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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hajj tragedy

The tragic loss of pilgrims' lives demands better preparation from pilgrims and a more effective response from the Saudi Govt

This year marks one of the most tragic incidents for Hajj pilgrims, with 98 Indians confirmed dead. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has verified that these deaths occurred due to an unprecedented heatwave in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. This calamity unfolded amidst one of the most severe heat conditions in recent years, which saw temperatures rising above 45 degrees Celsius, leading to the deaths of over 1,000 pilgrims from various countries. High temperatures combined with intense humidity resulted in a multitude of heat-related illnesses among pilgrims, particularly affecting the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. Medical facilities were overwhelmed with cases of heatstroke and dehydration, leading to a staggering number of fatalities. The victims included significant numbers from Egypt, Indonesia, and Jordan, underscoring the global reach of the tragedy and the dire need for improved safety measures during the pilgrimage. The Hajj pilgrimage annually draws millions of Muslims to Mecca. Despite Saudi Arabia's extensive efforts to safeguard pilgrims, there have been many tragic incidents. Health issues have also been a major factor in pilgrim fatalities, with heat-related illnesses being particularly common. The extreme heat and physical exertion can cause dehydration, heatstroke, and other complications. In 2018, dozens of pilgrims succumbed to heat exhaustion due to the severe temperatures typical of Saudi Arabia during the summer.



The devastating impact of this heatwave can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the effects of climate change are increasingly evident, with rising global temperatures leading to more frequent and intense heat waves. This has particularly exacerbated the harsh climatic conditions in the Middle East, making such events more severe and life-threatening. Secondly, despite significant investments in infrastructure to accommodate the vast number of pilgrims, the extreme weather overwhelmed the existing facilities, hampering efforts to provide adequate medical care and cooling solutions. Lastly, there was a general lack of preparedness among many pilgrims for the severe heat conditions. Many were not adequately informed or equipped to handle such extreme weather, lacking sufficient hydration and protective measures, which significantly contributed to the high mortality rate. To prevent such tragedies in the future, several measures need to be implemented. Enhanced weather monitoring and real-time heat alerts could significantly improve preparedness among both pilgrims and authorities. By introducing a robust system for heatwave warnings and disseminating crucial information about necessary precautions, future risks can be mitigated. Additionally, improving the infrastructure to provide more shaded areas, cooling centres, and hydration stations along the pilgrimage routes is essential to prevent heat-related health issues.

temperatures leading to more frequent and intense heat waves. This has particularly exacerbated the harsh climatic conditions in the Middle East, making such events more severe and life-threatening. Secondly, despite significant investments in infrastructure to accommodate the vast number of pilgrims, the extreme weather overwhelmed the existing facilities, hampering efforts to provide adequate medical care and cooling solutions. Lastly, there was a general lack of preparedness among many pilgrims for the severe heat conditions. Many were not adequately informed or equipped to handle such extreme weather, lacking sufficient hydration and protective measures, which significantly contributed to the high mortality rate. To prevent such tragedies in the future, several measures need to be implemented. Enhanced weather monitoring and real-time heat alerts could significantly improve preparedness among both pilgrims and authorities. By introducing a robust system for heatwave warnings and disseminating crucial information about necessary precautions, future risks can be mitigated. Additionally, improving the infrastructure to provide more shaded areas, cooling centres, and hydration stations along the pilgrimage routes is essential to prevent heat-related health issues.

PICTALK



Members of the Tibetan community and others during the arrival of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama, in New York

Development amid tolerance for corruption



PRAFULL GORADIA

Despite global scrutiny, the systemic corruption persists, raising questions about the future of India's democracy and its socio-political landscape

A few days ago, an old American acquaintance happened to be passing through Delhi en route to Calcutta. He was all praise for the noticeable progress India has made in the last ten years, which was admirable by any standards, he admitted. But he was non-plussed at how the same Indians tolerate so much corruption, so widely advertised and widespread. He had learnt that some chief ministers were currently in jail. What amazes people in the US, he told me, is how good Indian folks are willing to tolerate this scale of misconduct that draws much negative publicity the world over. Some years ago, Japan had a prime minister who had to go to jail. But the Japanese were highly embarrassed and there has been no repetition of it, as far as we know. What my American acquaintance was laying stress upon is that there appears to be no shame or embarrassment due to the continual coverage of this phenomenon. It isn't as if there is no corruption elsewhere in the world. Former US President and again the challenger for the Presidency in 2024, Donald Trump has been convicted of felony by a New York court. This is a crime more serious than misdemeanour. A couple of days ago, Hunter Biden, son of the incumbent President Joe Biden has been found guilty of concealing facts about his use of drugs. India's record in not only tolerating, but also rewarding tainted chief ministers and politicians is highly 'illustrious'. Lalu Prasad Yadav, former chief minister of Bihar, was convicted and jailed for defalcation of Rs.600 crores from the state budget meant for cattle fodder, in a country whose people worship the cow. The late Jayalalitha, former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, once a shining star of the silver screen, too had to go to jail owing to corruption. Lately, chief ministers like Shibu Soren of Jharkhand and Arvind Kejriwal of Delhi are behind bars for their involvement in corruption scams running into thousands of crores of rupees. Did they need the money for their survival, running



their regimes or for fighting elections? Certainly not. They were obviously driven by greed. What is amazing is all these individuals are so blasé as they have done nothing wrong at all. I have, over the years, had the opportunity to meet punished thieves and criminals. Some protested to me that they had been 'over-punished', but did not in the least look embarrassed, nor said they wished they hadn't done what they did. Such people also boldly contest elections again and again, campaign enthusiastically, and often win with thumping majority. The message is that they voters did not disapprove in the least. What do sociologists have to say about this phenomenon? Most voters are people who are likely to be honest, or at least expect honesty from others in their own lives, but happily tolerate their leaders pocketing public money on a large scale. Doesn't it occur to them that some of that money is their own hard-earned wealth? The late Indira Gandhi had justified corruption by declaring it to be a "global phenomenon" and asking, "Which country is free of corruption?" Many a politician of her time



FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS, INDIA HAS BEEN FORTUNATE TO BE RULED BY A PRIME MINISTER WHO HAS BEEN UNRELENTING AND UNCOMPROMISING IN HIS CRUSADE AGAINST CORRUPTION, MOST ARTICULATED BY HIS OWN MAXIM, 'NA KHAONGA NA KHANE DOONGA'

took this to be a signal of approval for gorging on public money unhindered. Her elder son, when he was Prime Minister, was involved in a major corruption scandal over the purchase of Bofors artillery gun. Dr. Manmohan's Singh's regime was littered with mega scams of corruption throughout its ten years in office. Corruption and endless appeasement of a particular religious minority. If any of his ministers were convicted or had to go to jail, Singh's defence was that they were coalition partners and not of his party. What could he therefore do? That apart, he had no qualms in publicly declaring that Muslims must have first claim on the country's resources and that 15 per cent of resources would be allotted to them by default. While this may not fall in the category of corruption, it does amount to moral turpitude. What does this portend for the future of democracy, especially in India? For the last ten years, India has been fortunate to be ruled by a Prime Minister who has been unrelenting and uncompromising in his crusade against corruption, most articulately defined by his own

maxim, "Na Khaonga Na Khane Doonga" (I won't steal nor allow others to). His measures and steps, beginning from demonetization, exposing and extinguishing fake shell companies, non-existent NGOs, streamlining of the country's tax system through GST, harshness against corrupt politicians and officials including sending them to jail have made him an admired global leader. It is no coincidence that India has become the world's fifth largest economy and is poised to become the third largest; this is directly related to Modi's unrelenting and uncompromising war on corruption. But it is also true that a segment of the people, used to the entrenched, corrupt ways of earlier regimes, making money without effort, and enjoying office or power without any accountability or fear of punishment, and suddenly forced to confront a world they don't like, might have suffered and felt aggrieved. The BJP losing seats in this election is a reflection of that as well. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Liquor tragedy calls for stern action



The recent Kallakurichi liquor tragedy, which resulted in the deaths of many people, is being used more as a political weapon to seek revenge against the ruling

party than as an impetus to find a lasting solution to the pervasive social evil of illicit liquor trade, facilitated by predatory elements in society. The BJP's vociferous criticism overlooks its own silence during a similar incident in Gujarat in 2022, where 27 people died. It's clear that such illegal activities cannot thrive without the complicity of political figures across party lines and the overt support of officials who have been compromised. Therefore, politicians found involved in such activities should face a 15-year ban from contesting any elections. Officials implicated in supporting these operations should be dismissed from their positions. Compensation for victims should be funded by assets seized from these political leaders and officials, not from public funds.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

unemployment. The opposition's increased numbers in the current Lok Sabha will likely lead to significant obstruction of the ruling party's agenda.

The NDA must acknowledge this reality and accommodate the opposition's demands to ensure smooth and effective parliamentary proceedings. If the pattern of frequent disruptions continues, leading to repeated adjournments, it might be more prudent to adjourn the session sine die to conserve public funds and maintain the country's reputation.

O. Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

IMPACT OF TRAIN CANCELLATIONS

Madam Editor— For the past year, numerous key trains have been canceled in the Waltair Railway Division under the East Coast Railway, impacting thousands of regular travelers. The Railway Department has focused on operating Vande Bharat trains, which generate significant revenue, while frequently canceling popular passenger trains on the pretext of ongoing development work

and safety inspections in the Vijayawada division of the South Central Railway. Trains like the Ratnachal, Simhadri, Jannabhoomi Express, Uday Express, and others have been repeatedly canceled. Recently, another Vande Bharat Express was launched on the Secunderabad route and to Bhubaneswar, leading to further cancellations of regular trains.

From June 24th to August 10th, eight pairs of daily trains from Visakhapatnam to Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Guntur, and Secunderabad have been canceled by the Waltair Division. Under the guise of modernising the railways, the department is increasing the number of high-revenue Vande Bharat trains while reducing the number of passenger trains relied upon by common travelers. The Govt must intervene to ensure that train services for regular passengers are maintained and expanded to meet their needs.

Gonapa Appanna | Visakhapatnam

The impact of competitive exam paper leaks on students

The paper leaks have profound emotional effects on students. To mitigate the ill effects of such incidents, it is crucial for the Govt to act swiftly and transparently



BIJU DHARAMAPLAN

One Nation One Examination is a novel venture initiated to provide equal opportunities to all students nationwide. This eliminates discrepancies in the difficulty and content of regional or state-level exams, providing a level playing field for all students. Such standardization can help in objectively identifying academic strengths and weaknesses, fostering a more meritocratic education system. With a single set of scores, universities and colleges can more easily compare applicants from different regions. This can reduce the complexity and confusion associated with multiple entrance exams, making the process more transparent and straightforward for students and institutions alike. The integrity of competitive exams is fundamental to ensuring a meritocratic education system. When a competitive exam is cancelled due to question paper leakage, it undermines the trust and hard work of students, creating a cascade of irreparable negative impacts. These repercussions are immediate, practical, deeply psycho-



logical, and long-lasting. At the core of any competitive exam lies the promise of fairness and equal opportunity. When a question paper is leaked, this promise is shattered. Students who have spent months or even years preparing for the exam feel betrayed by the system that was supposed to impartially evaluate their hard work. This breach of trust can lead to a pervasive sense of cynicism and disillusionment among students. The emotional and psychological impact of such cancellations is profound. Students invest significant emotional energy in preparing for these exams. The cancellation, especially under such scandalous circumstances, can lead to intense feelings of frustration, anger, and helplessness. The resulting anxiety and stress can have severe mental health implications, with students

experiencing symptoms of depression and burnout. The sudden cancellation of these exams can throw students' academic timelines into disarray. Admissions processes get delayed, and students are left in limbo, unsure about the next steps. This is particularly challenging for students at critical transition points, such as those finishing high school or undergraduate studies or people waiting to get college jobs. The uncertainty about rescheduled exams or alternative assessment methods adds another layer of stress. The financial impact of such cancellations is significant. Students often have to travel long distances to the examination centres. The cancellation of exams can severely dent students' motivation and morale. The idea that unethical behaviour can disrupt and devalue their honest efforts is deeply demoralizing. This can lead to a decline in academic engagement and enthusiasm. Students may question the value of hard work and integrity when such incidents occur, potentially leading to a loss of interest in their studies or future exams.

The tendency to move to foreign countries for education may even increase because of this. The cancellation of competitive exams due to question paper leakage has far-reaching and profound effects on students. The immediate breach of trust and fairness and emotional, academic, and financial repercussions create a challenging landscape for affected students. Providing mental health support to affected students and offering financial assistance to those incurring additional expenses can help alleviate some of the burdens. Implementing more robust security measures using AI technologies and providing severe punishment to those who are involved in malpractices can bring back the confidence of society in the 'One Nation One Exam' system. By learning from these incidents and making necessary reforms, the education system can emerge stronger and more resilient. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

These practices provide a pathway to inner strength and a connection with the Divine



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We wonder or should if we can experience the effects of spiritual activities, if we do them. There are many such activities. I have chosen ten most prominent ones to detail what they do for us. Additionally, I will try to indicate what they do in totality even if we choose only some of them, depending upon their suitability to us. Our natures are determining factors in both choosing them and our ability to do them over a long period of time. After all, their effect is not gross like eating a sweet and enjoying its taste. All spiritual activities leave subtle effect on us, but can be experienced. The only condition is to be open-minded. A negative or critical attitude will prevent realizing their effects. Beginning with praying, this is most natural to do; even children pray when troubled or are in need of something. Does God respond? He surely does but not necessarily in ways we desire, because we must deserve what we seek.

Our effort will not go to waste. The next is remembering; we all do. It is so natural; God is very much part of our lives at least for us Indians – the blessed lot. Why? Because spirituality is never far from us from childhood itself; it is in our blood. Reward will be similar to praying. The third is having 'darshan' (seeing) of a Deity in a temple. A good percentage of us have a pooja ghar in our homes, where we can have darshan easily. Rest of us, at least most of us, have calendars with photos of God's 'avatars' (incarnations). The immediate benefit is that we feel good and hopeful. Seeing God is that wonderful.

The fourth most common spiritual activity is to chant God's names or just Ohm. This has such an effect that once started, one will continue repeating names like Rama. We, Indians, almost always do 'naman' (namaskar), especially, when we are in front of a Deity. What does it do? The most wonderful thing, which it does is to inculcate humility in us, thus keeping our egos in check. Many of us thank God if something good happens in our lives. What it does is to make us deserving of more good times, and they surely come. Reading scriptures is not that common, but is not that rare also. Hanuman Chalisa is very popular; I started my spiritual journey in this life by memorizing Hanuman Chalisa.



Another popular spiritual activity is hearing (sermons) in temples or other places. They make us wiser. The last one is doing 'dhyana' (meditation). Its benefits are widely known and do not require repetition.

Now turning to overall benefits of doing spiritual activities. When we do them, we gain the company of God. Aren't we connecting with Him? Spiritual energy will flow into us. This is very special, because it increases our 'atmabala' (inner strength).

Additionally, God takes notice of us, just as a principal notices a bright or a talented student. We remain in His watch, if we are sincere in progressing on this path. Lord begins to promote us, as He did in my case. The concept of big picture was taking root.

Faith in God began increasing, as did faith in the 'Karmaphala Principle'. I began to understand what fate was, i.e. accumulated karmaphala over past lives, which had yet to come to fruition. I also realized that God does not interfere in their coming, but can help us to successfully deal with them. Maya's influence began to lessen, and the 'dhundha' (ignorance) was not so overpowering. I became encouraged to seek guidance from God about what I should be doing, rather than whimsically deciding my actions. Dharma began to come naturally to me, as did praying earnestly for help. I knew in my heart that I was very small, helpless, ignorant and unsafe. Only God can help, and He began taking care of me. Not only that, He began using me as His 'nimitta' (instrument). I was encouraged to write spiritual texts, about which my Lord began to guide.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Beauty-wellness sector is propelling employability

By strategically nurturing this sector, India can leverage its demographic advantage to create a robust workforce ready to excel both domestically and globally



DINESH SOOD



Let us not get too carried away with everything we do. It's important to regularly reflect on our strategies and thoroughly evaluate the results. An unbiased assessment makes things much simpler for us. In the realm of skill development, taking action, maintaining consistency, and adhering to a routine are crucial. Leveraging the demographic advantage requires serious planning rather than being just a game. It involves building capacity, creating infrastructure, and grooming manpower to impart skills to our young population, making them capable of finding employment both domestically and internationally.

The India Skills Report indicates a 52.8% increase in employability for women and 47.2% for men. Women have surpassed men in terms of employability, particularly in areas such as nursing, beauty and wellness, and other soft skills, which have shown the highest employability rates among women in the post-COVID era. The beauty and wellness sector not only holds vast potential for women but also for men in both domestic and global markets. The sector's unprecedented growth has resulted in a significant demand for semi-skilled and skilled professionals in the country.

Currently, the beauty and wellness sector employs approximately 12.3 million people, with 66% of them being women and a considerable portion not only from lower socio-economic backgrounds but a lot of aspirants urging from decent educated families. It is projected that by 2027, the Indian Beauty and Wellness sector will offer employment opportunities to around 20.3 million people.

Interestingly, about 44% of the workforce in the beauty and wellness sector possess educational qualifications equivalent to or less than secondary education with limited access to technical training. There are opportunities for greater adoption of vocational education, particularly

in segments such as salon services, beauty, fitness, nutrition, and yoga, which are showing increased acceptance of vocational education. Furthermore, the growing demand for services like nutrition consulting, fitness coaching, and nutraceuticals has resulted in new and diverse career opportunities that can be pursued by young individuals, who require skill enhancement and vocational education in Beauty and Wellness.

The Beauty and Wellness industry in the country is experiencing exponential growth, at a pace twice as fast as the markets in the United States and Europe. Heightened consumer awareness and aspirations regarding the industry have led to increased spending on beauty and wellness products and services. According to the Indian Beauty & Hygiene Association (IBHA), per capita spending on beauty and personal care has risen from around Rs 450 per annum in 2017 to Rs 684 in 2022 and Rs 772 in 2025.

While the global beauty and wellness sector grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.60% between 2018 and 2023, the Indian sector experienced an even higher growth rate of 18.40% during the same period, driven by a growing affluent and middle-class population and increased organized retail presence in the country. The sector is expected to reach around Rs 2,77,000 crores by 2025, showcasing a 23% growth from Rs 92,000 crores in 2018.

Promote Female Entrepreneurship: It is essential to promote female entrepreneurship in India, as the

current level is very low, with hardly one in every five entrepreneurs being female. The beauty and wellness sector presents unmatched opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for women. Therefore, there is an urgent need to actively foster entrepreneurship and self-employment for females in this sector through specially designed entrepreneurship education, training initiatives, and fiscal support, enabling them to elevate their businesses.

To support female entrepreneurs, it is imperative to create a special fund in collaboration with the NSDC, industries, and angel investors for developing innovative start-up activities in the sector. Additionally, the establishment of regional incubation centres is crucial to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit of promising women in the sector.

Under this initiative, young female entrepreneurs in the beauty and wellness industry must be equipped with new and improved business management skills to successfully run their enterprises. This focused effort should enable female entrepreneurs to develop concrete business ideas, create a bankable and investable business plan, and formulate a robust business growth strategy.

Traditional Skills to be Equipped with New-age Technologies:

The beauty and wellness sector is experiencing digital disruption as technology-led startups and 5G network access in rural areas become more prevalent. As a result, traditional skills in this sector need to be updated with expertise in new-age technologies

such as app setup, virtual try-on services, and data analytics. In addition, providing better customer engagement offerings will be essential.

Furthermore, Artificial intelligence (AI) is also making significant strides in the beauty and wellness industry. AI applications are rapidly changing the sector with innovations like augmented reality. For instance, skin consult AI has been developed to analyze skin ageing, detect major signs of ageing, and provide personalized skincare recommendations. This technology combines thousands of images with dermatological expertise spanning 15-20 years.

Personalized Services: Personalized services have become increasingly vital due to shifts in customer preferences, lifestyles, body types, and even genetics. The one-size-fits-all approach is outdated, with customers now seeking unique and tailored experiences.

The demand for on-demand-at-home services has surged, particularly among busy professionals. This has underscored the necessity for transferable skills among workers in the sector. Furthermore, new ideas and processes are galvanizing young students to pursue technical and technological careers, aiming to shape a better future.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD, of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Network Member, of India International Skill Centres, an initiative of GoI. Views expressed are personal)



THE BEAUTY AND WELLNESS INDUSTRY IN THE COUNTRY IS EXPERIENCING EXPONENTIAL GROWTH, AT A PACE TWICE AS FAST AS THE MARKETS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE

Empowering India's electronic vehicle sector

To reach a target of 30 per cent electric vehicle penetration by 2030, radical and coordinated action is needed among all stakeholders

The uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) is still in its infancy in India. According to research from S&P Global Ratings, the EV penetration rate in India in calendar year 2022 was only 1.1 per cent, as compared to the Asian average of 17.3 per cent. Governments play an essential role in supporting the mainstreaming of EV technology in the motor vehicle sector. The competitiveness of newer technologies in comparison to incumbent ones grows over time due to established supply chains, scale economies of production, consumer preference, and improved performance and maturity. However, relying only on market forces to achieve the transition to EVs from an entrenched internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle market is unrealistic. The



AYUSH LOHIA

EV ecosystem will require additional support in its nascency, and the government has a significant role to play. The case for accelerating EV adoption is strong – transport emissions in Indian cities are growing rapidly, with road transport contributing about 87% of the total. In combination with the aggressive movement towards renewable power generation, EVs can significantly cut down the share

of transport and pollution emissions at the local and national levels. Further, transportation is the third-largest energy consumer and the largest consumer of oil fuels, responsible for 70% of diesel and 99.6% of petrol consumption.

With India importing about 80% of its oil demand, and the price of crude oil being highly vulnerable due to global geopolitics, transport decarbonization reduces the risk to the country's energy security. Simultaneously, electrification presents India an opportunity to strengthen its role and move upstream in the global automotive value chain. Through a two-pronged strategy of localizing production for domestic EV consumption and developing low-cost solu-

tions in niche areas for outsourcing, the country can capitalize on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity through strategic industrial development of the EV sector.

The government of India has backed an extensive program for transport electrification through the implementation of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid & Electric Vehicles (FAME) schemes (I and II), the reduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on EVs to 5 per cent, and an income tax exemption of up to INR 150,000 on interest payments for EV loans. Additionally, the government has announced a new scheme called Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024, with an outlay of Rs 500 crore, pro-

viding subsidies for the adoption and manufacturing of e-2-wheelers and e-3-wheelers. Furthermore, a range of other guidelines and notifications on EV charging standards, delineating of EV charging services, capping of EV tariff for charging infrastructure, model Development Control Regulations (DCR) and building codes for EV charging, and green license plates for EVs further support the ecosystem. However, the early success of e-mobility in India can largely be attributed to a supportive policy landscape at the national and state level. Of the 36 states and Union Territories in the country, 26 have released EV policies over the last 5 years, with 16 of them being released between 2020 and 2022. Here are 7 policy recom-

mendations and subsidies needed in the EV MSME sector:

- 1. Reduced Taxation & Duties:** To make EV manufacturing more competitive it's important to implement tax breaks or reduced import duties on raw materials, components, and EV-specific parts imported by MSMEs
- 2-Infrastructure Development Support:** Provide subsidies or tax incentives to MSMEs involved in setting up EV charging infrastructure. This could encourage more players to invest in charging stations, particularly in remote or underserved areas.
- 3. Production-Linked Incentives:** For EV MSMEs we should introduce production-linked incentives (PLI). These incentives could be based on

achieving certain production milestones, thereby encouraging scale and efficiency.

- 4-Promote Research and Development:** Encourage MSMEs in the EV sector to engage in research and development by providing grants, subsidies, or tax incentives for innovative projects and technologies aimed at improving EV components, systems, and manufacturing processes.
- 5-Facilitate Access to Finance:** Establish dedicated funds or financial institutions to provide low-interest loans, venture capital, or grants specifically tailored for EV MSMEs to invest in infrastructure, technology adoption, and capacity expansion.
- 6-Export Promotion:** Offer incentives and support programs to enable EV MSMEs to

tap into international markets, including assistance with export promotion, market research, participation in trade fairs, and overcoming trade barriers.

- 7-Collaborative Initiatives with OEMs:** Encourage partnerships and collaborations between EV MSMEs and established Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). Provide incentives for OEMs to source components from MSMEs. Decisive and urgent action will be needed to achieve the target of 30 per cent electric vehicles by 2030 in India. At the end of the day, the formulation and notification of an EV policy is only one piece of a large puzzle.

(The Writer is, CEO, Lohia, views are personal)



India secure Olympic team quotas in archery; Deepika, Tarun set for fourth Games appearances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India secured men's and women's team quotas in archery for this year's Paris Olympics based on the updated world rankings on Monday. India topped the rankings among the non-qualified nations in both men's and women's section to seal their team quotas. India will, thus, be eligible to compete in all the five medal events in Paris -- men's and women's team, individual and mixed categories. In the men's section, India and China made the cut, while in the women's section Indonesia were the second nation to

secure the team Olympic quota. The team events will have 12 sides in each section, while five teams will compete in the mixed competitions. For the first time, team quotas are offered to the top-two nations after the three-leg Olympic qualifiers. The first Olympic Qualifier was held during the World Archery Championships in Berlin last year from where South Korea, Turkey and Japan qualified in men's category; while Germany and Mexico secured their spots in women's division. The second leg was a continental qualifier. Kazakhstan and South Korea

took the men's and women's team quotas respectively from the Asian leg, while Colombia and the United States made the cut from Pan-America. From the European leg, Italy (men) and the Netherlands (women) secured quotas. The final Olympic Qualifier was held in Antalya last week. Mexico, Chinese Taipei, Great Britain in men's section; China, Malaysia, Great Britain and Chinese Taipei from the women's section secured quotas from the Final Qualifier. **TARUN, DEEPIKA HIT A FOUR:** Forty-year-old Army veteran Tarundeep Rai, who made his Olympic debut at

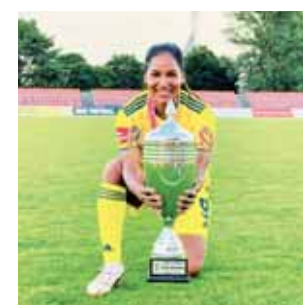
Athens 2004, will make his fourth Games appearance. The same is for former world No. 1 Deepika Kumari who will compete in her fourth Olympics on the trot, having made her maiden Games appearance in London 2012. Dhiraaj Bommadevara, Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur will make their Olympic debuts, while for Pravin Jadhav it will be his second successive Games after Tokyo. **INDIA SQUAD: Men:** Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraaj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav. **Women:** Deepika Kumari, Bhajan Kaur and Ankita Bhakat.

Jamshedpur FC extend head coach Khalid Jamil's contract by two years

PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR
Indian Super League side Jamshedpur FC has retained the services of head coach Khalid Jameel for the next two years, the club announced on Monday. An AFC Pro licensed coach, Khalid, who had guided Aizawl FC to the I-League title in 2017, took over as Jamshedpur's head coach in the middle of the previous season, at a time when the club had won only two out of its 11 games. His appointment brought immediate results, with the club bouncing back to reach the semi-finals of the 2024 Kalinga Super Cup. Under him, Jamshedpur FC notched 11 points with three wins and two draws in his first five ISL games, helping the club stay in the playoff race until the penultimate game of ISL. "We want to win the ISL. Our fans deserve it for the tremendous support they show every time," said Khalid after signing the extension, which runs until the end of season 2025-26. "We are forming a team that will give their all to achieve this in every training session and match, both players and staff," added Khalid, who was adjudged Football Players' Association of India Coach of the Year 2020-21. The club's pre-season camp is tentatively expected to begin in July.

Indian trio plays part in ZNK Dinamo Zagreb's maiden title triumph

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Indian trio of Jyoti Chauhan, MK Kashmina and Kiran Pisda played decisive roles in ZNK Dinamo Zagreb clinching the Croatian Women's Football Cup, the club's maiden silverware at the top echelons of the country's football. Kashmina, the 25-year-old midfielder from Manipur, turned out to be the cynosure of all eyes at the SRC Mladost ground in the picturesque town of Cakovec, as her successful conversion broke the deadlock after their summit clash against ZNK Osijek went into sudden death. Kashmina calmly scored the final spot-kick to help the Croatian capital side win 5-4 on penalties after both teams were locked at 1-1 at the end of



regulation time. It was a sensational victory against a powerhouse club like Osijek, who are record 19-time champions of the Croatian Women's Football Cup. They had been invincible throughout this season until going down to Dinamo in the final on Saturday. ZNK Dinamo Zagreb have been a haven for Indian women footballers over the last

couple of seasons. It began with Jyoti and Soumya Guguloth, in 2022, and they were soon joined by winger Kiran and Kashmina. "The way we won this Cup was special. Our club had never won it before, and the manner in which we won it right at the end, simply makes it all the more memorable," Kashmina told the-aiff.Com. "I've scored a few goals in the IWL as well, but winning here in Croatia, with the three of us playing an important role in the team, it really feels like we have created history for our club." While Kashmina came on from the bench in the final, Jyoti and Kiran played the full game. Both Jyoti and Kashmina had scored one each in the quarter-finals and semi-finals, respectively.

EURO CUP 2024

Germany gets late goal to draw 1-1 with Switzerland and finish top of Euro 2024 group

AP ■ FRANKFURT (GERMANY)

They all jumped for the ball in a frantic late push for the goal that would save Germany from its first loss at the European Championship, against an impressive Switzerland team. Defender Nico Schlotterbeck leaped up, next to the even more imposing center-back Antonio Rüdiger, who reached highest of all. In front of them both was substitute Niclas Füllkrug. The German trio was circled by three Swiss opponents trying to protect a 1-0 lead two minutes into stoppage time. Six pairs of feet off the ground in unison, straining to be the one to head the ball. It was Füllkrug who won the contest, guiding the ball across from another substitute David Raum back across Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer into the top corner of the net. The match ended 1-1. "We risked a lot in this phase because we could have conceded a second goal," Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said about throwing his defenders into attack. "Who doesn't dare to risk, doesn't get to draw." Germany had already advanced to the round of 16 before kickoff Sunday, but a draw felt like a win in the circumstances and kept the



momentum of impressive wins against Scotland and Hungary. "When you see how the Germans celebrated their goal that says everything," said Switzerland captain Granit Xhaka, named player of the match. Switzerland impressed while protecting a 28th-minute goal from Dan Ndoye's clever volleyed shot, and chasing a second goal was denied by a marginal offside ruling against Ruben Vargas and a fine save by Manuel Neuer from Xhaka's shot. The point for each team ensured Germany finished top and Switzerland second in Group A. Hungary took third place in the standings with an even later stoppage-time goal to beat Scotland 1-0 in Stuttgart. Germany now goes to Dortmund for a round of 16 game Saturday against the runner-up in Group C. That

opponent can be any of the four teams - England, Slovenia, Denmark or Serbia - playing their final round of Group C games on Tuesday. Nagelsmann acknowledged Germany's opponent might not like having two fewer days of rest, though added: "We have to prepare for four teams, they only have to prepare for one team." Switzerland heads to the Olympic Stadium in Berlin to open the round of 16 on Saturday against the runner-up in Group B, likely Italy or Croatia. They meet Monday in their decisive group game. Coach Murat Yakin suggested Switzerland had earned the right to make a higher-ranked opponent concerned about his unbeaten team. "I think we have a certain standing which we worked hard for. Were on a good path," Yakin said, "without a defeat,



Denmark takes on Serbia in final match of wide open group at Euro 2024

AP ■ MUNICH

Denmark faces Serbia on Tuesday in Munich in their final Group C match. Both teams hope it's not their last game at the European Championship. Denmark is currently second in the group, two points below England and level on points with third-place Slovenia. Serbia is last but has only one less point than Denmark and Slovenia. **HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE MATCH: MATCH FACTS** □ Denmark would advance to the round of 16 with a win and would be eliminated if it loses and Slovenia avoids defeat against England. □ If both matches end in a draw, Denmark and Slovenia will be split for second and third on overall goals scored, then disciplinary points, then European Qualifiers rankings. The first two tiebreakers are head-to-head and goal difference but that would stay equal. □ Serbia, which snatched a vital draw against Slovenia on Thursday to keep its hopes alive, will advance if it beats Denmark and Slovenia fails to win against England. It will be

out if it draws and Slovenia avoids defeat. □ Other results could leave Serbia scrambling for a calculator and facing an anxious wait to see if it scrapes through as one of the four best third-place teams. **TEAM NEWS** □ Denmark midfielder Thomas Delaney has recovered from the illness that kept him out of the match against England. - Serbia has no new injury concerns but winger Filip Kostic is out after injuring a knee ligament in his team's opening loss to England. **BY THE NUMBERS** □ There has never been a draw between the two sides. Each has won five of their 10 encounters. - But four of Denmark's five wins have come in the last four matches, including a 3-0 victory the last time they met, in March 2022. □ Christian Eriksen has moved level with Simon Kjær on a Denmark record of 132 national-team games. Kjær, Denmark's captain at Euro 2020, was an unused substitute against Slovenia and England as the defender returns to full fitness.

Dutch fans to brighten up Berlin as Oranje face Austria in last group game



AP ■ HAMBURG

The Netherlands needs a point from its final group game Tuesday against Austria to be sure of reaching the knockout stage of the European Championship, while Austria needs a win. The Dutch team has been supported by tens of thousands of orange-clad fans in Hamburg and Leipzig for its two games so far, and now they take their bright party to Berlin, where the final will be played next month. Perhaps a rehearsal? **HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE MATCH: MATCH FACTS** □ Both the Netherlands and France have four points in Group D, one ahead of Austria, while Poland has no points and was the first team eliminated. France is playing Poland in their final group game at the same time. □ The Dutch have a good record against Austria and will hope to make it eight wins in a row including a group stage victory over Austria in the last edition of the tournament. □ The game will be played in Berlin's Olympiastadion. It will be the Netherlands' first game in the stadium built during the Nazis for the 1936

Olympics. □ Austria hasn't beaten the Oranje since a 3-2 victory in a friendly in Vienna in 1990. The Dutch won both their previous competitive meetings - at the 1978 World Cup and Euro 2020. □ The Netherlands started Euro 2024 by defeating Poland 2-1 thanks to a late goal from Wout Weghorst, then held France to the first and so far only goalless draw in the tournament. France missed a host of chances to score, while Xavi Simons had a goal ruled out through VAR, much to Dutch coach Ronald Koeman's annoyance. □ Koeman helped the Netherlands win Euro '88 as a player when West Germany hosted the tournament. He's now in his second stint as national team coach. □ Under German coach Ralf Rangnick, Austria lost only one of its 10 qualifying games for Euro 2024, to Belgium 3-2. It was the team's only defeat last year. □ Austria opened Euro 2024 with a 1-0 loss to France, then defeated Poland 3-1. Team news □ Neither team had any major injury worries before Monday's pre-match press conferences.

Uruguay starts Copa America campaign with 3-1 win over Panama

AP ■ MIAMI GARDENS

Maximiliano Araújo scored when he sent a left-footed shot into the top far corner in the 16th minute, Darwin Núñez and Matías Viña added late goals and Uruguay beat Panama 3-1 in its Copa America opener. Seeking a record 16th Copa America title, Uruguay dominated with 20 shots, including seven on target. Amir Murillo scored late into stoppage time for Panama. The match drew 33,425 to Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. The stadium is the site of the July 14 final and seven games during the 2026 World Cup. The United States defeated

Bolivia 2-0 in Sunday's earlier Group C game at Arlington, Texas.

Uruguay plays Bolivia at East Rutherford, New Jersey, on Thursday, when Panama faces the U.S. in Atlanta. The group ends July 1 with a U.S.-Uruguay game at Kansas City, Missouri, and a Panama-Bolivia match in Orlando, Florida. The top two teams move on to the quarterfinals. Uruguay is tied with Argentina for a record 15 Copa America titles but hasn't advanced past the quarterfinals since winning its last championship in 2011. Panama failed to get past the group phase in 2016, its only previous appearance as a guest at South America's championship.



Araújo scored the first goal after he received a pass from Viña from just outside the penalty area, took a touch and turned. He tapped the ball twice and curled the ball past goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera's outstretched left arm for his second goal in nine international appearances.

Núñez made it 2-0 in the 85th minute after Panama turned over the ball in the center circle. Nicolás de la Cruz played a long cross to Araújo, whose header deflected off a shoulder of Murillo to Núñez. He volleyed from 12 yards for his 12th goal in 24 appearances, his ninth in his last six matches. Viña boosted the margin to 3-0 with a header from de la Cruz's free kick in the first minute of stoppage time, outjumping defender Abdel Ayarza for his first international goal. Murrillo spun a defender to beat goalkeeper Sergio Rochet in the fourth minute of stoppage time for his ninth goal.

After back surgery, Andy Murray is undecided on readiness for Wimbledon

AP ■ LONDON

Andy Murray hasn't decided on whether he'll play at Wimbledon next week following his back surgery. The 37-year-old Murray had surgery Saturday after retiring injured from a midweek match at Queen's Club in the buildup to what was expected to be his final appearance at the All England Club. Murray's team said in a statement Monday that the two-time Wimbledon champion "is continuing to work with his medical team to confirm when he will return to the court." "At this stage, no decisions have been made and we will update further as soon as anything has been finalized," the statement read. The former No. 1 has signaled his intention to retire later this year. Murray, who won the Wimbledon title in 2013 and 2016, retired from his match Queen's Club



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.

