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₹1 cr fine, up to 10-yr jail for paper leak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the raging row over the entrance cum employment exams paper leaks, including the latest NEET, NET and CSIR, the Centre on Friday operationalised the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, that aims to curb malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations and entails provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to ₹one crore for offenders.

The Bill received the President's assent on February 13, but was enforced only on Friday. Besides Ministry of Education on Saturday constituted a high-level committee of experts led by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the National Testing Agency (NTA).

The seven-member committee will make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and the structure and functioning of the NTA, the Department of Higher Education in the ministry said.

It said the committee will submit its report to the Ministry within two months. Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor Professor B J Rao and former director of AIIMS Delhi Randeep Guleria are on the panel.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge termed the enforcement of the anti-paper leak law a "whitewash" and asserted that the BJP cannot evade its responsibility in "promoting corruption and education mafia".

Several Opposition political parties and student associations, including the Congress, have held protests across the country over alleged irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG and the UGC-NET. "More important are laws, systems, processes, and procedures to ensure that leaks don't happen in the first place," said Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh.

The National Testing Agency, which conducts the competitive exams, on Friday announced the postponement of the June edition of the Joint Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test, citing unavoidable circumstances and logistic issues.

It came two days after the agency cancelled the UGC-NET examination within 24 hours of its conduct saying the integrity of the exam had been compromised, and a massive row on NEET over alleged irregularities, with the issue now before the Supreme Court.

Activists under the banner of Yuva Shakti stage a protest over the alleged irregularities in NEET 2024 results and UGC-NET 2024 exam cancellation, in Patna, on Saturday PTI Photo

Bihar Police to verify seized NEET papers

PNS/AGENCIES ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Unit of Bihar Police has obtained NEET reference question papers to compare these with documents recovered during a search operation last month from a flat here and is also exploring the "possibility of conducting narco analysis and brain mapping tests" of accused in the case, sources said on Saturday.

They also indicated that the Enforcement Directorate might investigate the money laundering aspect of the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination -the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or NEET, conducted by the National Testing Agency in May.

"We had requested the NTA for the reference question papers after we began the probe last month. Finally, they did the needful. We will tally these papers with partially burnt papers seized from a Patna flat last month. This exercise is likely to be done before a forensic examination of such documents," an EOU source said.

Top officials of the EOU are likely to visit Delhi on Saturday to "discuss certain aspects of the ongoing probe with the senior officials of the Union Education Ministry and other concerned wings", he said.

"Based on EOU's FIR, the Enforcement Directorate may probe into the matter under several sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The Central agency is expected to identify proceeds of crime and initiate proceedings to attach properties belonging to the accused or suspects," said another source of the Economic Offences Unit.

Rijiju , Opp spar over Pro-tem Speaker

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the first Session of the 18th Lok Sabha, the NDA and the INDIA Bloc sparred on the issue of Pro-tem Speaker with the Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju accusing the Congress of resorting to lies and the Opposition threatening to refuse to join the panel of chairpersons in the House.

President Droupadi Murmu had appointed BJP leader and seven-term member Bhartruhari Mahtab as the Pro-tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha who is tasked with administering the oath and affirmation to the newly-elected members of the Lower House and presiding over the election of the Speaker.

The President had also named five senior members — K Suresh (Congress), T R Baalu (DMK), Radha Mohan Singh and Faggan Singh Kulaste (both BJP) and Sudip Bandyopadhyay (TMC) to assist Mahtab in the process that will take place over the first three days of the Lok Sabha Session commencing on June 24.

Congress has alleged that the Government has violated procedures and conventions and ignored the claim of eight-term member Suresh to the post of the Pro-tem Speaker, a claim dismissed as "misleading" by Rijiju.

On Saturday, Opposition sources said Suresh, Baalu and Bandyopadhyay may not join the panel of chairpersons to assist Pro-tem Speaker Mahtab in administering the oath to the newly-elected members of the Lok Sabha.

Rijiju had asserted that Mahtab was the senior-most in the House as he was elected for seven uninterrupted terms to the Lok Sabha, while Suresh, though a eight-term member, was not a member in 1998 and 2004.

Suresh had said his claim to the post of Pro-tem speaker was overlooked as he belonged to the Dalit community, remarks that were scoffed at by Rijiju.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala said the Congress had deliberately insulted a "tribal" Parliamentary Affairs Minister by lying on the issue of Pro-tem speaker.

"Congress has always insulted tribals. They called Droupadi Murmu Rashtrapatni and they even abused her," Poonawala said.

Rijiju said he may be the first tribal to occupy the post of Parliamentary Affairs Minister but he won't be intimidated by the threats and lies of Congress party.

"I will be bound by rules and will strictly follow Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'," he said.

Earlier, Congress leader K C Venugopal had described the overlooking of Suresh's claim to the Pro-tem Speaker post as an attempt at "destroying parliamentary norms". "I have said this before and say this now, the battle for saving our democracy and Constitution isn't over yet," Shiv Sena leader Aditya Thackeray said in a social media post.

Inside view of the new Parliament House File photo

Politics over water heats up as Delhi LG slams AAP Govt

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As Delhiites suffer acute water crisis and political parties indulge in slugfest over the issue, Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Saturday expressed "anguish" and accused the Aam Aadmi Party-led Government and its Ministers of turning the water crisis into an 'opportunity' to blame neighbouring States.

"The shrill discourse of the Ministers of the GNCTD over the last few weeks, has been distressing and questionable at various levels.

"Drinking water supply has become a challenge in the national Capital. Political leaders of Delhi have turned a crisis into an opportunity for blaming neighbouring States, with the sole aim of gaining political mileage," said Saxena, adding even as Haryana and the Delhi Jal Board itself reiterated day after day that all treatment plants were producing water, beyond their installed capacity, the AAP Government moved the SC against Haryana on May 30, 2024, only to be snubbed again with an advice by the court to request for Haryana's help.

Making these assertions, Saxena said drinking water supply has become a challenge in the national Capital in the backdrop of a searing heat wave, which has gripped northern India.

The States are obliged to release water as per agreements signed under this framework, he said in a statement on water crisis.

"At the same time, the city Government is under an obligation to ensure that this water resource is used efficiently to ensure equitable supplies across the city.

"Unfortunately, neither has the city Government, demonstrated seriousness in ensuring improvement in water networks and augmentation of capacity, nor has it chosen a path of dialogue," the LG said.

The Lieutenant-Governor's statement comes amid a heated war of words between the Governments of Delhi and Haryana over the acute water crisis in the Capital.

Delhi Water Minister Atishi is on indefinite fast to press the demand for additional water from the BJP ruled State Haryana. Atishi has claimed Haryana was releasing 100 MGD less water in Yamuna for Delhi since last two weeks, affecting 28 lakh people in the city.

The LG said the AAP Government resorts to litigation against him as well as the Central Government and other States and even its own departments.

Nearly 20 such cases have been filed by the AAP Government in HC and SC.

Residents collect drinking water from a tanker amid ongoing Delhi water crisis at Vivekananda Camp, Chanakyapuri, in New Delhi PTI File Photo

Focus on boosting India, Bangladesh economy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Saturday here reviewed the entire gamut of their bilateral ties during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Sheikh Hasina. They agreed to start negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement and prepared a futuristic vision for boosting overall relations. .

Hasina is the first foreign dignitary to pay official visit to New Delhi since Modi assumed charge for the first time earlier this month.

She was among the seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Modi and the Union Council of Ministers on June 9.

Addressing a joint news conference with his Bangladesh counterpart after talks at Hyderabad House, Modi announced that India will commence an e-medical visa facility to facilitate Bangladeshis seeking medical treatment to come to India. He also said both countries have agreed to open a new Assistant High Commission in Rangpur for the "convenience of the people of the North West region of Bangladesh."

Modi said the two countries are focusing on connectivity, commerce and collaboration. He said the two nations will enhance focus on digital and energy connectivity to spur their economies.

Hasina said India is Bangladesh's major neighbour and trusted friend. "Bangladesh greatly values its relations with India," she said and invited Modi to visit her country. "Come to Bangladesh to witness what all we have done and plan to do," she said.

Modi said after parleys with Hasina they discussed furthering defence ties, defence production, cooperation on counter-terrorism, management of the border and other issues, in their bilateral talks in New Delhi.

He said the neighbouring country is situated at the confluence of New Delhi's Neighbourhood First Policy, Act East Policy, Vision Sagar and Indo-Pacific Vision.

"To further strengthen our defence ties, we had detailed discussions from defence production to modernisation of armed forces. We have decided to strengthen our cooperation over counter-terrorism, fundamentalism and peaceful management of the border.

"Our vision for the Indian Ocean Region is the same. We welcome Bangladesh's decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. We will continue our cooperation at BIMSTEC and other regional and international forums," Modi said.

He further said the two countries have together completed many important projects for public welfare. "Trade in Indian rupees has started between the two countries. The world's longest river cruise on the Ganga river between India and Bangladesh has been successfully completed. The first cross-border friendship pipeline between India and Bangladesh has been completed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina before a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

New CM's decision

Corporations' Chairmen withdrawn

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

During the earlier BJD regime, Chairmen were appointed in different corporations in the State.

As the new BJP government found that "no progress was witnessed in the work culture and functioning of the different corporations by the appointment of these Chairmen, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday decided to relieve them from their responsibilities.

The Chairmen were mainly politicians of the BJD who were rehabilitated on political considerations.

Notably, political Advisors to the different government departments appointed by the BJD government had been withdrawn on Friday at the instance of the new Chief Minister.

Ratna Bhandar opening soon

PNS ■ PURI

The Ratna Bhandar of the Jagannath Temple here would be opened soon, said Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Saturday.

After witnessing the Hati Vesha of the Holy Trinity at the temple on the Snan Purnima along with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Harichandan told reporters that the last time the inventory of the Ratna Bhandar had taken 70 long days and this time it would take as many days too.

He said that preliminary discussions for opening of the Ratna Bhandar have been held and the date of its beginning would be announced "very soon".

In State

Rains, lightning predicted for next few days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as southwest monsoon covered most parts of Odisha, thunderstorm coupled with rain, lightning and gusty wind is likely to be witnessed in many areas of the State for the next few days, the Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday.

IMD Regional Director Manorama Mohanty said the intensity of rain may decrease for two days on June 23 and 24 and pick up from June 25 onwards.

The monsoon has already covered 24 districts of the State and is likely to advance into the rest six districts of Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Baleswar, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj soon.

Most parts of the State are likely to experience light to moderate rain/thundershower for the next one week.

The IMD has issued a Yellow warning of thunderstorm with lightning at some places of Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Dhenkanal, Angul, Nuapada, Balangir, Subarnapur, Boudh, Bargarh, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda districts in the next 24 hours.

Similarly, heavy rain is likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Gajapati, Ganjam and Kandhamal during the period.

CM to go on 2-day visit to native K'jhar from today

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will visit his village in Keonjhar district on Sunday for the first time after assuming charge as CM.

As per the itinerary released by the CMO, Majhi will hold road shows at different places during his two-day visit.

He will fly to Ghatagaon in the district from Bhubaneswar at 10.25 am on Sunday and participate in a road show from the Ghatagaon High School ground to the Maa Tarini Temple.

He will offer puja at the Tarini Temple in Ghatagaon and then move to Keonjhar town at around 1.10 pm. He will participate in another road show, a felicitation ceremony and a public meeting in the town and make a night halt there.

Majhi will go to his village Raikala in Keonjhar Sadar on Monday and take part in a road show from Raikala to Jhumpura before addressing a felicitation ceremony-cum-public meeting in the area.

He will interact with local people in his village and have lunch in his house before flying back to Bhubaneswar in the afternoon.

CM asks officials to remain alert for floods

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday directed the Water Resources Department officials to be in preparedness for probable floods during the monsoon in the State.

Presiding over a high-level review meeting, Majhi asked the officials to open 24×7 Control Rooms and take necessary measures for effective management of floods.

Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary of the department Anu Garg said the CM advised the officials to strengthen river embankments and focus on weak and vulnerable points.

"We informed the Chief Minister that we have already completed mock drills on the opening of gates at different dams. Our engineers and local Tehsildars are regularly checking the embankments for detection of any cracks so that urgent repairs can be taken up," she said.

Majhi also told the department officials to speed up the works of all delayed projects including mega lift irrigation, minor lift irrigation and deep bore-well and complete those early.

Pre-Budget Consultation in Delhi

Odisha pleads for promotion as an investment hub

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo on Saturday attended the Pre-Budget Consultation meeting chaired by Union Finance Minister Niramal Sitharaman. The meeting was held to take suggestions of Finance Ministers of all States and Union Territories for the ensuing Union Budget, 2024-25.

Odisha Principal Secretary, Finance Department, Vishal Dev accompanied the Singh Deo. A written memorandum containing some issues concerning the States in general and some issues specific to the economy and finances of Odisha which could be addressed through appropriate measures in the Union Budget, 2024-25 was submitted to Sitharaman.

A few of important issues were flagged by Singh Deo as follows:

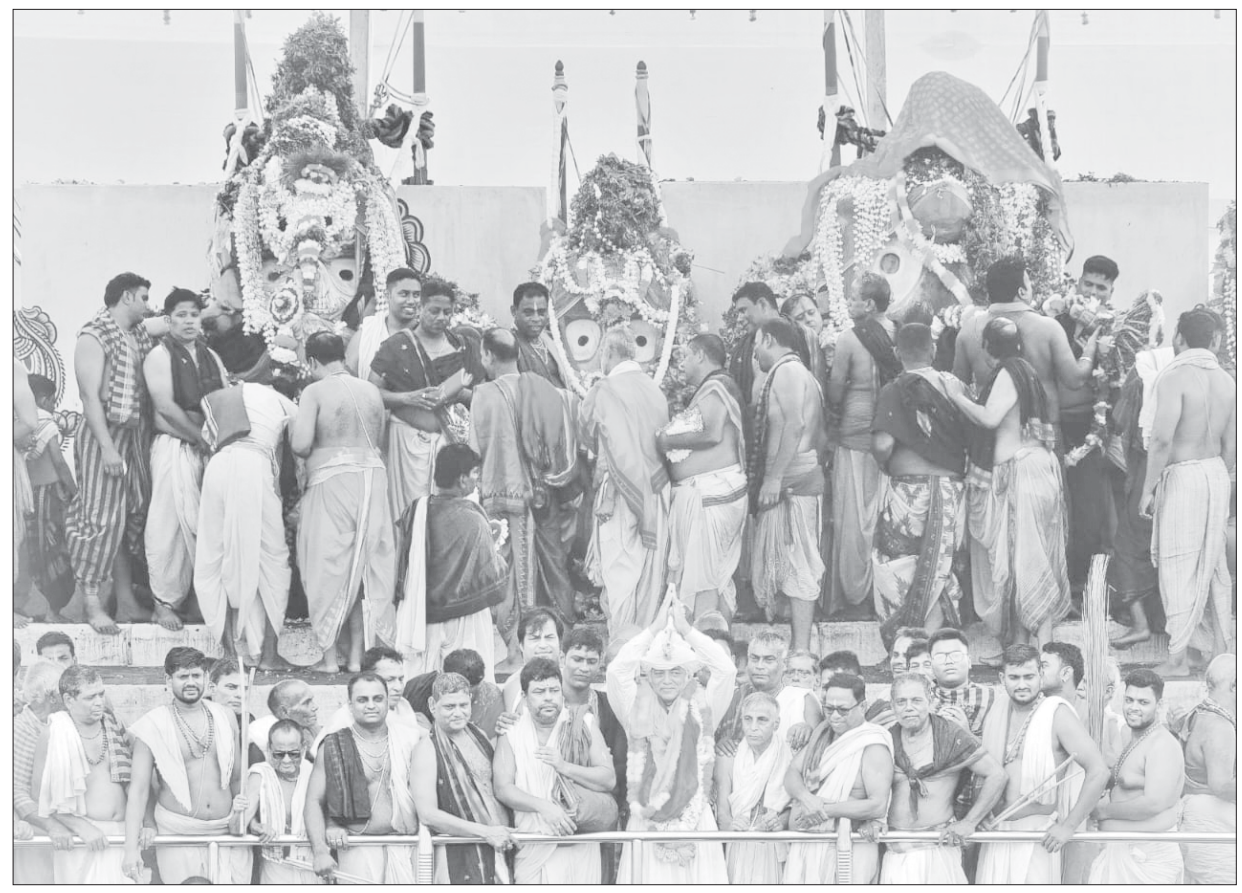
Support of the Union Government for creation of an enabling environment to attract international investors, semiconductor industries to Odisha; promotion of Odisha as an investment hub; expansion of the Paradip Port to propel growth in Odisha;

higher allocation under Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SACI), 2024-25 to further accelerate the State's infrastructure development; advance indication of the State-wise annual allocation under CSS schemes at the time of budget formulation which would enable the States to prepare their Budgets on a realistic basis and ensure timely and effective utilisation of funds; establishment of a second AIIMS at Sambalpur; expeditious completion of National Highways, specifically the Coastal Highway and Capital Region Ring Road (CRRR) projects in Odisha.

The other issues related to partial support from the Centre for implementation of the Subhadra sheme for promoting women welfare through entrepreneurship, ease of living and dignity for them;

sanction of fund for construction of at least 5 lakh houses for rural and urban areas in Odisha under PMAY; support of the Central Government for new city development and rapid urbanisation in Odisha; and addressing the power sector issues through inclusion of Odisha DISCOMs under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), financial support for adoption of new technologies such as green hydrogen and Central funding for Green Energy Corridor projects in Odisha.

Sitharaman assured to look into the demands raised and suggestions given.



On the occasion of the Deva Snan Purnima on Saturday, Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra take bath with 108 pots of scented water at the Snan Mandap and appear in Gajanan Vesha at the Jagannath Temple premises in Puri in the presence of lakhs of devotees. From Sunday onward, a fortnight-long Anasar festival of the Trinity will begin at the Alarnath Temple in Brahamagiri. Legend has it that the devotees will have darshan of Lord Alarnath and get the same result like that at the Jagannath Temple in Puri. ***Ranjan Ganguly: Pioneer***

M'bhanj MP to take oath in Santali

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Newly-elected Lok Sabha members, including 21 from Odisha, are slated to take oath in Parliament on June 24. While some of the 21 elected from Odisha are already in New Delhi, others have started leaving for the national capital for the oath-taking ceremony.

Ahead of his visit to Delhi, BJP leader Naba Charan Majhi, who has been elected from the Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha constituency, stated that he would take oath in Santali language.

The tribal leader further said that he would hold discussion with both the Centre and state government regarding steps required for the promotion and propagation of Santali language.

Majhi said he would work whole-heartedly for the spread of Santali and also speak to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the matter.

Notably, Ramachandra Hansdah had taken oath in Santali language in the Lok Sabha after getting elected on a BJD ticket from Mayurbhanj in 2014.

Samanta gets ISTE Lifetime Achievement Award

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 53rd session of the Indian Society for Technical Education (ISTE), the premier body of technical education in the country, commenced at the KIIT-DU here on Saturday with the conferment of the Lifetime Achievement Award to KIIT and KISS founder Dr Achyuta Samanta.

The conclave is being hosted by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) and supported by the KIIT-DU.

The ISTE honorary fellowship was given away to Director of IIT Delhi Rangan Banerjee; Regional Director of VTU Prof Baswaraj Gadgay; Adviser to AICTE Rajendra Baliram Kakde; Senior Advisor to the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority Dr Anil Kumar and Maj Gen (Retd) Maj Mahesh Kumar Hada.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Samanta reminisced about the longstanding relationship between KIIT & KISS and ISTE spanning over 24 years. He recalled how KIIT and KISS, established in 1997 and granted deemed university status in 2004, had hosted the ISTE convention in 2001 when KIIT was merely four years old.

This year's convention, themed "Viksit Bharat 2047: Alignment with Higher Education Institutions," aims to align higher education with the vision of a developed India by 2047. Dr Samanta expressed optimism about the growth and development of the Indian education system, highlighting that numerous institutions in India are now achieving world rankings. He underscored the importance of the National Education Policy (NEP), asserting that its proper implementation would be instrumental in realising the dream of a Viksit Bharat.

INBRIEF

YAMINI GETS ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF OSEPA PROJECT DIRECTOR

Bhubaneswar: Senior IAS officer Yamini Sarangi has been given additional charge of State Project Director (SPD) of the Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) as OSEPA Project Director Parul Patawari has been allowed to avail LTC to her home town Jaipur in Rajasthan from June 24. Yamini Sarangi, SPD of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS), is allowed to remain in additional charge of SPD, OSEPA, and Member Secretary of Mo School with financial and administrative powers in addition to her own duties till Patawari joins her duty.

SAKAR OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Bhubaneswar: SAKAR observed the International Yoga Day with the children of Mundasahi Basti, Pokhariput here. SAKAR secretary Swarupa welcomed the participants to do yoga at the

SAKAR bridge course centre. Adinarayan Setupathi explained about the importance of yoga in daily life of children and adults alike. He also made the children to do different yoga postures and explained about the benefits. Teachers were asked to inculcate yoga as a regular habit of children. A total of 46 children attended the programme.

'Let Mahanadi row be solved outside tribunal'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a meeting of the Mahanadi Bachao Andolan and Odisha Nadi Suraksha Samiti here on Saturday, concern was expressed over the Mahanadi river water dispute and the condition of other rivers in the State.

In the meeting presided over by Andolan covenor Sudarsan Das, opinion was expressed that the Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh should be resolved outside the court through mutual understanding. At present, the same party is in power at the Centre, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. So, through discussion the dispute can be resolved. The Odisha Chief Minister, who holds the Water Resources portfolio, should make efforts in this regard, demanded the speakers.

Currently, the conditions of rivers are not healthy. Many of the small rivers are drying up. Some of the rivers' water is highly polluted. So, the State Government should formulate a water policy and form a Water Commission to implement it, the speakers opined.

On the occasion, a 16-member committee was constituted for the conservation and restoration of the rivers.

Among others, Gandhain Prahallad Sinha, former Minister Debi Prasad Mishra and human rights activist Manoj Jena were present.

In Cuttack

2 youths die as bike hits truck

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Two persons were killed and another sustained critical injuries when the motorcycle by which they were travelling rammed into a stationary truck on a bridge in Cuttack on Saturday.

As per sources, the mishap took place on the Madhusudan Bridge connecting CDA Sector 11 and Nuapatna in the morning.

While two youths died on the spot, an injured one was admitted to a nearby hospital. His condition was stated to be critical.

On being informed, a police team reached the spot and initiated a probe into the accident.

The identities of the deceased and injured persons were yet to be ascertained.

CSIR-IMMT holds 10th Int'l Yoga Day

Practical session held; yoga gurus felicitated

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) on Friday marked the 10th International Yoga Day with a vibrant celebration in its campus. The event was conducted under the chairmanship of Director, CSIR IMMT, Bhubaneswar Dr Ramanuj Narayan. The theme of the event was "Yoga for self and society"

The programme started with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony and the national anthem.

Through his inaugural speech chief guest Pranta Pradhan (Odisha) of Bharatiya Yoga Sansthan, Suresh Kumar Mohapatra motivated the audience and emphasized on the impact of yoga in everyday life and how it should be incorporated to the quality of one's day-to-day life.

Director Dr Narayan felicitated yoga instructors from Bharatiya Yoga Sansthan Manjula Mishra, KV Apprao, Anusuya Behera and Pragyan Pattanik.

Dr Narayan earlier extended a warm welcome to all dignitaries and participants, expressing gratitude for their presence. The audience participated in an interactive session and discussed the importance of the International Yoga Day and the role of yoga in day-to-day life. Scientists and staff members of CSIR-IMMT actively participated in the programme, guided by yoga instructors.

9th Bhubaneswar Int'l Trade Fair kicks off

To continue till July 1

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 9th edition of the Bhubaneswar International Trade Fair-2024 kicked off at the Janata Maidan on Friday. Sports, Youth Development and Higher Education Minister Suraj Suryasbhuhi inaugurated the program, accompanied by Rajya Sabha MP Sulta Deo and Mayor Sulochana Das.

MSME Director Pawan Gupta, Chief Operating Officer of Uttarakhand Hospitals Mans Bukher, Deputy Director of Jupiter Group Vasaranjan Pange, State Head of Freedom Oil, Amiya Dhal, Managing Director of Gupta Events, Suzy Kumar Gupta, among others were present.

An array of exhibitors, hailing from various districts and countries, gathered to showcase their special items.

The trade fair, which will continue till July 1 opens daily from 2 pm to 10 pm. It offers a diverse selection of exhibits, including real estate, construction products, furniture, interiors, home decor, home appliances, lifestyle and apparel, automobiles, antiques, Indian handicrafts and crafts, boutique and beauty, and national and international antiques, boasting of over 4,000 national and international articles.

Moreover, each evening will be filled with captivating cultural programmes, such as fashion shows, talent hunts, rock bands, and performances by famous Hollywood and Bollywood artists.

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Infected water linked to jaundice in Sambalpur

NIMAIN CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

Health officials in Sambalpur have identified contaminated water as a significant factor in the recent outbreak of jaundice in four city slums. A total of 68 jaundice cases have been reported so far with two patients hospitalised on Friday. A majority of the patients are below 15 years, said Additional District Medical and Public Health Officer (ADMO) Ashok Das.

Residents of the affected slums have been consuming contaminated water and several ice candy factories and street vendors selling cold drinks have also tested positive for contamination. The alarming rise in cases has prompted Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to call for stringent actions against those responsible.

The father of an infected child shared his concerns, saying, "Our son showed all the symptoms of jaundice. We did a blood test and he tested positive. Now he is under medication."

Mahendra Nanda, a health officer in the Sambalpur Municipal Corporation (SMC), stated, "We have been regularly visiting the area and taking cognisance of the matter. Only these four areas have jaundice cases. We are conducting raids on every food outlet in the area. If any vendor or shop is found selling contaminated food or drinks, we will seal their shop for seven days."

ADMO Das provided further insights into the source of contamination, "The ice candies samples have tested positive, these factories may be making candies from contaminated water. The supply water is also below-standard. Some water samples have been found infected. In Kumbharpada, a few supply water pipes passing through drains have leakages. In negative pressure, the outside water is getting contaminated into the pipe."

Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Sujata Rani Mishra said, "There are multiple sources contributing to the jaundice cases in the area. We can't say only one source is completely the factor. However, the water candies and cold drinks sold on roadsides have been found infected. Some of the water samples have reported positive. Fast food samples have also reported infected. Multiple sources of infection are contributing to this jaundice outbreak."

Yoga Day held by VDU, J'pore civic body

PNS ■ JEYPORE

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) unit of Vikram Dev University, Jeypore, organised the International Yoga Day under guidance of commanding officer Priti Ranjan Dash. Vice-Chancellor Prof Devi Prsad Misra of Vikram Dev University inaugurated the event with a brief speech on the importance of yoga in maintaining physical and mental health.

Yoga instructor Anirudha Sahoo led the participants through various yoga asanas (postures) and pranayama (breathing exercises). An interactive session was held where participants could ask questions and receive guidance on incorporating yoga into their daily routines. Over 200 students and faculty members participated in the yoga session.

The Jeypore Municipality also organised the Day at the Jeypore park where MLA Tara prasad Bahinpati graced the occasion as chief guest along with SDPO Ankit Verma and BDO Shakti Mohapatra. Local residents joined the event, reflecting the widespread appeal and recognition of yoga.

'Yoga helps cultivate balanced attitude'

Yoga Day held in DAV, K Nagar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The DAV Public School, Kalinga Nagar observed the 10th International Day of Yoga in its premises on June 21. The campus reverberated with the chanting of 'Omm' early in the morning amidst which all the staff members, students and parents participated in the observation and practiced different postures of yoga.

Joining as the chief guest, eminent yoga personality Kabi Prasad Mohapatra of Bharatiya Yoga Sansthan highlighted the relevance of yoga in order to live a healthy and happy life. While addressing the gathering, Mohapatra said, "Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day-to-day life and endows skill in the performance of one's actions."

In a formal meeting organised to mark the occasion, Principal Balaram Mohapatra advised the students to inculcate in them the healthy habit of creating consciousness and achieving personal as well as collective wellbeing through yoga. An array of activities was organised among the students including parents to sensitise them about the importance of yoga in human life. The entire programme was arranged smoothly by the yoga teacher Subhashree Roul, Physical Education Teacher Dr Prakash Chandra Panigrahi, A Ravishankar, Music Teacher Rajkishore Gochhayat and Nigamananda Mishra.

In Baleswar

Man kills parents over property feud

Buries bodies to destroy evidence

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A man allegedly killed his parents at Garasingha village under the Simulia police station in Baleswar district and buried their bodies, to destroy evidence.

The accused identified as Ramesh Behera is absconding after the incident. It is alleged that the accused killed his parents over a property feud in a drunken state.

Reports said Prabhakar (90) and his wife Champ (75) had gone missing four days ago. Their daughter Mamata Mallick lodged a missing complaint at the Simulia police station accusing her brother Ramesh of killing her parents and hiding their bodies.

Based on her complaint, police launched an investigation and subsequently recovered the body of Prabhakar near his house while Champa's body was yet to be traced.

The recovery of his body was carried out in the presence of a magistrate and a forensic team.

Police suspect that Ramesh buried the bodies of his parents to destroy the evidence against him before fleeing the scene. It was suspected that he might have dumped his mother's body in a nearby pond or buried it somewhere else, sources added.

Importance of yoga underlined at CUO

PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Central University of Odisha (CUO) marked the 10th International Day of Yoga with a grand celebration under the theme "Yoga for Self and Society" on June 21.

The event was inaugurated by its Vice-Chancellor Prof Chakradhar Tripathi. Registrar I/c Prof NC Panda and yoga expert Jaya Krishna Padhan were present.

In his opening address, Prof Tripathi highlighted the importance of integrating yoga into daily routines. Registrar I/c Prof Panda discussed the significance of this year's theme. A highlight of the event was a yoga workshop conducted by Jaya Krishna Padhan, who led participants through various asanas. Assistant Professor of Economics Dr Minati Sahoo gave the welcome address, while Assistant Professor of Mathematics Dr Sarbeswar Barik gave the vote of thanks. The university faculty, staff, and students, besides teachers and children from Government High School, Sunabeda and Jagannath Bidya Pitha, Sunabeda attended.

'Eradicating sickle cell disease is a multifaceted challenge'

Awareness drive held in Brahmapur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Ganjam District Health Department organised an awareness campaign on sickle cell anaemia and anemia at Brahmapur on Wednesday.

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a genetic blood disorder that leads to the production of abnormally shaped red blood cells. Unlike typical round cells, sickle-shaped cells can cause blockages in blood flow, leading to pain, infections, and organ damage. In India, particularly in regions like south Odisha, SCD is a significant health concern due to its high prevalence among tribal populations.

"June 19 is observed as World Sickle Cell Day and the Central Government has announced a goal to make India free from sickle cell anemia by 2047. The campaign aims to raise awareness and conduct screenings for individuals over 40 years old in affected regions. As part of the initiative, a special campaign is being conducted from June 19 to July 3," Brahmapur MP representative Dr Subashchandra Sahu said .

Key messages for awareness campaigns include understanding symptoms, promoting genetic counselling, and informing about management and treatment. Communities are educated on recognizing the signs of SCD, such as severe pain episodes, frequent infections, and anemia. The importance of genetic testing and counselling for at-risk couples is emphasized to prevent the birth of affected children. Information about the availability of treatments, such as regular blood transfusions, hydroxyurea therapy, and pain management strategies, is also disseminated management.

So far, 23 camps have been organized in Ganjam district, with screenings conducted for 3,000 individuals from Kandhamal and Gajapati district. 186 people under 25 years age were screened using dried blood spot methods, according to the district health department. The event saw the participation of south Odisha-level consultants, ANMs, ASHA workers, nursing officers, nursing college students, and trainees from ANMTC.

Eradicating Sickle Cell Disease is a multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive approach involving awareness, healthcare infrastructure improvement, community engagement, and strong policy support. By addressing these areas, it is possible to significantly reduce the burden of SCD and improve the lives of those affected by this debilitating disease. With sustained efforts and collaboration among stakeholders, south Odisha can move closer to a future free from Sickle Cell Disease, District Chief Medical and Public Health Officer Dr. Umashankar Mishra said.

The event was graced by Brahmapur Municipal Corporation Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai as the chief guest. Other notable attendees included the District Welfare Officer, MLA Representative Bikram Keshari Panda, Additional District Public Health Officer (VBD) Dr Santosh Padhi, Additional District Public Health Officer (Leprosy) Dr Anil Rath, District Medical Officer Dr Bishwambar Behera, and DMRC Shakti Kumar Digal among others.

In Baleswar

Curfew partially lifted; 75 held till now

PNS ■ BALESWAR

With normalcy gradually returning in the violence-hit areas, the Baleswar district administration partially lifted curfew in Baleswar Municipality on Saturday.

While curfew has been lifted from the Industrial police station area, the relaxation period has been increased in the Shadevkhunta and Town police station areas.

So far, a total of 75 persons, including several juveniles, have been apprehended in connection with the incident and 19 cases registered.

All the arrests were made on the basis of evidence.

To keep an eye on mischiefmongers, surveillance would be made through drones in the violence-affected areas. But internet would be soon made available to the broadband users, said Baleswar district Collector Asis Thakre and SP Sagarika Nath.

JSWBPSL holds Yoga Day in S'pur

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The JSWBPSL celebrated the International Yoga Day on June 21 with the theme "Yoga for Self and Society."

The event, graced by President and WTD, JSWBPSL Anil Kumar Singh, aimed to promote physical and mental well-being through Yoga. The session included various yoga postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and meditation techniques. The participants engaged themselves in the practice, experiencing a sense of calmness, rejuvenation, and enhanced focus.

The company arranged for healthy refreshments and ensured a comfortable environment, enabling participants to fully immerse themselves in the practice without any distractions. The event not only promoted physical fitness and mental well-being but also served as a reminder of the company's dedication to fostering a healthy and harmonious work culture, reflecting the universal appeal and significance of yoga in modern lifestyles.

AI in biosciences to reshape healthcare, research profoundly

VANITA BISWAL

AI is reshaping the bio sciences landscape, offering novel methodologies and tools to comprehend and manipulate biological systems. Its impact extends across diverse domains such as drug discovery, genomics, personalised medicine, and diagnostics. Through rapid and precise analysis of extensive datasets, AI is revolutionizing the way researchers and clinicians navigate intricate biological challenges.

The traditional drug discovery process is characterised by its lengthy duration and substantial costs, often spanning more than a decade and requiring significant financial resources. Traditional drug discovery involves a systematic process of identifying compounds or molecules that have the potential to treat a specific disease or condition. This process typically begins with target identification, where scientists pinpoint a biological target (such as a protein or enzyme) involved in the disease pathway. Once a target is identified, researchers screen large libraries of chemical compounds or natural products to find molecules that interact with the target in a desired way. This is often done through in vitro assays or computer simulations.

AI stands poised to revolutionise this paradigm by drastically accelerating the identification and advancement of novel drugs. Machine learning algorithms can analyse vast chemical libraries to predict the likelihood of molecules binding to specific targets, thereby prioritising compounds for further experimental validation. Additionally, AI-driven virtual screening approaches accelerate the discovery of lead compounds with therapeutic potential. Virtual screening is a computational technique used in drug discovery to rapidly assess large libraries of compounds.

Clinical trial process is another significant part of the drug discovery and its impact on human beings. A clinical trial is a form of clinical investigation where participants are assigned to different groups and receive one or more interventions as per the protocol. This enables researchers to assess how these interventions impact a particular health condition. AI helps in designing better clinical trials by identifying suitable patient populations and predicting outcomes, thus increasing the efficiency of the trials.

AI-powered methods facilitate the process of repurposing drugs by pinpointing existing medications with untapped therapeutic benefits for different conditions. Through machine learning algorithms, vast datasets encompassing information, patient records, and drug repositories are analysed to forecast novel connections between drugs and diseases. This approach unveils latent pharmacological effects, accelerating the discovery of fresh applications for established medications.

AI algorithms examine medical images like MRI, CT scans, and X-rays to swiftly and precisely identify abnormalities such as tumours, fractures, or neurological conditions, surpassing the accuracy and speed of traditional diagnostic techniques. Digital pathology involves converting glass slides of tissue samples into digital images that can be viewed, analysed, and shared using computers or digital devices. This technology enables pathologists to examine samples remotely, collaborate more effectively, and integrate image data with patient information. It typically includes high-resolution scanning of slides followed by storing and analysing digital images using specialised software. AI-driven digital pathology systems enhance diagnostic precision, particularly in diseases like cancer, by evaluating tissue samples automatically.

Digital pathology offers several advantages, such as streamlined workflow efficiency, enhanced accessibility to archived slides for research or consultation, and the ability to achieve more accurate and standardised diagnoses. Moreover, it facilitates the implementation of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms for advanced image analysis, assisting pathologists in identifying patterns or anomalies that might not be readily detectable using traditional methods.

Biomarkers serve multiple functions in medicine and biology, including diagnosing diseases, tracking disease progression, predicting responses to treatment, and evaluating overall health status. Traditional methods depend on well-established laboratory techniques and the expertise of trained personnel. They can be laborious, particularly when handling numerous samples or executing multi-step assay procedures. In contrast, AI for biomarker detection employs sophisticated computational tools to analyse extensive biological datasets. This approach aims to enhance precision, streamline operations, and facilitate the discovery of new biomarkers crucial for diagnosing diseases, predicting outcomes, or monitoring treatments. AI-driven biomarker detection can accelerate the analysis process, leading to faster identification and validation of potential biomarkers.

In traditional methods, synthetic genes and metabolic pathways are designed using established biological and biochemical knowledge. This process heavily depends on scientists' expertise to choose genes, devise sequences, and foresee their interactions within cellular environments. Experimentation entails a sequence of steps, such as gene synthesis, cloning, introducing them into host organisms, and iterative testing to refine performance. Each cycle demands considerable time and resources to achieve the intended results. AI methods harness computational power and predictive modelling to streamline the design, prediction, and optimisation of synthetic genes and metabolic pathways. This approach allows for a more efficient and effective exploration of design options, potentially leading to the discovery of innovative solutions in synthetic biology.

Ensuring AI models are devoid of biases that could skew healthcare outcomes stands as a pivotal challenge. Safeguarding the confidentiality of sensitive patient data utilised in AI training and analysis is imperative to uphold trust. Crafting AI systems with transparent and interpretable decision-making processes is essential for their integration into clinical settings.

The field of structural biology has witnessed a paradigm shift through precise predictions of protein structures, thus catalysing drug discovery and enhancing our comprehension of disease mechanisms. Tailoring cancer treatment recommendations on an individual basis is achieved through meticulous analysis of extensive medical literature and patient records.

The ongoing evolution of AI in biosciences holds the potential to reshape healthcare and biomedical research profoundly. By leveraging advanced computational techniques, AI empowers scientists and healthcare providers to uncover novel insights, innovate targeted therapies, and provide personalised care at an unprecedented level. However, navigating ethical challenges will be crucial in harnessing AI's full benefits and ensuring its responsible integration into global healthcare systems.

(Biswal is guest faculty in Zoology, Vikram Dev University, Jeypore)

Hasina invites Indian businesses to invest in Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has invited Indian businesses to invest in the country's special economic zones, highlighting the huge potential for bilateral economic cooperation.

Addressing Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) members on Friday evening, Hasina said both India and Bangladesh should work together to do business.

"All over India, there is a huge market so both the countries can work jointly and share our experiences. There is a good opportunity to do business," Hasina said, stressing that doing business is a key part of the bilateral relationship. She added that high importance is being given to working with India to fulfil the needs of the people.

The prime minister mentioned that she wanted to make the economy of Bangladesh stronger and more sustainable. She also stated that Bangladesh will work on bigger ports, waterways, rail and road connectivity.

Sanjiv Puri, President, CII said Bangladesh is India's land bridge to the vibrant regions of Southeast Asia, and Bangladesh and India can address the market together at a time when supply chains are shifting. He also mentioned that in agriculture, the two nations can set up joint ventures between private sectors.

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said that to drive economic engagement, CII plans to take a CEOs delegation to Bangladesh later this year.

During the industry interaction, business members from India and Bangladesh highlighted several sectors of joint collaborations, including increasing the supply of energy to Bangladesh with a special emphasis on hydropower and creating more energy transmission lines to Bangladesh.

They also spoke about education and skill development in Bangladesh through telecommunications solutions. Other areas of collaboration such as agriculture, trade, and IT were also discussed.

BJP demands immediate resignation of TN Minister over hooch tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday demanded the immediate resignation of Tamil Nadu Prohibition and Excise Minister S Muthusamy over a recent hooch tragedy in the state and accused the ruling DMK of shielding the culprits. The saffron party also demanded a probe into the incident by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Several people died after consuming spurious liquor in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi while many are undergoing treatment at local hospitals.

Addressing a press conference here, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla described the deaths as "state-sponsored murder" and held the ruling DMK in the southern state "solely responsible" for the tragedy.

"So far, 53 individuals have died and a majority of them belonged to the Scheduled Castes. Instead of taking action on this state-sponsored murder, the DMK continues to shield the villains of this ghastly crime," Poonawalla said.

Referring to similar incidents in the state in the past, he alleged that there is a nexus between the liquor mafia and DMK leaders and demanded a CBI probe into it.

Poonawalla also said the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) should take suo-motu cognisance of the incident and issue notices to the Tamil Nadu government and state police chief, asking who is responsible for the deaths. "The BJP demands the immediate resignation of Tamil Nadu Prohibition and Excise Minister Muthusamy for an impartial investigation into the incident," he said, asking why Chief Minister M K Stalin is not handing over the probe to the CBI.

Poonawalla also targeted the Congress and other constituents of the INDIA bloc over their "silence" on the issue.

"(Congress leaders) Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who spoke about Dalits and south India umpteen number of times during the (Lok Sabha) election, have not uttered a word on this issue. This means their concern for south India and the members of the Scheduled Castes is cosmetic," he said.

Another BJP spokesperson, Anil Antony, also slammed the DMK and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) over the hooch tragedy, alleging that the response and actions of the Tamil Nadu government are "lackadaisical" and indicate "a clear collusion" of the state authority with the liquor mafia.

Defer implementation of three new criminal laws, as Bills bulldozed through Parliament: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday demanded that the enforcement of the three criminal laws, which are to come into force from July 1, be deferred, saying the Bills were "bulldozed" through Parliament.

In a post on X, Ramesh said the implementation of the Bills be deferred to enable a thorough review and re-examination by a reconstituted Standing Committee on Home Affairs as they were passed at a time when 146 MPs had been suspended.

"On Dec 25 2023, the President of India had given her assent to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023,the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023. The three far-reaching Bills had been bulldozed through Parliament without proper debate and discussion,

and at a time when 146 MPs had been suspended from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha," Ramesh said.

"Earlier the Bills had been bulldozed through the Standing Committee on Home Affairs without detailed interactions with stakeholders across the country and completely ignoring the written and very detailed dissent notes of a number of MPs belonging to different political parties, including the Indian National Congress, who were members of the Standing Committee," he said. Ramesh said the three new laws are to come into effect from July 1, 2024, and the Congress is of the firm opinion that the date should be deferred to enable a thorough review and re-examination of the laws by the reconstituted Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

He said the panel should have more extensive and meaningful consultations with various legal experts and organisations "who have serious concerns on the three laws as they stand", after which it should be scrutinised by the 18th Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as well.

On Friday, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding deferment of the implementation of the three criminal laws, saying they were "hurriedly passed". Similar demands have been made by the DMK as well.

New Roojh app for appointments at All India Institute of Ayurveda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Patients visiting the All India Institute of Ayurveda at Sarita Vihar in the national Capital no longer need to stand in long queues to get their token numbers to get the appointments with the doctors. They can now do this conveniently from their homes using the Roojh app, saving valuable time and resources.

An autonomous health institute under the Union Health Ministry, the hospital serves a daily influx of 2000 to 2500 patients who seek benefits from its 42 different OPD services.Previously, due to the lack of an online appointment system, patients had to endure long waits to obtain their tokens.

"In response to this issue, the hospital recently launched the 'Roojh' app. The primary objective of this app is to eliminate long waiting periods for patients and simplify the appointment booking process,

enabling common patients to easily avail treatment," said an official from the AIIA.

One can download and install the 'Roojh' app from Google Play Store or Apple Store. After installing the app, users need to create a login, for which an OTP will be sent to their mobile.

Through a few simple steps, users can create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA), ensuring secure storage of their medical records for future use.

Post registration, patients receive a token number, which facilitates easy creation of their OPD card, said the official.

The AIIA has also set up a health desk to assist elderly and other patients. The app can be used from Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM while on Saturdays, this facility is available from 8:00 AM to 10:30 AM.

Dr. (Prof.) Tanuja Nesari, Director of the institute, said, "We are committed to providing excellent services to patients, and this ABHA ID marks a new change that will protect patients from inconveniences during sun, rain, and cold weather. We will be able to serve patients well."

Recently, the institute also initiated the operation of new counters to reduce the time spent distributing medicines. These steps will not only benefit patients in the future but also make treatment possible for a large number of patients.

"The launch of the 'Roojh' app is an important step that will assist patients in receiving better healthcare services and free them from long waiting periods.

This initiative by the All India Institute of Ayurveda will not only save patients' time but also provide convenient and effective healthcare services," Sharmila Sharma, a patient of diabetes said adding that by following ayurvedic medication her condition is now better managed.

WHO's global warning over fake weight-loss, diabetes medications

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has for the first time issued a global warning regarding counterfeit versions of popular weight-loss and diabetes medications containing semaglutide, the active ingredient in Novo Nordisk's Wegovy and Ozempic. The move followed reports of fake semaglutide documented across all geographical regions since 2022.

Fake drugs could be harmful and if they do not have the necessary raw components, can lead to health complications resulting from unmanaged blood glucose levels or weight, the WHO said in a statement here. In view of escalating demand and falsification reports, the WHO said that it is now developing rapid guidelines for the potential use of GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RAs) like

semaglutides in treating obesity among adults.

"Counterfeit drugs may lack essential active ingredients or contain undisclosed substances like insulin, posing severe health risks such as uncontrolled blood glucose levels, particularly hazardous for diabetes patients," WHO Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines and Health Products, Dr. Yukiko Nakatani said and stressed the importance of avoiding suspicious medicines.

Dr Nakatani also advocated for their immediate cessation and reporting to relevant authorities.

The WHO said patients can protect themselves by using prescriptions from licensed physicians to buy the medications. The agency said patients also should avoid buying the drugs from unfamiliar sources, especially online.

Semaglutides are crucial for managing type 2 diabetes and reducing cardiovascular risks. Typically administered weekly via injection or daily in tablet form, these medications also aid weight loss by suppressing appetite.

Despite their efficacy, their high cost renders them unsuitable for widespread public health programs aimed at ensuring broad access to treatment in resource-limited settings.

To protect themselves from falsified medicines and their harmful effects, patients who are using these products can take actions such as buying medicines with prescriptions from licensed physicians and avoid buying medicines from unfamiliar or unverified sources, such as those that may be found online, the global health body said.

People should always check packaging and expiry dates of medicines when they buy them, and use the products as prescribed. In the case of injectable semaglutides, patients should ensure they are stored in the refrigerator, it added. All notifications on falsified medicines can be sent to WHO via rapidalert@who.int.

Govt has ruined future of crores of youth: Priyanka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Amid outcry against alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination NEET and also the cancellation of the UGC-NET examination, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday launched a scathing attack on the government over exam paper leaks, saying the issue has become a national problem under the BJP rule which has "ruined the future" of crores of youth.

In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said the Congress demands that strict action be taken over the "NEET scam" so that 24 lakh students get justice.

Her statement came on the day, the CBI questioned a man in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar in connection with the UGC-NET paper leak case

The CBI had registered an FIR into the UGC-NET paper leak case on Thursday against unidentified people on a reference from the Union Education Ministry. In another post in Hindi on X, she wrote, "In the last five years, papers of 43 recruitment exams have been leaked in the country. Paper leak has become a national problem of our country under BJP rule which has ruined the future of crores of youth so far."

"India is the youngest country in the world. We have the largest youth population. Instead of making these youth skilled and capable, the BJP government is making them weak," she alleged.

Crores of talented students study hard day and night, prepare for different exams, parents bear the burden of studies by sacrificing everything, Priyanka Gandhi said.

"Children wait for years for a vacancy to come. When a vacancy comes, there is the cost of filling the form, the cost of going for the exam, and finally the whole effort is wasted due to corruption. The BJP's corruption is weakening the country," she added.

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday had attacked the Centre over the alleged irregularities in NEET and exam paper leaks issue, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "psychologically collapsed" post-elections and will now struggle to run the government.

He had also said the main reason for paper leaks was that educational institutions had been captured by the BJP and its parent organisation RSS. He asserted that paper leaks will not stop unless that is reversed.

The UGC-NET-2024 exam for the selection of junior research fellows, assistant professors and PhD scholars was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on June 18 in two shifts across the country.

Shah launches programme to fast-track immigration process

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday launched a special programme under which the immigration process of pre-verified Indian nationals and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders will be fast-tracked.

The Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) is a "visionary initiative" by the government, thoughtfully designed for Indian nationals and OCI cardholders, the official said.

Eligible individuals will need to apply online and submit their biometrics (fingerprint and facial image) along with other required information as specified in the application form.

The FTI registration will be valid for a maximum of five years or until the validity of the passport, whichever comes first, he said.

Approved applications would receive a message to schedule an appointment to provide their biometrics details. Applicants may provide their biometrics at designated international airports in India or the nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) according to the prior appointment schedule. Biometrics is compulsory for the completion

of the application processing, the official said.

The applicants may ensure a minimum passport validity of at least six months while applying for the FTI-TTP. The membership of programmer will be co-terminus with passport validity, he said.

The applicant needs to provide the current residential address to avoid the rejection of the application, another official said.

Incorrect or false information, concealing any material facts in the application form shall make the application liable for rejection. Those applicants will not be registered for the FTI-TTP whose biometrics, for any technical reason cannot be captured, the official said. The FTI-TTP aims to revolutionise people's travel experience, making it faster, easier, and more secure, he said.

This initiative showcases the government's commitment to enhance travel convenience and efficiency for everyone, the official said. Registration under FTI will be completed after necessary verifications and confirmation of eligibility, he said.

Applicants will be registered after their identity has been successfully authenticated through mobile OTP and email verification. The Union home ministry also shared a support help desk email ID -- india.Ftittp-boi@mha.Gov.In.

MeitY kicks off India AI Mission, invites institutes to nominate students undertaking projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has launched the IndiaAI Mission with a budget of Rs 10,372 crore and started inviting nominations from top institutes, such as IITs, NITs etc, for students who are undertaking projects in artificial intelligence (AI), according to reports.

Engineering students pursuing B.Tech or M.Tech degrees at colleges ranked in the top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework will be eligible to receive AI fellowships.

The ministry will provide Rs 1 lakh in three instalments to the B.Tech students who are accepted, while the M.Tech students will get Rs 2 lakh funding in four tranches of Rs 50,000 each, the reports mentioned. In a letter addressed to 50 engineering institutes by IndiaAI Mission CEO Abhishek Singh, the ministry has asked each institute to nominate 10 students from each category who are undertaking AI projects.

"This fellowship support will supplement existing fellowships and cover the duration of their project: one year for B.Tech students, and two years for M.Tech students," said the letter."This support is instrumental in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thereby ensuring a workforce proficient in the essential skills needed to progress in the field of AI," it added.

To be eligible for fellowships, B.Tech students must have secured an overall 80 per cent mark or equivalent grade in the last semester and the nominated M.Tech students should be pursuing postgraduate studies in AI-related courses and should be undertaking a thesis on AI and related subjects, as per the ministry.

Kanishka bombing probe 'active & ongoing': Canadian police

PTI ■ OTTAWA

Investigations into the bombing of the Air India Flight 182 remain "active and ongoing", the Canadian police have said, terming it the "longest" and one of the "most complex domestic terrorism" probe, ahead of the deadly bombing's 39th-anniversary memorial.

The Montreal-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 exploded 45 minutes before it was to have landed at London's Heathrow Airport on June 23, 1985, killing all 329 people on board, most of them Canadians of Indian descent.

The bombing was blamed on Sikh militants in retaliation to 'Operation Bluestar' to flush out militants from the Golden Temple in 1984.

In a statement on Friday, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Assistant Commissioner David Teboul called the bombing the "greatest terror-related loss of life involving and affecting Canadians" in the country's history as he offered "deepest sympathies, understanding and support to the families of the victims".

"The Air India investigation is the longest and certainly one of the most complex domestic terrorism investigations that the RCMP has undertaken in our history," Teboul said. "Our investigative efforts remain active and ongoing," he said.

Asserting that the impacts of the bombing "have not diminished with time" he said that the trauma it caused has impacted generations.

"We must never forget those innocent lives lost to this tragedy and other acts of terrorism," he said.

Noting that this year marks the 39th anniversary memorial of the bombing, he said that the 40th memorial, a significant milestone, is approaching in 2025. "At the memorials, previous and current employees from the investigation and our greater organisation, past and present, will ensure we remember those lost and those left to deal with the unthinkable," he said.

FILE PHOTO

"Over the years, attending the memorials has been an opportunity to pay our respects to the victims and their families and show our appreciation for all those that did so much to respond to and investigate the tragedy," he said, encouraging people to do the same in private or at the memorials in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

India's consulates in Vancouver and Toronto have planned a memorial service to mark the anniversary of the bombing.

A memorial is scheduled on June 23 at the Air India Memorial at Stanley Park's Ceperley Playground area in Vancouver.

Another memorial service is scheduled at South Lawn, Queen's Park, Toronto.

Nepal names 8 new envoys, including for New Delhi

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal has nominated ambassadors for eight countries, including India, a little over two weeks after recalling the incumbents.

According to the Cabinet sources, former chief secretary and Nepal's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Lokdarshan Regmi, has been nominated as the new Nepalese ambassador to India.

Regmi has earlier held positions of Home Secretary, Finance Secretary and Secretary at the Ministry of Land Reform and Management.

The decision was taken by Nepal's Cabinet on Friday.

Earlier on June 6, the Nepal government had recalled ambassadors from 11 countries, including those serving in India and the US and appointed under the Nepali Congress' quota, three months after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' terminated his alliance with the party and joined hands with former prime minister KP Sharma Oli.

The development had come three months after the coalition was formed with the support of CPN-UML.

The government has named former Commerce and Industry Secretary Chandra Ghimire as Nepal's new ambassador to the United States replacing the incumbent ambassador, Sridhar Khatri while Bijan Pant has been named Nepal's new ambassador to the United Kingdom.

All the ambassador nominees need to undergo parliamentary hearings before the president appoints them to their respective positions.

Israeli national found dead after being shot in Palestinian town

AP ■ RAMALLAH

An Israeli was shot dead in a Palestinian town in the northern West Bank Saturday morning, Israel's army said, while deadly strikes rocked northern Gaza.

The army said a man was pronounced dead after being shot in the town of Qalqilya, and that Israeli troops were currently operating in the area. The day before, Israeli forces shot dead two militants in the same West Bank town. No further details were made public.

Violence has flared in the the West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war erupted last October. Since then, at least 549 Palestinians in the territory have been killed by Israeli fire say the Palestinian Health Ministry, which tracks the killings. Over that same time, Palestinians in the West Bank have killed at least nine Israelis, including five soldiers, according to UN data.

In a separate event, the Palestinian Civil Defence, an emergency group active in Gaza, said they pulled 19 dead bodies from a building hit by an Israeli strike in an eastern neighbourhood of Gaza City on Saturday. The group said its emergency workers were also digging for survivors at the site of another strike in Shati Refugee camp, west of Gaza City. The Associated Press has been unable to verify the figures provided by the emergency group.

The Israeli army said its fighter jets struck two Hamas military sites in the Gaza City area, but did not elaborate further.

The Israel-Hamas war erupted on October 7 when Hamas militants stormed southern Israel and killed around 1,200 people and took hostage some 250 others. Israel has responded by bombarding and invading the enclave, killing over 37, 400 Palestinians there according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

Israeli nationals are prohibited from entering Qalqilya and other areas of the West Bank that fall under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

In April, the death of a 14-year-old Israeli settler sparked a series of settler attacks on Palestinian towns in the territory. The The army said the boy was murdered, and later arrested a Palestinian in connection with the killing.

In 2014, the abduction and killing of three Israeli teens in the West Bank escalated tensions and eventually ignited a 50-day Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, at the time the deadliest round of fighting between the two sides.

Over recent years, the PA's influence in the northern West Bank has waned as militant groups have grown increasingly powerful.

Also Saturday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said a 12-year-old Palestinian boy died from his wounds after being shot by Israeli forces in Ramallah last week. Commenting on the shooting, the Israeli army said its forces raided al-Amari refugee camp near Ramallah to arrest a suspect last Friday and then opened fire on a group of Palestinians who were pelting them with stones.

Nigel Farage draws flak for saying West provoked Putin to invade Ukraine

AP ■ LONDON

Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, the recently formed right-wing party that is seeking to woo voters away from Britain's governing Conservatives at the general election on July 4, is facing wide-ranging criticism over his claim that the West provoked Russian President Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine.

In a BBC television interview broadcast Friday evening, Farage drew a link between the expansion of NATO and the European Union eastwards over the past few decades and the invasion.

Claiming that he warned of a potential war in Ukraine in 2014, when he was a member of the European Parliament, Farage said "we provoked this war." It's unclear whether his warning came before or after Russia had annexed the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in February 2014.

"It was obvious to me that the ever-eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union was giving this man a reason to his Russian people to say, 'They're coming for us again' and to go to war," Farage said. "It's, you know, of course it's his fault — he's used what we've done as an excuse."

"It was obvious to me that the ever-eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union was giving this man a reason to his Russian people to say, 'They're coming for us again' and to go to war"

Farage's critics from across the political spectrum slammed his statement, with many describing him as a Putin apologist. "I think Nigel Farage is a bit like that pub bore we have all met at the end of the bar who often says if I was running the country' and presents very simplistic answers to actually, I am afraid in the 21st century, complex problems," Ben Wallace, the former Conservative defense secretary who has stood down as a lawmaker, told BBC radio.

Many Conservatives have largely held back from overly criticizing Farage, who though not a lawmaker in the UK Parliament, was hugely influential in Britain's vote to leave the EU in 2016.

The worry among many Conservatives is that attacking him too much will further alienate many Conservative voters, who sympathize with his tough rhetoric on issues like immigration and Brexit.

This is the first general election that Reform UK is contesting and it has enjoyed a lift in the polls after Farage said in early June he would lead the party and contest the seat in Clacton in southeast England. He is currently favorite to win that seat and finally enter Parliament after seven attempts.

Meanwhile, John Healey, who is set to become defense secretary if the left-of-center Labour Party wins the election on July, said Farage would "rather lick Vladimir Putin's boots than stand up for the people of Ukraine."

USS Roosevelt arrives in Busan as a show of force against North Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

A nuclear-powered United States aircraft carrier arrived Saturday in South Korea for a three-way exercise stepping up their military training to cope with North Korean threats that escalated with its alignment with Russia.

The arrival of the USS Theodore Roosevelt strike group in Busan came a day after South Korea summoned the Russian ambassador to protest a pact reached between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this week that pledges mutual defense assistance in the event of war.

South Korea says the deal poses a threat to its security and warned that it could consider sending arms to Ukraine to help fight off the Russian invasion as a response — a move that would surely ruin its relations with Moscow.

Following a meeting between their defense chiefs in Singapore earlier in June, the United States, South Korea and Japan announced Freedom Edge. The new multidomain exercise is aimed at sharpening the countries' combined response in various areas of operation, including air, sea and cyberspace.

The Theodore Roosevelt strike group will participate in the exercise that is expected to start within June. South Korea's military didn't immediately confirm specific details of the training.

South Korea's navy said in a statement that the arrival of Theodore Roosevelt demonstrates the strong defense posture of the allies and "stern willingness to respond to advancing North Korean threats." The carrier's visit comes seven months after another US aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, came to South Korea in a show of strength against the North. The Theodore Roosevelt strike group also participated in a three-way exercise with South Korean and Japanese naval forces in April in the disputed East China Sea, where worries about China's territorial claims are rising. In the face of growing North Korean threats, the United States, South Korea and Japan have expanded their combined training and boosted the visibility of strategic US military assets in the region, seeking to intimidate the North.

The United States and South Korea have also been updating their nuclear deterrence strategies, with Seoul seeking stronger assurances that Washington would swiftly and decisively use its nuclear capabilities to defend its ally from a North Korean nuclear attack.

Wickremesinghe lauds India's support during economic crisis

AP ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has survived two difficult years of its economic crisis and it was possible because of the financial support of USD 3.5 billion from India, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Saturday and emphasised his commitment to maintain a strong partnership with New Delhi.

Addressing the 31st All India Partners Meet in Colombo from June 20-22, Wickremesinghe said that he during his last visit to India to attend the new government's swearing-in discussed with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the core areas of partnership.

"Having now survived two difficult years, I must acknowledge that this was possible because India gave us a loan of USD 3.5 billion. All that will be repaid," he said.

Wickremesinghe said that sustainable energy is one of the grave areas that the two nations would be jointly working on.

"When I was in Delhi last week, I discussed with Prime Minister Modi the need to accelerate the joint programme that we have decided, agreed on. So the major ones are identified. Now this will show the new path we are taking, and a number of projects, all will be in one parcel," he said.

He added that Sri Lanka had discussed a fair number of proposals.

"First is the grid interconnection between Sri Lanka and India, so that sustainable energy can be transmitted to India, where you all need that very badly. We have the Sampur solar power project, which is a Government to Government (G2G) project, and a three-island project, which is where we hope the groundbreaking can take place in July," he said.

Wickremesinghe added that additionally there is a focus on a project to establish land connectivity between Sri Lanka and India.

"Extensive discussions have also taken place regarding expediting the Trincomalee Development Project, which encompasses industrial investment zones and tourist areas. Furthermore, plans are underway to construct a multi-product oil pipeline from Nagapattinam to Trincomalee, pending the final observation report," he said.

Wickremesinghe also mentioned the directors meeting of the International Monetary Fund, the global lender which is helping the island nation come out of the economic crisis.

"We have just concluded the board of directors meeting of the IMF, which was quite successful and are preparing thereafter to meet with our creditor nations, the Paris Club, India and others, who meet at the official creditors committee next week, and also carrying on discussions with China with the Exim Bank of China," he said.

"I hope by next week, or thereafter, that we will have come out of this phase of bankruptcy and into the next phase as we go ahead," he said.

The island nation, in April 2022, declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. The unprecedented financial crisis led President Wickremesinghe's predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit office in 2022.

Earlier in May, Foreign Minister Ali Sabry had said Sri Lanka is looking at a reduction of approximately USD 17 billion from its overall debt burden in the ongoing debt restructuring process.

Pak minister condemns Swat lynching

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday condemned the lynching of a man in the town of Swat for allegedly committing desecration of the Quran, lamenting how religion is being weaponised to justify "street justice" and "vigilantism".

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader, while speaking during the budget debate in the National Assembly, said that Parliament had to take stern notice of "mob justice", as it had brought Pakistan "to the brink of destruction", the Dawn newspaper reported.

On Thursday night, an enraged mob in the picturesque Pakistani town of Swat gunned down a tourist, dragged him through the town and later hanged him in full public view for allegedly committing desecration of the Quran.

Muhammad Ismail, a 40-year-old resident of Sialkot in Punjab province, was visiting the northwestern Pakistan hill resort town of Swat and was accused of having burnt the pages of Islam's holy book in Madyan tehsil of Swat district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Amid interruptions by Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Iqbal said, "Another mob lynching has happened in Swat and Pakistan is under scrutiny for it."

The 65-year-old secretary general of the PML-N further said that if this was an isolated incident "we could move past it". However, Iqbal then referred to similar incidents that happened earlier in Sialkot, Jaranwala and Sargodha where those accused of desecration were lynched by vigilante mobs.

The minister also recalled an attempt on his life in 2018 when he was shot by a supporter of the religio-political party Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan. Iqbal said he was grateful that he got a new lease of life after an extremist shot him.

"We must take notice of this incident as our nation is on the brink. We have now reached a point where we are using religion to justify mob violence and street justice, flagrantly violating the Constitution, the law and the state," Iqbal said.

In Islam "even the bodies of heretics must be shown respect", he said.

"Not only are mobs killing people, but they are setting the bodies on fire and making a spectacle out of it. It's shameful," he said.

Iqbal also demanded that a committee be formed to probe these incidents of mob attacks.

Crew released

Washington (PTI): Eight Indian crew members of the cargo ship *'Dali'* that crashed into a famed Baltimore bridge in March left for India on Friday after nearly three months on the mammoth vessel. According to Baltimore Maritime Exchange, four of the 21 crew members are still on board the 984-foot cargo ship MV Dali, which is tentatively scheduled to leave Friday evening for Norfolk, Virginia. The rest of the crew has been moved to a service apartment in Baltimore and will remain there pending an investigation.

Russia launches more missiles on Ukrainian energy facilities

AP ■ KYIV

At least two people were killed in Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, in Russian shelling on Saturday afternoon, local officials said.

The shelling hit an area of "dense residential development", according to city mayor Ihor Terekhov. He said that 18 people were wounded, along with the two dead reported by regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov.

Russia launched a new barrage of missiles and drones in an overnight attack on Ukraine, officials in Kyiv said Saturday, damaging energy facilities in the southeast and west and injuring at least two workers.

Ukraine is struggling with a new wave of rolling blackouts after relentless Russian attacks on energy infrastructure that started three months ago took out half the country's power generation capacity. In its eighth major attack on energy facilities overnight, Russia fired 16 missiles and 13 Shahed drones, the Ukrainian air force said. Ukraine's air defences intercepted 12 of the 16 missiles and all 13 drones launched by Russia, the air force said.

State-owned power grid operator Ukrenergo said the strikes damaged equipment at facilities in southeastern Zaporizhzhia and the western Lviv region.

Two energy workers were injured in Zaporizhzhia when a fire broke out at an energy facility, according to regional Gov. Ivan Fedorov.

With no major changes reported along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, where a recent push by the Kremlin's forces in eastern and northeastern Ukraine has made only incremental gains, both sides have taken aim at infrastructure targets, seeking to curb each other's ability to fight in a war that is now in its third year.

Moscow's overnight attack on Zaporizhzhia and Lviv follows Ukrainian military strikes on three oil refineries in southern Russia overnight into Friday.

Air defences destroyed five drones over the Sea of Azov and the country's western Bryansk and Smolensk regions, the Russian Ministry of Defense said.

Hindujas 'appalled' by Swiss court's jail term order; file appeal

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's wealthiest family, the Hindujas, have said they were "appalled" by a Swiss court's ruling of jail terms for some members and have filed an appeal in a higher court challenging the verdict finding them guilty of exploiting vulnerable domestic workers from India at their villa in Geneva.

In a statement issued on behalf of the family on Friday, lawyers from Switzerland stressed their clients – Prakash and Kamal Hinduja, both in their 70s and their son Ajay and his wife Namrata – had been acquitted of all human trafficking charges.

They also dismissed media reports that any members of the family faced detention after court reports from Geneva said the four were sentenced to between four and four-and-a-half years in prison.

"Our clients have been acquitted of all human trafficking charges. We are appalled and disappointed by the rest of the decision made in this court of first instance, and we have, of course, filed an appeal to the higher court, thereby making this part of the judgement not effective," reads the statement signed by lawyers Yael Hayat and Robert Assael and Roman Jordan.

"Under Swiss law, the presumption of innocence is paramount till a final judgement by the highest adjudicating authority is enforced. Contrary to some media reports, there is no effective detention for any members of the family," they said.

The lawyers also pointed out that "it should also be recalled that the plaintiffs in this case had withdrawn their respective complaints after declaring to the court that they had never intended to be involved in such proceedings".

"The family has full faith in the judicial process and remains confident that the truth will prevail," they conclude.

The statement followed a hearing in the Swiss city of Geneva after prosecutors opened the case for alleged illegal activity, including exploitation, human trafficking and violation of Switzerland's labour laws.

The family members were accused of seizing the workers' passports, barring them from leaving the villa and forcing them to work very long hours for a pittance in Switzerland, among other things.

Some workers allegedly spoke only Hindi and were paid their wages in rupees in banks back in India that they could not access.

During the trial, prosecutors alleged the family spent more on their dog than on their servants.

The family's legal team had countered the allegations and told the court the staff were treated respectfully and provided with accommodation.

According to 'The Sunday Times Rich List' released last month, the UK-based Hinduja family once again emerged as the country's richest, with wealth estimated at around GBP 37.196 billion.

They saw this tally increase over the previous year in the wake of the opening of the brand-new luxury OWO Raffles Hotel in the heart of London.

The UK-based family's group of companies, headed by chairman GP Hinduja, operates in 48 countries and across several sectors – automotive, oil and specialty chemicals, banking and finance, IT, cyber security, healthcare, trading, infrastructure project development, media and entertainment, power, and real estate.

Govt buys 71,000 tonnes of onion for buffer stock

Expects retail prices to ease with normal monsoon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has bought nearly 71,000 tonnes of onion so far this year for buffer stock, out of the total target of procuring 5 lakh tonnes for price stabilisation and it expects retail prices to ease with the progress of monsoon over most parts of the country.

According to data compiled by the department of consumer affairs, the all-India average onion retail prices stood at Rs 38.67 per kg on Friday, while the modal price was Rs 40 per kg.

Till June 20th, the Centre has procured 70,987 tonnes of onion, as against 74,071 tonnes procured in the same period last year, a senior official in the department of consumer affairs said.

"The pace of onion procurement for price stabilisation buffer this year is largely comparable with last year, despite about 20 per cent decline in estimated rabi production," the official said, adding that the government is on course to achieve targeted procurement of 5 lakh tonnes for price stabilisation.

The government will exercise the option of holding or releasing onions from the buffer in order to maintain stability in prices of onion, the official said. The procurement price is a dynamic one, linked to prevailing market prices.

The increase in prices of onion is on account of a shortfall in production in 2023-24 by about 20 per cent each in Kharif, late Kharif and Rabi, over the previous year due to less rains in major producing areas, the official explained.

To control prices, the government has been taking measures in a graded manner, from August last year starting with export duty of 40 per cent, followed by Minimum Export Price (MEP) of USD 800 per tonne in October, 2024 and imposition of export prohibition from December 8, 2023.

These measures have helped in maintaining domestic availability of onion at reasonably stable prices.

Export prohibition had been lifted from May 4, 2024 with MEP of USD 550 per tonne and 40 per cent export duty in view of substantial stability observed in major mandis like Lasalgaon, in Maharashtra and the prospect of good Kharif production on the back of above-normal monsoon prediction this year.

"The prolonged and extreme heatwave condition currently prevailing over large parts of the country has impacted the production of green vegetables and led to increase in prices of vegetables including tomato, potato and onion," the official said, adding that the situation is expected to ease with the onset of monsoon over most parts of the country.

In March, the Union Agriculture Ministry released the data for onion production. As per the data, onion production in 2023-24 (First Advance Estimates) is expected to be around 254.73 lakh tonnes, compared to around 302.08 lakh tonnes last year.

This is due to a decrease of 34.31 lakh tonnes output in Maharashtra, 9.95 lakh tonnes in Karnataka, 3.54 lakh tonnes in Andhra Pradesh and 3.12 lakh tonnes in Rajasthan, the data showed.

Indian deeptech startups count surges in 2023 but funding plummets 77 per cent: Nasscom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India saw a significant surge in deeptech startups in 2023 with 480 new ventures emerging, making it the third largest pool globally, a report said.

However, the report by technology industry body nasscom and global consulting firm Zinnov highlighted the worrying trend of a funding winter, posing a major challenge for these startups.

'India's DeepTech Dawn: Forging Ahead' report also said funding for scaling, talent attraction and retention, and global expansion are the top 3 challenges faced by startups in deeptech innovation.

"India currently has 3600+ deeptech startups, out of which 480 were established in 2023 itself, nearly 2X more than the number of deeptech startups established in 2022," the report said.

But India's deeptech promise is stunted by a funding gap.

"Compared to startups across some other leading deeptech ecosystems, Indian deeptech startups receive a fraction of the median investment at every stage.

"This lack of funding restricts the ability of some promising deeptech startups to scale, thus hindering India's ability to compete in the global deeptech race," it said.

Indian deeptech startups raised about USD 10 billion in the last 5 years.

Total USD 850 million was raised in 2023 itself — this is a 77 per cent decline over USD 3.7 billion raised in 2022. The number of deals, meanwhile, declined by 25 per cent in 2023 over 2022, it said.

"India needs a multi-pronged approach: increased funding at early-stage, supportive market ecosystem for scale-ups, and robust initiatives to aid commercialisation."

Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerged as a founder's favourite, with 74 per cent of deeptech startups established in 2023 driven by AI. AI was also an investor favourite, with 86 per cent of the startups who raised funding in 2023 having an AI focus.

AI takes the center stage in patent filings with 41 per cent of all patent filings in deeptech, followed, with a large gap, by IoT and Neurotech, the report said.

According to venture capital firms, long gestation periods are the biggest challenge facing them while investing in deeptech.

"Co-investment programmes and government-backed instruments are necessary initiatives to be taken by the government to make the landscape more favourable to invest in," the report said.

The number of investors participating in funding rounds for India's deeptech startups dropped by over 60 per cent in 2023 compared to 2022.

The absence of many large global investors, who had previously driven funding, also contributed significantly to this decline.

"Median ticket size across seed-stage and late-stage reached their 4-year low and 5-year low respectively. Although early-stage median ticket size reached a 5-year high, it was not enough to offset the overall decline in funding. The absence of mega deals in 2023 as compared to 9 mega deals in 2022, underscores a declining investor emphasis on large-ticket investments," the report noted.

Investors preferred investing in seed-stage deeptech startups with low ticket sizes and relatively lower risk, further declining the funding volume.

Nasscom recommended the government to "identify and strengthen innovation clusters, facilitate the availability of patient capital and robust compute infrastructure, fast-track the implementation of the National DeepTech Startup Policy (NDTSP), improve the IP framework, and strengthen the overall supplier ecosystem (including talent pipeline)".

A deeptech startup involves early-stage technologies based on scientific or engineering advancements, to create and own Intellectual Property (IP).

These startups are characterised by extended development timelines and high capital intensity and also carry large technical uncertainty which presents a large opportunity or risk depending upon whether or not it succeeds.

Prestige Estates plans to raise up to ₹5,000 crore via QIP; monetise hotel biz

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects Ltd plans to raise up to Rs 5,000 crore by selling equity shares to institutional investors and also monetise its hotel business through issuance of shares of its arm Prestige Hospitality Ventures.

Prestige Estates is one of the leading real estate developers in the country.

It is into development of housing, office, shopping malls, warehousing and hospitality projects. The company has a significant presence in South India and has entered into Mumbai and Delhi-NCR property market.

According to a regulatory filing on Friday, the company's board approved "raising of funds by way of issuance of equity shares or other eligible securities for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 5,000 crore by way of qualified institutional placement (QIP) or other permissible mode."

The board also approved plans to "monetise assets of the hospitality segment through its arm Prestige Hospitality Ventures Ltd, by way of issue of shares (through primary or secondary or both)."

All these decisions are subject to approval of shareholders.

According to an investors presentation, Prestige Estates has 10 hotels in operations totalling 1,489 keys. It is developing 3 hotels with 955 keys and there are 5 hotels having 765 keys in pipeline.

For monetisation of hospitality assets, the board has formed a sub-committee to oversee and structure the process.

"The committee is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring compliance with all regulatory requirements, coordinating with advisors and underwriters, and making all necessary arrangements," the filing said.

During 2023-24, Prestige Estates' net profit rose to Rs 1,374.1 crore from Rs 941.8 crore in the preceding year. Total income increased to Rs 9,425.3 crore from Rs 8,772 crore.

On operational front, Prestige Estates reported 63 per cent annual increase in sales booking for the last financial year at record Rs 21,040 crore on strong demand for its residential properties and higher average sales realisation.

Prestige Group has completed 300 projects spanning a developable area of around 190 million square feet.

Entrepreneurship presents viable path to economic rejuvenation: Arora

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Entrepreneurship presents a viable path to economic rejuvenation and a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem can drive sustainable growth, leading cybersecurity major TAC Security founder Trishneet Arora has said.

Arora believes that fostering a culture of entrepreneurship can be the key to revitalizing Punjab's economy and addressing its financial woes and the path to Punjab's prosperity lies in collaboration between entrepreneurs and the government.

He envisions a synergistic relationship where the government provides the necessary infrastructure and policy support, while entrepreneurs drive innovation and growth.

This partnership can create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive, ultimately benefiting the state's economy, he said.

"Technology and AI have the potential to revolutionize farming in Punjab by enhancing productivity, reducing costs, and ensuring sustainable agricultural practices," Arora said.

Plans to empower 65 lakh underprivileged youth with employability skills

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Magic Bus, a non-profit organisation in the education and skilling space, aims to impart essential life and employability skills in over 65 lakh young people from marginalised communities over the next five years.

The NGO operates in 23 states and union territories and operates out of 117 livelihood centres, of which 17 are all-girl centres. It imparts essential life skills and employability skills in young people from underserved communities.

"Since 1999, Magic Bus has impacted 30 lakh adolescents, equipping them with life skills to achieve school, life, and work outcomes. We have empowered over 3.7 lakh youths with life and employability skills, connecting them to sustainable livelihood opportunities. Looking ahead, we aim to extend its impact by empowering over 65 lakh young people over the next five years," Magic Bus India Foundation founder Matthew Spacie told PTI.

Life skills education serves as a cornerstone for the holistic development of young people and are essential for them to navigate life and work in an increasingly technology-driven world, he said.

Magic Bus India Foundation Global CEO Jayant Rastogi stated that the organisation conducts thorough assessments of the demand-supply gap before introducing new skills or phasing out obsolete ones.

"This process involves analysing the demand for specific skills in different geographical areas and evaluating the suitability of individuals to meet those demands. Before initiating any skilling programme, we ensure that there is a clear understanding of the market demand for the skills being imparted," he said.

Additionally, he said, the organisation also engages with potential employers during the programme to align its training with their hiring needs, which helps Magic Bus to tailor its skilling initiatives to the current job market requirements and maximise the employability of its participants.

The organisation targets young people, 18 to 25 years, from marginalised communities, providing them with the necessary 21st-century skills to obtain grey-collar jobs in the formal sector in the service industry.

Rastogi further stated that Magic Bus has partnered with various state governments to expand the reach of life skills education.

"We have also aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP), our approach aims to bolster the government's efforts in delivering holistic education, empowering adolescents with higher-order thinking, analytical skills, and socio-emotional learning essential for success in the 21st century," he added.

Magic Bus is also operating programmes in Bangladesh, Spacie said.

"Currently, our programmes are operational in Bangladesh, and we are mapping potential countries in South East Asia to understand their needs and take our programmes to newer geographies," he added.

Newsdrum is set to expand operations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After completing two years in the media space, general news platform Newsdrum is set to expand operations on the back of technology and Artificial Intelligence-led tools and innovations.

The platform has enabled AI-led features including but not limited to content repurposing, AI Web Stories and content distribution.

The portal has aimed at keeping its readers ahead of the curve with its sharp analysis, news breaks and has broken over three dozen stories, notching over 5 million monthly page views.

According to Semrush, an American platform used to for keyword research, competitive analysis, site audits, backlink tracking and comprehensive online visibility insights, 63 percent of visitors of NewsDrum have informational intent followed by 16 percent with transactional and 13 ercent with commercial intent.

Durlax Top Surface ₹40.80 cr IPO subscribed over 161 times

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Solid surface manufacturer Durlax Top Surface's Rs 40.80 crore initial public offer has been oversubscribed nearly 161 times, the company said on Saturday.

According to the exchange data, the IPO received bids for around 87 crore shares against 60 lakh shares on offer for subscription, Durlax Top Surface said in a statement.

Non-institutional investor category received the highest interest among investors and was subscribed over 415 times. Bids for around 35.52 crore shares were received against 8.56 lakh shares on offer.

Retail segment was subscribed over 202 times and the qualified investor segment was subscribed over 48 times, the company said.

The company's shares will be listed on the NSE SME platform, Emerge, on June 26.

The company had fixed the price band at Rs 65-68 per share for the issue which was open for subscription from June 19-21, it added.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of 42 lakh shares worth up to Rs 28.56 crore and an offer for sale of 18 lakh shares worth up to Rs 12.24 crore.

Out of the fresh issue of Rs 28.56 crore, the company plans to utilise Rs 17.50 crore to part finance working capital requirements and Rs 6 crore towards general corporate purposes.

Promoters including Shravan Suthar and Lalit Suthar hold around 95 per cent stake in the company while public shareholders hold nearly 5 per cent stake.

Promoter Shravan Kumar, who held 66.94 per cent of the equity stake or 83,01,399 shares sold 18 lakh shares through the OFS route.

"Promoter holding pre-issue stands at 95.44 per cent which post-issue will come to 60.35 per cent," the company said.

Established in 2010, Durlax Top Surface manufactures solid surface materials. The company has two brands, namely LUXOR and ASPIRON.

The Gujarat-based company reported revenue of Rs 90.84 crore and a net profit of Rs 5.05 crore for FY 2023-24.

Firm wins bid for world's first flue gas CO2 to 4G ethanol project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New energy transition platform Jakson Green has announced its plans to establish the world's first flue gas CO2 to 4G ethanol project for a power plant.

Serving as the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) partner, Jakson Green aims to operationalise the project within two years.

The initiative, located in Lara, Chhattisgarh, is conceptualised and designed by NETRA (NTPC Energy Technology Research Alliance), the R&D arm of state-run NTPC, according to sources.

'Flue gas CO2 to 4G' refers to a process where carbon dioxide (CO2) captured from flue gases (emissions from industrial processes or power plants) is converted into "4G ethanol" through advanced technology.

Addressing bleeding management in cardiac, liver transplant surgeries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In good news for India's healthcare sector especially in high-risk cardiac and liver transplant surgeries, Plasmagen Biosciences Private Limited (Plasmagen), a Bengaluru-based biopharmaceutical company, has partnered with global biotechnology leader CSL Behring to introduce Haemocomplettan P (Human Fibrinogen Concentrate) to the Indian market.

The move hopes to address the challenge of managing uncontrolled massive bleeding given that India performs approximately 1,50,000 cardiac surgeries and around 1,800 liver transplants annually, with a substantial number of these patients requiring blood transfusions to manage hemorrhage.

In fact, around 50 per cent of cardiac surgery patients need blood transfusions, and more than 25 per cent of blood transfusions in hospitals are for liver transplant recipients.

Delayed control of bleeding in these surgeries can lead to severe complications, including renal failure, stroke, and even death, as well as increased healthcare costs and longer hospital stays.

Vinod Nahar, Managing Director of Plasmagen, highlighted that the collaboration with CSL Behring not only addresses the pressing issue of bleeding management in critical surgeries but also expands the scope of treatment options across various medical specialties, including cardiac, liver transplant, gastroenterology, and pediatrics. This partnership ensures that high-quality, globally recognised biopharmaceutical products are available in India, aiming to improve healthcare outcomes, enhance disease awareness, and provide comprehensive patient education, he added.

Haemocomplettan P, manufactured by CSL Behring, is a specialised product designed to treat and prevent bleeding disorders in patients with congenital afibrinogenemia and acquired hypofibrinogenemia.

This human fibrinogen concentrate has been used globally for over 27 years, treating more than 3.5 lakh patients and demonstrating significant efficacy in rapidly restoring fibrinogen levels.

This replenishment is crucial for effective blood clotting and can significantly reduce the need for blood transfusions.

Dr N Kanagarajan, a Senior Consultant Cardiac Anaesthesiologist at the Madras Medical Mission in Chennai, said.

NAGAL CONFIRMS HIS PARIS OLYMPICS QUALIFICATION

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian tennis star Sumit Nagal on Saturday confirmed that he has officially qualified for the men's singles event of the upcoming Paris Olympics.

The Paris Games will be his second stint in the Olympics, having also qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Games, where he made it to the second round.

"Extremely glad to share that I have officially qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics. This is a monumental moment for me as the Olympics holds a special place in my heart!," Nagal posted on X.

"One of my career highlights so far was participating in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Ever since then, Paris has been a big goal for me. Can't wait to put my best foot forward."

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) had said that Nagal as per ITF was alternate till June 10, when the rankings were considered for qualification.

Rohan Bopanna and N Sriram Balaji will compete in the men's doubles event at Paris Games. Bopanna, being a top-10 player, had the choice to pick his partner. AITA approved his choice and paired him with Balaji.

Nagal had enhanced qualification chances by winning the Heilbronn Challenger earlier this month as he broke into the top 80 of the ATP singles rankings.

The Heilbronn victory was Nagal's second Challenger title this season, having prevailed in the Chennai Challenger earlier this year.

The 26-year-old Nagal has been making the waves since the start of the 2024 season as he qualified for the main draw of the Australian Open, where he made it to the second round with an upset win over then world number 37 Alexander Bublik.

He had also qualified for the main draw of the Indian Wells Masters and Monte-Carlo Masters, the ATP 1000 events.

Shubhankar makes cut, but slips in third round of KLM Open

PTI ■ AMSTERDAM

Shubhankar Sharma, heading to the Paris Olympics in August, made the cut on the line in the second round of the KLM Open before suffering a round of 3-over 74 in the following round here.

Sharma is now tied 67th. He had double bogey in the second round, and had two more in the third on the Par-3 fourth and Par-5 18th, which he had birdied on the opening two days.

Overall, he had four birdies, three bogeys and two doubles on the third day, down four places from the second round.

The leader after two rounds was Mikko Korhonen (64-68), who was 10-under. He was yet to start his third round.

The Finn made a hole-in-one en route a share of his lead on the opening day, and he added every score from two to seven in round two to move to 10 under.

He was a shot clear of American Sean Crocker, who carded a 67, and two ahead of English duo Ross Fisher and James Morrison.

Korhonen is a two-time winner on the DP World Tour, but his appearance at last month's Soudal Open was his first in 12 months, and this is just the third event of his comeback from a spell out.

A holed nine iron from 137 yards was the highlight of a second round that contained six birdies, two bogeys and a triple, and the 43-year-old was happy to be back on the Tour.

Dane Rasmus Hojgaard matched the day's lowest round with a 65 to sit at seven under alongside England's Matthew Baldwin, Scot Ewen Ferguson, American Nicolo Galletti, Italian Matteo Manassero and German Matti Schmid.

Indian women compound archery team wins hat-trick of World Cup gold medals

PTI ■ ANTALYA (TURKEY)

Indian compound women's archery team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur continued their imperious form this season, securing a hattrick of World Cup gold medals with a win over Estonia in the third stage of the event here on Saturday.

The trio, who had qualified as the top-seed, beat Estonia's Lisell Jaatma, Meeri-Marita Paas and Maris Tetsmann, 232-229 in a one-sided final here.

The women's compound team thus has been unbeatable this season, having won the World Cup Stage 1 and Stage 2 gold medals in Shanghai and Yecheon in April and May respectively.

Indian male compound archer Priyansh is also fighting for a bronze later in the day.

In the recurve section, Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj Bommadevara are also in the hunt for two medals, having advanced to their respective individual semifinals.

Gangjee holds on in close finish to win Selangor Masters golf title

PTI ■ SELANGOR (MALAYSIA)

Rahil Gangjee won the PKNS Selangor Masters despite six bogeys in his 3-over 73 on the final day as he prevailed over Deyen Lawson (69) by one shot, here Saturday.

The 45-year-old veteran, who had started the day with a five shot lead, finished at 8-under for the wire-to-wire win as Lawson was 7-under.

Gangjee's five-shot lead going into the final round disappeared within a matter of holes as he was unable to find the form that he seemed to have had since round one.

With three bogeys in his first nine, and another to match on hole 10, he soon found himself neck and neck with Thailand's Runchanapong Youprayong.

It was Gangjee's second win on the ADT after his 2018 success at Louis Philippe Cup in India.

He has two Asian Tour wins - first in 2004 in Volkswagen Masters in Beijing and then 14 years later in Panasonic Open in Japan. In 2011 and 2012 he played on the Nationwide Tour in the US and also played between 2020 and 2022 in Japan.

Local rising star Marcus Lim and Australia's Deyen Lawson were breathing down his neck and just one shot behind in the USD 175,000 Asian Development Tour event.

Gangee was able to birdie the par-three hole 12 and then the Par-5 13th as he stayed ahead. Another birdie came on the 16th.

By the time he reached the 17th tee, Runchanapong had dropped away with a double bogey on 16th and only Lawson was left, two shots behind.

Those two shots vanished as Gangjee bogeyed 17th and 18th. Lawson's birdie on 17 meant the pair were heading down the final fairway with just one shot between them.

Both managed only bogeys on the 18th and Gangee was finally able to breathe to get the win at 272 and Lawson (69) in solo second in 273.

Lim (69) and Runchanapong (69) were tied third.

Poosit Suprpramai (66) of Thailand posted the only bogey free round of the day, his four birdies helping into a share of fifth spot alongside compatriot Sarut Vongchaisit (71).

Saptak Talwar the only other Indian to make the cut shot 70 with three closing bogeys and was T-33rd.

Ronaldo can handle physical intensity of Euro 2024

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez plucked out statistics to defend his continued selection of Cristiano Ronaldo after the striker's capacity to handle the physical intensity of the European Championship was questioned on Friday.

The 39-year-old Ronaldo played the full game but didn't score in Portugal's group-stage opener, a come-from-behind 2-1 win against the Czech Republic on Tuesday.

Next up for the five-time world player of the year is what promises to be an intense, atmospheric match against Turkey and its loud, passionate fans in Dortmund on Saturday.

Get out of the group and Portugal will have to play every four or five days to reach the final in Berlin on July 14.

Martinez insisted that was not beyond Ronaldo, even at his age, and pointed to his record in the Saudi league with Al-Nassr in the recently completed season.

"Can I ask you something?" Martinez replied when asked if Ronaldo's minutes might have to be managed at Euro 2024. "Do you know how many minutes Cristiano played last season?"

The answer was 2,649 minutes in league play, the second highest for Al-Nassr behind Sadio Mane. Ronaldo started 31 of the team's 34 games, again behind only Mane's 32.

It was put to Martinez that the intensity of the Saudi league doesn't compare to what he is experiencing at Euro 2024 and that he doesn't need to press from the front as much with his club.

"I think when you are talking about atmosphere, it is about experience and how you handle big occasions," Martinez continued. "I don't think there is another player in world football who has had six European Championships.

"What is important to understand is what a player brings. For us, Cristiano brings experience, know-how, goalscoring opportunities, that movement in the box, the opportunity to open space. If you want to analyze his stats in terms of the physical, all you need to do is look at what he has done in the last 12 months."

Martinez maintained Ronaldo was being picked because of what he continues to do, not simply what he has done in his storied career.

"Cristiano is in the national team of Portugal because he deserves to be," Martinez said. "Cristiano has scored 51 goals in 50 games (last season). All the physical stats just back up that he can play every four days."

Ronaldo was dropped by Portugal for the knockout stage of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where the team was coached by Fernando Santos and wound up getting eliminated by Morocco in the quarterfinals.

Given Martinez's robust defense of Ronaldo, there appears little chance of that happening in Germany and he praised Ronaldo for his workrate and discipline against the Czechs, against whom he had three shots on target.

"He is a player who is a poacher in the box," Martinez said, "and he will open space for other players.

Murray to have surgical procedure on injured back

AP ■ LONDON

Andy Murray will undergo a "surgical procedure" on his back Saturday before the former No. 1 makes a decision about trying to play at Wimbledon or the Paris Olympics. The 37-year-old Murray retired from his second-round match at Queen's Club on Wednesday because of back pain - the latest in a series of injuries that have slowed the two-time Wimbledon champion.

Murray, who has signaled his intention to retire later this year, stopped playing while trailing Jordan Thompson 4-1. He said he was experiencing problems with his right leg even before getting to the court.

After three games, Murray received treatment on his surgically repaired right hip, right knee and lower back.

His management team confirmed that he'd have the procedure Saturday. No other details were provided.

Mbappé out of France starting lineup

AP ■ LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

Kylian Mbappé was left out of France's starting lineup for its European Championship clash with the Netherlands on Friday. He was among the substitutes.

Mbappé hadn't been certain to start after breaking his nose on Monday in the opening 1-0 win over Austria. Mbappé trained wearing a face mask on Thursday and coach Didier Deschamps sounded optimistic that his star forward would be able to play. But Deschamps evidently decided it was not worth the risk to start him against the physical Dutch defenders.

Deschamps opted to go with Antoine Griezmann, Marcus Thuram and the unpredictable Ousmane Dembélé up front. Griezmann played further back against Austria, but Real Madrid midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni has recovered from injury to start, and Griezmann can expect to play closer to the goal.

Mbappé appeared relaxed when he got off the team bus upon arrival at the stadium. He wore sunglasses but no bandage on his nose as he had when he resumed light training on Wednesday.

He emerged before Friday's game wearing a black face mask - not the red, white and blue mask he wore on Thursday - for the team's warmup, and sat on a football initially while the rest of his teammates stretched out. He was coaxed off the ball by a coach, then spent some time adjusting the mask and tapping it, as if to test its suitability, before he joined the substitutes in kicking a ball around.

France and the Netherlands are level on three points in Group D. France has won seven of the teams' last eight meetings.

Olympic silver medalist Schnell, Capobianco grab semifinal leads at US diving trials

AP ■ KNOXVILLE (TENNESSE, USA)

Delaney Schnell led on the women's 10-meter tower after the semifinals, and Andrew Capobianco set the pace in men's 3-meter springboard at the U.S. Olympic diving trials on Friday night.

Schnell is looking to add a second event to her schedule in Paris after qualifying in synchronized 10-meter with Jess Parratto.

A silver medalist with Parratto at the Tokyo Games, Schnell scored 325.95 points in the individual event to lead Daryn Wright by 18.10 heading into the Sunday final. Sophia McAfee was third with 275.10.

Capobianco topped the men's event with 507.25. He scored 91.65 and 91.20 on his last two dives to take a 21.65-point lead into the Sunday final. Carson Tyler was next with 485.60, with Luke Sitz holding down the third spot at 430.10.

Scores from the semifinals carry over to the finals. The top two in men's 3-meter qualify for the Olympics, while only the winner of the women's 10-meter earns a spot.

It's shaping up to be a busy weekend for Tyler, who led after the platform semifinals. He will be attempting to earn an Olympic berth in that event on Saturday before returning for the springboard final a day later.

Richardson overcomes wobbly start for win in first heat at Olympic trials

AP ■ EUGENE (OREGON, USA)

Her burst out of the starting block was more like a wobble. Sha'Carri Richardson also raced with one of her shoelaces untied.

None of it mattered much on the opening night of U.S. Olympic track trials. Even in a race that was far from a masterpiece, Richardson was the fastest 100-meter sprinter in Friday's preliminary round and set herself up to race for a spot in the Paris Olympics.

She finished in 10.88 seconds - fastest of any of the 34 sprinters spread over four races, and a mere .02 seconds off the time she ran three years ago, when she won the trials, only to have the victory erased by a positive test for marijuana.

"That tells me I'm prepared," she said in a post-race interview with NBC. "I just need to put it all together."

Richardson will be back on the track Saturday for the semifinals. If she finishes in the top two in that race, she'll go for the title less than two hours later. The top three finishers in the final will head to Paris, where Richardson would try to add that title to the world championship she won last year.

The 24-year-old sprinter was the headliner on opening night at University of Oregon's Hayward Field, wearing a gold-and-black running suit with her trademark, long nails to match. But when the gun sounded, she bounced out of the block and warbled across her lane as she struggled to get upright. She was briefly in last place. Not until she was a good 10 steps down the track did she hit her stride, then hit overdrive and pass the other eight racers.

"I definitely didn't have the start I've been training to have in this moment," she said. "But I'm still not panicking. I'm staying patient and knowing no matter what's going on, to continue to run my race."

Other winners in the 100 prelims included 2022 national champion Melissa Jefferson and NCAA 100 and 200-meter champion McKenzie Long of Ole Miss. Noah Lyles starts his quest for the Olympic 100 in the men's prelims Saturday.

For Richardson, things went sideways shortly after her

victory at trials in 2021, when her marijuana positive was revealed, after which she disclosed she had been battling with depression in the wake of her mother's recent death and other issues.

Ever since, she has been on a long comeback that she looks at in a different way - "I'm not back, I'm better." And, by almost every count - especially the ones the public can chart on the track - she is.

She came into trials as the reigning world champion, and also with a victory on this track last month in the Prefontaine Classic. She is the early favorite to win the Olympics in what is always a stacked field filled with Jamaicans.

Asked how she's dealing with her rising fortunes, she said, "I'm enjoying the recognition of hard work, the support that comes with it."

"The fact that the world can see so much work I've done on myself, for myself, and the world receives that, I'm appreciative and I will always show up for my fans," she said.

10,000 metersGrant Fisher won the 10,000 meters in 27 minutes, 49.47 seconds and joined Woody Kinkaid and NCAA record-holder Nico Young as the first three athletes to officially earn their spots on the team at trials.

As an added bonus, they were the first three who got to sign the base of a miniature Eiffel Tower that's on display at Hayward Field this week.

Running for Northern Arizona, Young ran 26:52.72 to shave nearly 16 seconds off the men's 10,000-meter college record in March.

"I feel like this is where I saw my season going, and to execute it today is surreal," he said.

Wilson's RecordQuincy Wilson doesn't even have a driver's license yet, but he now has a world record.

ENGLAND AIM FOR MASSIVE WIN OVER USA TO STAY IN SEMIFINAL RACE

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

Defending champions England will need their power hitters to do the job against a demoralised yet tricky USA in their final Super 8 match as they eye a huge win to keep themselves in contention for a semifinal spot at the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

England batters couldn't produce the big hits while chasing a target of 164 during their last Super 8 match against South Africa, suffering a narrow seven-run loss on Friday.

West Indies' massive nine-wicket win over the USA has opened up the group, leaving England with the task of notching up a big victory to push their net run-rate up as it might come down to it in the end.

While South Africa are currently sitting atop the Group 2 with two wins, both West Indies and England have a win and a loss each with the former having a better NRR than the latter.

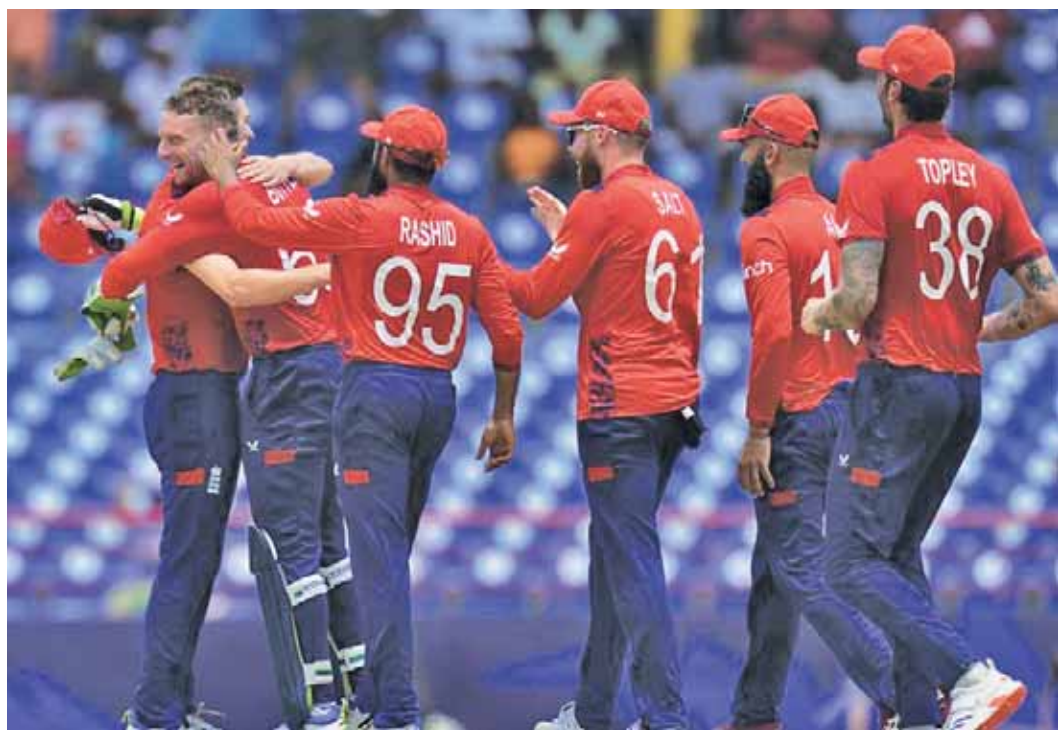
However, no team is assured of a semifinal berth and England will need to defeat USA by either 10 runs or at least an over to spare to stay in contention for the semifinals.

For SA, a loss -- even in a Super Over -- against WI in their final match will knock them out of the race if England can achieve their task.

If SA win and England lose to USA, it will again be a three-way tie between WI, ENG and USA for the second spot and the team with better run-rate will go through to the knockout stage.

England batters produced an authoritative performance against the West Indies but they failed to tame the SA bowlers and faltered in their chase of 164 on Friday.

Phil Salt has been in great form, having blasted two centuries, a fifty, and three thirties in his last 10 T20Is but his early dismissal meant England couldn't get the explosive start as Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow couldn't quite bring out the big shots.



Harry Brook (53) and Liam Livingstone (33) played sensibly to take the chase deep but England eventually failed to score 25 runs in the last three overs.

However, despite the loss, England's batting remains a formidable force which the likes of Saurabh Netravalkar and Harmeet Singh will find tough to tame.

In the bowling unit, Adil Rashid and Jofra Archer have been their standout bowlers with 13 and 12 wickets each but Mark Wood's form will be a cause of worry as apart from a three-wicket haul, he couldn't get any wicket in his last 5 T20Is.

For the co-hosts USA, it has been a reality check after a stunning show in the group stage. They suffered successive losses and their entry into the semifinal will be a miracle as they are alive in the tournament only mathematically.

USA will need to beat England by 80 runs in their final game and also hope that South Africa outwits WI by more than 67 runs to make the semifinal on the basis of NRR.

For US, Andries Gous and Aaron Jones have done the heavy lifting in the batting department and they will need support from the entire team as it will take more than a few individual performances to get it across the defending champions.

Jones has been leading the sides since USA have been without skipper Monank Patel following their game against Pakistan.

TEAMS (FROM)

England: Jos Buttler (c), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Tom Hartley, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley and Mark Wood.

USA: Monank Patel (c), Aaron Jones, Andries Gous, Corey Anderson, Ali Khan, Harmeet Singh, Jessy Singh, Milind Kumar, Nisarg Patel, Nitish Kumar, Noshtush Kenjige, Saurabh Nethralvakar, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Steven Taylor, Shayan Jahangir. Reserve Players: Gajanand Singh, Juanoy Drysdale, Yasir Mohammad.

India women eye ODI series clean sweep against South Africa

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India were able to tame varied challenges thrown at them by South Africa so far, and they will be eager to take the series to its fitting conclusion of a 3-0 margin during the third and final ODI here on Sunday.

Currently, the margin stands 2-0 in favour of India but that insuperable position has not come without its own trials by fire.

In the first match, the Indian batters had to come back from a perilous 99 for five before making a 260-plus total. The home side bowlers defended the target well too.

But in the second game, it was the turn of the Indian bowlers to ace the test that they were subjected to by centurions Laura Wolvaardt and Marizanne Kapp on a placid pitch.

Despite the heavy pounding, they kept their nerves till the last ball of the match to come out on the right side of the result.

However, the common thread across these two matches was the exceptional batting of Smriti Mandhana, who made 117 and 136 in them.

Mandhana thus became the first India woman batter to score two successive hundreds in ODIs, and she also equalled Mithali Raj's record of seven one-day centuries.

So, the Indian vice-captain will be eager to sign off from the ODI series on a high before entering the one-off Test at Chennai from June 28.

The timely return to form of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who made an 88-ball 103 in the second match, too might have pleased the management no end. However, the think tank will be eager to see a substantial outing from opener Shafali Verma, whose run of low scores has now been extended to eight matches.

With the series already in kitty, India might also give an outing to fringe players such as bowlers Shreyanka Patil, Saika Ishaque and top-order batter Priya Punia.

On the other hand, South Africa will be keen to win the match and gain at least two ICC Women's ODI Championship points, critical in their qualification for next year's 50-over World Cup.

Of course, a win will go a long way in instilling a dose of confidence ahead of the Test and the ensuing T20I series.

But for that, the visitors will need a concerted effort from their batters and bowlers.

TEAMS (FROM):

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Dayalan Hemalatha, Radha Yadav, Asha Sobhana, Shreyanka Patil, Saika Ishaque, Pooja Vastrakar, Renuka Singh Thakur, Arundhati Reddy, Priya Punia.

South Africa: Laura Wolvaardt (c), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Mieke de Ridder, Sinalo Jafta, Marizanne Kapp, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Sune Luus, Eliz-Mari Marz, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Tumi Sekhukune, Nondumiso Shangase, Delmi Tucker.

SA bowlers had good plans and pulled it off against England: Markram

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

South Africa skipper Aiden Markram applauded his bowlers for sealing a thrilling seven-run victory against England in a T20 World Cup Super Eight match here on Friday, saying they did not wilt under pressure.

England needed just 25 runs in the last three overs with six wickets in hand but tight bowling left them stranded at 156/6 in their chase of 164 on an easy-paced wicket with even bounce.

"Last three overs we had a lot against us but the bowlers had good plans and pulled it off," said Markram, whose side's innings was built around opener Quinton de Kock's fine 65 off 38 balls.

"If I am greedy, we were 10-20 short especially after the start we got. Not quite played a complete game of cricket but we are on the right track."

He singled out de Kock for special praise, who dished out a second good performance in the Super Eight stage and helped South Africa win their sixth game on the bounce in the World Cup.

"Quinny (de Kock) has been good for us in the last two games. It was a bit nerve-wracking in those (last three) overs but it can happen. The plans were there just the execution wasn't. I'm grateful that catch (of Harry Brook) stuck," he added.

England skipper Jos Buttler too praised De Kock for his enterprising batting.

"Quinton came in with a lot of intent and we couldn't quite match that. We pulled it back and were happy to chase that target, but his innings was the difference. We came back well with the ball.

"(Harry) Brook and (Liam) Livingstone had a fantastic partnership to get us close and even look like favourites but credit to South Africa for closing out the game," he said.

De Kock, who picked up his second 'Player of the Match' in Super Eight, said he just tried to carry on from where he had left off against the USA in the previous game.

De Kock had scored 74 off 40 deliveries in the opening Super Eight game.

"I try to carry on confidence game by game. We bowled really well in the powerplay and we controlled it very nicely. To be able to defend 160 on a decent wicket is a good effort from us."

West Indies crush USA by 9 wickets

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Opener Shai Hope blasted an unbeaten 82 as West Indies came back roaring to crush the United States of America by nine wickets in the T20 World Cup Group 2 Super Eight match here.

After bowling out the USA for a mere 128 in 19.5 overs, the West Indies batters went all guns blazing from the word go to knock off the target in 10.5 overs to make 130/1, recording a comfortable win.

The win improved West Indies' standing in the Group 2 points table. The Caribbean side, which had suffered an eight-wicket hammering from England on Wednesday, is now placed second with two points and a Net Run Rate of 1.814.

Johnson Charles fell for a 14-ball 15 with a couple of fours early on but the pair of Hope (82 not out) and Nicholas Pooran did the job for their side, smacking the USA bowlers all around the park here at the Kensington Oval.

Hope made a mincemeat of the USA bowling as the right-handed wicketkeeper-batter clattered eight sixes and four fours to make 82 not out from just 39 balls, with Pooran reaching 27 not out from 13 balls with three sixes and a four.

Hope remained at the forefront of WI's chase as he forged a 67-run stand for the opening partnership with Charles and then added another 63 runs unbeaten for the second wicket with Pooran, which came off only 23 balls as the Caribbean side ruled the roost.

Earlier after the West Indies put USA in to bat first, Andre Russell (3.5-0-31-3) and Roston Chase (4-0-19-3) made life tough for the opposition batters.

After an early blow in the form of Steven Taylor (2) who was caught at point by chase of Russell, the pair of Andreis Gous and Nitish Kumar (20) forged a strong partnership to revive USA and take them ahead but they both fell after making their respective starts.

Nitish was trapped leg-before by West Indies spinner Gudakesh Motie for 20 off 19 balls with two fours and Gous, who hit three fours and a six in his rapid 29 off 16 balls, was caught at deep midwicket by Hope off Alzarri Joseph in the eighth over and that was when USA's decline began.

None of the following USA batters could trouble the West Indies as the tournament co-hosts kept chipping away with regular wickets, denying their opponents any momentum with the bat. USA skipper Aaron Jones (11) was cleaned up by Chase who looked unplayable. Chase grabbed another wicket when he had the veteran Corey Anderson trapped leg-before for seven.

Harmeet Singh, who had provided fireworks with the bat for the USA against South Africa in the last match, fell for a first-ball duck when Chase had him caught by Charles to ensure West Indies remained on top of the proceedings.

Afghanistan set for stern Australia test in T20 World Cup Super Eight game

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN (ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES)

A stern test awaits Afghanistan as they take on a rampant Australia in their T20 World Cup Super Eight Group 1 clash here on Sunday.

Coming off a 47-run thrashing at the hands of India, Afghanistan will be under pressure not just to record a win but also to improve their Net Run Rate which took a severe hit after the loss in their first Super Eight game.

Afghanistan are placed third with a NRR of -2.350 and it will be an uphill task for them to improve that as well as move up in the points table in a group which also consists Bangladesh.

While Rahmanullah Gurbaz (178 runs) and Ibrahim Zadran (160) have been at the forefront of Afghanistan batting, they need more from their middle and lower-order batters in terms of contribution.

Both Fazalhaq Farooqi (15 wickets) and Rashid Khan (9) have made life tough for batters consistently across varied pitches in the Americas and they will be crucial to stop the battery of in-form Australian batters who like to keep things in their control.

Afghanistan showed their all-round skills in the group stage to finish second behind the West Indies but they will have to find their 'A' game to stop the 2021 winners Australia, who have notched up five wins in a row.

At the top, David Warner (169 runs) and Travis Head's (179) destructive opening pair can take down the best of bowling attacks and in such a scenario, Rashid's use of Farooqi and himself could have a big impact on the proceedings.

The two teams last met in the ODI World Cup in 2023. It was in Mumbai where Glenn Maxwell had played a once-in-a-generation knock to notch up a sensational double hundred while battling cramps all over his body, with Pat Cummins in tow who provided sturdy support from the other end.

Afghanistan would certainly be motivated to exact revenge for that loss in a format wherein they feel most comfortable and have the skills and mindset to excel but it remains to be seen if Rashid's side can execute their plans to perfection.

Like South Africa, Mitchell Marsh's Australia have established themselves as one of the formidable sides in the tournament with plenty of firepower in their ranks.

Maxwell's form remains a concern but Australia have a perfect cover in Tim David, the burly all-rounder who has also been honing his skills as a leg-spinner in order to add more to the bowling strength.

Marcus Stoinis' presence in the middle and lower order makes Australia's batting look deeper and his current form - 156 runs in three matches at 190.24 - makes him one to watch out for.

Pat Cummins' hat-trick in the last game against Scotland notwithstanding, the Australians will be challenged to improve their fielding in general after they spilled a total of six catches in which Marsh alone dropped three.

Adam Zampa (11) is ranked second in the list of most wicket-takers in this World Cup and the leg-spinner remains Australia's best bet with the ball after the big three quicks.

TEAMS (FROM):

Australia: Mitchell Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis (wk), Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade (wk), David Warner and Adam Zampa.

Afghanistan: Rashid Khan (c), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Ishaq, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Karim Janat, Nangyal Kharoti,Hazratullah Zazai , Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Fareed Ahmad Malik.

AFFIDAVIT

By vitue of an affidavit before Notary Public Bargarh, I, Jayprakash Agrawal, aged about 45 years, S/o Purusottam Agrawal resident of Uma Talkies Road, Ward No.06, Bargarh ,Odisha have changed my old name from Jaiprakash Agrawal to my new name Jayprakash Agrawal, S/o Purusottam Agrawal. Henceforth, I will be known as Jayprakash Agrawal in all government and other documents for future purposes.

Sd/-
Jayprakash Agrawal

TATA STEEL
TATA

"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION FOR ENERGIGING 33000 V POWER LINE"

"Notice is hereby given to all People of Joda, Bichakundi, Khondbond & surrounding areas/ villages that the 33,000 volts, 50 Hz, A.C. overhead Power Line will be energized on or after the date specified below. On & from the same date the overhead Power line shall be treated AS LIVE at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line."

Area	Line (section) & Description	Length in KM	Date Of Energization
Khondbond	33KV Overhead Double Circuit Power Line	3.725	25.06.2024
Bichakundi	33KV Overhead Double Circuit Power Line	3.311	
Joda	33KV Underground Power Cable Line	4.883	
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the pioneer
agenda

"That's my gift. I let that negativity roll off me like water off a duck's back. If it's not positive, I didn't hear it. If you can overcome that, fights are easy"
— George Foreman

Water is a driving force and fuel for all nature. India's water crisis is increasing day by day, especially in metropolitan cities. To address this problem is the urgent need of the hour, say **DR KAUSHAL KANT MISHRA** and **DR VINAY PATHAK**

SCARY SCARCITY OF LIFE'S DRIVING FORCE

DR VINAY PATHAK

DR KAUSHAL KANT MISHRA

Water is the key resource for sustaining life on Earth. It permeates every aspect of our existence, from the biological processes that occur within our bodies to the agricultural systems that produce our food or source of energy. The critical nature of water is further underscored by its finite availability and the essential roles it plays in maintaining ecosystems, supporting economic activities, and ensuring human health and well-being.

As global populations continue to rise and climate change intensifies, the pressure on our water resources is mounting, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable management and conservation practices. The significance of water cannot be overstated; it is the lifeblood of our planet, making the stewardship of this precious resource a paramount concern for all.

Securing water resources is paramount because, unlike energy, there are no alternative sources for water. It is an imperative that transcends environmental and geopolitical boundaries. We are often guided by the same motivations and methodologies in water related matters like we do for energy.

However, unlike energy, which could benefit from a diverse array of alternative sources, water remains singular in its indispensability and irreplaceability. Energy resources can be substituted, green sources for fossil fuel, solar for coal, nuclear power for thermal power and so on. The situation is quite different when it comes to water.

The total volume of water present on planet earth is constant. If we discount the amount of water contained in meteors, water does not come to this planet in any significant form. Our exorbitant exploitation of this natural reserve is making water ratio available for human diminish alarmingly.

Alternative energy resources like wind energy, solar energy, have become quite reliable alternatives to the traditional fossil fuels. These alternative energy sources do provide pollution free and sustainable means for the planet's energy needs. We can use ethanol for petrol or mixture of both and it still works.

In contrast, water has no such alternatives. These renewable sources are diverse and abundant, enabling a flexible and resilient energy supply system. There is no renewable or alternative water that can replace the freshwater required for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, and industrial processes. This stark difference underscores the critical nature of water and the imperative to manage it wisely.

While advancements in technology have enabled us to harness the power of the sun and wind, the same cannot be said for creating new sources of water. Thus, the focus must be on conserving and efficiently managing the water we have, ensuring its availability for future generations.

> SECURING WATER RESOURCES IS PARAMOUNT BECAUSE, UNLIKE ENERGY, THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVE SOURCES FOR WATER. IT IS AN IMPERATIVE THAT TRANSCENDS ENVIRONMENTAL AND GEOPOLITICAL BOUNDARIES. WE ARE OFTEN GUIDED BY THE SAME MOTIVATIONS AND METHODOLOGIES IN WATER RELATED MATTERS LIKE WE DO FOR ENERGY

The absence of viable substitutes for water underscores the urgency of safeguarding our existing supplies through comprehensive, integrated approach encompassing the demand side and also the supply sides of the equation. Ensuring water security involves not only protecting the quality and quantity of freshwater sources but also includes improvements and in the water supply, transmission, sanitation infrastructure to withstand the impacts of climate change and population growth. This requires coordinated efforts at all levels of governance to commit and deploy far reaching policy reforms, technological innovations, and community engagement.

The stakes are high, as the failure to secure water resources could lead to severe social, economic, and environmental consequences. Let's convince ourselves and decide to call water not as water resource but water reserves.

According to a US geological survey the total water reserves on this planet is 1.36 billion kms. Out of this only 2.5 per cent is freshwater and out of that 0.3 per cent is liquid while the rest is frozen in glaciers and poles. Scarcity of water is actually scarcity of access to water reserves, which is pervasive. As per UN estimates around two billion people suffer from some form of water stress. This number is only going to increase in near future.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the annual per capita water availability is less than 500 cubic meters, far below the threshold for water access. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, recurrent droughts exacerbate the already limited access to safe drinking water, affecting both rural and urban populations.

The world's most populous countries, India and Chinaface significant challenges due to the over-extraction of groundwater depletion and water reserve contamination. In Chennai, the situation turned dire in 2019 when the city's reservoirs dried up, leading to a severe drought. This crisis was exacerbated by delayed monsoons and overdependence on groundwater, prompting emergency measures like water tankers and rationing. Bengaluru's crisis this year in April needs no reminder.

The local impacts of water reserve access are profound and varied, affecting communities in different ways depending on their geographic, economic, and social contexts. In regions like California in the United States, prolonged droughts have led to severe water restrictions, affecting agricultural productivity and leading to economic losses.

In India, the state of Maharashtra has experienced recurrent droughts, leading to crop failures and driving rural-to-urban migration as farmers seek alternative livelihoods. These local impacts highlight the interconnectedness of water scarcity with other critical issues such as food security, economic stability, and social cohesion.

Overuse and mismanagement of water reserves are primary drivers of water scarcity. In agriculture, inefficient irrigation practices lead to significant water wastage. For example, traditional flood irrigation methods can lose up to 50 per cent of water to evaporation and runoff. Transitioning to more efficient methods, such as drip irrigation, can substantially reduce water use while maintaining crop yields. In industry, water is often used in large quantities for processes such as cooling, cleaning, and manufacturing. Without proper recycling and reuse strategies, this water is discharged as waste, contributing to the depletion of local water reserve sources. Household mismanagement also plays a role, with excessive water use for activities such as lawn watering, car washing, and inefficient fixtures leading to unnecessary wastage. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes technological innovation, regulatory measures, and public awareness campaigns to promote more sustainable water use practices across all sectors.

Climate change has a profound impact on global water cycles, exacerbating water reserve access scarcity and contributing to the depletion of freshwater reserves. Rising temperatures lead to increased evaporation rates, reducing the availability of surface water in lakes, rivers, and reservoirs.

There may be increased rainfall and flooding which sometime increases the chances of contamination of water supplies and infrastructure damage. The variability and unpredictability of climate change's effects on water availability necessitate adaptive management strategies that can respond to these changing conditions. This includes enhancing water storage infrastructure, improving water use efficiency, and developing robust monitoring and forecasting systems to better manage water resources in a changing climate.

In many developing countries, inadequate sanitation infrastructure exacerbates the problem, leading to widespread contamination of drinking water reserves. Addressing water pollution requires stringent regulatory measures to control industrial emissions, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and improve waste management systems.

Further, increasing the expenditure in water treatment methods may help mitigate the problem. Public awareness and education campaigns are also crucial in promoting responsible behaviour and reducing pollution at the reserve source. The health and well-being of communities depend on the availability of clean and safe water, making the prevention and mitigation of water reserve pollution which is a critical component of water reserve management.

Thus, the call to action is clear: we must prioritize water reserves as a central pillar of sustainable development. Efficient water reserves management is key to tackling the problem. We have to ensure sustainable use of water resources. In agriculture, the adoption of advanced irrigation techniques, such as drip-irrigation and sprinkler based systems, can significantly reduce water use while maintaining or even improving crop yields. These new and innovative technologies deliver water directly to the plant roots and reducing the overall need for water.

In the industrial sector, recycled water supply in-plant reuse policy may substantially decrease water consumption. By treating and reusing wastewater within industrial processes, companies can reduce their reliance on freshwater sources and lower their environmental impact. Household water-saving technologies, such as low-flow fixtures, dual-flush toilets, and rainwater harvesting systems, can also contribute to significant water savings.

Encouraging the widespread adoption of these technologies requires supportive policies, financial incentives, and public awareness campaigns. By implementing efficient water management practices across all sectors, we can reduce water wastage, enhance water security, and promote sustainable development.

All individuals, industries, and governments need to act collectively and urgently to protect and manage our water reserves. The right time to get together and respond to the call for action is right now. The water we save today is the water we generate for tomorrow.

***DR KAUSHAL KANT** Mishra is Delhi-based senior orthopaedic surgeon*
DR VINAY PATHAK *is Assistant Professor, IIIT-Sonepat*

MY WIFE NEELAM IS A NORTH INDIAN, SO SHE WILL MAKE NORTH INDIAN FOOD, WHILE MY MOTHER WILL MAKE BENGALI FOOD
— RONIT ROY

FEAST ON A CULINARY RAINBOW!

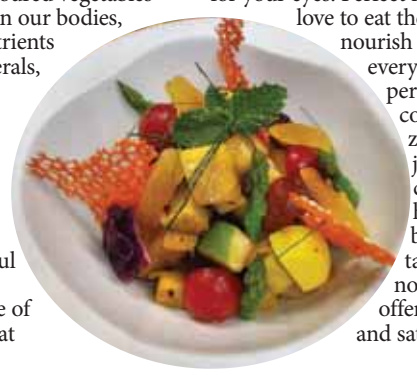
Admiring a rainbow in the sky is an awesome experience but savouring it on your plate is a sensory treat, writes SHARMILA CHAND

How to go about creating a rainbow? Pick and choose different colored fruits and vegetables, toss them together in a bowl, perk up with your favourite seasoning and place it in your plate. Maybe you can line it all up in the sequence of rainbow colours. Or else, enjoy all mixed.

Now isn't your plate looking colourful and pretty? Well, it's not just for the visual appeal, but each colour plays its own role, lending a range of nutrients having immense health benefits.

Chefs's Flair

Ask chefs how to create a rainbow and trust them, they will have a signature dish up their sleeves. It won't be as simple as just tossing up a few ingredients. Rather the dish will be exotic, colorful, flavoursome, nutritious and aesthetically presented. "Take a bite from Elan's Poke Bowl and enjoy a spectrum of flavours and health benefits," says Chef Vijay Thapliyal, Executive Chef, The Lodhi, New Delhi. He elaborates, "We use a variety of ingredients that are locally sourced to ensure the well-being of our guests while inculcating a sustainable future. Coloured vegetables play a significant role in our bodies, providing essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and fibre. By incorporating these colourful ingredients, we broaden our spectrum of nutrients while ensuring our guests enjoy a visually appealing and delightful meal.



Elan's Poke Bowl is one of our standout dishes that embody the rainbow diet. It includes ingredients like edamame beans, silken tofu, red cabbage, pumpkin seeds, red rice, pink carrot ribbons, cucumber dices and sesame dressing, each ingredient lending its own property. Inspired by the Buddha Bowl, this dish has been a staple on our menu and is being served consistently. It's a vibrant, colourful dish that celebrates both colours and flavours, making it a complete meal in itself. The vibrant combination of colours and textures creates a delightful dining experience that tantalises the palate and captivates the visual senses."

Chef Ankur Gulati, Executive Chef, The Claridges, New Delhi loves his vibrant Thai Rainbow Salad. He says, "This delightful dish combines a medley of colourful fruits and vegetables, creating a visual feast and a nutritional powerhouse. Packed with fresh mangoes, bell peppers, purple cabbage, cherry tomatoes, and carrots, this salad offers a spectrum of flavours and health benefits. Rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and fibre, our Rainbow Salad is as good for your body as it is for your eyes. Perfect for those who love to eat the rainbow and nourish their body with every bite. It is perfectly complemented by a zesty Thai chili jam dressing, creating a harmonious blend of sweet, tangy, and spicy notes. Each bite offers a juicy, crisp, and satisfying crunch, making this salad the perfect way to cool down and nourish your body during the hot summer months." Enjoy a taste of Thailand with every colorful and nutritious mouthful!

Rainbow Platters

The fact that Rainbow diet is not restricted to any one particular cuisine is evident in the traditional food of every region. If the Indian Thali symolises a perfect Rainbow platter with different coloured veggies, chutneys, pickles, papads, the Sushi Boats too exemplify the same.

Hence, you dine at Harajuku Tokyo Café, and see how the concept is fully embraced using a diverse array of colourful ingredients. Chef Asami says, "Our Poke Bowls are complete meals that illustrate the concept beautifully. The Bowl consists of white sushi rice topped with a choice of protein, along with fresh, crunchy vegetables like carrots, cucumber, sweetcorn and cabbage. Drizzled with our special house-made sauces, the Bowl offers a balanced mix of proteins, vitamins and minerals, making it both nutritious and delicious. He further adds, "Let us not forget our Rainbow Sushi and Sushi Boats which showcase a variety of vegetarian options and feature a spectrum of colourful ingredients. These include red bell peppers, carrots, cucumbers, avocados, and purple cabbage. Each ingredient is chosen not only for its taste and texture but also for its nutritional benefits, ensuring a well-rounded, healthful dining experience. By incorporating these colourful ingredients, we ensure that our dishes are not only appealing to the eye but also provide a wide array of essential nutrients, supporting overall health and well-being."

Joy In Colorful Bakery!

In bakery too, colours and colourful decorations on bakery products act like a visual language, creating a unique character evoking emotions and flavours. For example, at Taj Holiday Village Resort and Spa, Goa, Chef Subhankar Chitrakar's Giant Easter Egg, is such a delightful rainbow that adds warmth, colours and joy to the entire festivities. "It is my favourite and I love to design it patiently using royal icing. You have to let the chocolate egg cool completely before decorating with icing. Let your imagination run to the moon and back while you deck it up."

He adds, "Certain colours are naturally ass ciated with specific emotions and flavours. For instance, red evokes excitement and is linked to flavours like strawberry or cherry. Pink is softer and suggests sweetness like raspberries or watermelon. I use these colour connotations to tell a story about the taste of the pastry before you even take a bite. Colourful sprinkles, chocolate drizzles, or candied fruit pieces can visually highlight the key ingredients in a pastry. This not only creates a unique look but also tells the guest exactly what flavours to expect."

An all-natural fruit jelly is a favourite of Yatendra Rawat, Executive Chef at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon. "It is very simple to make and highly nutritious; kids just love it. It requires very basic and limited ingredients such as cut fruits of your choice, gelatin, sugar, and water. If you want to be a little more adventurous, you can add a bit of your favorite fruit juice to the water and sugar mixture. To prepare it, cook the sugar, water, and gelatin together until a gel texture is achieved. Then, pour the mixture over the cut fruits of your choice and freeze. Once un-molded, it will give you a wholesome dessert that looks like a rainbow."

To Conclude

Go ahead, have a Rainbow Diet that promises to not only refresh and revitalize you during the hot summer months but also supports your health with a broad spectrum of nutrients.

(Author Intro: Sharmila Chand is an author and freelance journalist who writes on food, travel, art, design, wellness

How Best To Spend 48 Hours In Tokyo

Glitz, Glamour, Neon lights secretly protect a soul that resonates profound Japanese traditions and heritage in Tokyo, discovers SHARMILA CHAND

Landing at the international Haneda Airport, I headed straight to Hotel The Peninsula Tokyo which I chose for its location -- right opposite The Imperial Palace and Hibiya Park in Marunouchi district; just a walk away from the famous Ginza, the shopping hub. The hotel's captivating vibes are an added attraction, a seamless blend of traditional Japanese charm and contemporary luxurious elements.

From the charms of the centuries-old active volcano Mt Fuji, and the quaint village -- Oshino Hakkai, to soaring edifices such as Tokyo Sky Tree, the capital city of Japan packs multiple surprises at every corner. It may not be on top list of travelers as heritage Kyoto but believe me, once you start exploring this city, you will be surprised at its vivacious character, unmatched by any other place in the world. There is an unbeatable synergy between rich Japanese culture and hyper modern metropolitan landscape in Tokyo.

So if you have only 48 hours in this delightful eclectic city, then let's cover it in such a way that you get to see both the East and West side; highlighting tourist trails as well as local hideouts to get a glimpse of real life. I call these my selection which will make an interesting potpourri to explore.

The Iconic Skytree

Start your morning with a visit to the cconic Skytree, the world's tallest freestanding tower, rising above the Azuma Bridge. A perfect venue that offers an unparalleled bird's-eye view of the city's vistas, particularly the red-roofed shrines dotted humbly among the huge skyscrapers.

Tsukiji Outer Market

Now sushi for breakfast may seem a bit unusual, but when in Tokyo, it is a done thing. Trust me, this is an experience worth giving a shot. The market is packed with top-notch sushi options, vegetarian and non-veg both. I thought it was the most exciting way to start my day of Tokyo exploration.

Akihabara for Tokyo Flavour

If not sushi then have a hearty breakfast of your choice and then start with Akihabara. It gives you the real peek into what Tokyo is associated with. In this kitschy district you will find skyscraping arcades, Manga stores, video game stores and a lot more. That's the much talked about

Spend An Hour In Shinjuku Gyoen

Tokyo's most spectacular gardens are in Shinjuku Gyoen. Tourist hotspot, much loved during cherry blossom season as it is home to over 400 cherry trees. You will get to see perhaps the most beautiful sight with baby pink petals all around.

Accentuated with coy fish ponds, fruit trees, and exquisite flower beds. Take a quick look at the Art Gallery here and then a cuppa of coffee at the pretty cafe.

Tokyo's Oldest Buddhist Temple

Senso-ji temple is the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo which showcases the rich culture of Japan's Edo Period. Undoubtedly this was my best sojourn. It enshrines a golden image of Kannon -- Buddhist Goddess of mercy. Legend has it that she was miraculously pulled out of the nearby Sumida-gawa by two fishermen in AD 628. The image has remained on the spot ever since but is never on public display. The main entrance to the temple complex is via pretty red Kaminari Mon and Busy shopping street Nakamise-d?ri. When you enter the gate, do not miss to see statues of F?jin (the God of wind) and Raijin (the God of thunder), and a stunning carved dragon under the giant red lantern. At the end of Nakamise-d?ri is the temple itself. The 55m-high five storey Pagoda is a sight to behold. Walk to the eastern edge of the temple complex. Here you will see Asakusa Jinja, a shrine built in honour of the brothers who discovered the Kannon statue that inspired the construction of Sens?-ji.

Immerse yourself in a vibrant atmosphere adorned with colorful hanging lanterns. Have a look at various temples and then walk towards Nakamise bustling market that offers a delightful array of traditional Japanese snacks and souvenirs. And yes, don't forget to make a wish at the famous Senso-ji Thunder Gate!

Day 2: 10.30 am Coffee at Shozo

It is always nice to discover special cute small places to have a coffee break. So after winding up breakfast at the hotel, it is a good idea to go to Aoyama district. You will find this area fascinating with plenty of shops and art galleries. My local friends had already told me - a pretty hideout, the Shozo Coffee Store should not be missed and I agree with them. A wooden hut done up with plants was my coffee corner where I had the best caramel latte with a delicious cheesecake. And that set my mood right to start exploring.

The Grand Meiji-jing?: History and Heritage

Tokyo's grandest Shint? shrine is dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and Empress Sh?ken. Their reign (1868-1912) coincided with Japan's transformation from an isolationist, feudal state to a modern nation. Constructed in 1920, the shrine was destroyed in WWII air raids and rebuilt in 1958. The main shrine is built of unpainted cypress wood with a copper-plated roof. It is in a wooded grove accessed via a long winding gravel path. The shrine occupies only a small fraction of the sprawling forested grounds, which contain some 120,000 trees collected from all over Japan. Of this, only the strolling garden Meiji-jing? Gyoen is accessible to the public. It is said that The Meiji emperor himself designed the iris garden here to please the empress and the garden is at its best when the irises bloom in June.

Traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony

If you are not exhausted after lunch, I suggest attend a beautiful tea ceremony at Happo-en. Where on earth you will get to immerse in a real Zen garden in the heart of Tokyo? Happo-en is one of Tokyo's exclusive secrets. Off the touristy beat, hence tranquil, with hundred year old bonsai trees and Japanese carp and cherry trees swimming in a pond. Attend the serene tea ceremony, a lifetime experience, you will not forget.

A Bowl of Ramen Is Quintessential

Ramen and Tokyo go together. A bowl of Ramen is absolutely essential. Stop by at any Ramen joint, as you will find them after every 50 m. There's no shortage of delicious, steaming hot bowls of rich broth, mounds of noodles and toppings of your choice to be found throughout the city.

Visit Golden Gai in the evening

One evening go to Golden Gai and see the spectacle. Narrow alleys will take you to the buzz of bars, karaoke joints, and sizzling yakitori spots. Have a bite at Omoide Yokocho. It's an uber-narrow strip lined on both sides with hole-in-the-wall yakitori joints. I kept looking at bandana-clad chefs flipping skewers by the dozen over fiery charcoal. That day I was totally immersed in the environs, looking nonstop at the locals, without blinking an eye and also ate like them, shoulder to shoulder. Amidst the heavy smoke and aroma of the grilled food, I was in a bustling and lively world.

Learn Origami Craft

The Happy Origami Crafting Lesson teaches participants how to create intricate figures from traditional washi paper. Beginners can join, no prior experience with origami is required. With this one-of-a-kind experience, you'll be able to learn the ancient Japanese art of origami with the help of an experienced paper folding pro.

Seal Your Memories and Bid Farewell To Tokyo

Immersing myself in the traditional Japanese culture, exploring the capitals unique character of effortlessly blending tradition and technology, admiring pagodas comfortable next to neon signs, experiencing authentic 'Forest Bathing', my 48 hours were like a fairytale dream!

(Sharmila Chand is an author and independent journalist who writes on Travel and Food

Dakshin Yatra Flavours of South

Edesia, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla And Viva, Holiday Inn Aerocity, are delighted to announce an exclusive South Indian food festival, Dakshin Yatra Flavours of South, from June 22 to June 30, 2024. Guests are invited to embark on a culinary journey through the rich and diverse cuisines of South India, with dining experiences available every evening from 7 PM to 11 PM at both locations.

Dakshin Yatra promises an authentic and immersive experience with a menu specially curated by the esteemed Chef Reghunath, who will be traveling from Kochi to share his expertise and passion for authentic South Indian cuisine. The festival will feature famous dishes such as Chettinad Chicken, Kerala Prawn & Mango Curry, Dindigul Biryani, Thalassery Biryani, Bisi Bele Bath, Malabar Parotta, and many more.

The Dakshin Yatra festival is an opportunity for our guests to experience the rich and diverse flavors of South India right here in New Delhi, says Mr. Shuvendu Banerjee, General Manager at Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla. "We are thrilled to bring this unique experience to our guests, with Chef Reghunath's exceptional expertise adding an authentic touch to every dish, says Mr Amit Rana, General Manager at Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport.

Complementing the food, the festival will offer a selection of unique cocktails and mocktails that capture the essence of South India, including Madras Magic, Kerala Coconut Cooler, Andhra Mango Mojito, Udupi Uplifter, Ambuli Juice, Neer Majjige, Panakam, Panna, and Nimbu Pani.

The ambiance at Edesia and Viva will transport guests to the vibrant and culturally rich regions of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Both restaurants will be adorned with traditional decor, colourful displays, and installations representing the distinct art and culture of these southern states. A dedicated vendor will enhance the dining experience by transforming the space into a visual celebration of South India's heritage.

A FILM IS NOT A VEHICLE TO ACCUSE, OR TO RELAY A SPECIFIC MESSAGE. IF WE REDUCE A FILM TO THIS, WE LOSE ALL HOPE FOR CINEMA TO IGNITE A RICHER CONVERSATION
— HIROKAZU KORE-EDA

A BEACON OF SANATANA DHARMA IN THE MODERN WORLD

PRIYANKA ANAND'S transition from corporate success to spiritual leadership exemplifies her profound commitment to preserving and promoting India's ancient wisdom. Inspired by her Guru, Om Swami, she now leads the Vedic Sadhana Foundation, making Sanatana Dharma accessible to the modern world says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In a world where ancient traditions often struggle to find their place amidst modernity, Priyanka Anand stands as a shining beacon of Sanatana Dharma, illuminating the path for countless seekers. Her journey from a successful corporate career to leading the Vedic Sadhana Foundation is a witness to the power of spiritual transformation and the enduring relevance of India's ancient wisdom.

Priyanka's life story is one of dedication, faith and a profound commitment to preserving and promoting the timeless teachings of Sanatana Dharma, especially among the younger generation.

From a young age, Priyanka was driven by a quest for deeper answers to life's fundamental questions. This quest took a significant turn when she met her Guru, Om Swami, whose selfless service to humanity and profound vision inspired her to find a new direction. One of the major reasons for her transition was the disconnection she observed between the youth and their Vedic heritage, a disconnection she experienced personally and saw in her own daughter. Guided by her Guru, Priyanka felt a compelling urge to share this transformative experience with others, particularly children, to ensure they appreciate and embrace their cultural heritage.

Despite stepping away from her corporate career, Priyanka continues to grip her corporate experience in her current role. The Vedic Sadhana Foundation operates with the dynamism of a startup, driven by a mission to serve and make a lasting impact. Rather than focusing on shareholder value, the foundation is dedicated to sharing the wealth of Dharma with future generations. This approach ensures that the rich heritage of Sanatana Dharma is not only preserved but also revitalised in a way that resonates with today's youth.

Priyanka's decision to transition from the corporate world was influenced by several pivotal moments. Under her Guru's guidance, her interest in exploring the depths of Dharma grew. The powerful teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures offered profound answers and insights into life. A particularly significant experience was when her daughter, attending a Catholic school, expressed a desire to become a disciple of Jesus at the age of seven. This moment highlighted the disconnection from their own cultural heritage.

Priyanka began sharing stories from the Puranas with her daughter and practicing more rituals at home. These experiences deepened her love for Bhagawan and solidified her path. In times of despair, her Guru was her pillar of strength, much like Krishna to Draupadi, leading her to share this journey with others.

At the Vedic Sadhana Foundation, Priyanka strives to make ancient teachings relatable to the younger generation by meeting them where they are online. The foundation has developed the world's first app for Mantra Sadhana, empowering youth globally through the practice of meditation and mantra chanting. The Sadhana App, used by 90,000 people globally, 75% of whom are youth, makes these practices accessible. Additionally, the foundation holds free Sadhana events across India, allowing youth to collectively embrace and understand the meaning behind these practices. Engaging directly with their curiosity, the foundation answers thousands of queries on their helpdesk, showcasing the beauty and richness of Dharma, which encourages personal exploration and empowers youth to lead better lives.

Incorporating Sanatana Dharma into educational systems is essential for preserving this rich heritage. Key scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata can be integrated into the curriculum, teaching them as history rather than mythology. Mindful practices like prayer, meditation and contemplation can profoundly impact students, encouraging them to reflect on higher questions of life. Well-trained teachers who understand Sanatana Dharma can inspire students with its values and virtues. Celebrating traditional festivals, rituals and practices creates a vibrant cultural environment, helping students connect with their heritage. Technology, like the Sadhana App, can also be incorporated into the curriculum, providing students with practical tools for spiritual growth and self-discovery.

The impact of the Vedic Sadhana Foundation's work is evident in stories like Priya's, who found solace and purpose through the Sadhana App. Struggling with severe mental health issues, Priya discovered the app and started with simple mantra chanting. The practices brought her a profound sense of calm and clarity, transforming her life. Inspired to learn more about Sanatana Dharma, Priya found a renewed sense of purpose and a stronger spiritual foundation. Her story is a powerful testament to the foundation's life-changing impact.

One major challenge in promoting Sanatana Dharma is the reluctance to discuss religion openly. The foundation addresses this by leading by example, proudly celebrating heritage and showcasing its transformative power. Modern-day disengagement from traditional practices due to time constraints and lack of access to authentic information is another challenge. The Sadhana App, created by Om Swami, makes these practices accessible to all, demonstrating their profound impact.

Priyanka's vision for the Vedic Sadhana Foundation is to become a global beacon for Sanatana Dharma, making ancient Indian wisdom accessible and transformative for people worldwide. The foundation plans to establish a stronger presence, inspire the younger generation and collaborate with patrons to ensure a lasting legacy. Upcoming initiatives include the Sadhana Tablet, a dedicated device for performing Sadhana, and the Astro Sadhana App, which integrates astrology with spiritual practices. Programs for children will help them connect with their spiritual roots from an early age.

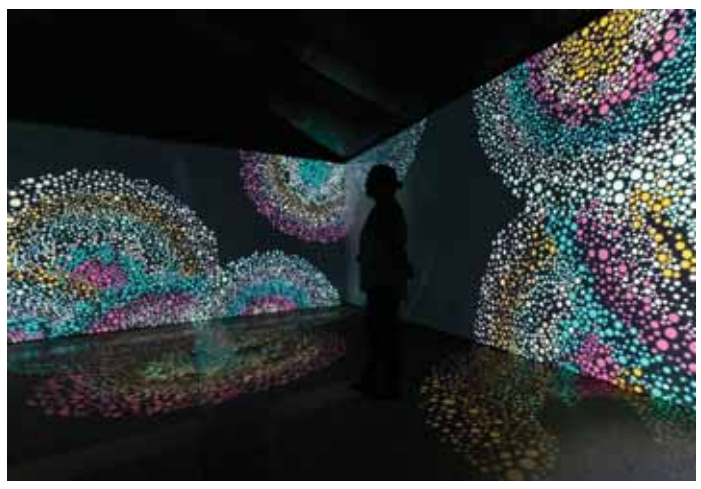
With a global audience, the foundation plans to expand its reach to digital platforms and establish a strategic physical presence. Relocating to the USA, Priyanka aims to bring ancient Indian wisdom to the forefront, mirroring historical efforts of saints who spread this knowledge globally. By making digital offerings more accessible and organising on-ground events, the foundation hopes to inspire pride in heritage and embrace Sanatana Dharma worldwide.

Priyanka's personal journey and spiritual practice under the mentorship of Om Swami have profoundly influenced her leadership and the foundation's direction. Rediscovering the transformative power of Sanatana Dharma, she integrates these ancient practices into modern life, driving the foundation's mission to reconnect individuals with their spiritual roots and promoting mental and emotional well-being through ancient practices.

In a world increasingly disconnected from its roots, Priyanka Anand and the Vedic Sadhana Foundation stand as powerful advocates for the preservation and promotion of Sanatana Dharma. Through innovative use of technology, educational initiatives and a profound commitment to spiritual growth, they are ensuring that the timeless wisdom of ancient India continues to thrive and inspire future generations. Priyanka's journey from a corporate leader to a spiritual guide is not just a personal transformation but a beacon of hope for all seeking deeper meaning and connection in their lives. Her work is a reminder that, with dedication and vision, it is possible to bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern, creating a harmonious path forward for all.

An Immersive Journey Through Indigenous Australian Culture

"Walking Through a Songline" is a mesmerising digital installation that merges the ancient wisdom of Indigenous Australian Songlines with cutting-edge technology. Presented by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the Australian High Commission, this immersive experience, crafted by the National Museum of Australia and Mosster Studio, takes visitors on a profound journey through the rich tapestry of Aboriginal culture, offering a unique blend of storytelling, art and innovation says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Stepping into 'Walking Through a Songline' feels like crossing the threshold into another world, one where ancient stories and modern technology converge in a harmonious dance. It feels surreal as it presents an impressive vision of a 'Perfect World'. It feels like a soulful journey, offering a quiet, therapeutic way that allows the mind to wander into its own world.

The collaboration between the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the Australian High Commission brings forth a groundbreaking digital installation, 'Walking Through a Songline.' Produced by the National Museum of Australia and Mosster Studio, this captivating experience promises to be a cultural journey like no other transforms the abstract into the creating an environment that is both surreal and profoundly real.

The installation, produced by the National Museum of Australia and Mosster Studio, centers around the captivating story of Naji, which originates from the Dreaming or Bugarregarre time. This narrative is a cornerstone of Aboriginal culture, detailing how spirit beings traversed a barren land, bringing life and water in their wake. As you walk through the space, these stories unfold through a series of stunning projections, enveloping you in a world that feels both timeless and immediate.

One of the most compelling aspects of this installation is its ability to evoke a sense of peace and introspection. The quiet, therapeutic atmosphere invites visitors to lose themselves in the journey, much like the spirit beings did as they traversed the land. Each projection is a doorway into a different facet of the story, each detail meticulously crafted to draw you deeper into the narrative. Visitors are taken on a journey through mesmerising projections that portray Songlines in an artistic and astonishing way. This immersive experience blends ancient knowledge with new technology, allowing visitors to sit quietly in front of each short film and feeling transported to another world. The calm and therapeutic nature of the installation resonates with everyone present.

The tale of the Seven Sisters, a highlight of the exhibition, is presented with a blend of awe and reverence. Known as Kungkarangkalpa, the story follows the sisters as they are pursued across the desert landscape by Wati Nyiru. The narrative is brought to life through vibrant paintings by First Nations artists, which are projected onto the walls, creating a dynamic and immersive visual experience. The transformation of the sisters into stars is depicted with a poignancy that speaks to the universal themes of resilience and transformation.

'Walking Through a Songline' does more than tell a story; it creates an experience that bridges the ancient and the modern. The use of cutting-edge digital technology allows for a multi-sensory journey through the Songlines, pathways of knowledge that map the routes of Ancestral creator beings. These Songlines are not just historical artifacts; they are living, breathing elements of cultural identity, imbued with values and practices that have been preserved through generations.

The installation also features a series of short films, each offering a unique glimpse into different aspects of Indigenous Australian culture. Films like 'Footprints' and 'Bulunu Milkarri' explore themes of cultural preservation and storytelling, highlighting the vital role that these narratives play in the survival and continuation of Aboriginal traditions. These films add a rich, personal dimension to the exhibition, allowing visitors to connect with the individual stories and experiences of the First Nations people.

As you move through the installation, the seamless blend of visual art and storytelling creates a tapestry that is both beautiful and profound. The projections, combined with a beautiful soundtrack, create an atmosphere that is both meditative and expressive. The voices of traditional custodians and knowledge holders resonate throughout the space, adding depth and authenticity to the experience.

The collaboration between the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the Australian High Commission is a testament to the power of cross-cultural exchange. By bringing this installation to a wider audience, they not only celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Australia's First Nations people but also uphold a greater appreciation for the diversity and depth of Indigenous cultures worldwide.

'Walking Through a Songline' is more than an exhibition; it is an immersive journey that invites you to step into the heart of Aboriginal culture. It is a celebration of life, resilience and the timeless power of storytelling. As you leave the exhibition, the stories stay a reminder of the deep connections that bind us to the land and to each other. This installation is exploring the profound and enduring narratives that continue to shape our world.

SWAY INTO SUMMER SERENITY

DISCOVER THE SHEER SPLENDOR OF CHIFFON SAREES

As the balmy breeze of summer is here, it's time to drape yourself in elegance and embrace the season's ethereal charm. We're thrilled to unveil our latest collection, curated especially for the enchanting summer weddings and soirées that await. Crafted with meticulous attention to detail and an unwavering commitment to sophistication, our Summer Chiffon Saree Collection captures the essence of grace and allure. Each saree is a masterpiece, designed to adorn you with effortless glamour and timeless beauty.

Light as a Whisper, Radiant as the Sun - Chiffon, renowned for its delicate texture and airy feel, takes center stage in our collection. Impossibly light and luxuriously soft, chiffon drapes like a dream, ensuring you glide through the summer festivities with unparalleled grace.

A Kaleidoscope of Hues and Patterns - From the soft pastel tones reminiscent of a summer sunrise to the vibrant hues that mirror the blossoming flowers, our collection boasts a kaleidoscope of colors to suit every mood and occasion. Whether you prefer subtle sophistication or eye-catching exuberance, you'll find the perfect saree to express your unique style.

Intricate Embellishments and Timeless Embroidery - Each saree in our collection is adorned with exquisite embellishments and timeless embroidery, adding a touch of opulence to every ensemble. From delicate floral motifs to intricate threadwork, every detail is meticulously crafted to elevate your look and leave a lasting impression.

Effortless Elegance, Unmatched Comfort - Designed with the modern woman in mind, our chiffon sarees marry elegance with

comfort. With their lightweight fabric and fluid drape, they allow you to move with ease and confidence, ensuring you stay effortlessly chic from dawn till dusk.

A Timeless Investment - More than just garments, our chiffon sarees are a timeless investment in your wardrobe. Versatile and enduringly chic, they transcend fleeting trends, becoming cherished heirlooms that you'll treasure for years to come.

Drape Yourself in Summer Splendor- As you prepare to step into the enchanting world of summer weddings and events, let our Summer Chiffon Saree Collection be your guide. Immerse yourself in the sheer elegance of chiffon, and let each saree become a canvas upon which you paint your own summer story. Let this summer be your most stylish yet, as you enchant and captivate in the timeless beauty of chiffon sarees from Atelier Shikaarbagh

About Atelier Shikaarbagh

Atelier Shikaarbagh is not just a brand, but a celebration of heritage and style. With a legacy inspired by fashion icons Rani Urmila Rajey of Dholpur and Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, the brand encapsulates the essence of timeless elegance and grace. The brand is now led by the visionary Founder & Head Designer Maayankraj Singh, Atelier Shikaarbagh is a sanctuary of sartorial splendor, where each creation is a masterpiece in its own right. From resplendent sarees adorned with intricate embroidery to bespoke wedding poshaks that exude regal charm, every creation is meticulously crafted to perfection.The essence of each garment is steeped in heritage craft and design narratives that have stood the test of time. The expression molds itself to the vision and desires of a proud traditional patron, finding their personal signature in a rapidly evolving local, regional and international fashion and styling arena.

Their designs have been worn by some of the most prominent personalities, including the esteemed Mrs. Kokilaben Ambani, Mrs. Nita Ambani, Mrs. Smriti Z Irani, Princess Sarvath al-Hassan, Mrs. Sharmila Tagore, Mrs. Hema Malini, Mrs. Kareena Kapoor Khan, Ms. Jahnavi Kapoor, and members of Indian and International royal families.

Let me know if you require any more information.

CHANDU CHAMPION

Kartik Aaryan's Breakthrough Performance Sets the Bar High

"Chandu Champion," directed by Kabir Khan and produced by Sajid Nadiadwala under Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, is an enthralling biographical sports drama that tells the inspiring story of Murlikant Petkar, India's first Paralympics gold medallist

Kartik Aryan stars in the lead role, capturing the essence of a dream that perseveres against all odds and ultimately becomes a reality. The film follows Murlikant Petkar's life, from his challenging childhood to overcoming personal trauma and societal ridicule. Known as 'Chandu,' Petkar's journey is marked by resilience, perseverance and an indomitable spirit that defies the label of 'loser' and aims for Olympic glory. This movie introduces the world to Murlikant Petkar, a hero whose name and achievements were unknown to many, beautifully depicting his journey and making sure everyone knows about the hero who fought for our country and made us proud.

Kartik Aryan delivers an exceptional performance in "Chandu Champion," showcasing his versatility and dedication to the craft. His portrayal of Murlikant Petkar is deeply moving, capturing the essence of the character's struggles and triumphs with authenticity. Aryan's physical transformation for the role is truly inspirational, highlighting his commitment to portraying the character authentically. His performance is an exemplification to his talent and serves as a powerful anchor for the film. Aryan's dedication to the role shines through, making it one of his standout performances. Vijay Raaz, portraying Tiger Ali, provides a perfect balance to the film with his nuanced performance. The on-screen chemistry between Aryan and Raaz adds a compelling dynamic, enriching the narrative with authenticity and depth.

Kabir Khan's direction is skillful and sensitive, capturing the essence of Petkar's life journey. The screenplay is meticulously crafted, combining moments of joy, emotion and pride. Unlike typical sports biographies, "Chandu Champion" combines heartfelt storytelling with engaging entertainment. Sudeep Chatterjee's cinematography is visually stunning, capturing the highs and lows of Petkar's journey with breathtaking visuals.

While the first half of the film is engaging and well-paced, the second half slows down slightly. However, the gripping storyline and stellar performances keep the audience invested in Chandu's journey. "Chandu Champion" is a joyful, emotional and pride-filled depiction of a real-life hero's extraordinary journey. Kartik Aryan's powerful performance, alongside Vijay Raaz's excellent support, makes this film a must-watch. Despite the slower pace in the second half, the film's heartfelt narrative and inspirational message make it a memorable cinematic experience. "Chandu Champion" celebrates the human spirit and the relentless pursuit of dreams, reminding us that no dream is too big to achieve. Rating: 4/5

FAITH CHANGES US - FAITH IN SOMETHING INTRINSICALLY GOOD, SOMETHING OTHER THAN OURSELVES, SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OURSELVES
—DONNA GODDARD

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA

ARIES March 21-April 19

This week appears promising for financial progress. Prepare for potential travel, mainly for business or professional reasons. However, be ready for some disruptions that could affect your plans. Delays in bookings or reservations might occur, along with minor financial inconveniences such as issues with banking transactions. Despite these irritations, your resilience and determination will help you navigate through the challenges. Fresh opportunities are on the horizon, poised to boost your career. A significant personal proposal could also emerge, breathing new life into your romantic or marital connections. Partners will find themselves more attentive and committed to each other, fostering a harmonious bond. Toward the week's end, pay attention to your spending, particularly on thoughtful gestures and scenic getaways.

Lucky number 6 | **Lucky colour** Yellow
Lucky day Tuesday

LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week heralds a phase of abundant prosperity for you. Your innovative thoughts and dedication to family welfare will ensure joy and cooperation at home. Expect significant discussions that require your insightful contributions, enhancing harmony among loved ones. Assistance may come unexpectedly from close relatives, bolstering your emotional well-being and aiding in the realization of your aspirations. This period invites you to savor the rewards of your efforts, as favorable developments in financial and personal ventures are likely. You may find opportunities to expand your horizons, possibly involving property investments or business growth. Your children could also receive promising educational or professional opportunities. However, be vigilant as the week concludes; envy may drive adversaries to create obstacles. Steer clear of any contentious activities to maintain your peace and progress.

Lucky number 8 | **Lucky colour** Brown
Lucky day Sunday

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

At times when life doesn't align with your expectations, you may encounter feelings of rejection, sadness, loneliness, or even betrayal. While these experiences can be distressing, they are also essential for personal growth. Challenges prompt us to reflect, learn from our setbacks, and emerge stronger. Midweek, you might find yourself searching for clarity independently, striving to transcend your desires and emotional responses. This period of introspection is vital for calming life's storms. It is an affirmation of your resilience and capacity to overcome adversity. If betrayal has made you doubt the possibility of love, take this as a challenge to reaffirm your capacity for affection. Remember, just beyond every obstacle, there awaits an opportunity, much like the sun eagerly waiting behind the clouds to shine forth.

Lucky number 21 | **Lucky colour** Olive
Lucky day Wednesday

TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week promises a bustling agenda filled with social engagements and welcoming activities. You'll find yourself at the center of familial and friendly gatherings, enjoying the infusion of creative vigor that comes with these interactions. A joyful reunion with an old friend might brighten your week further. You'll feel the warmth of elder's blessings enhancing your contentment. Midweek brings a serene atmosphere at home; with well-being in your personal health, harmony among loved ones, and a stable financial situation contributing to a balanced environment. However, the latter part of the week might present challenges, particularly in your closest relationships and personal well-being. A subtle shift in energy could lead to misunderstandings, so approach interactions with mindfulness and preventative care. During these moments, reconnecting with your spiritual focus can provide solace and guidance.

Lucky number 19 | **Lucky colour** Orange
Lucky day Friday

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you possess a remarkable inner strength that will drive you towards your goals with clarity and determination. Your exceptional interpersonal skills will shine, aiding you in climbing to new heights professionally. Your established resilience ensures a sense of security and vibrant energy. Business endeavors are likely to be profitable, with timely financial returns bolstering your ventures. Relationships, whether professional or personal, will experience harmony, supported by familial and paternal bonds. Fortune smiles upon you during this period. However, those in romantic relationships may need to exercise patience. It's a time for reflection—avoid concealing your feelings. Instead, embrace new situations with maturity and openness, allowing you to navigate this week with wisdom and adaptability.

Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Black
Lucky day Thursday

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You are entering a phase where taking some time for relaxation and self-care is essential. Embrace the calm and strength you discover during this period. Some may also need to focus on physical or emotional healing following recent challenges. Pay attention to your environment, as it may present you with a critical revelation or resolution. Be prepared for complexities that might not resolve quickly, as they could lead to prolonged periods of uncertainty. Nonetheless, the latter part of the week promises a shift towards positivity. A new venture may present itself, demanding quick action and daring decisions. This is your moment to shine, leveraging your abilities to embark on this journey with confidence and see it through successfully.

Lucky number 10 | **Lucky colour** Golden
Lucky day Tuesday

GEMINI May 21-June 20

A significant shift is on the horizon, bringing notable advancements in professional settings. Expect opportunities for increased income and recognition for your efforts. With clear objectives, you'll move forward with purpose and determination. This period marks a time when your hard work will begin to pay off. Midweek brings a surge of prosperity, igniting your energy and creativity. Your generous spirit flourishes, and you find joy in philanthropic activities. Despite material successes, you may find yourself drawn towards deeper spiritual exploration. Family and professional relationships strengthen, providing support and improved collaboration. Business individuals will experience enhanced rapport with colleagues and partners. For those in corporate roles, prospects for promotions or favorable relocations emerge. This phase is ideal for recognizing and leveraging your talents to their fullest potential.

Lucky number 22 | **Lucky colour** Purple
Lucky day Monday

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you possess a natural reservoir of resilience and determination. Your objectives are crystal clear, and you are geared up to meet them. Known for adept communication, you will find yourself excelling in interactions, which could pave the way for elevated positions. Your inner strength will provide a sense of security and vitality. Those engaged in business ventures are likely to see substantial profits and timely financial returns. Relationships, both personal and professional, are set to thrive, with support coming from family and significant figures in your life. However, it is advisable to exercise patience in matters of the heart. This period calls for reflection; it's a time to embrace new scenarios and express your feelings openly, adopting a mature approach to the changes around you.

Lucky number 20 | **Lucky colour** White
Lucky day Monday

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Embrace the unseen brilliance within you that previously went unrecognized. Embrace confidence in your capabilities and in the higher forces that guide you. Holding firm to the belief that something will occur is a powerful means of bringing it to fruition. You are touched by a profound sense of inspiration and inner strength. Your openness to the world around you is a source of power, not weakness. This is a time of spiritual liberation and empowerment. It's wise to abandon outdated perspectives and embrace a fresh outlook. Listen closely, as your inner guidance becomes more pronounced, paving the way for your deepest aspirations to surface. You're entering a phase ripe with opportunities for new connections, filled with promise and the potential for deep affection and joy.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Beige
Lucky day Thursday

CANCER June 21-July 22

This week, you may find yourself wrestling with mental unrest, finding it difficult to achieve peaceful sleep due to ongoing concerns. Your thoughts are particularly focused on your children's well-being and progress, which might cause you some anxiety. You're anticipating some important outcomes, but these seem to be delayed, adding to your stress. Additionally, a family member's health, possibly a close relative like your mother, might require more of your attention during this period. For those experiencing emotional fluctuations, possibly due to hormonal changes or other natural cycles, finding balance through yoga or meditation could prove beneficial. These practices not only strengthen mental resilience but also empower you to handle life's challenges more effectively.

Lucky number 17 | **Lucky colour** Pink
Lucky day Wednesday

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

The essence of a pure heart and mind provides a reliable foundation for your endeavors. This week, your innate desires merge seamlessly with this purity, shaping the core of your being. As you encounter your deepest desires and fears, you don't shy away. Instead, you integrate them, gaining strength and resilience. Confident in your capabilities, you navigate through various spheres—balancing theory with practice, and weaving together logic, emotion, and action. Your objectives are clear, underscoring the truth that mere wishes cannot effect change, but decisive actions can transform everything. Remember, the capacity to create is pivotal. Therefore, pursue your goals with determination, observe as your efforts align the world to your vision, and take charge of crafting the life you envision. Your life is a reflection of your choices—embrace your power to mold it.

Lucky number 14 | **Lucky colour** Grey
Lucky day Saturday

PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You are often so absorbed in meeting others' needs that you overlook your own life's riches. Amidst this hustle, remember that the affection surrounding you could fade if neglected. Disappointment frequently arises not from a lack of possessions, but from failing to appreciate what you already possess. Acknowledging and valuing these blessings daily is crucial. This week, anticipate significant shifts that will challenge the status quo. These changes will test your understanding of destiny and readiness for new phases. An opportunity for a union, be it through a new friendship, romantic connection, or partnership, is on the horizon. Embracing such bonds requires flexibility, yet it's the clarity and sincerity of your intentions that will provide a dependable foundation during this transformative period.

Lucky number 11 | **Lucky colour** Vilot
Lucky day Sunday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Get over habit tendencies, destiny changes

Gautam Buddha was once asked: "Can destiny be changed?" "No. But you can change your habits, attitudes and mental orientation. Once you succeed in changing them, destiny automatically changes," he replied. The paradox, however, is that for a large majority of Indians, which includes even well-educated people, sense of 'fatalism' seems to be deeply ingrained in their psyche. So, they refuse to explore even the obvious truth. Pundits perpetuate the sense of superstition quoting shady texts to exploit human vulnerability, as that serves their vested interest. The irony, however, is that seldom are people conscious about exploring their true nature with the intent to make necessary amend in their approach to life.

It will be interesting to note here that the course of destiny applies only on human beings. Why? Other species such as trees, plants and animals are bound by their basic nature. They keep following their predefined natural cycle. They don't enjoy the scope to make any exception. Human beings on the contrary enjoy the exclusive prerogative of making choices. But no sooner option is available, the probability of its use and misuse becomes equal. And there is nothing like a free lunch in this world. You will have to own up for the choices made and bear with the consequences thereof. That is what binds human beings to a cause-effect chain. It is on this premise that our course of destiny stands, and which stretches on to even next birth.

To overcome the above vulnerability, human beings also enjoy another exclusive privilege - the faculty of discriminate intelligence. They, thus, could guide their actions by choice and discrimination. The discriminatory ability empowers us to explore the choices available, evaluate them, make reasoned judgment, and pick up right lead. But this faculty does not play out involuntarily. It needs to be consciously invoked on every occasion before taking any call, which remains the prerogative of ahamkara (Ego). The irony, however, is that our egotistical mind gets carried away by seeming realities. They, thus, are tempted to take things on their face value. More often, caught up in the usual flow of life, our egotistical mind doesn't care to invoke discriminatory faculty for due diligence. Guided by their instinctive judgment, they jump into action without applying proper forethought, and evidently to our detriment.

The question now is: how does our karmic consequences get carried over to the next life? Going by ancient Indian philosophic perception, a being's life is structured in three layers – Causal, Astral, And Gross. Causal body carries the imprints of the past, which sets the terms of how we are expected to come up in life. These imprints are picked up by the astral body, which translates them into action through the gross body platform playing from the front. All mind functions, including our memory, remains the prerogative of astral body. As one meets the end of life, it is just our gross body that disintegrates. The causal and astral bodies, that are pure energy dimensions, are not lost. Carrying all memory imprints, they move on to higher dimension, to reincarnate afresh with a new gross body platform. The newly born has in store all memory imprints picked up during the past birth, in the form of thought-seeds. As and when they get congenial ground they come into play. So, it is again mind through which destiny indications play out.

Here again, since we enjoy choice option, it also enjoins upon us with the capability to make conscientious choices to checkmate carryover implications from the past and pick up fresh leads. It needs to be appreciated here that mind is a very powerful instrument. It can even self-reflect upon itself, and explore one's own nature – desire trends, habits & attitudes, likes & dislikes, prejudices & obsessions, as well as indwelling potential. All that is needed is to take charge of oneself. Identify, acknowledge, address one's infirmities and then redefine the thought process through fresh educative inputs. In the process, you may get over all preconditioning of mind. Following which, your mind power will be available in full strength, which may know no limits. With your expanded vision and improved sense of reasons and judgment, you may see things in the right perspective due. You will be able to discriminate between 'what you want' and 'what is right' and pick up the right lead. Your inter-personal relations will improve, and therefore, you may be able to relate well with all and sundry. Life may then turn into a beautiful experience.

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