some rest, both Paolini and Krejckikova have plenty to work on. Krejckikova

committed six double-faults against Rybakina. Paolini wasted two match points before putting away Vekic and said afterward: "I was drowning, but I managed to swim." The finalists have only faced each other once before, back in Australian Open qualifying in 2018. Krejckikova won in straight sets but that surely won't factor into Saturday's final - neither woman even recalled the match. The 5-foot-4 (1.63-meter) Paolini tries to control rallies with early strikes and frustrates opponents by seemingly getting to every spot on the court defensively. Emma Navarro, who eliminated Coco Gauff and Naomi Osaka before losing to Paolini in the quarterfinals, said the Italian was "on top of me from the very first point.



# Young Indian stars look to translate dominance into series victory over Zimbabwe

PTI ■ HARARE

Back to their collective best, a clutch of young Indian stars will be eager to usher in a new era in the shortest format with a series victory when they face Zimbabwe in the fourth T20I here on Saturday.

After an unexpected defeat in the first match, the Shubman Gill-led side rediscovered its mojo in the second and third games to take a 2-1 lead with comprehensive wins.

Under the existing cricketing landscape, a series win over Zimbabwe will not rank high in the pecking order, but it will certainly spark ambitions inside some young players who are keen to take the team forward post the retirement of Ravindra Jadeja from T20Is, Washington is eyeing the spin-all-rounder slot and the Tamil Nadu man has shown some promising signs against Zimbabwe, taking six wickets at a fine economy of 4.5.

Whenever the selectors sit together to pick the Indian squad for the upcoming white-ball tour to Sri Lanka, they now will have to consider Washington's name seriously.

The 24-year-old has given this Indian side the option of a bowler flexible enough to operate inside and outside the Power Play, and a handy lower-order batter, who if the need arises, has the technique to come up the order as well.

Abhishek bludgeoned a 47-ball hundred in the second T20I here, underscoring the hope around him as a long-term India material.

India will no longer have the services of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the ultra-abridged version, and Yashasvi Jaiswal is the frontrunner to occupy one of those top-order slots. Abhishek will hope to further buttress his claim for the other vacant top-order spot, for which there are other strong contenders in Shubman Gill and Rituraj Gaikwad, with a bruising knock against the African side here on the morrow.

But this is not to say that some of the more established names such as



Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube have nothing to gain from this series.

They linked with the squad here after taking part in India's victory parade in Mumbai post the T20 World Cup triumph, where they had limited or little role in that epochal run.

So, the remaining two matches of this series will be an opportunity for Dube and Samson to keep themselves in the front row of players who will carry India into the future, producing some valuable efforts.

Indian management will also be pleased by the outing of their bowlers, particularly that of leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, whose googlies were indecipherable for the home batters.

Bishnoi has six wickets, numbers similar to Washington and pacer Avesh Khan, who proved a nippy customer in this series.

Mukesh Kumar might come in place for left-arm pacer Avesh Khan after getting a rest in the previous match, but the pacer, though he has taken four wickets, will certainly like to be more economical.

On other hand, Zimbabwe have slipped a few rungs below after beating India in the first match.

There have been lonely sparks in their line-up like searing spells by impressive pacer Blessing Muzarabani and a well-paced fifty by Dion Myers.

But they need to harness them to meaningfully challenge this Indian unit, which is currently operating at one level higher.

#### TEAMS:

**India:** Shubman Gill (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rituraj Gaikwad, Abhishek Sharma, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Shivam Dube, Riyan Parag, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar, Tushar Deshpande.

**Zimbabwe:** Sikandar Raza (c), Akram Faraz, Bennett Brian, Campbell Johnathan, Chatara Tendai, Jongwe Luke, Kaia Innocent, Madande Clive, Madhevere Wessly, Marumani Tadiwanashe, Masakadza Wellington, Mavuta Brandon, Muzarabani Blessing, Myers Dion, Naqvi Antum, Ngarava Richard, Shumba Milton



## India showed resilience to win T20 WC and celebrations told that story: Laxman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Batting great VVS Laxman hailed India's "resilience" while winning the recent T20 World Cup "from the jaws of defeat", and said the passionate celebration by players and former head coach Rahul Dravid exemplified the value of that triumph to them.

India won their first ICC trophy after 11 years and their second T20 title after 17 years when they beat South Africa by seven runs in the final in Barbados on June 29.

"The kind of finish we had after we were under pressure with South Africa batters needing 30 runs off 30 balls. And from there to show character, resilience and self-belief to pull off the match from the jaws of defeat, it shows the character of the entire team," Laxman said in a video posted by the BCCI on its X handle.

"The amount of hard work they put in, the celebrations (by the players and support staff) told the bigger story behind this victory.

The 49-year-old Laxman, who is currently heading the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru, said the fervent celebrations by the team showed how much the victory meant to each of the players and the support staff.

"Obviously, it is a special feeling winning the World

Cup. When you are playing against the best and win the trophy, it means a lot to all the players participating in the tournament.

"Everyone showed their emotions and it showed how much it meant to each and every player in the squad, as well as the support staff, the emotions were really high. You saw Hardik Pandya breaking down once he bowled the last delivery. You saw Rohit Sharma on the ground.

"The entire country is rejoicing this win. It was a special feeling keeping in mind we had come close (to winning the title) six months back (ODI World Cup). We should have won the 50-over World Cup, dominating the entire tournament but not being able to cross the final hurdle," he said.

Laxman made a special mention of the expressive celebration of Dravid, who generally abhors public show of emotions.

"Someone like Rahul with whom I have played so much cricket, knew him for so many years, but for him to show that emotions, first when the last ball was bowled and then the various conversations he was having with the team members and when he lifted the trophy.

"I thought it was a great gesture by Rohit and Virat Kohli to hand over the trophy to him (Dravid) and the way he

celebrated by lifting the trophy, it showed how much it meant to each one of them," said Laxman who paired with Dravid in a memorable Test win against Australia in Kolkata in 2001 when they stitched that famous 376-run partnership after following-on.

Laxman, who has 8781 runs from 134 Tests at an average of 45.97, lauded captain Rohit, star batter Virat Kohli and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja for their contributions in the T20 format.

The trio announced retirement from the T20Is after the T20 World Cup win.

"My message to these stalwarts of the game, Virat, Rohit and Ravindra Jadeja, an extremely talented player who has contributed immensely to the progress of the Indian team. Congratulations for the pride with which they had played this game is exemplary.

"While they have retired from this format, I am sure they will continue to prepare the way they did so far in their career and continue to bring laurels to the country.

"Big congratulations for an excellent T20 career and I am sure they will continue to contribute in the longer version of the game and in the 50-over format."

## We are very greedy to win every game: Harmanpreet ahead of women's Asia Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian women's team is entering every Imatch with an unquenchable thirst for victory and there will be no deviation from that set path during the highly-anticipated Asia Cup match against Pakistan later this month, reckoned captain Harmanpreet Kaur.

The Indian women are high on confidence after beating South Africa in a three-match ODI series and in the one-off Test while drawing the T20I series 1-1 recently at home.

"The kind of approach we have right now, every day whenever we are going to play the matches, we are giving equal importance to all matches," Kaur told Star Sports.

"We all are very greedy to win every game, and that is something we feel should be in a team, and this is what everyone in the team is feeling," she added.

India's next assignment is the Women's Asia Cup, set to begin on July 19 in Sri Lanka, with Kaur and Co. Opening



their campaign against familiar foes Pakistan at Dambulla.

Kaur said it is her responsibility as a leader to calm her team's nerves during such pressure games.

"When you play against Pakistan, there is a different atmosphere in both the countries. Both the countries want their team to win.

"As a player, there is a lot of pressure for us. But as a leader, it is my responsibility

to make my team feel light in that environment, so that they don't think that we are playing against Pakistan or it's a pressure game," she said.

India-Pakistan rivalry is one of the most sought after be it in men's or women's game. But for Kaur, it is imperative for her side to forget the outside noise and treat the match as any other game.

"It will be important for me to make

everyone feel that this is also just another game. We have to do well for the team and make the team win.

"Other than thinking about what is going on in the stadium, who are the other people cheering for? Who are they talking about? Just focus on the main things. Don't think about the things that we can't control," she added.

Middle-order batter Jemimah Rodrigues said the team is enthusiastic about its chances at the Women's Asia Cup.

"The enthusiasm is really high, and that's always been the scene. It's a nice feeling, but more than that, it's very inspiring to know that every time we walk out on the field, we know we have the support of every single person backing us.

"It's just about how well we prepare rather than thinking too much ahead of ourselves. About the results, it's always about preparation.

"We know if we prepare well, we are going to go out there and do well," she added.

## Sable says he can win medal in Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable does not want to be just a participant at the Olympics and believes he can win a medal at the Paris Games beginning later this month.

The 29-year-old Sable, who recently broke his own national record, will be competing in his second Olympics. He had failed to make it to the finals at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

"I don't want to just participate, I believe I can win a medal. I am working hard with my eyes set on that goal, if everything falls into place I win a medal," Sable said when asked about the Paris Olympics.

"I used to think Olympic medallists had a unique and difficult approach to training, but my experiences over the past two years have boosted my confidence," he said in a



JioCinema release.

Sable had clocked 8 minutes and 9.91 seconds to break his earlier national record while finishing sixth at the Paris Diamond League earlier this month.

At the Paris Olympics, he will face at least seven competitors who have run at better time than him this year.

The likes of legendary Indian athletes like Milkha Singh, Sriram Singh and PT Usha have inspired Sable to aim for an Olympic medal.

"Their performances at the world level have deeply inspired me. If my role models

can excel globally, so can I. I've been taught to focus on my own progress rather than others. My competition is with my timing," he said.

"My goal has always been self-improvement rather than focusing on the competition. This mindset has allowed me to break the national record ten times," said the reigning Asian Games gold medallist.

He said his silver medal winning performance at the 2022 Commonwealth Games gave him the confidence that he can compete against the best in the world.

"My aim at the Commonwealth Games was to compete against the Kenyan athletes. Finishing second by a fraction of a second gave me the confidence that we can compete against the best in the world," said Sable, who had broken Kenyan medal monopoly in 3000m steeplechase in the CWG.



## 704 wickets and out: England great Jimmy Anderson bows out of test cricket in win over West Indies

AP ■ LONDON

It's 704 wickets and out for Jimmy Anderson.

The most prolific fast bowler in test history bowed out of international cricket by helping England complete a win by an innings and 114 runs over the West Indies at Lord's on Friday.

The 41-year-old Anderson's 188th and last test ended with him taking 3-32 in the West Indies' second innings as they were dismissed for 136 a little over an hour into the third day's play.

One of those wickets came on Friday, with Anderson enticing an edge behind off Joshua Da Silva with a delivery that seamed away. It was classic Anderson - unlike the caught-and-bowled chance he dropped off Gudakesh Motie with England needing just one more wicket for victory.

He fell to his knees and covered his face with his hand.

Soon, he was walking off the

field at the home of cricket to a standing ovation after Gus Atkinson took the final wicket.

The morning had started with Anderson, who doesn't like being the center of attention, looking emotional after being given a guard of honor from both teams - and a first standing ovation from the crowd - when he came out at the start of the day's play.

Atkinson, who represents the future of English pace bowling, took two of the wickets after the Windies resumed on 79-6 - still 171 runs adrift of making England batting again - and had match figures of 12-106.

He became the first England bowler to get a 10-wicket haul in a test at home since Alec Bedser in 1946.

Anderson finished his test career four wickets behind the late Australia legspinner Shane Warne's tally of 708 wickets. Only one bowler has more than them: former Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan with 800.

## Indian hockey defender Jarmanpreet, who once served doping ban, geared up for Olympics debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Frustrating doping ban jolted Jarmanpreet Singh's career in 2016, but he has long forgotten that bitter episode and the defender is all geared up for his Olympics debut in Paris later this month.

Jarmanpreet, a regular member of the Indian hockey team in the last few years, was picked in the 16-member Indian team for the Paris Games.

"It was not easy. It was one of my darkest phases, with many uncertainties," said Jarmanpreet on the doping ban from 2016 to 2018.

"Players don't usually emerge

from a setback like this. To sit out of matches for two years is a big gap in the sport," he recalled.

Jarmanpreet was then a promising player on his way to playing for India at the Junior World Cup 2016 when he was slapped with the doping ban.

The Punjab player did not give up and served out the two-year period in exile before making a return to competitive hockey and then to the Indian senior team.

"But I was persistent and I knew I had to bounce back. I don't think I could have done this without a strong domestic structure where I could show



the selectors that I still had it in me," said Jarmanpreet, who is now an Income Tax officer,

in a Hockey India release.

"In 2018, after the Hockey India Senior Men National

Championship, I was among the 50 probables in the camp. Hockey India gave me a chance to rebuild my career. I was selected for the national programme for senior men where I was given an opportunity to catch up with my peers and make my senior India debut.

"They saw that potential in me and I didn't give up on my dream to play for India at the Olympic Games," he noted.

The 27-year-old has played in 98 international matches since making his India debut at the 2018 Champions Trophy in Breda, the Netherlands, where India won the silver medal.

He was a part of the Indian

team that won a gold medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023 and silver-winning squad at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Now in Switzerland where the Indian team is going through a mental conditioning camp, Jarmanpreet is excited and eager to experience his first outing in the Olympics.

"The journey so far with this team has been incredible. We have gone through the highs and lows as one strong unit. Now, we are focused on our goal and we are in the last block of our preparations.

"I am super excited and eager to start our campaign at the Paris Olympics," he said.