



**OPINION 6**  
BIBLICAL RHETORIC  
STIRS CONTROVERSY

**WORLD 9**  
ISRAEL ARMY TO PAUSE DAYTIME  
FIGHTING IN GAZA

**MONEY 10**  
INDIAN AIR-CONDITIONER MARKET  
TO REACH ₹50,000 CRORE BY FY29

LUCKNOW, MONDAY JUNE 17, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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ABOUT KOHLI'S  
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12 SPORTS



Union Home Minister Amit Shah chairs a high-level meeting to review security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and preparedness for Amarnath Yatra, in New Delhi, on Sunday. J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha is also seen

## Jeevan dayini Ganga in distress amid intense heatwave

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/  
RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

On the auspicious day of Ganga Dussehra, the Ganga River in Varanasi reached an unprecedented low, measuring 189.66 feet against the expected 193 feet. The river's width, typically spanning 70 to 80 metres in June, has now been reduced to 30 to 35 metres, exposing the ghats and revealing environmental distress.

"In summers, the water level generally goes down, but this year's drop is unprecedented

due to the intense heatwave sweeping across Northern India," said Vijay Kumar, General Manager of the Jalkal Department.

Three days ago, 1,800 cusecs of water were released from the Kanpur Barrage to sustain the Ganga's level in Varanasi, resulting in only a 2-centimeter rise. "If the water level of the Ganga decreases further, there will be a problem," Kumar warned, noting that he had requested additional water releases from the Kanpur Irrigation Department to stabilise the



river's level. The city's water supply, which relies on 120-125 million liters per day (MLD) drawn from the Ganga, currently uses 110

MLD. The present water level of 189.66 feet is significantly below the required 193 feet for an adequate supply. "Although the Ganga is

considered life-giving (Jeevan dayini), the recent heatwave has exposed the river's vulnerability. "The declining water levels have caused the Ganga to recede from the ghats, revealing broken boats, scattered garbage, and shattered boulders," said Ashutosh Shukla, a Varanasi resident.

Pandit Dinesh Chandra Mishra, a priest at Assi Ghat, reminisced about Ganga Dussehra's traditional significance, when rising water levels used to mark the onset of floods 50 years ago. "This

trend has diminished in the past five years," he said. Mishra emphasised the need for additional water releases, pointing out the challenges faced by boatmen and the looming threat to the city's water supply. "The river has already receded from the ghats, creating major challenges for boatmen. The biggest crisis will be in our water supply," he warned. The past month and a half have seen relentless scorching heat, causing significant drying of the Ganga.

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## Army to turn heat on J&K terrorists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday here reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of several terror incidents in the region recently and also took stock of the preparations for the annual Amarnath Yatra scheduled to commence from June 29 and will continue till August 19.

The Home Minister was given a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing situation in Jammu and Kashmir where security forces are expected to intensify counter-terror operations in the coming days, it was learnt. The operations against the terrorists will be carried out

in line with the Prime Minister's directive, sources said. Shah presided over the high-level meeting here at North Block, three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a similar meeting where he directed officials to deploy the "full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities" after a spate of terror incidents, including an attack on a bus carrying pilgrims. Earlier at a meeting on Friday last, Shah was briefed about the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the deployment of forces along the International Border and Line of Control (LOC), infiltration attempts, the status of ongoing anti-terror operations.

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## Tension flares up in Capital over water woes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The ongoing water crisis in Delhi has sparked protests, vandalism, and heated political exchanges across the Capital. On Sunday, unidentified individuals vandalised the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) office in Chhattarpur amid the severe water shortage while tensions also flared in the Dwarka, where a dispute over access to water from a common tap resulted in three people being injured and hospitalised at Indira Gandhi Hospital.

The Aam Aadmi Party on Sunday accused the BJP workers of vandalising a Delhi Jal Board office during their protests over the water crisis in the national Capital. Sharing a video of the purported incident on X, AAP Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj wrote, "See the BJP leaders wearing sashes and workers shouting slogans in



Protest erupts as water crisis worsens in Delhi on Sunday

support of BJP leaders, destroying government property at the Delhi Jal Board office."

Reacting to the Chhattarpur incident, former MP and BJP leader Ramesh Bidhuri expressed empathy with the anger of the people but condemned the destruction of public property. "It is natural. The people can do anything when they are angry. I am

grateful to the workers who controlled those people...It is the government's and people's property. There is no benefit in damaging this property."

The incident occurred as Delhi is grappling with one of the worst water crises amid the boiling hot weather. The footage shared by on social media showed shattered window pane and broken earthen pots at the DJB office. There have been significant allegations against the AAP Government, where the protesters and the political parties are claiming that the senior officials, including some from the Delhi Government are running a "tanker mafia". Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj and Water Minister Atishi accused BJP leaders and workers of vandalising an office of the Delhi Jal Board. Terming it a "conspiracy" against the Government, Bharadwaj

shared a video showing some people breaking the windows of an office by hurling stones and earthen pots at it. "See BJP leaders wearing party sashes and its workers raising slogans of BJP zindabad vandalising Government property at the Delhi Jal Board office. Who is getting pipelines broken at various places? Whose conspiracy is it?" he said in a post on X in Hindi.

Atishi said at a Press conference that the BJP is leaving no stone unturned to trouble Delhi's people. "The first part of the conspiracy was reducing Delhi's water through its government in Haryana. Today (Sunday), the Wazirabad barrage is lying empty while the Munak canal is receiving less water," the senior AAP leader alleged.

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## Delhi continues to sizzle

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in Delhi on Sunday was recorded six notches above normal at 44.9 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said. The minimum temperature was recorded at 33.2 degrees Celsius, 5.7 notches above the season's average. For Monday, the Met office has predicted mainly clear skies and heatwave to severe heatwave with warm night conditions and strong surface winds.

At 5.30 pm, the humidity was recorded at 19 per cent. The national Capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'moderate' category with a reading of 195 at 6 pm, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good'; 51 and 100 'satisfactory'; 101 and 200 'moderate'; 201 and 300 'poor'; 301 and 400 'very poor'; and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh continued to be in the grip of heatwave conditions with the maximum temperature remaining above 45 degrees Celsius at most places in the State.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday visited the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh to enquire about his mother Gayatri Devi who is admitted to the hospital for an eye treatment, hospital sources said. During his stay at the hospital for nearly three hours, Adityanath also met those who were injured in the Rudraprayag road accident that killed 15 tourists on Saturday. He also assured the injured persons of all possible help from the UP government. Many of the victims of the Rudraprayag accident are residents of UP's Noida, Mathura and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami also met Gayatri Devi and enquired about her health.

## Musk's EVM remark sparks row in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

More than a week after the Lok Sabha election results, the debate over Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) once again started after Tesla CEO Elon Musk sparked a fresh controversy by vouching for the elimination of EVMs over the risk of "hacking". Former Minister of State of IT and BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar, however, countered his statement saying India's EVMs are robustly secure, in fact very different from those used in other countries. Chandrasekhar countered Musk's statement with a detailed explanation of India's approach to EVM technology. Chandrasekhar asserted that EVMs in India are custom-designed, secure, and isolated from any network or media. The Tesla CEO's remarks on EVM came in response to US politician Robert F Kennedy Jr's post in which he had raised the issue of EVM irregularities in Puerto Rico's primary elections. Kennedy is contesting the US Presidential elections 2024 as an Independent candidate. Later, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and INDIA Bloc also joined in, backing Musk's



apprehension of EVMs. Notably, the Opposition did not raise the issue of EVM hacking or malpractices after the Lok Sabha results announced. "EVMs in India are a 'black box', and nobody is allowed to scrutinise them. Serious concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process. Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability," said Rahul while his coalition partner Akhilesh also shared Musk's post. "Technology is to remove problems, if they become a cause of problems, their use must be stopped. When risks of EVM tampering are being flagged in several elections across the world and well-known technology experts are flagging risks, the BJP must

clear the air on why they are bent on using EVMs". Prior to Lok Sabha results, they had alleged that there was a possibility of the ruling BJP tampering with electronic voting machines to turn poll outcomes in their favour. Musk, in his own social media platform post on X, raised concerns about EVMs, suggesting they should be eliminated due to the potential risk of being hacked by humans or AI, even if the risk is minimal. "This is a huge sweeping generalisation statement that implies no one can build secure digital hardware. Wrong," Chandrasekhar said, adding "Elon Musk's view may apply to US and other places — where they use regular compute platforms to build Internet connected Voting machines."

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## Unease in NDA over NEET



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

In what could be the first sign of "political" uneasiness in the just formed Narendra Modi-led NDA Government, its partner JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar-led Bihar Government has come down cracking by registering an FIR in the infamous NEET entrance paper leak though the Centre has been defending from day one and termed all the controversy an allegation a conspiracy by the Opposition to malign the Centre. A regular massive protests from the across the country, including Bihar which sees a large number of aspirants, is being reported on a daily basis ever since the expose giving the Opposition-led by the Congress an opportunity to attacking the Dharmendra Pradhan-led Education Ministry. After the things were getting murkier, Pradhan addressed the NEET controversy once again on Sunday reiterating the Government's commitment to accountability and fairness. He emphasised that strict actions will be taken against any officials found guilty of malpractice.

"On the recommendations of the Supreme Court, a re-test has been ordered for 1,563 candidates. Irregularities have been found in two places. The Government is taking this issue seriously. If any high-ranking officials of the NTA are found guilty, they will face strict consequences. Significant improvements are needed in the NTA. We are committed to ensuring that no wrongdoer escapes punishment," Pradhan said. The Centre and the NTA have told the

Supreme Court they had cancelled the grace marks given to 1,563 candidates who took the examination for admission to MBBS and other such courses. They will have the option to either take a re-test or forgo the compensatory marks awarded to them for loss of time, the Centre has said.

The Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Bihar, which is probing allegations that the paper of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) was leaked ahead of the exams held on May 5, has said they found evidence that suggests that some students knew the questions before they appeared for the examination. EOU said 13 people, including four students, have been arrested for their suspected involvement in the alleged leak and some have also been accused of receiving the question papers ahead of the test. According to Additional Director General of Police, EOU, NH Khan, during the probe they had asked a set of questions to the National Testing Agency (NTA), which organises the NEET exam, and while they might have some follow-ups to their questions, their investigation is "very much suggestive of a paper leak." EOU Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manavjeet Singh Dhillion said they recovered a list of the 13 people from a "safe house" located on the outskirts of Patna. Sources said around 30 medical aspirants had reportedly been summoned by people they described as the "exam mafia" to receive questions and answers ahead of the exam. Dhillion claimed that four arrested candidates had "confessed" during interrogation that the questions were identical to those they had received at the "safe house" on May 4. The NEET exam was held on May 5 in 4,750 centres across India and around 2,400,000 candidates took it. The results were expected to be declared on June 14 but were announced 10 days earlier since the evaluation of the answer sheets was completed earlier. The results sparked outrage and protests amid alleged irregularities after as many as 67 students scored a perfect 720.

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## Tourist guides to turn saviours

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of rising incidents of heart attacks, the IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators) has proposed a crucial initiative aimed at ensuring first aid for tourists in emergencies: Training guides and drivers in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) skills. The move, though, has come quite late from the IATO given that countries world over train their guides and drivers in such skills to effectively respond to emergencies, ensuring prompt and potentially life-saving interventions for visitors in distress. An IATO official said they are advocating for comprehensive training programme to equip tour guides and drivers with CPR skills. "We have written to the Tourists Guides

Federation of India (TGF) and Indian Tourist Transporters Association (ITTA) to organise the skill development training programme enabling the drivers and guides to provide quality services to the international standard to the foreign tourists. "Training of first aid and CPR is needed as sometimes medical facilities are not available in remote areas and guides can save the lives of tourists." There have been a few reported cases of heart attack among tourists also. The IATO official stressed that such training programmes should be organised annually as this will create confidence especially amongst foreign tourists, amid growing interest of inbound tourists for India.

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## World's highest steel arch rail bridge nears completion in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The world's highest steel arch rail bridge which is 1.315 metres long and 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, over river Chenab in the Reasi district of Jammu Division, is all set to bring Kashmir Valley one more step closer to the rest of the country with the commissioning of the 46-km long Sangaldan-Reasi section by the end of this month.

Sources said in his first visit to the valley after taking over as Prime Minister for third consecutive time, Narendra Modi will also travel first when this is thrown open for the nation later this month. The Commissioner of Railways Safety (CRS) DC Deswal is scheduled to visit the rail section for an on-the-



spot inspection of the 46-km long railway track between Sangaldan-Reasi before giving its nod to extend the footprints of the rail network up to Reasi. Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railway, Deepak Kumar said the commissioning of this

section depends on the CRS's inspection of this vital section of the ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail link (USBRL) on June 27 and 28. "The works of Sangaldan to Reasi will be completed before the scheduled inspection of CRS," he said.

The USBRL project, including the 48.1 km long Banihal-Sangaldan section, was inaugurated by Modi on February 20, 2024. With the commissioning of the 46 km Sangaldan-Reasi section, the work on a 17-km stretch between Reasi and Katra only remains pending which is likely to be completed by the year's end to connect Kashmir with the rest of the country by train. Out of the total 272 km USBRL project, 209 km was commissioned in

phases with the first phase of the 118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009 followed by 18 km Banihal-Qazigund in June 2013, 25-km Udhampur-Katra in July 2014 and 48.1-km long Banihal-Sangaldan stretch in February, this year.

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### HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of *The Pioneer* will remain closed on Monday, June 17, 2024 on account of *Eid-ul-Azha*. The next edition of the newspaper will appear on Wednesday, June 19, 2024.



# Bakrid platter exudes whiff of composite culture

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The city is all set for Eid-ul-Azha (Bakrid), which carries a unique Ganga-Jamuni flavour, with Muslim families going to great lengths to ensure a delicious spread for their Hindu brethren who visit them to relish the feast. On the eve of the festivities, amidst peak heatwave conditions, many Muslim women were seen preparing for their Hindu and Christian friends who would visit them on Monday evening. Almas Abdullah, a resident of the old city, mentioned that several Hindu friends of her husband visit to greet them and enjoy non-vegetarian delicacies. She emphasised the enduring composite culture of the city, where people of all religions participate in celebrations with enthusiasm. “Many of my husband’s friends enjoy mutton dishes. I have prepared various non-vegetarian dishes including biryani. Tomorrow morning, I will make kaleji to be eaten with chapati for breakfast. For lunch and dinner, I have prepared biryani, korma, and other mutton items along with sewain,” she explained, adding that they have purchased five goats for



Women making last-minute purchases on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha

Pioneer

qurbani. Shima, a resident of Gomtinagar, mentioned that she prepares food for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. “Some of our Hindu friends are vegetarians, so I prepare chhola-puri and dahi-bara for them. For other guests who enjoy non-vegetarian food, we prepare our staple biryani and serve it with kebabs,” she said.

She also plans to prepare yakhni pulao, a Lakhnawi specialty made by boiling rice in mutton stock. “We will use nearly 3 kg of rice for 4 kg of mutton. Another popular dish is kaleji with puri. Shami kebabs are also on the menu, prepared with 1 kg of minced meat, flattened into balls with onion, coriander, and chilies, served with garlic-coriander chutney,” she elaborated.

Amreen Qureshi, a dietitian from Chowk, highlighted the variety of non-vegetarian dishes prepared for visitors on the festive day. “Two of my favourites are ‘raan’ and ‘fried chaap’. Raan involves marinating the whole leg with spices, lemon juice, ginger, garlic, and papaya overnight, then grilling it on charcoal the next day. Chaap, or ribs, are marinated and

fried as well,” she described. She added that they were also preparing kaleji, slow-fried with spices, onion, and curd until dry, and flavoured with kasuri methi to mask its smell. For korma, they fry mutton with onions, garlic, spices, and khus-khus. Their biryani is prepared in the ‘dum pukht’ style, where mutton is cooked separately, layered with cooked rice, and slow-cooked. Farhana Maliki, national president of the Royal Family of Begamat of Awadh, shared her menu plans for the festival, including biryani, yakhni pulao, and korma. “This year, I am skipping my favourite ‘balai sewain’, which is vermicelli wrapped in cream, as the heat would cause the cream to melt,” she added. She also mentioned serving sheer-khurma and qimami sewain. “Sheer-khurma is prepared by frying vermicelli in ghee and adding it to thickened milk garnished with dry fruits. This sewain is milky, with a ratio of 200 gm vermicelli to 2 kg of milk,” she explained. Regarding qimami sewai, she said that it is made by thickening a solution of sugar, saffron, and water, to which vermicelli is added.

# Constable thrashed over car parking dispute

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A dispute over car parking outside a petrol pump in Sarojininagar turned violent when the staff allegedly thrashed a constable who was in plain clothes on June 14 night. The constable, Rahul Kumar, was returning home after getting food from a dhaba. According to reports, Rahul Kumar, who is a constable posted at PRV attached to the Manak Nagar police station, had gone to purchase food from a dhaba in the area and was driving a four-wheeler. On his way home, he stopped in front of the petrol pump for some reason. In the meantime, the petrol pump staff approached him and asked him to move his car as it was blocking the entry/exit of vehicles. “I told them that I was a constable in the UP Police and that I would be leaving soon, but they were not convinced and picked a fight with me,” Kumar said.

The constable alleged that they beat him severely when he warned them of police action. “They knew I was a policeman. Some of them mocked me, saying it didn’t matter if I was in the police, and then they thrashed me,” he added. The complainant said a police team from Sarojininagar arrived at the scene and detained three of the attackers, identified as Narendra, Bholu Tiwari, and Pintu Yadav. “Their accomplices fled the scene when they saw the police arriving,” he said. Police have registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC and started further investigations. Meanwhile, a scuffle erupted between a PAC constable and a vendor, Mata Prasad, near gate number 2 of Lucknow Zoo, close to the DGP resi-

# Man ‘digitally arrested’, duped of over ₹40 lakh

**Lucknow (PNS):** A city resident was ‘digitally arrested’ in his flat for two days and duped of over Rs 40 lakh by cyber thugs who intimidated him by claiming his involvement in the Raj Kundra money laundering case in Vibhuti Khand police station area. A digital arrest refers to confining a victim in a small space or room and preventing them from communicating with their family. The victim, Akhleshwar Singh of Vibhuti Khand, was terrorised by a fraudster impersonating a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officer named Akash. The imposter claimed the victim’s digital trail was found in the Raj Kundra money laundering case. “I was shocked, and my brain stopped working as soon as the caller introduced himself as a CBI officer and mentioned my involvement in the money laundering case. I tried to overcome my nervousness, but he told me that the case was to be summed up. He asked me not to talk to any-

one in my family. The miscreant had details of my fixed deposits in the banks and instructed me to transfer the money to another bank account,” the victim recounted. On June 12, Singh transferred Rs 28.5 lakh via RTGS to a bank account provided by the fraudster. “But he did not release me from the digital arrest even after I paid the money. He told me that I had another fixed deposit of Rs 16 lakh in another bank and demanded I transfer this money if I wanted any reprieve from the case. I transferred another Rs 15 lakh to a bank account he provided through RTGS,” he added. The victim said the miscreant continued to call him until his funds were exhausted. “He had details of my bank accounts and threatened that I would be sent to jail if I did not pay the money. He instructed me not to talk to anyone in my family during my digital arrest,” Singh said. The police have registered a case in this connection and started investigations.

# Barber arrested for using saliva during facial massage

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A barber at a salon in Lucknow has been arrested for allegedly using his saliva during a facial massage on a customer in Sushant Golf City police station area. The case was registered after the customer became suspicious and requested the CCTV footage, which showed the accused applying saliva to the customer’s face, police said. The incident took place on June 1. “An FIR under relevant sections of the IPC was registered based on a complaint by the customer, Pandit Ashish Kumar, a resident of Unnao, on Saturday,” Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, South, Shashank Singh said, adding that further action is being taken. “The Lucknow police took the accused, Zaid, into custody on Saturday and sent him to judicial custody,” Singh added. The complainant, Pandit Ashish Kumar, who works in a canteen, visited the salon for a massage on June 11 in the

Ahaimamau area, where Zaid is a barber. The CCTV footage, which went viral on social media, showed Zaid spitting on his palm and then massaging the customer’s face. The video captures him repeating this act two to three times.

## JEWELLERY WORTH ₹4 LAKH STOLEN

A thief posing as a prospective buyer made off with gold jewellery worth Rs 4 lakh from a shop in Bhoothnath Market on Sunday. According to reports, a young man wearing a shirt and jeans entered the shop pretending to be a customer. He quickly noticed two gold chains and two bracelets, and within 15 seconds, and diverted the shop owner’s attention by claiming he needed to transfer money via his e-wallet. The thief fled the shop and managed to escape. The entire incident was captured on CCTV, and the police retrieved the DVR to review the footage. A case has been filed, and an investigation is underway. Siddharth Rastogi, owner of Sunar Jewellers at Bhoothnath Market, recounted that around 12:50 pm, a youth in a white shirt and brown glasses arrived at his shop. The youth asked to see a gold chain and bracelet but expressed dissatisfaction with them and requested for other items. When Siddharth presented new items, the youth engaged in bargaining. During negotiations, he distracted Siddharth and swiftly made off with two gold chains and two bracelets.

# Akbarnagar: All illegal structures to be razed by June 18: LDA VC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

More than 140 structures, both temporary and permanent, in Akbarnagar were demolished on Sunday, bringing the total number of structures razed since the ongoing drive began on June 10 to 910. Vice-Chairman of Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) Indramani Tripathi stated that the entire area would be cleared by June 18. However, he emphasised that it was impossible for them to halt the ongoing drive midway, as there are still over 250 structures slated for demolition.

Tripathi noted that religious leaders submitted a request in writing to LDA on Sunday, agreeing to the demolition of workshops, madrassas, graves, and tombs in the area. These structures were deemed unauthorised and erected illegally. He stated that debris clearance would commence on June 19. He informed reporters that religious sites, graves, and tombs would be demolished in the final phase of the ongoing drive, scheduled for the second week of July. Currently, a major challenge for the development authority is preventing theft of iron rods, bricks, and other build-

ing materials from the demolition sites. According to regulations, debris from demolished houses and establishments must not be sold but disposed of safely at designated sites on the outskirts of the city. LDA and LMC, supported by PAC jawans and local police, are vigilant against anti-social elements who are freely engaging in theft. Incidents have included theft of diesel from LDA and LMC vehicles involved in the ongoing drive, resulting in the arrest of four individuals and the detention of six others for questioning on Sunday morning.

# Guv bid to enter record book with online ‘yoga pledge’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to enter the Guinness Book of World Records, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel has directed universities in the state to take an online pledge to make yoga a part of their lifestyle. Students and teachers can take the pledge by clicking on a link created by Raj Bhavan. The pledge reads: “I take a pledge to imbibe Yoga as a lifestyle by practising it regularly both for myself and the family.” Meanwhile, the governor has said that the event should not be limited to Raj Bhavan alone but organised on a large scale in every school, open

ground, and park in the state. She directed Principal Secretary, AYUSH, Leena Johri to organise this event on a large scale in every district. Additionally, she said that arrangements should be made to teach yoga to pregnant women and Anganwadi children, so that along with healthy children, the habit of yoga is also developed. The governor emphasised practising yoga in harmony with nature. She suggested that if it rains during yoga practice in open grounds, simple asanas should be performed according to the weather, but yoga should always be practised in a natural environment.

She also instructed the involvement of residents of slums, women, and children who have disassociated from begging and are connected to the mainstream. The governor directed Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob to involve the residents of these colonies in yoga and provide them with yoga materials such as t-shirts and mats. Yoga Week, which started on June 15, will conclude on June 21 (Yoga Day). While discussing the arrangements for yoga, the governor highlighted the importance of a more natural yoga system. Officials stated that efforts would be made to connect as many schools in the state as possible with yoga.

# Fire breaks out in godown

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A fire broke out at Khatiya Godown on Mill Road near Eveready trisecton under Bazaarkhala police station area around 2 pm on Sunday. Upon receiving the news, a team was despatched on the instructions of the CFO, Lucknow. The team, consisting of two fire tankers and led by the in-charge fire officer from Alambagh, departed from Alambagh to reach the scene. By the time the firemen arrived, the fire had spread significantly and was leaping high. A thick plume of smoke covered the skyline, and a large number of commuters had gathered to watch the fire and the subsequent rescue operation.



The firemen immediately began extinguishing the flames by spraying water from hose pipes after evacuating the area around the site. As per the orders of the CFO, two additional fire tankers from Chowk fire station also reaches the spot

to assist in the rescue operation. After hectic efforts, the fire was extinguished in about an hour and a half. Providing details after the firefighting efforts, fire officials reported that the fire had broken out at Bhavani Trading

Company, located on the Khatiya Godown Campus. The company, which is into a fabrication business manufacturing iron goods such as doors, windows, and grills, is run by Sharad Kumar Srivastava, who rents the space from Ashwini.

# Dussehri mangoes to leave for US for first time today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The first consignment of Dussehri mangoes will leave for the United States of America for the first time on Monday in an event which will witness the presence of Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Sahi at the Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) to flag off the reefer vans. CISH Director T Damodaran disclosed here on Sunday that the institute has been constantly devising the way forward for export of mangoes from Uttar Pradesh since 2023 to the elite markets of Europe, Japan, the USA, Russia and Malaysia in large quantities. “Though exports were being made from Uttar Pradesh for the last 15 years, it was on a very small scale and most of the exports were limited to West Asia and Nepal. Due to the instability in the price in West Asia, lack of potential exporters and production of residue free quality fruits the export from Uttar Pradesh was very minimal to about 0.02 per cent of the total export from India,” he said. He said that at this juncture the ICAR-Central Institute of Subtropical Horticulture took the lead in establishing linkages



with the stakeholders of UP State Horticulture Department, APEDA, New Delhi, leading mango exporters of the country like Innova Food Park, Bengaluru, Berrydale Fruit Tech, Mumbai and farmers. “The plan for export this year was charted out in June 2023. The proposal was phased in three stages. The first phase was to create mango clusters in the GI belts of Dusshehri at Malihabad, Chausa at western Uttar Pradesh and langra at Varanasi with the support of the state missionary of agriculture led by Manoj Kumar Singh, Agricultural Production Commissioner who had supported the programme financially and regularly took the updates of the progress. The second phase of the programme was to implement the complete technological based GAP (good agricultural practices) of CISH

# UPSC aspirants find prelims paper easy

**Lucknow (PNS):** The prelims of the civil services examination conducted by the Union Public Services Commission were held on Sunday. Civil services aspirants who appeared in the examinations said that the paper was relatively easy in comparison to the past five years. A student of a local university who appeared for the examination said that he was happy that the paper was not tough but he was concerned that the merit would go really high this year. “It was after several years that we found the paper easy. Last year the paper was very tough but this year there were facts-based questions. Under the New Education Policy it was stated that NCERT books will be used and hence there were many questions from the NCERT books. Maximum questions were from polity followed by geography and current affairs and so on,” she said. Another aspirant said that the paper was easy. “There were more questions on statics and many questions came from the previous years. The questions of polity and modern history were easy. The science segment and the environmental segment were difficult,” he said.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar inspected various examination centres during the examination. The inspection started from the examination centre at Government Jubilee Girls’ Inter College where the arrangements of the examination rooms and examination supervisors were inspected by the DM. After this, the divisional commissioner and district magistrate jointly inspected Navvug Kanya Inter College in the first shift and reviewed the arrangements.

## डीबी0एस0 कालेज, गोविन्द नगर, कानपुर

### आवश्यकता

महाविद्यालय में चतुर्थ श्रेणी कर्मचारी-इलेक्ट्रीशियन (विजली मिस्त्री) का 01 पद रिक्त है। रिक्त पद हेतु न्यूनतम शैक्षिक अर्हता, वेतनमान, आयुसीमा एवं आरक्षण आदि उत्तर प्रदेश शासन द्वारा समय-समय पर निर्गत शासनादेशों एवं विश्वविद्यालय परिनियमावली में दिये गये प्राविधानों के तहत लागू होंगे। इच्छुक एवं अर्ह अम्थर्शी सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति के कार्यालय- 15/96, सिविल लाइन्स, कानपुर से दिनांक 30 जून, 2024 तक निधारित आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा कर सकते हैं। प्राचार्य

## दयानंद गर्ल्स कालेज, सिविल लाइन्स, कानपुर

### आवश्यकता

महाविद्यालय में तृतीय श्रेणी कर्मचारी- कनिष्ठ सहायक का एक पद रिक्त है। रिक्त पद हेतु न्यूनतम शैक्षिक अर्हता, वेतनमान, आयुसीमा एवं आरक्षण आदि उत्तर प्रदेश शासन द्वारा समय-समय पर निर्गत शासनादेशों एवं विश्वविद्यालय परिनियमावली में दिये गये प्राविधानों के तहत लागू होंगे। इच्छुक एवं अर्ह अम्थर्शी सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति के कार्यालय- 15/96, सिविल लाइन्स, कानपुर से दिनांक 30 जून, 2024 तक निधारित आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा कर सकते हैं। गौरवेंद्र स्वरूप- सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति

HDFC BANK		Legal Cell	POSSESSION NOTICE APPENDIX IV
We understand your world		HDFC Bank Ltd, 2nd Floor, Experio Building, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226010.	[RULE 8(1)]
Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of the HDFC Bank Ltd. under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued deemed notices, and calling upon to pay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. Details are given as under:-			
Customer Name		Description of the Immovable Property	
1. M/s Dasloer Foods Private Limited Through Its Director's (Borrower) 2. Mr. Shahbaz Khan (Borrower) 3. Mr. Mohd Saeed (Co-Borrower & Mortgagor) 4. Mrs. Shireen (Co-Borrower & Mortgagor) 5. Mr. Mohd Anas (Co-Borrower) 6. Mr. Asjad Nafis (Co-borrower)		<b>PROPERTY NO.1:</b> House Constructed on Plot Of Land No. B-1/25, Type-B, Admeasuring 3200 Sq Ft. i.e. 297.397 Sq. Mtr., Situated At Sector-F, Aliganj Scheme, Ward- Aliganj, Tehsil & Distt. Lucknow-226024, Uttar Pradesh. (Property Owned By Mr. Shahbaz Khan & Mrs. Shahnaz Khan.), Bounded Asunder: East: 05 Feet Wide Road (Service Road), West: 09 Mtr. Wide Road, North: Bhukhand No. B-1/26, South: Bhukhand No. B-1/24	
		<b>PROPERTY NO.2 :</b> House Constructed On Plot Of Land No. D-1/24, Admeasuring 900 Sq. Ft., Situated At Sector-I, Aliganj Scheme, P/a Aliganj, City & District Lucknow-226024, Uttar Pradesh. (property Owned By Mrs. Mohd. Saeed (Co-borrower & Shireen), Bounded As Under: East: 25 Feet Wide Road, West : Lane, North: Plot No. D-1/23, South: Plot No. D-1/25	
		The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein above in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules, on above mentioned dates. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to charge of the HDFC Bank Ltd. for an amount of notices mentioned above and interest thereon together with expenses and charges etc. less amount paid, if any. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.	
		DATE :- 13.06.2024	Authorised Officer, HDFC Bank Ltd.



# New transfer policy offers special relief to divyangs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant development, the Yogi Adityanath government has introduced special provisions for persons with disabilities (divyangs) in its transfer policy for 2024-25. Under these measures, divyang personnel or those with dependent family members affected by more than 40 per cent disability will be exempted from general transfers. Notably, transfer of divyangs will be ordered only in cases of serious complaints or unavoidable circumstances. Furthermore, based on the availability of positions and upon request by divyangs, consideration may be given to posting them in their home district. It is noteworthy that in the first cabinet meeting after the Lok Sabha elections, the Yogi government approved the new Transfer Policy 2024-25 which provides various types of

relief in transfers under special circumstances. The new transfer policy specifies special procedures for transfers under specific circumstances. According to this policy, parents of the mentally impaired or with locomotor disability divyangs can request a posting based on a certified government doctor's recommendation to a location where adequate medical facilities are available or where their proper care can be ensured. Additionally, transfers or adjustments may be considered for personal reasons of the officer/employee such as medical treatment or education of children. Such transfers or arrangements may proceed if a position becomes available or upon agreement with another officer/employee, subject to no administrative objections. Under the new policy, if both spouses are employed in gov-

ernment service, efforts will be made to transfer them to the same district, city or location whenever possible. Similarly, the employees of Groups C and D who are retiring in two years will be considered for posting in their home district and the employees of Groups A and B will be considered for posting in the desired district except their home district. Their posting period in that division or district earlier will not be taken into consideration. Furthermore, transfers may occur for vacant positions resulting from promotions, terminations, retirements, etc. If an employee is appointed to another position after promotion to vacant positions, this process will not be considered a transfer under the transfer policy, and appointments to vacant positions after promotion will be made at the level of the appointing authority. However, it will be ensured

that such transfers are conducted transparently and based on fair principles. Under the aspirational district plan announced by the Central government, all positions in every department in each phase will be filled by transferring to all eight districts (Chitrakoot, Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Fatehpur, Balrampur, Siddharthnagar, Shravasti, and Bahraich) related to the aspirational district plan and 100 aspirational development blocks declared by the state. In addition, the personnel posted in these aspirational districts and all the districts of Bundelkhand as well as in 100 aspirational development blocks of 34 districts will not be released by their controlling authorities after transfer until their replacement takes over the charge. This restriction will not apply to IAS, IPS, IFS, PCS and PPS officers.

## Mayawati to review LS poll results on June 23

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After the crushing defeat in the Lok Sabha elections 2024, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati is going to hold a meeting at the party's state office in Lucknow on June 23. Party office-bearers from across the country have been called for this meeting to be held on June 23. BSP coordinators and district presidents of Uttar Pradesh have also been called for this meeting. At the same time, it is expected that Mayawati's nephew Akash Anand will not attend this meeting. Mayawati had sought reports from all the national office-bearers on the reasons for BSP defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. According to infor-

**Mayawati had sought reports from national office-bearers on the reasons for BSP defeat in the LS poll**

mation, Mayawati has also taken sector-wise reports on the basis of the report of the national office-bearers. It is believed that in this meeting Mayawati will discuss the report of the sector in-charges and after that a big change is expected in the BSP party organisation. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Mayawati had talked about contesting the elections alone and the BSP had contested the polls on its own without joining the INDIA block or the ruling National Democratic Alliance. The BSP secured about 9.25 per cent votes but did not get a single seat. In the 2019 elections, Mayawati had won 10 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh in alliance with the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal. According to experts, Mayawati had to pay a heavy price for removing her nephew Akash Anand as her successor and party post in the middle of the election.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath meets family members of the workers from Gorakhpur who died in the fire accident in Kuwait, at the Gorakhnath temple complex in Gorakhpur on Sunday

PTI

## Govt speeds up construction of forensic lab in Azamgarh, new jail in Hathras

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to create a crime-free environment and effectively tackle criminal activities in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government has expedited the establishment of a forensic lab in Azamgarh and the construction of a new district jail in Hathras. The Planning department's technical cell has been assigned the responsibility to oversee and complete this work under the guidance of the state government. It is noteworthy that the construction of a forensic lab in Azamgarh costing more than Rs 39 crore and a new district jail in Hathras costing more than Rs 146 crore is underway. The government is committed to completing these projects on time and with high quality.

The technical cell of the Planning department has initiated the process of appointing a project management consultancy (PMC) agency to complete these tasks. All construction activities under the project are being executed through engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) mode. Through the appointment of the PMC agency, the quality and progress of all construction under the project will be ensured and completed within the specified timeframe. To complete this process, applications have been sought through the request for proposal (RFP) medium. The PMC agency appointed to complete both projects will have to fulfill several crucial tasks. On one hand, after receiving the construction contract for the forensic lab in Azamgarh, the PMC agency

will have to complete the architectural design within 75 days. Once the architectural design is completed, all construction work will be finished within 18 months. A defect liability period of 36 months has been stipulated for the entire duration of the project. Similarly, the PMC agency receiving the contract for the construction of the new district jail in Hathras will have to ensure that all construction work is completed following high-quality standards within 18 months. During this period, the PMC agency will have to work as a supervision agency and a defect liability period of 36 months has been fixed under the project. The PMC agency will have to complete the reporting and monitoring process of all construction activities under both projects. It must ensure

that during this period, the construction of creative indoor spaces, proper site planning, and various operational requirements according to local needs are fulfilled. While maintaining low maintenance costs, it will also work on the integrated design of electricity, mechanical and other services to ensure high quality. In compliance with environmental standards, the projects will incorporate various sustainable practices. These include green building techniques, improved ventilation, climate-friendly architecture, wastewater recycling, water conservation, and rainwater harvesting. Additionally, water and solid waste management will be implemented. All these processes will be completed under the supervision of the assigned agency.

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR/LUCKNOW

The Janata Darshan programme of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was held in Gorakhpur on Sunday for the first time since the clamping of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) ahead of the general election. The last Janata Darshan in Gorakhpur was held on March 9, before the notification of the Lok Sabha elections was issued. According to an official statement, the event witnessed a heavy crowd seeking the help of the state for their woes, including health problems. The government claimed that the deserving people would be given full assistance from the Chief Minister's discretionary fund for treatment. Adityanath heard about 350 people and assured them their

problems would be resolved. On the complaints related to police and revenue, the UP CM said officers must address these concerns at the district level.

**CM GREETES PEOPLE ON GANGA DUSSEHRA**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday extended his best wishes to the people of the state on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra. "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the people of the state and all the devotees on the occasion of 'Ganga Dussehra', the descent day of the national river, Mother Ganga, which grants salvation and life. I pray that by the grace of Mother Ganga, may everyone's life be filled with happiness, peace, prosperity and good health. Jai Ma Ganga,"

Adityanath posted on X in Hindi. Elaborating on the festival, Ashutosh Varshney, who heads the Prayagraj-based Ram Naam Bank, said that Ganga Dussehra, also known as 'Gangavartan', is celebrated to commemorate the descent of river Ganga from heaven to Earth. "Ganga Dussehra takes place on 'dashami' (10th day) of the 'Shukla Paksha' of the Hindu month of 'Jyeshtha'. The festival celebration lasts 10 days, including nine days preceding this holy day," Varshney said. The festival is observed by Hindus mainly in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar and West Bengal, where the river flows. Haridwar, Varanasi, Prayagraj, are some of the main locations of the celebrations, where devotees gather at the banks of the river Ganga and perform 'aartis'.

## Race hots up in SP for post of leader of opposition

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The race for the post of leader of opposition in Uttar Pradesh assembly has intensified in the Samajwadi Party. The post has fallen vacant following the election of incumbent leader of opposition Akhilesh Yadav to the Lok Sabha. Akhilesh Yadav has since resigned from the membership of the UP assembly. Though a couple of party leaders have emerged as frontrunners to take over from Akhilesh Yadav the charge of leader of opposition in the assembly, sources in the SP indicated the successor could be a dark horse. Among the frontrunners for the post are senior leaders Shivpal Singh Yadav, who is the uncle of Akhilesh Yadav, former assembly speaker Mata Prasad Pandey, Indrajit Saroj and Ram Achal Rajbhar. Former minis-

ter of state Ravidas Mehrotra is also in contention, they say. In the 2022 assembly elections, the SP won 111 seats in the 403-member UP assembly and Akhilesh Yadav became the leader of opposition. SP chief spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary said that Akhilesh Yadav would soon take a decision in this regard. Asked about the leaders being considered for the position, he said many names were in contention to take over as leader of the opposition. Shivpal Yadav and Pandey sit in the front row of the House. Into his sixth term as an MLA, Shivpal Yadav, who represents Jaswantnagar assembly constituency in Etawah district, served as the leader of opposition during the Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party government from 2007 to 2012. Pandey is the MLA from the Etwa assembly constituency in

Siddharthnagar district while Saroj represents the Majhanpur constituency in Kaushambi district and Ram Achal Rajbhar is the MLA from Akbarpur in Ambedkar Nagar district while Mehrotra is a legislator from Lucknow. Besides the leader of opposition, intense lobbying has begun in the SP for the Karhal assembly seat vacated by Akhilesh Yadav. The SP chief had won the seat in 2022 by defeating Bharatiya Janata Party candidate and former SP leader SP Singh Baghel with a huge margin of about 67,000 votes. Another high-stakes seat is Milkipur in Ayodhya district. The incumbent SP MLA Awadhesh Prasad has been elected as MP from Faizabad. In 2022, Prasad had defeated the BJP's Baba Gorakhnath by about 13,000 votes. Prasad belongs to the Pasi (Dalit) community.

## Youth ends life in fear of being grilled by police

**Lucknow (PNS):** A youth, allegedly in fear of torture by the police on charges of kidnapping a girl, ended his life in Unnao. His body was found hanging from the ceiling of his room on Sunday afternoon. The parents of the youth alleged that due to fear of the police, their son committed suicide by hanging himself in the verandah inside the house. Hanging has been confirmed in the post-mortem report as the cause of death. The girl had eloped with a youth three days ago. eports said that the body of 22-year-old Salim, son of Munir of Majra Pratapkhedha village in Purthiyawa, was found hanging with a dupatta in the verandah inside the house on Sunday afternoon. The police brought down the body.

## 12 killed in separate incidents

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Tragedy hit Ganga Dussehra celebrations as a dozen people, including three girls, died in separate incidents on Sunday. In the first incident, while taking a holy dip on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra, a 16-year-old girl drowned in Ganga at Shivpur Ghat in Dokati police station area of Ballia. On the other hand, four youths drowned while taking bath in the river Ganga on Bihar side. The Dokati police reached the spot and started a search for the drowned people but no success was achieved at the time of writing the news. Reports said that on Ganga Dussehra, on Sunday morning, Kumari Anshu, daughter of late Firangi Yadav of Gopalpur Lalganj under Dokati police station, went to take bath in Ganga with her mother and sister. While bathing, she went

into deep water and drowned. On the Bihar side in front of the same ghat, four youths of Bara Kharoni village in Bihiya police station area, Ramji (18) son Jawahar, Sonu Yadav (20) son Videshi Yadav, Reshu (19) son Sanjay Sharma, Deepu (17) son Ramashankar, went into deep water while taking selfie and drowned. Police station in-charge of Dokati, Madan Patel, who reached the spot, kept trying to find the bodies of the victims but till the time of writing the news none of the victims could be found. In the Jaitipuri area of Shahjahanpur, Vivek Yadav (16) and Vipin Yadav (17) of Gadhia Rangin area drowned in deep waters while bathing in the Ramganga on Sunday morning. Vipin and Vivek had reached Dhubla Karimnagar village with their friends to take bath on Ganga Dussehra. Ramganga

river flows in Shahjahanpur. While bathing, Vivek, Vipin and their friend Saurabh jumped into the river and went into the deep waters. Saurabh tried to save Vipin and Vivek but he himself started drowning. He somehow saved his life. In a similar case in Mirzapur, some families went to take holy bath on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra on Sunday morning during which four girls went into deep water. When they started drowning, they raised an alarm after which some other people rescued two of the girls identified as Shalu, Shivani. The bodies of the other two girls identified as Anchal and Nancy of Hemupatti locality of Mirzapur were fished out later and sent for post-mortem. A case was also registered by the police. In another incident, three people died and two were injured when a car, in a bid to overtake another vehicle, collided with

a tractor-trolley in the Rijor area of Etah district on Sunday, a senior official said. The senior superintendent of police said some persons from Shikohabad in Firozabad district had gone to Soron in Kasganj district for a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra on Saturday night. "They reached Soron around 3 am and left the place at around 6 am after taking a dip in the Ganga river," he said. He said on Shikohabad road, the car, in a bid to overtake another vehicle, collided with the tractor-trolley. Three car passengers, identified as Sarala Devi, Pinky, and Girish, were killed in the accident," he said. The SSP said Govind and Daya Kumari were injured in the incident and had been admitted to the Etah Medical College hospital. "The victims are relatives and are from Sirsaganj, Shikohabad and Agra," he said.

## Akhilesh Yadav reiterates demand for cancellation of NEET

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Sakhilesh Yadav, on Sunday, reiterated his demand for cancellation of the medical entrance examination NEET conducted by the National Testing Agency (NAT). In a post on X, Akhilesh Yadav said "Ek desh ek hi maang, Radd ho NEET exam". In another post, Akhilesh Yadav endorsed the demand of Elon Musk, who owns the microblogging site X, for scrapping the electronic voting machines (EVMs). "The technology is used for efficiency, and convenience. If the technology itself becomes a problem, it should be scrapped. Many countries have expressed their apprehensions over the manipulations of the EVM and renowned technological experts are publicly expressing their doubts over the EVM, then BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) owes an explanation to the people why the party

is adamant on using the EVM. I reiterate my demand that all future elections should be held with ballot paper," the SP chief said. Tesla and X CEO Elon Musk, in a post, had called for the elimination of electronic voting machines (EVMs), citing concerns over potential hacking threats by humans or artificial intelligence. "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk stated. On National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET), Akhilesh Yadav alleged rigging in the medical entrance examination and demanded that the apex court take suo motu cognisance of the matter and conduct a thorough investigation and give strict punishment to the guilty. The NEET results were declared on June 4. "Hundreds of candidates have scored 100 per cent marks in



the results of NEET (formerly known as CPMT/PMT), which is conducted as an entrance exam for medical studies across the country," Yadav said in a post on X in Hindi. "In these too, many people scoring 100 per cent marks simultaneously from the same exam centre indicates a big scam," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav alleged that "in the BJP rule, exams are turning into a business of illegally leaking question papers, getting fake people to take the papers, setting up the centre and managing the results". Yadav, who has constantly attacked the ruling BJP over irregularities in recruitment exams in his rallies during the Lok Sabha elections, said, "It cannot be a coincidence that almost similar scams have taken place in most of the exams. Due to this, the youth of the country have started losing faith in the system. The frustration of the youth means that the future is hopeless." This is one of the biggest failures of the BJP government. Taking suo motu cognisance of this case, the Supreme Court should conduct a thorough investigation, give strict punishment to the guilty and eliminate any possibility of such a recurrence in the future. Condemnable," he said in his post

## Communicable Disease Control Campaign, Dastak Abhiyan 2024 to begin in July

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In order to tackle health challenges due to water-borne diseases and other seasonal vagaries ahead of monsoon season, the state government will initiate the Communicable Disease Control Campaign statewide from July 1 to July 31. Concurrently, the Dastak Abhiyan will be conducted from July 11 to July 31. A detailed action plan has been prepared and officials have been instructed to implement both the campaigns effectively. The Urban Development department is actively supervising the initiative and issuing directives to urban bodies for seamless execution of the plan. The urban development directorate has instructed all municipal commissioners, general managers of the water works and executive officers of the municipal council to implement action plans following the directives provided. Additionally, sensitisation

meetings have been scheduled for municipal corporations, municipal councils, and all nagar panchayats. Instructions have been issued to provide the chief medical officers with a micro-plan detailing ward-wise and area-wise activities to be completed by June 28 for the special Communicable Disease Control Campaign. Urban bodies have also been directed to submit consolidated reports to the government regarding the activities conducted and completed during the campaign as per this micro-plan. Urban bodies have been directed to collaborate with the Health department to educate officials and staff about preventing encephalitis and other vector-borne and waterborne diseases, as well as maintaining cleanliness. Continuous awareness campaigns through mohalla committees will be conducted to address these health concerns. Urban areas will also see regular fogging and targeted vec-

**Urban areas will also see regular fogging and targeted vector control activities in high-risk areas identified by the Health department**

tor control activities in high-risk areas identified by the Health department. Additional instructions include promoting environmental and personal hygiene, preventing open defecation, ensuring the use of clean drinking water, and controlling mosquito populations. Efforts will be made to cover open drains, clean drains and garbage, mark shallow hand

pumps with red paint to prevent their use and seal hand pump pipes with concrete. Wastewater from hand pumps will be managed with soak pits, and the quality of drinking water will be monitored through bacterial and virological testing. Guidelines have also been provided for water-logging and water supply. Mini public water supply systems and tank-type stand posts must be installed and monitored according to standards. Roads and pavements will be constructed to prevent water-logging and vegetation growth. Vegetation along roads will be regularly cleared and activities will be focused on sensitive urban populations and slum areas. Prioritising Open Defecation-Free (ODF) status in these areas is essential. Progress reports on departmental activities in sensitive areas and slum regions will be documented and monitored for physical progress.



# Stage set for PM's visit to Kashi tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Stage is all set for the first visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 18 to his parliamentary constituency after assuming charge as the prime minister for the third consecutive time. He is coming here to express his gratitude to the local people, who elected him for third time in a row from the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat recently. During his stay, the PM will interact with the farmers at Mehandiganj near Rajatalab and then offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Then Modi will participate in the Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat. As per the earlier schedule, the PM was supposed to stay here for around five hours and leave the city in the night but now, Modi will stay at the Officers' Guest House in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) during the night and leave the city next day morning.



Regional BJP chief Dilip Patel on Sunday appealing to farmers to attend PM's programme in Varanasi

sions he visited Banaras and Varanasi railway stations and some other places. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, during his inspection recently, also saw the progress of India's first urban ropeway project. According to information, the prime minister will land at Lal

Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur around 4 pm on June 18 and next day around 8 am will leave for the airport from the helipad at the BLW and then return to Delhi by his special plane. After landing at the Babatpur airport, the PM will go to the

Kisan Samvad site at Mehndiganj by army helicopter. From there around 6 pm, the PM will go to the Police Lines helipad and then visit Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham by road for offering prayers. Then Modi will attend the Ganga Aarti at

Dashashwamedh Ghat. After that the PM will go to the Officers' Guest House in BLW for night rest. Meanwhile, a team of SPG officers inspected the Babatpur Airport, Officers' Guest House at BLW, public meeting site at Mehandiganj, Dashashwamedh Ghat and Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham and held a meeting with police and administrative officers. Earlier, regional BJP president Dilip Patel while addressing the party's office-bearers of various frontal organisations, departments, cells etc engaged in the arrangements for the Kisan Samvad as the chief guest said ever since Varanasi MP became the PM, food providers (farmers) are at the top of his priorities. This is the reason why the PM will first interact with the farmers on his first visit to Kashi after taking oath. "It is the good fortune of all of us that Modi, who was elected as MP from Kashi three times in a row, became the PM third consecutive time. In the last 10 years, the PM has increased the

respect and glory of Kashi along with India in the entire world", he said, adding that during the address of the Kisan Sammelan, the PM will transfer the 17th instalment of Kisan Samman Nidhi to the accounts of the farmers. He said the farmers will reach the Kisan Sammelan by buses, tractors and four wheelers. Besides, the farmers from nearby areas will join the Kisan Sammelan by marching on foot with drums. Addressing the meeting, MLC Ashwani Tyagi said whenever the PM does any big work, he starts it from Kashi. District BJP president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, former MLA Jagdish Patel, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, former MLA Surendra Narayan Singh, Ashok Chaurasia, Rajesh Rajbhar, Anil Srivastava, Dr Sujit Singh, regional media in-charge Navratan Rathi, co-in-charge Santosh Solapurkar, Sanjay Sonkar and many other workers engaged in the arrangements were present in the meeting.

## Grand welcome awaits Modi



The BJP workers appealing to farmers to attend PM's Kisan Samvad in Rajatalab area in Varanasi.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be given a grand welcome on his arrival in Kashi On June 18. As per the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) regional spokesman Navratan Rathi, a grand welcome has been planned at the Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, as well as Mehandiganj gram sabha site. In the urban area from the Police Lines to Dashashwamedh and from Dashashwamedh to Kashi Vishwanath Temple Gate Number 4, on the entire route of the Yatra, under the leadership of Uttar Pradesh Ministers of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal and Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', MLAs Dr Neelkanth Tiwari and Saurabh Srivastava, the BJP workers will welcome the PM with their supporters and local residents by playing drums, nagada, blowing conches, showering rose petals etc. On Sunday morning, senior

BJP leaders, including regional president Dilip Patel, district president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma and other leaders and public representatives, in the form of a procession in the villages of Harsos, Mehndiganj, Birbhanpur etc around the venue, created public awareness with drums and trumpets. They went to every house in the villages and invited the farmers to attend the Kisan Sammelan. During this, Surendra Patel, Praveen Singh Gautam, Ashwani Pandey, Bhanu Shankar Patel, Vikram Patel, Prem Shankar Pathak, Anil Tiwari etc were mainly present. City president Vidyasagar Rai said that under the grand welcome, the route of the prime minister's journey will be decorated with party flags, banners and saffron clothes. Not only this, apart from the route of the journey, thousands of big and small hoardings are being put up on major roads and crossings to welcome and greet the prime minister and local MP.

## Sangam city records 47.2 degrees C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The maximum temperature in Sangam city was once again recorded at 47.2 degrees Celsius on Sunday due to which the people remained indoors. Similarly, the minimum temperature was recorded at 34.4 degrees Celsius. Professor AR Siddiqui of the Geography Department at Allahabad University said monsoon may arrive in Prayagraj around June 22. However, before that similar condition will prevail. The temperature will be hovering

around between 45 and 48 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile a car parked at new Yamuna bridge, Naini caught fire on Sunday afternoon. **SUICIDE:** A man committed suicide in Naini area on Sunday. His wife and son had gone somewhere. When they returned, they did not find him anywhere to be seen. The family thought he was sleeping in the room upstairs. When they went to see they found his body hanging from a rope. His wife fainted and fell down. The family informed the police. When the room was searched, a sui-

cide note was found on the spot. The police have taken the suicide note in their possession and are questioning the family members. Reports relieved here said that Sanjay Saxena of Chak Raghunath Naini, an NGO operator, had no work these days. Naini Inspector Yash Pal Singh said that as per the relatives Sanjay was troubled for a long time due to financial constraints. However, Sanjay's family members are not ready to say anything about this. The family members who reached the post-mortem house said

that they had nothing to say in this regard. **CASE REGISTERED:** A case under serious sections was registered against directors and other top officials and employees of a famous coaching institute here on Sunday. The Civil Lines police has registered a case. It is alleged that ₹3 lakh were taken from each student. Civil Lines inspector Ram Aashray Singh said that a case has been registered on the complaint of the parents. The officials of the coaching institute have been called for questioning in this regard.

## Farmers' torchlight procession today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An important meeting of farmers affected by various government schemes, including Transport Nagar, Ring Road Phase 2 and Sports City was held on Sunday under the aegis of Sanjukt Kisan - Mazdoor Morcha at Bairwan. They decided that in view of Bakrid the leaders of various schemes changed the proposed demonstration date at the district headquarters on June 17 and decided that torchlight

processions will be taken out in all 11 affected areas on June 17 at 5 pm. On June 18 the farmers of affected schemes of Varanasi will reach Rajatalab rehil headquarters with their 'khasra', 'khatauni' and 'jot-bahi' in a procession with drums from their respective areas and will expose the 'anti-farmer' face of the BJP government with evidence. It will be the same day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with the farmers at Mehandiganj in same Rajatalab area.

## Lakhs take holy dip at Sangam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Lakhs of devotees took holy dip at Sangam — the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra here on Sunday. Despite scorching heat the devotees took bath at the Sangam and offered prayers at Shri Bade Hanumanji Temple, Lord Shiva and Lord Shri Ram Janaki Temple here. On Ganga Dussehra, Ganga Aarti and other special were organised. The devotees started arriving at the Sangam bank



since morning itself. Apart from the district, devotees from states like Bihar, Bengal, South India, Chhattisgarh etc offered prayers. Due to thousands of vehicles heading towards Sangam, a situation of jam

arose. The road was already blocked due to the construction of flyover in Alopi Bagh. Ganga Dussehra was celebrated with great pomp in the district. A huge crowd gathered at Daraganj, Dashashwamedh,

Nagvasuki, Phaphamau, Saraswati Ghat, Boat Club, Balua Ghat as well as Arail, Chhatnag Naini ghats etc. apart from Sangam bank for a holy bath. There was a fair-like atmosphere on the Ganga ghats. Along with food items, shops of worship materials and fruits, flowers, garlands, roli and toys were set up. After bathing, the devotees performed worship and 'jalabhishek' in the temples located on the ghat. Lakhs gathered at Sangam for the Ganga snan. Only crowd and vehicles were visible from Parade Ground to Sangam.

## Campaign to provide relief to train passengers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

With the aim of providing relief to the passengers in the scorching heat these days, under the direction of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava, a special campaign is being run for water service, economy meal and crowd control by strictly following the railway rules by running Operation Samvedna at the major stations of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER). Along with this, a special cell has been created in the control room of the divisional office for quick resolution of the problems of the passengers and officers have been deputed in it who are monitoring and resolving the problems of the passengers 24x7.

In this direction, under the leadership of Assistant Commercial Manager Pushkar Singh Rawat, a drive was launched in train number 14005 Lichhavi Express to disembark the unauthorised passengers in the AC coaches. As many as 6 TTEs of Northern Railway and 5 TTEs of NER and a 10-member team of Railway Protection Force (RPF) checked all the AC coaches of the train on Saturday and took action in front of ACM-II NER. Later, all the unauthorised passengers were sent to the general coaches. Also, the ticket checking staff of Varanasi division, namely Naseem, Vibhas, Raghunandan, along with the RPF team, stopped unauthorised passengers from entering the AC coaches till Gyanpur Road station.

In the same direction, unauthorised/ ticketless passengers were caught by conducting a bus raid campaign at Aunrihar station. In train numbers 05169, 05427 and 15111, the bus raid team checked the tickets. Along with comprehensive arrangements for controlling the extra rush of passengers during summer, help desks have been set up for the convenience of passengers, which are queuing up passengers for crowd control at UTS booking counters, helping in booking tickets through mobile app as well as motivating them to get tickets quickly by paying through QR Code. Along with this, passengers are being made aware and encouraged to make their own tickets from ATMV machine.

## NSI, IIT-K sign MoU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The National Sugar Institute, (NSI), Kanpur, and Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Saturday to establish a Centre of Excellence for Biofuels. The MoU was signed in the presence of Ashwani Srivastava, Joint Secretary (Sugar), Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India; Professor Manindra Agrawal, Director of IIT Kanpur and Professor Seema Paroha, Director of the NSI. Professor Rajeev Jindal and Debopam Das from IIT Kanpur and Vinay Kumar, Anup Kumar Kanaujia and Dr R Anantalakshmi from the NSI were also present. Under this MoU, NSI, Kanpur, and IIT-Kanpur will collaborate on joint projects to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of biofuel production in India through advanced research and development and adoption of cutting-edge technologies. In the first phase, proposals will be solicited from the NSI and IIT Kanpur. In the subsequent phase, proposals will also be invited from centrally and state-funded institutions/universities and other organisations/industries. This collaborative research will include comprehensive studies on increasing the production of ethanol, methanol, bio-CNG, aviation fuel, green hydrogen etc. from biomass and renewable energy sources. The MoU is signed for three years and can be extended based on mutual agreement and review by both institutions upon its completion. Prof Manindra Agrawal highlighted that the NSI has been working in this field for



NSI Kanpur and IIT Kanpur signed an MoU on Saturday.

nearly 60 years, understanding market conditions and technical requirements well. Similarly, IIT Kanpur has fundamental capabilities in chemistry and related technologies. The aim is to integrate the strength of both institutions to establish state-of-the-art centre that will help India take a leadership position in the biofuels sector. Ashwani Srivastava, Joint Secretary (Sugar), Government of India mentioned that National Biofuel Policy, 2018, allows the use of surplus food grains for ethanol production and the production of ethanol from various sugarcane-based feed stocks. Under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, the government has set a target to achieve 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol by 2025. Considering the limited availability of sugarcane-based feed stocks, the government is promoting maize as a major feedstock for increasing ethanol production in the country. Besides ethanol, the government is also focusing on the utilisation of other by-products of sugarcane, such as molasses as a fertiliser Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) as a green renewable automotive fuel under the concept of waste-to-wealth. By focusing on the sustainability of biofuels, the government's efforts will

help reduce the import bill for crude oil and decrease dependence on imported fossil fuels, contributing to the goal of an energy-independent India. The centre will support biofuel innovation while ensuring security and sustainability. He extended his best wishes for the joint research work between the two esteemed institutions. Director of NSI, Professor Seema Paroha, announced that a dedicated building equipped with all necessary equipment, pilot plants and a central facility with a state-of-the-art laboratory for this specific task will be established on the institute's campus for the Centre of Excellence. The total cost will be provided by the ministry, which has already given administrative approval. This MoU will pave the way for the production of advanced, sustainable and high-quality biofuels by developing innovative technologies, optimising existing processes and demonstrating the feasibility of biofuel technology through the establishment of pilot projects. Ultimately, this will help preserve energy supply, reduce unnecessary carbon dioxide emissions, protect the climate and decrease dependency on biofuels and crude oil imports. **BREAKTHROUGH:** A team of scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) Pune, and Ashoka University has made a significant breakthrough using data from India's first astronomical observatory, AstroSat. Their research reveals new insights into the internal structure of neutron stars, some of the densest objects in the universe.

## Devotees offer prayers in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of devotees took a holy dip in the sacred water of Ganga river in this holy city here on Sunday on the auspicious occasion of Ganga Dussehra. Right from the wee hours, the people started thronging various ghats to bathe and offer prayers. Rush was seen at Dashashwamedh, and adjoining ghats apart from others including Assi, Tulsi, Hanuman, Kedar, Panchganga, Sciendia and Bhainsasur ghats. Despite scorching heat the rush was seen at many ghats during the morning hours. The activists of Namami Gange took a pledge for keeping the river clean and performed Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat to express gratitude towards Maa Ganga. They also offered 'shramdaan' to remove puja and other wastes from the river on this auspicious day of descent of Maa Ganga which is the symbol of faith and livelihood of millions of people in the country. An appeal was made to ensure public participation by taking oath for the flow of 'Sanatani' culture and gratitude was expressed towards the national river Ganga by waving the national flag amidst the chanting of slogans in favour

of Maa Ganga. On the occasion, a symbolic chunari was offered to Maa Ganga. Regional coordinator Rajesh Shukla said that Ganga Dussehra is celebrated with religious faith in honour of the day when Goddess Ganga came to earth. "She came to earth to rescue the 60,000

Ganga is enough for every human being", he said, adding that river Ganga being pure is an important parameter for the cleanliness of our environment. Along with the government, we all have to understand and fulfill our concern for Ganga with honesty, he said. City in charge Pushpalata



Namami Gange activists performing 'aarti' on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra in Varanasi on Sunday.

sons of King Sagar. Since then, Ganga has been providing salvation, peace, livelihood and happiness to the people of the earth. Seeing, touching, worshipping and bathing in Maa

Verma, Sohan Singh, Dr Sunil Verma, Pankaj Agrahari, Mamta Verma, Anushka Verma etc were also present. Meanwhile, the city unit of Namami Gange on the 10th

Vishnu Puja will be held apart from 3.45 pm Shri Shiv Puja, from 4 pm to 6 pm daily discourse on various religious topics and at 6.45 pm Shri Shakti Puja will be performed. Besides, he said five-day Gau-Sabha from July 24 to 28 and three-day Shri Vidya Sadhna Camp from August 28 to 30 August will be organised. Apart from this, programmes will also be organised on the occasions of various festivals during this period. The venue for all the events will be Narsingh Seva Sadan, East Pitampura, in Delhi.

## Shankaracharya's Chaturmasya Vrat Mahamahotsav to be held in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 22nd Chaturmasya Vrat Mahamahotsav of the Jyotishpeethadhiswar Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwarananand Saraswati Maharaj will be organised in Delhi this time from July 21 to September 18 (from Ashadh Purnima to Bhadrapad Purnima). During this time various religious rituals will be performed. Giving this information, Shankaracharya's media in-charge Sanjay Pandey said that

Sanyas Ashram has a very special place in Indian tradition. "In the tradition of Sanyasis stay at one place during the four fortnights of Chaturmasya and benefit all the Sanatan Dharmis of that area by their darshan, worship, bhiksha-vandan, curiosity-resolve and discourses etc. It has been said that the one who conducts Chaturmasya gets the fruits of conducting Rajsu and Ashvamedh Yajnas", he said, adding that since the traditional monarchy has been abolished in India, Rajsu and

Ashvamedh Yajnas cannot be performed now but by organising the Chaturmasya of Sanyasis, the virtuous fruits of these yagyas can certainly be obtained. Pandey said that this time, devotees of Delhi and nearby areas will go on doing darshan-worship of the Shankaracharya till the Chaturmasya Vrat Maha Mahotsav. He said that during the period, every day at 4.30 am Shri Ganesh Puja, at 6.45 am Shri Surya Puja, from 8 am to 9.30 am daily recitation on Vivek Chunamani and at 9.45 am Shri

## Webinar organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A webinar on the topic "Environmental issues in sugar industry-Way forward" was organised by "Just for Environment" organisation in which large number of delegates from Sri Lanka, Uganda, Yemen and Indonesia also participated. Sugar industry which is considered as grossly polluting industry is required to work on managing air and water pollution and also on solid waste management adopting best available technologies, said Herby Dikkumbara, Chief Executive Officer, Ceylon Sugar Industries, Sri Lanka in his inaugural address. In fact, sugar factories are required to work for converting the solid waste like filter cake for bio-gas production, boiler ash from sugar and dis-

## Guard dies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A security guard employed in a cattle feeder manufacturing unit died under mysterious circumstances in Rania police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Sunday morning. The police have started a probe after sending the body for autopsy. The condition of security guard Ashok Pandey of Rae Bareilly, started deteriorating during duty on Saturday. After finishing his duty, he went to sleep in room. On Sunday when he did not report on duty, colleagues rushed to the spot and found him dead. SO said during investigation, illness had come to fore as the cause of his death. However, on the suspicion of kin, the body was sent for autopsy and a probe was on in the matter, he said.



# NSA Doval to hold two-day talks with US counterpart from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and US will review the entire spectrum of their strategic ties during two-day talks here starting Monday between National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and his counterpart Jake Sullivan. They will also hold meeting on initiative of Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), it was learnt here on Sunday. It will be the first meeting between the two NSAs after Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office for the third time. Incidentally, Modi had a bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden earlier this week on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy. The main meeting of iCET will be held on Monday with the focus being a review of all the projects considered at the Washington meeting on January 31, 2023 including transfer of technology of GE-414 jet engines for Tejas Mark



II fighters, sources said. A US team is already in India to negotiate the sale of 31 MQ 9B armed Predator drones to India, just as a French team is in India to negotiate the 26 Rafale-Maritime fighter deal for INS Vikrant. NSA Ajit Doval is slated to be in Paris on June 20-21 for a meeting with his counterpart Emmanuel Bonne and military counterpart to deepen military ties. During the iCET meeting, Doval and Sullivan are likely to discuss the draft of a new

bilateral Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap to accelerate technological cooperation between the two countries for the joint development and production of jet engines, loitering ammunition and other systems. The other issue under review is building of a resilient semiconductor supply chain in India through joint ventures. Other issues under discussion will be space cooperation, quantum computing and next generation telecommunications.

# Statues of national icons relocated for beautification: Om Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Outgoing Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Sunday said statues of freedom fighters and national icons spread across Parliament complex have been relocated to a new enclosure on its premises, Prerna Sthal, following discussions with different stakeholders. The relocation of the statues, he said, were done as part of a landscaping and beautification exercise. Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurating the Prerna Sthal on Sunday in the presence of large numbers of members of Parliament. Addressing reporters, Birla also asserted that discussions were held from time to time with different stakeholders on the relocation of statues as such decisions were within the purview of the Office of the Lok Sabha Speaker. "None of the statues have been removed, they have been relocated. There is no need to indulge in politics on this," the outgoing speaker said when asked about the opposition



criticism on the relocation of the statues. "From time to time, I have been discussing these issues with different stakeholders. People were of the view that having these statues at one place will help disseminate information about their lives and achievements in a better way," Birla said. The statues of Mahatma Gandhi and B R Ambedkar, earlier located at prominent places on the Parliament premises, were places where opposition leaders gathered to protest against the government. Congress chief spokesman

Jairam Ramesh had said the whole idea of this relocation and giving it a grandiose name was to ensure that the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar were not in a prominent place right in front of Parliament House where MPs could hold peaceful and democratic protests as and when required. Birla said the Prerna Sthal -- located on the lawns between the old Parliament building and the Parliament library building -- will be open to visitors all through the year and host commemoration days to honour the contribution of the leaders to nation building.

The outer lawns of the Parliament complex have statues of national icons such as B R Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Pratap, Hemu Kalani, Mahatma Basaveshwara, Kittur Rani Channamma, Motilal Nehru, Maharaj Ranjit Singh, Durga Malla, Birs Munda, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, and Chaudhary Devi Lal. "An action plan has been made to make the life stories and messages of these great Indians available to visitors through new technology," the Lok Sabha speaker said.

Birla said during the construction work of the new Parliament building, the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Chaudhary Devi Lal were moved to other places within the complex. Lawns and gardens have been laid around the statues at the Prerna Sthal to allow visitors to easily pay their tributes to them and also take inspiration from their lives by accessing information using QR codes, Birla said. Asked about the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) taking over security of the entire Parliament complex, Birla said it was done so that accountability could be fixed on one agency. Earlier, the Parliament Security Service, the Delhi Police and the Central Reserve Police Force were responsible for the security of the Parliament complex and there was certain overlap in responsibilities, he said. The Lok Sabha speaker said CISF personnel were being trained on dealing with parliamentarians as the system of Parliament security was different from guarding other premises.

# Railway Board sets up panel to find out reasons for violation of speed limits by drivers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Railway Board has set up a committee to find out the reasons for the violation of speed restrictions by train drivers at various points between originating and destination stations which is detrimental to safe train operations. According to sources, the Board came into action after recent incidents in which two train drivers violated the speed restriction of 20 kmph at a river bridge, which was under maintenance and drove their trains at 120 kmph speed. In the first incident, the loco pilot and assistant loco pilot of the Gatiman Express, India's first semi-high-speed train

which runs at 160 kmph speed between Hazrat Nizamuddin in Delhi and Virangana Lakshmi Bai Jhansi Junction in Uttar Pradesh, violated the advisory speed restriction between Jajau and Mania railway station near Agra Cantt. Just a couple of days after the Gatiman incident, the drivers of another train Malwa Express, which runs between Katra (Jammu) and Indore (Madhya Pradesh), too committed a similar violation at the same spot and steered the train at 120 kmph. Soon after these incidents, the Railway Board on June 3 issued a circular to all zones and informed, "Railway Board has constituted a committee to review the caution orders being issued to Loco Pilots



and Train Managers (guards)." "The committee desires to interact with Loco Pilots through video conference to

understand the issues related to caution orders at the field level," the circular added, asking all zones to nominate loco

pilots from each division to attend a meeting on June 5. "Over 180 loco pilots and loco inspectors took part in

the meeting and came out with various suggestions to ensure that speed restrictions are followed in letter and spirit," said a loco pilot, who was part of the virtual meeting. The Railways imposes speed restrictions for the safe operation of the trains for various reasons such as track condition, ongoing track repair work, old railway bridges and station yard remodelling etc. The Railway officials say that before boarding the engine, the loco pilots and their assistants obtain a complete route chart along with advisories and cautionary speed limits from the concerned operating department and they are supposed to maintain the speed accordingly. During operation, the assis-

tant driver calls out loudly these advisories and cautions and the driver repeats it to confirm. "In the meeting, various suggestions came. For instance, a section of drivers suggested that a train guard should remind a driver on a walkie-talkie 3 km before the starting point of the speed restriction. This practice is being followed by the guards of Kota division and a request was made to make it applicable across the board in Railways," said another loco pilot, who attended the meeting. "Some drivers wanted the caution order to be given on bold letters with bigger font size on A4 size white paper. They also said that drivers should be issued different

colour highlighters to mark the restrictions for their convenience," he added. The participants also said that it was also discussed in the meeting whether permanent speed restriction (PSR) should also be made a part of the caution order. "Normally only temporary caution orders are given to the drivers on a paper sheet but a suggestion was made that PSR should also be mentioned," said a loco pilot. "The committee will look into these suggestions and deliberate upon other means to decide if there is a need to amend the operation norms concerning speed restrictions in the interest of safe train operations," said a source in the Railway Board.

# Minister reviews progress of social justice schemes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Dr Virendra Kumar soon after taking over the office convened a meeting to review the progress of various schemes and strategise on key departmental initiatives for the next 100 days. During the meeting, Secretary of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Rajesh Aggarwal, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the department's initiatives, according to an official statement. This was followed by a detailed discussion on the modernisation efforts of the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO). Heads of various organisations, including the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), National Institutes (NIs)



and the National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC), presented their significant achievements. The participants engaged in thorough deliberations on strategic direction and action plans aimed at enhancing the department's outreach and efficiency. The modernization of ALIMCO is expected to revolutionize the provision of aids and assistive devices for persons with disabilities. The achievements of CCPD, RCI, NIs and NDFDC high-

light the department's dedication to inclusive growth and empowerment. Dr Kumar underscored the importance of these initiatives in fostering an inclusive and equitable society. "The Government's focus is on creating a robust framework that supports the empowerment and inclusion of all sections of society. The modernization of ALIMCO and the achievements of our various bodies are testaments to our dedication towards this goal," he said.

# IAF contingent participates in Ex Red Flag 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent participated in the Exercise Red Flag 2024 conducted at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska of the United States Air Force, from June 4-14. This was the second edition of Ex Red Flag 2024, which is an advanced aerial combat training exercise, held four times in a year by the US Air Force, IAF said here on Sunday. The exercise witnessed participation of the Indian Air Force along with Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), Royal Air Force (RAF) of the United Kingdom, Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), German Luftwaffe, and the US Air Force (USAF). The IAF contingent participated with the Rafale aircraft and personnel comprising of aircrew, technicians, engineers, controllers and subject matter experts. The transatlantic ferry of Rafale fighter aircraft was enabled by the IL-78 Air to Air Refuellers (AAR), while the transportation of personnel and equipment was undertaken



by the C-17 Globemaster aircraft. The contingent landed at Eielson, USAF base in Alaska on 29 May 24. Red Flag is an air combat exercise conducted with multiple scenarios designed to provide realistic combat settings. A demarcation of forces is done for simulating the desired environment, with the Red Force simulating Air Defence elements, and the Blue Force simulating the Offensive

Composite elements. During this Exercise (Ex), the Red Force was mainly constituted by the USAF Aggressor Sqdn flying the F-16 and the F-15 aircraft. This was the first time the IAF Rafale aircraft participated in Ex Red Flag, wherein, they operated alongside the RSAF and USAF F-16 and F-15s, and the USAF A-10 aircraft. The missions included Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat

exercises as a part of Large Force Engagements (LFE), in Offensive Counter Air and Air Defence roles. The IAF crew were actively involved in mission planning and also assumed the role of Mission Leaders for designated missions during the exercise. In spite of the challenging weather and almost sub-zero temperatures, the IAF maintenance crew worked diligently to ensure serviceability

of all the aircraft throughout the duration of the exercise and all assigned missions could be undertaken with more than 100 sorties being flown during the exercise. Key takeaways from the exercise included insight on interoperability with international partners and a collaborative understanding of employment philosophy in a multinational environment. Experience of ferrying long distances, while undertaking Air to Air refuelling enroute, was both an enriching and thrilling takeaway, especially for the younger crew. Undertaking their return journey, the contingent is planned to split enroute along with their mutual support elements and participate in exercise with Air Force elements of Greece and Egypt, before landing back in India on 24 Jun 24. Enriched with the Red Flag exercise experience, the IAF keenly looks forward to hosting the participating contingents from other countries during Ex-Tarang Shakti-2024, which is the first ever Indian multinational air exercise to be held later this year.

# Centre's flagship NSAP for elderly, widow set for makeover

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central flagship, National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), a welfare programme launched by the Government to provide financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities living below the poverty line in urban and rural areas is all set for a makeover. Soon after taking the charge as the Union Rural Development and Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry, new Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan indicated that he was keen to restructure the scheme being the important economic and social security cover for the vulnerable groups in the society. "We have to structure the project for an ideal life for the elderly, widows and the disabled, for which we have to take every problem seriously, and for this, if there is a need to change the rules and regu-



lations of the scheme, then amendments should also be made," he told his officials. The NSAP includes several schemes such as the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), among others. These schemes provide

monthly pension amounts to eligible beneficiaries to support their livelihood and improve their quality of life. However, the pension amount has been very paltry. The last revision to the pension amount was in 2012, when the central contribution increased from Rs 200 per month to Rs 500 per month for those aged 80 years and above. For IGNDPS and IGNWPS,

central contribution was enhanced to Rs 300 per month. For those below 80 years, it has been Rs 200 per month since 2007. The CAG in its report last year had found gaps in the scheme. Now, the new Minister at the Helm, the officials said that the scheme is poised for improvement, expanded scope, or may be adapted to new circumstances or needs. It can also imply that there might be reforms or restructuring underway to enhance the program's impact or efficiency. Emphasising on the importance of District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committees (DISHA), he said that there is a need to strengthen the DISHA Committees further. The Minister added that he will write a letter to all the newly elected MPs to request them to ensure that the meetings of DISHA Committees are held on time so that every small problem and progress can be continuously paid

attention. DISHAs have been formed to ensure better coordination among all the elected representatives in Parliament, State Legislatures and Local Governments (Panchayati Raj Institutions/Municipal Bodies) for efficient and time-bound implementation of the central welfare schemes in the States. The Rural Development Minister emphasised on implementing the action plan for the next 100 days in a strong and effective manner. He said that we all have to work together with full strength on every scheme of rural development, only then Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of a developed India will be fulfilled. Minister of States for Rural Development Dr. Chandra Shekhar Pemmasani, Kamlesh Paswan, Rural development Secretary, Shailesh Kumar Singh and senior officials of the Ministry were also present in the meeting.

# Gene responsible for fragrance, safety against pathogens in lavender found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a discovery that is particularly significant for India, which is exploring lavender cultivation as part of the Aroma Mission launched in 2016, a team of researchers has found that gene, LaMYC7, plays a crucial role in the aromatic plants for enhancing its distinctive both the fragrance as well as safeguarding the plant against pathogens, a team of researchers has found. Understanding the genetic mechanisms of lavender's aromatic and defense properties can help breeders develop more resilient varieties with higher essential oil yields given that many farmers in Kashmir under the Mission supervised by the Central Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) are starting to cultivate the crop, often growing it alongside apple orchards. The study published in the



journal Horticulture Research is conducted by a team from the State Key Laboratory of Plant Diversity and Specialty Crops at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The researchers explained that the LaMYC7 transcription factor regulates the biosynthesis of key terpenoids, such as linalool and caryophyllene, which are responsible for lavender's characteristic aroma. These terpenoids also play a vital role in the plant's defense mechanisms

against pathogens, particularly Pseudomonas syringae, a significant threat to plant health. Talking about the research techniques, they said they employed advanced techniques including RNA sequencing, transgenic technology, and enzyme assays to explore the function of LaMYC7. These methods revealed that LaMYC7 enhances terpenoid biosynthesis, thereby boosting lavender's resistance to pathogens, said the study.



## Heatwave crisis

To mitigate the health impacts of extreme heat, urgent Govt action is essential

This summer has been unlike any other. The relentless heat intensifies with each passing day, and there is no relief in sight. India is currently grappling with one of the most intense heat waves in recent history, with temperatures soaring above 45 degrees Celsius in many regions. This extreme heat is taking a significant toll on the health of the people, straining healthcare systems, and prompting urgent government action to mitigate the crisis. The immediate health impacts of the heatwave are severe and widespread. Hospitals across the country are reporting a surge in cases of heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heat exhaustion, characterised by symptoms like heavy sweating, muscle cramps, and fatigue, can escalate into heatstroke. Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the body's temperature regulation fails, leading to confusion, unconsciousness, and potentially fatal organ damage. Chronic health conditions are also being exacerbated by the extreme heat.



Individuals with cardiovascular diseases are at increased risk of heart attacks and strokes as the body struggles to cool itself, leading to higher heart rates and blood pressure. Respiratory issues are worsening too, with higher levels of air pollutants combining with the heat to create a hazardous environment for those with asthma and other lung conditions.

It is time the Indian Govt declared a health emergency and implemented measures aimed at protecting public health and alleviating the impact of the heatwave. The government must actively disseminate information through various media channels, advising people to stay indoors during peak heat hours and drink plenty

ty of water. The office timings must be changed. Some states like Rajasthan are doing good jo. External coolers have been installed on public buses to mitigate the soaring temperatures. In response to the extreme heat, the Jaipur administration has initiated the use of artificial rain. Large water tankers have been stationed along the roads to spray water on pedestrians, adopting this method to combat the sweltering conditions. The rest of the country could take a cue from Rajasthan. Indeed, healthcare systems are under significant pressure, with hospitals and clinics witnessing a sharp increase in heat-related medical emergencies. To cope with the surge, additional medical staff must be deployed, and temporary medical facilities must be set up in some areas to handle the overflow of patients. What we are witnessing can be attributed to climate change. Urban areas must have more green spaces which help lower temperatures. Climate experts warn that such events are likely to become more frequent and severe in the coming years due to climate change, necessitating comprehensive plans to protect public health. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, enhancing healthcare system capacities, and promoting public awareness, India can build resilience against future heatwaves and safeguard the health of its population in an increasingly warming world.

### PICTALK



Ashy prinia bird feeds its babies, in Chikmagalur, Sunday

PTI

## Reimagining success in long-term relationships

By fostering mutual support, effective communication, and shared goals, couples can build a resilient bond that withstands the test of time

Fairytales and romantic comedies have long shaped our dreams of love, painting idyllic pictures of happily ever after. However, reality tells a different story. Long-term relationships in the real world are far messier and more dynamic than their cinematic counterparts. It is essential to understand that the happily ever after narrative may not be practically achievable. Instead, we must delve into a more nuanced perspective on what constitutes success and fulfillment in lasting partnerships. As we reimagine and reinvent the path to success in long-term relationships, we must remember that unrealistic expectations and ideals can only lead to disillusionment. Facing real-life challenges, including conflict, growth, and change, is an inevitable part of any enduring partnership. In this rapidly changing world, it is prudent to navigate these complexities, offering a more realistic and ultimately more satisfying vision of long-term relationship success. Healthy relationships are dynamic ecosystems, not static stalemates. They thrive on creating an environment



where personal exploration and growth enhance the partnership's foundation. In such relationships, partners continuously evolve as individuals, with their passions, priorities, and goals shifting over time. Strong, lasting relationships develop on the foundation of good communication, creating a safe space for vulnerability where feelings, needs, and desires can be openly expressed. This openness enhances trust and emotional intimacy, leading to a deeper bond between partners. Acceptance is also crucial for lasting fulfillment. People, like relationships, are a beautiful mosaic of strengths and quirks. While individual growth is important, strong relationships benefit from a shared compass. Whether it's a passion for travel or a dream of building a family together, having common core values provides a sense of purpose

and unity. It is also vital to develop skills for healthy conflict resolution, as disagreements are inevitable in a long-term relationship. Maintaining the spark in a deeply satisfying relationship involves creating space for individual pursuits outside of the partnership. This fosters a sense of self and helps in developing a personal identity, which can reignite the spark and reduce co-dependency. For long-term fulfillment, intimacy must go beyond the intense passion of the initial stages. Prioritizing quality time, focusing on physical affection, and creating shared experiences play essential roles in nurturing intimacy. Social media can put intense pressure on couples to maintain a 'Perfect Couple' image, but real life cannot be perfect 365 days a year. The ability to weather storms together as a team is what demonstrates the strength of love. Prioritizing self-love is the foundation for a fulfilling relationship, as partners content with themselves can contribute positively to the partnership. If couples encounter endless challenges, seeking professional

support from a counselor can be invaluable. A successful long-term relationship is not about achieving an unattainable state of bliss but about embracing the journey with its inevitable twists and turns. By focusing on communication, shared goals, and individual interests, partners can build a connection that evolves and deepens over time. The happily ever after may not be a permanent destination, but the journey of building a satisfying partnership can definitely be a deeply enriching experience. The essence of a successful long-term relationship lies in embracing the journey with all its complexities and imperfections. By appreciating each other's unique qualities and navigating conflicts with grace, couples can build a resilient and dynamic partnership. Real love is all about supporting each other through life's challenges and celebrating the moments of joy.

(Author is Dubai-based award-winning Poet, Novelist, Writing Retreat Curator and Founder of TheWriteScene.com. Views expressed are personal)



DEEBA SALIM IRFAN

In politics, symbolism matters. In the biblical-civilisational land of Palestine or Ha'aretz Hamuvtakhat ('Promised Land') which birthed Abrahamic faiths, symbolism is even more significant. Therefore, Israel's most extreme-right Prime Minister ever i.e., Benjamin Netanyahu, upped the incendiary rhetoric by invoking the 'Amalek' narrative to appeal to the basest of instincts. Netanyahu provoked, "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible" – referencing the Biblical Amalekites who were seen as the archetypal enemies of the Jews. It was suggestive of not sparing any of the so-called modern 'Amaleks' (read, Palestinians). Many were horrified at the attempt to seek justification in holy scriptures, to defend the indefensible. Similarly, many are deeply concerned at the import and usage of the Palestinian expression "From the river to the sea" as the same finds mention in the terror group Hamas's charter, which is construed as the complete extermination of the Israeli State and the Jews. The polemics are deeply symbolic. Israel is today conducting a brazen and no-holds barred retaliation (already accounted for over 35,000 Palestinian deaths) that remains unheeding and unconcerned to global calls for restraint. In some ways, the horrific 7th Oct attack by the terror group Hamas was serendipitously timed for the already unpopular, dictatorial, and tainted Benjamin Netanyahu. Expectedly, after the attack the opposition parties put their differences aside and joined the National Unity Government to stand together in the face of national crisis. It also distracted the attention from Netanyahu's misgovernance till then and offered a much-needed distraction. Netanyahu grabbed the opportunity of the wounded moment to launch an unprecedented revenge that has now got his initial allies like the USA to rethink. After many supportive vetoes in the Security Council, the US was forced to agree with motions that called out the disproportionality of Israeli revenge.

## Biblical rhetoric stirs controversy

As Netanyahu faces mounting pressure, his future leadership hangs in the balance amidst growing calls for a more humane approach to the conflict



Netanyahu cared two-hoots and persisted with his onslaught, as he gambled that it allowed him time and space to do even more fear mongering, 'othering', and manufactured-outrage that could somehow justify his continuation.

Already, Israel (especially under Netanyahu) has regularly cocked a snook at the United Nations by becoming the most 'sanctioned' nation in the world. It also cares little about international condemnation. But perhaps it has overplayed its trademark belligerence for now, as the reactions from countries that were once clearly pro-Israel (e.g., the USA) or cautiously guarded (e.g. Western European nations) are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their stand, as the global outcry over Israeli excess becomes louder. While typically it wouldn't have mattered to Israel under Netanyahu – but perhaps now it does, given that it could backfire on the public mood in Israel which in any case is tiring of the bloodshed and even more wary of Netanyahu's ability to lead the nation, hereinafter.

Three Western countries i.e., Spain, Ireland and Norway have announced that they will now recognise a Palestinian State (with borders that existed prior to the 1967 war, with Jerusalem as the joint capital). It is a wholly symbolic move



ISRAEL IS TODAY CONDUCTING A BRAZEN AND NO-HOLDS BARRED RETALIATION THAT REMAINS UNHEEDING AND UNCONCERNED TO GLOBAL CALLS FOR RESTRAINT

that comes with the rider that they are willing to change the contours of the sovereign borders after the final negotiated settlement of the 'two-nation' formula, something Netanyahu has opposed tooth-and-nail. It is an attempt to defame Netanyahu's stand and propel the national mood towards ceasefire and rapprochement. Given that these three countries are 'Western' and have ostensibly no axe to grind with Israel (unlike any of the Arab Sheikdoms or Iran) and hence their action is only rooted in genuine concern and morality. A country like Norway, is in any case the beacon of ethics and humanity, in the global comity of nations – hence that bears its own significance with such an action. It could therefore impact and galvanise public opinion within Israel to put internal pressure on Netanyahu. Such a development, if it were to accrue, is possibly Netanyahu's worst nightmare come true. His survival and legitimacy are predicated on the still popular notions of extracting 'justifiable' revenge, and the sudden siding of Western powers (once pro-Israel) towards his nemesis i.e., Palestine, deligitimises those notions. Even its staunchest ally, the United States of America, is facing consequences of affording an initial 'blank cheque' onto Israel with rising protests across its campuses, some-

thing Joe Biden can ill-afford in the election year. Americans have now become mealy-mouthed and wishy-washy in their support towards Netanyahu and have started talking about ceasefire, reiterating the 'two-state' formula as the way forward and talking about direct dialogue with the Palestinians. Whereas the United Kingdom, Malta, Australia, and Slovenia have gone one step further and threatened to follow suit with Norway, Spain, and Ireland in recognising the Palestine State. While all of this is still in the realm of symbolism without any concrete interference in the expanding Israeli footprint and flattening of the Gaza Strip – it will be significant in checking Netanyahu's amoral politics and untenable approach in Gaza Strip. Even Netanyahu's instinctive reaction that such moves by one-time allies tantamount to 'rewarding' Hamas will not have too many takers as truly neutral countries like Norway are not known to take sides in conflict one way or the other, or even to 'derecognize' Israel, but only to drive peace with the insistence of the 'two-nation' formula of Oslo Agreement and peace, as the only way forward. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DEMOCRATIC MATURITY

Madam — Apropos the news story "The robustness of India's political system," published on June 15, this is my response. Civil society thrives on a shared acceptance of rules and practices, whether documented or not. The UK's unwritten constitution exemplifies this, demonstrating that selfregulation and mutual respect can maintain order even amid disagreements. This contrasts with countries with written constitutions that struggle with orderly conduct, often resorting to courts for conflict resolution.

Recent Indian parliamentary elections highlight the maturity and fairness of the electoral process. The electorate's peace-fulexercise of political choices reflects their thoughtful judgment. However, cabinet appointments based on the Prime Minister's prerogative, including nonelected members, have sparked debate. While some see this as a deviation from norms, it's crucial to recognise the inherent flexibility in political decision-making. The formation of a 70+ ministerial house underlines the complexity and balance required in such decisions, showcasing the artistry and maturity of the Indian political system. Despite negative press, these decisions should be accepted as part of the evolving political landscape.

Saanvi Jain | Jamshedpur

### COMBATING HEALTH MISINFORMATION

Madam — Apropos the news story "Addressing misinformation about health supplements," published on June 15, this is my response. In today's digital age, people often trust online resources more than fellow human beings. It's common during travel to follow Google Maps rather than ask a local for directions. Even when a local provide correct guidance, we view them with scepticism. For the present generation, Google and WhatsApp have become libraries and teachers. This trend extends to healthcare, where many rely on internet sources rather than visiting a physical doctor. While the internet offers easy access to information, it

### 'Ghar Wapsi' remains a distant dream



Apropos the news story "Kashmiri Pandits see 'return of spring'," published on June 15, this is my response. Reading about the Mela Kheer Bhawani fills me with mixed emotions. The return of spring in Kashmir, symbolised by the

gathering of Kashmiri Pandits at the Ragnya Devi temple, is a poignant reminder of their longing for home. Ashok Kumar's words, "Spring has come back again," capture the bittersweet nature of their visit—celebrating their heritage while yearning for a permanent return. Despite the recent surge in violence, the steadfast faith of these devotees is admirable.

The image of local Muslim families setting up shops and offering support during the festival underscores a spirit of communal harmony that Kashmir desperately needs. However, the reality remains harsh. Successive Governments have failed to secure a lasting solution for the displaced Pandits. The construction of a Yatri Niwas for pilgrims is a small step, but it falls short of addressing the broader issue of resettlement. True 'ghar wapsi' remains a distant dream, overshadowed by security concerns and political inertia.

Aarush Kapoor | Vijayawada

also harbours a significant amount of misinformation, especially concerning health supplements. Misleading advertisements and exaggerated claims about vitamins and dietary supplements can lead to serious health risks. Profit-driven motives overshadow consumer safety, causing individuals to potentially forgo evidence-based treatments. To combat this, promoting scientific literacy and critical thinking among consumers is crucial. Social media platforms must enhance content moderation and regulatory bodies need to enforce strict penalties on manufacturers spreading misinformation. Education and stringent regulations are vital to ensure public health and consumer safety.

Vihaan Sharma | Udaipur

### GOD EMPOWERS GOODNESS

Madam — Apropos the news story "God's varied interest in humanity," published on June 15, this is my response. The BhagavadGeeta suggests that God is deeply invested in us, especially those who seek to live righteously. According to its teachings humans can be categorised

based on their relationship with God and their actions. Devotees, who worship with devotion, are closest to God and achieve liberation. They embody God's teachings and inspire others. Next are God's instruments, like Arjuna, who carry out divine instructions and are rewarded in heaven but must return to earth after their merits are exhausted. Social workers, like King Janaka, perform welfare acts, benefiting humanity and earning God's favour. Good people, characterised by their inherent goodness and philanthropists, who selflessly help others, are also recognised by God. Common people, primarily driven by passion and survival, form the society's backbone. The Geeta emphasises that God empowers those with virtuous intentions, guiding them and ensuring they receive His support, ultimately highlighting the importance of living a life aligned with divine principles

Meera Rao | Raipur

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FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF BREAKS IN WORK LIFE

Enhancing productivity through strategic break management



SAKSHI SETHI

Are you someone who is making yourself available 24/7? Or the one who prefers clearing all work mails every now and then over a family get together? Well, if yes, then folks it may be the time to set healthy boundaries at work. Pausing amidst busy days allows the mind and body to recharge and refocus. According to various studies and research, it has been found that the most productive employees have worked for 52 minutes followed by a 17-minute break. Furthermore the studies also suggest that the mind of an individual is not made for nonstop work. It becomes essential to take regular breaks for sustaining high performance and avoiding mental fatigue. Regardless of individual's job profile, taking regular breaks is a simple yet effective strategy to enhance the overall work performance and well-being. Continuous work without breaks can lead to burnout, which is characterized by exhaustion and decreased productivity. Breaks help to recharge mentally and physically. Regular breaks improve focus and concentration. Stepping away from tasks periodically helps individuals return with a clearer mind and renewed energy. By integrating breaks into the work routine, an individual can maintain high productivity, reduce stress and improve their physical as well as mental health. In short, prioritizing breaks is an investment in their long-term career success and personal happiness for it can foster creativity and innovation. It is often believed that when an individual takes a pause from work, the brains become free to wander and explore new ideas and can lead to unexpected solutions



The importance of taking breaks from work has become even more pronounced after the COVID-19 pandemic due to several factors that have altered the way people work and live. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for regular breaks from work to manage increased stress, digital fatigue and blurred work-life boundaries. These breaks are essential for maintaining productivity, creativity, physical health and overall well-being in a rapidly changing work environment. Incorporating regular breaks such as a short family vacation or if not a vacation, just incorporating microbreaks into the workday or midday exercise breaks can lead to numerous compounding benefits, thereby making it a simple yet effective strategy for maintaining both productivity and well-being. When an individual will take all forms of breaks, they will seek positive emotions of excitement, joy, happiness, inspiration, pride and much more which will ultimately supercharge the cognitive restoration. There is no denying the fact that any individual can get too wrapped up in work stress when work is the only source of identity, validation and confidence they have but it becomes crucial at times for individuals to get in contact with activities that are completely unrelated to their professional life such as an unrelated hobby or a casual conversations about non work topics with friend groups that could often generate laughter, encouragement and much more. As is often said, contentment isn't the same as complacency. All of us should urge ourselves to be content, swim in gratitude and radical acceptance of now in a world that is never going to be happy. Remember, whether you're a high-powered executive, a teacher, a creative artist, a healthcare worker, a customer service representative or any other employee working, the benefits of taking breaks are universal and can significantly enhance your productivity, mental health and the overall job satisfaction. So try to grant yourself full permission to punctuate work hours with rejuvenating pauses.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# The healing symphony of yoga and music



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Yoga and music intertwine to foster physical wellbeing and mental relaxation, offering a holistic approach to health and harmony

June 21 holds a special place in the hearts of millions around the world. It is a day when the ancient science of yoga and the universal language of music unite, creating a symphony of wellness and harmony. "International Yoga Day (IYD)" and "World Music Day (WMD)", both celebrated on this date, offer a unique opportunity to explore the interconnections between physical, mental and emotional well-being. Yoga, with its deep roots in Indian culture and music — an intrinsic element of human expression — converge to create a holistic approach to health and happiness. Originating in India over 5,000 years ago, Yoga integrates physical postures, breath control, meditation and ethical principles to achieve harmony between mind, body and spirit. The earliest references to yoga are found in the Rigveda and it was further elaborated in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita which defines Yoga as "The journey of the self, through the self, to the self". Further, Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras', written around 400 CE, systematically outlined the eight limbs of yoga, providing a framework for physical, mental and spiritual practices. Over the centuries, yoga evolved with contributions from various yogis and saints, adapting to cultural changes and diversifying into numerous styles such as Hatha, Ashtanga, Kundalini and so on. Yoga has transcended cultural and geographic boundaries in contemporary society, gaining global recognition for its myriad health benefits. Scientific research confirms its effectiveness in improving physical fitness, mental clarity and emotional resilience. For instance, studies published in reputable journals like the 'European Journal of Preventive Cardiology' highlights yoga's ability to enhance cardiovascular health by lowering blood pressure, cholesterol levels and body mass index. The 'Journal of Psychiatric Practice', which suggests 'yoga' can complement treatment for major depressive disorder by integrating physical postures and meditation techniques laying emphasis on mindfulness and breath control fosters inner calm and concentration, thus enhancing cognitive function. Also, the 'International Journal of Yoga' enhances emotional regulation and positive effect with practices like guided meditation and pranayama that are particularly effective in cultivating emotional stability and resilience. Presently, millions of individuals worldwide adopt yoga not merely for physical fitness, but as a comprehensive approach to health and well-being. For instance, in the United States, yoga participation has increased dramatically over the past decade, with a significant percentage of the population practicing yoga regularly. Similarly, in Europe, yoga has been integrated into public health programs and educational curricula, emphasizing its role in promoting overall wellness. Thus, International Yoga Day has become a global event following its proposal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the United Nations General Assembly in 2014. The resolution, co-sponsored by 177 nations, emphasizes yoga's holistic benefits for health and well-being. This day aims to enhance global awareness of yoga and encourage its practice, promoting unity and peace. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, International Yoga Day has gained unprecedented global recognition, empha-



JUNE 21 CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY AND WORLD MUSIC DAY, UNITING THE ANCIENT PRACTICE OF YOGA AND THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF MUSIC TO PROMOTE HOLISTIC HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND GLOBAL HARMONY

sizing the timeless relevance of yoga in today's world. Simultaneously, World Music Day celebrates the joy of music in all its diverse forms, underscoring its power to heal and unite. Today, celebrations worldwide feature mass yoga sessions, workshops and educational events, highlighting yoga's universal appeal and its capacity to unite people across cultural and national boundaries. Similarly, "World Music Day", also known as "Fête de la Musique", is celebrated on June 21, coinciding with International Yoga Day. Originating in France in 1981-82, according to one theory, this day has grown into a global event dedicated to celebrating the universal language of music. It encourages musicians of all levels to perform in public spaces, promoting free and diverse musical expressions. Music's power to unite, heal and uplift resonates deeply, making this celebration an important cultural event. Music has long been recognised for its therapeutic effects, aiding in emotional healing and mental wellness. Research indicates that music can reduce stress, alleviate pain and improve cognitive function. In the context of yoga, music enhances the practice by creating a serene atmosphere, aiding concentration and facilitating deeper relaxation. The synergy of yoga and music can profoundly influence one's well-being, offering a comprehensive approach to mental and emotional health. Yogi and mystic, *Sadhguru* once said, "Yoga is not just about bend-

ing and twisting, it's a process of creating a situation where your body and mind are in tune with nature and music," which can be seen during the Shivaratri celebrations which Isha Foundation organizes every year, blending music, meditation and yogic practices. This connection between yoga and music does elevate the practice, enhancing the flow of positive energy and creating a meditative State conducive to inner peace. As B.K.S. Iyengar, a pioneering yoga guru, had put it that "Yoga, an ancient but perfect science, deals with the evolution of humanity. This evolution includes all aspects of one's being, from bodily health to self-realization." The integration of music into yoga practices helps achieve this holistic development, fostering mental clarity and emotional stability. According to a June 21, 2022 report from TOI, Dr. Pratiksha Gadkari, a physiotherapist, emphasized the benefits of yoga in enhancing joint flexibility and range of motion. She highlighted its role in improving balance through posture and movement, while also noting the calming effects of music on the mind. Dr. Gadkari suggested that starting exercise routines with soothing music can boost energy and promote a fresh start to the day. The report also quoted Amar Kulkarni, a renowned singer and music teacher who practices yoga regularly. He drew parallels between yoga and music and mentioned how both disciplines can generate internal energy and positive vibes. Kulkarni pointed out

yoga's emphasis on '*Omkar Sadhana*', which resonates with the foundation of Indian classical music in '*Omkar*'. He highlighted how these practices complement each other, enhancing respiratory strength through physical exercise and drawing inspiration from the energy of sound. However, some 'Yog Acharyas' also believe that in certain styles of yoga, the incorporation of music varies and may not universally be deemed suitable. For instance, within the contexts of 'Vinyasa' and 'Anusara' methodologies, music has gained greater acceptance. Conversely, in Iyengar sessions, the auditory environment typically consists solely of the teacher's guidance. Here, the utilization of music, when employed, hinges upon the instructor's discretion, which may be argued. In today's fast-paced world, where stress and mental health issues are prevalent and have hit the youth largely, the combination of yoga and music offers a sanctuary for healing and rejuvenation. This synergistic approach can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety, providing a natural remedy to combat the pressures of modern life. Together, yoga and music intertwine to foster physical well-being and mental relaxation, offering a holistic approach to health and harmony. It's time we start to breathe in with rhythm and experience divinity in our inner peace. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

# Mushroom farming empowers women in rural Bihar

Women in Bihar thrive through mushroom cultivation, achieving financial independence and contributing significantly to local economies

Mushrooms are rapidly gaining recognition and popularity in the culinary world for their unique taste and versatility. Dishes such as mushroom curries, pudding, pickles and snacks are becoming favourites on many people's palates. Along with this growing culinary trend, mushroom farming is expanding swiftly across various States in India, including Bihar. According to National Horticulture Board data, Bihar produced approximately 28,000 metric tonnes of mushrooms in 2021-22, accounting for 10.82 per cent of the total mushroom production in India. In the previous year, the State produced a total of 23,000 metric tonnes of mushrooms.



PRIYANKA SAHU

The Bihar Government is providing up to a 50 per cent subsidy to farmers engaged in mushroom cultivation, which is boosting production and increasing farmers' incomes. Under the Integrated Horticulture Mission scheme, these subsidies have also raised farmers' morale, leading to a surge of women farmers entering the field. In many districts of Bihar, women have established a

distinct identity in mushroom production, often surpassing their male counterparts. For the past ten years, Manorama Singh, a farmer, has been recognised for her mushroom production not only in the Vaishali district but across the State. She cultivates mushrooms herself and also trains nearby farmers in mushroom farming. Manorama prepares mushroom seeds and makes the necessary compost. Mushroom farming has emerged as a powerful catalyst for financial independence among many women. Neelam Devi, a 34-year-old farmer from Bandra block in Muzaffarpur district, was married off at a very young age due to her family's poor

financial condition. She always aspired to be self-reliant. One day, she learned about a mushroom farming training programme offered by an NGO called 'Atma'. She joined the programme, received training and began cultivating mushrooms in a room of her house. Despite facing disapproval and opposition from her in-laws, Neelam remained steadfast and determined to pursue her goal. Gradually, she began to achieve success and earn significant profits from mushroom production. Today, she has become so proficient in this field that she is teaching 200 women how to cultivate mushrooms, supporting them in their journey to become self-reliant.

For her commendable work, Neelam has been honoured as a successful farmer by Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa. Her reputation as a mushroom trainer and producer has spread far and wide. Those who once opposed her, including her in-laws, now take pride in her determination and passion. Like Neelam, dozens of women farmers in Muzaffarpur are creating a new identity through mushroom farming and earning substantial profits annually. 45-year-old farmer Lal Bahadur from Kothiya village in Kanti block, about 17 km from the Muzaffarpur district headquarters, believes that both women and men find mushroom cultivation bene-

ficial because it is easy to grow. It can be cultivated easily at home, with low costs and high profits. The mushroom crop is ready in just 25 days. He shared that initially, he too lacked knowledge about mushroom farming. Then, in 2012, he met Dr. Daya Ram, a professor at Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa. After training with him in mushroom farming, Lal Bahadur began raising awareness about mushroom cultivation among farmers in the surrounding villages. He explained that initially, due to a lack of proper information, people did not support him. They believed that mushrooms were wild plants, known in the village as gobar chhata, some of which are

highly poisonous. After much explanation, people began to understand the difference between edible mushrooms and gobar chhata. Once this distinction was clear, the villagers started mushroom farming with him and women actively participated. Lakshmi Devi, another farmer from the same village, shared how Lal Bahadur's understanding of mushroom farming opened a new avenue for them in farming. "Before we knew about mushroom farming, we would go to the city for labour work, but even then, it was difficult to make ends meet. Since we started mushroom cultivation, our household situation has improved." In recent years, the demand for mushrooms has increased

significantly across various districts in Bihar. From hotels and restaurants to wedding functions and feasts, mushroom dishes are becoming a status symbol. Beyond the capital city of Patna, mushrooms are now easily available in the vegetable markets along the roadsides in cities like Hajipur, Samastipur and Muzaffarpur. As the mushroom market continues to grow, so does its demand. This increasing demand has opened new doors for farmers, allowing them to benefit from this trend. Not only are they gaining financially, but these women farmers are also contributing to strengthening Bihar's economy. (The author is a rural writer from Muzaffarpur, Bihar. Charkha Features;



# BJP team to inspect Bengal post-poll violence

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal BJP leader and MLA Shankar Ghosh has expressed concerns about the changing demographic pattern of the State which is throwing a decisive impact on the voting pattern and election results. In a recent post he has wondered whether the BJP lost in a number of seats on account of the changing demographic equations. Ghosh has put forward the BJP's defeat at Cooch Behar seat in North Bengal as a test case. Former Union Minister Nishith Pramanik had lost from Cooch Behar in the recently concluded general elections. According to Ghosh there are 2043 polling booths in Cooch Behar constituency. Out of them there are 160 booths from where the winning Trinamool Congress candidate Jagadish Chandra Basunia got little more than 1.06 thousand votes whereas the BJP polled about 6,000 votes leaving a gap of about 1 lakh between the two parties. On the other hand in the remaining 1843 booths the BJP polled 60,000 more votes than the TMC. "The equation left the BJP trailing by 40,000



votes," Ghosh said, wondering whether a time had come to study the changing demographic patterns of various constituencies. He also said that Cooch Behar is just a test case and there are several other areas where similar concentration of voters of a particular community had led to similar results. One such seat could be Jadavpur where the residents of Bhangar, a minority-dominated Assembly traditionally vote en masse and for a par-

ticular political party often providing the winner a lead of more than 1 to 1.50 lakh votes. "A time has come when the party should consider this changing demographic pattern while considering the election results," he said. Meanwhile in a parallel development the BJP has constituted a four-member committee led by former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb to inquire into the post poll violence in Bengal. Other members in the com-

mittee are former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Kavita Patidar and Brijlal. The committee would submit its reports to BJP national president JP Nadda, party national general secretary Arun Singh said adding Bengal unlike other States was witnessing relentless violence post general elections much like the one that took place after the 2021 Assembly elections that necessitated the visit of National Human Rights Commissions mem-

bers to the State. Referring to the Bengal bound saffron committee TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said that the BJP was trying to hide its face behind the "curtain of violence." He said, "they cannot explain the reason of the humiliating loss they suffered --- because of their poor performance --- in the elections so they are trying to create the façade of violence ... they are still denying that they have been rejected outright by the people of Bengal." Another TMC leader said that while the BJP was trying to provide an excuse for their defeat and divert the people's attention from defeat to violence they should in fact look into the state of affairs in Tripura. "They are sending former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb who has single-handedly decimated the opposition parties in that State ... they won 94 percent of municipal seats uncontested ... and a large number of their opposition leaders and workers have either fled that State or are spending their nights in forests ... this is the kind of democracy that is in work in Tripura and they are teaching us lessons in democracy," he said.

## Eezhava community warns CPI(M) & Congress over minority appeasement

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Eezhava community, a numerically powerful Hindu faction in Kerala has warned both the CPI(M) and the Congress for their unabated appeasement of the minority communities, especially the Muslims. Vellappaali Natesan, the supreme leader of the Eezhava community, who is also the general secretary of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam), founded by Sreenarayana Guru, has pointed out that the nomination of candidates to Rajya Sabha from the State is disproportionate to the religious demography of Kerala. "The nomination of two Muslim candidates and one Christian candidate to the Upper House by both the LDF and UDF is gross injustice. While the UDF has nominated a Muslim League member, the LDF has nominated two members from the Muslim and Christian communities overlooking the interests of the Hindus," Natesan said in the editorial of the June 2024 issue of Yoga Nadam, the official organ of the SNDP Yogam. Natesan's outburst comes at a time when a big section of BJP

leaders in the State allege about an unholy alliance between the Eezhava community, a major chunk of the BJP leadership and the CPI(M) have formed a deal to keep the Hindutva party weak in perpetuity and force the Eezhava community to cast its votes to the Marxists. In the signed editorial, Natesan further stated that out of the nine Rajya Sabha members from Kerala, there are five Muslims, two Christians and just one Hindu and this highlights the discrimination faced by the latter. "The nomination of candidates to the Rajya Sabha is a clear case of minority appeasement politics played by the Congress and the CPI(M)," said Natesan. He attributed the victory of Suresh Gopi from Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency relegating K Muraleedharan of the Congress to third position to the changed priorities of the Christian community. "The Christians had always pursued a strong antipathy towards the BJP. If they have changed their known stance and voted for the BJP, it is because of the fact that they have understood the discrimination shown by the two major parties against them," said Natesan. He cautioned the Congress and CPI(M) against

driving away the Christian voters towards the BJP as it was dangerous for democracy and secularism. Many Islamic outfits have demanded the arrest and prosecution of Natesan for his alleged attempt to create enmity between various communities in the State. "Is telling the truth a sin in this State? The intellectuals and the mass media in Kerala maintain silence over the atrocities carried out by these religious groups for fearing of losing their commercial benefits. Whenever some calamities occur in remote parts of the world, the self-styled angels of peace create chaos and commotion here in Kerala while the official system looks the other way. I know what the repercussions of speaking the truth and I am not afraid to face it. I am always ready to end up as a martyr," said Natesan. Natesan is seen as a close associate of the CPI(M) in general and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in particular. Though he had praised Narendra Modi in the past, he was forced to change tact because of cases of financial irregularities foisted by the CPI(M) government against him as the chief of micro-finance institutions.

## Prestigious Prix Versailles recognises Smritivan Memorial

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The memory of the victims of the 2001 Bhuj earthquake and their spirited fight against the natural disaster has been preserved on a global scale, with the prestigious Prix Versailles Award recognizing the Smritivan Earthquake Memorial Museum constructed to pay tributes to the disaster-hit people as one of the world's seven most beautiful museums. This accolade celebrates the museum's architectural excellence and its role in commemorating the tragedy when nearly 13,000 people during the earthquake on January 26, 2001, which had its epicentre in Bhuj died. The grand structure, which is the first such memorial in the country, is spread over 470 acres on Bhujio Hill near Bhuj town. The memorial carries names of the people who lost their lives during the earthquake. It also has a state-of-the-art Smriti Van Earthquake Museum. In a heartfelt post on social media platform 'X', Union Home Minister Amit Shah remarked that the listing will help spread the "fragrance of



the memories" of those lost in the tragic earthquake across the world. Shah acknowledged the museum as a testament to resilience and remembrance, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "It is a touching moment for all of us as Smritivan in Kutch finds a place in the prestigious World Selection for the Prix Versailles Museums 2024. "Envisioned by P.M. Shri @narendramodi ji, Smritivan is a museum that preserves the memories of the people we lost in the devastating earthquake in 2001. Its inclusion in the World Selection for the Prix Versailles Museums 2024 will spread the fragrance of their memories worldwide," he said.

Modi too lauded the inclusion, highlighting the museum's role in preserving the memory of the 2001 earthquake victims and expressed pride in this international recognition. The museum stands as a solemn tribute to the thousands of lives lost during the devastating earthquake that struck Bhuj in Gujarat in 2001. It serves as a place for reflection and remembrance, providing a space where visitors can learn about the impact of the disaster and the resilience of the affected communities. Designed to honor the memories of the earthquake victims, the museum's architecture and exhibits reflect the cultural heritage of Kutch and the

resilience of its people. The recognition by the Prix Versailles highlights its aesthetic and emotional impact on a global stage. Being listed among the world's most beautiful museums by the Prix Versailles positions the Smritivan Museum alongside other globally renowned cultural landmarks. The Prix Versailles is an international award that recognizes outstanding architecture and design in various categories, including museums, shopping malls, and restaurants. It is known for celebrating buildings that combine architectural beauty with cultural and social significance.

## GNDU among top 15 best universities in country



PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Guru Nanak Dev University has been on the path of improving its rankings consistently since past seven years or so. In the most recent 'The WEEK-HANSA Research Survey 2024', it has been adjudged among the top 15 Best Universities in the country. It has improved its all India ranking from 23rd in 2017 to 15th in 2024 in the said survey. It is the only state funded multidisciplinary university to have jumped to 7th position in 2024 from 14th position in 2017 in the State of Punjab. Its high quality inclusive and conducive environment for academics, research, professionalism, cocurricular, and extra-cocurricular activities has been the hallmark of its success.

Vice Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) Jaspal Singh Sandhu has congratulated the faculty, researchers, and staff of the university to have attained this achievement. He expressed that only the sincere and consistent efforts of the stakeholders of any institution can bring laurels to glorify its achievements. He cited that GNDU is the only multi-specialty State University of Northern Region (Jammu, Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh) to attain such remarkable achievements. He said that all-round efforts have been made in the last seven years or so to build state-of-the-art infrastructure for to upscale the quality academics, research, and cocurricular activities to earn name and fame at the national and international levels.

## AMU launches 31 online courses under SWAYAM initiative



PNS ■ ALIGARH

The Aligarh Muslim University has launched 31 new courses for SWAYAM for the academic session 2024-25. The courses, ranging from various disciplines, including Botany, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Wildlife Sciences, Forensic Medicine, Commerce, Economics, English, Geography, Public Administration, Sociology, Political Science, Library and Information Science, Law, Psychology, Urdu, Hindi and Sunni Theology, have been designed keeping in mind the requirements of the learners from across the country. These courses have been developed by AMU's Department of Computer Science in collaboration with the NPTEL, IIT

Madras and funded by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. These courses have been launched on SWAYAM portal, <https://swayam.gov.in/INI>, and are open for enrolment, free of cost. University's SWAYAM Coordinator Prof. Aasim Zafar informed that learners from any University can enroll in these online courses as per their requirements. Starting from July 22, out of the 31 courses, 28 will run for duration of 12 weeks, while 3 will conclude in 8 weeks. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Naima Khatoon expressed confidence that learners across the country will be benefitted from the quality content courses and rich expertise of learned faculty members of AMU. She also appreciated University teachers for their efforts.

## Army to turn heat on J&K...

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And also the HM was briefed about the strength of terrorists operating in the Union Territory, sources said. National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, Army Chief General Manoj Pande, Army Chief-designate Lt General Upendra Dwivedi, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, Director General of CRPF Anish Dayal Singh, DG of BSF Nitin Agarwal, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police R R Swain and other top security officials attended the meeting. Terrorists struck at four places in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir within four days last week, killing nine pilgrims and a CRPF jawan and leaving seven security personnel and several others injured. Two suspected Pakistani terrorists were also killed in an encounter with security forces in Kathua district. On June 9, terrorists opened fire on a 53-seater bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra from the Shiv Khori temple. The bus, ferrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi, plunged into a deep gorge following the gunfire, killing nine people and injuring 41 others. On June 11, terrorists fired at a joint check post of the Rashtriya Rifles and police at Chattergalla in Bhaderwah while a search party in the Gandoh area of Doda district was attacked on June 12,

resulting in injuries to seven security personnel, including a policeman. On June 13, Modi spoke to the Home Minister and discussed the deployment of security forces and counter-terror operations. The Prime Minister also spoke to the Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor as well and took stock of the situation in the Union Territory. Sinha briefed him on the efforts being undertaken by the local administration. In the meeting, the Prime Minister was given a full overview of the security-related situation in the region and was apprised of the counter-terror efforts being undertaken. The attacks took place ahead of the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Amarnath, located at a height of 3,880 metres in the south Kashmir Himalayas, which will begin on June 29 and will continue till August 19. The Amarnath pilgrims travel through two routes -- Baltal and Pahalgam -- in Jammu and Kashmir. Last year, over 4.28 lakh people visited the shrine and the figure could go up to five lakh this time. All pilgrims are expected to be given RFID cards so that their real-time location can be traced and everyone will be given Rs 5 lakh insurance cover. There will also be an insurance cover of Rs 50,000 for each animal carrying the pilgrims. Shah has been stressing on providing smooth arrangements on the route from the airport and railway station to the pilgrimage base camp and proper security of all pilgrims, sources said.

## World's highest steel arch...

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Official sources said the flagging of the first train between Sangaldan-Reasi is scheduled on June 30, connecting the Reasi district in Jammu to Kashmir via railway line. The General Manager of Northern Railway Shobhan Chaudhuri had earlier inspected the Chenab Bridge up to Sangaldan station via Motor Trolley, assessing the track, Electrical and Mechanical system and signal telecom works in the Bakkal-Duggar-Sawalkote-Sangaldan section last month. Deputy Commissioner, Reasi Vishesh Paul Mahajan, who recently inspected the railway line, said the people of the district are eagerly waiting to listen to the train's siren and its chugging on the trek. Mahajan said when the train crosses the Chenab bridge, anytime soon it will be a proud moment for the country that "our engineers have gifted the highest railway bridge to the world."

## Tension flares up in Capital over...

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"Many parts of south Delhi did not receive water this morning because the main pipeline was intentionally broken yesterday (Saturday). Step two, breaking water pipelines and disrupting supply. Step three, which was revealed today, was the BJP sending goons to the Delhi Jal Board office to create ruckus," she said. The AAP government has been accusing the BJP-ruled Haryana of not releasing Delhi's share of water. The BJP lambasted the statements of Bharadwaj and Atishi condemning the protesters, and said this Kejriwal government is far from the reality. "There is no water supply for the past three days in South Delhi, that's the reason people came out of their houses to protest," BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP leaders and newly elected MPs staged a protest at 14 locations

across the national capital to highlight the failure of the Arvind Kejriwal government. The BJP will also hold a protest on Monday. The ongoing water supply crunch in the national Capital took centre stage with the water supply levels dropping to the season's lowest level at 901 MGD-- a 10% drop from the normal levels. BJP MP Harsh Malhotra accused the AAP government of corruption and mismanagement, claiming, "Delhi government is receiving enough water for the public of Delhi. The shortage that we are facing today is because of their corruption, non-planning, and non-action." In another incident, tensions also flared in the Dwarka, where a dispute over access to water from a common tap resulted in three people being injured and hospitalised at Indira Gandhi Hospital.

## Musk's EVM remark sparks row...

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The Indian EVMs, the BJP leader claimed, are custom designed with now way in. "...Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media - No connectivity, no bluetooth, wifi, Internet. ie there is no way in. Factory programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," he said. The former IT Minister also offered to run a tutorial on how EVMs can be built right. "Electronic voting machines can be architected and built right as India has done. We would be happy to run a tutorial, Elon," he added. However, the Tesla chief was firm on his assertions and rejected the BJP leader's claim saying "anything can be hacked". Musk had raised concerns that the risk of EVMs being hacked by humans or AI was too high and that they should be eliminated. "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk said. Rajya Sabha MP and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi took the opportunity to flag reports on Mumbai election. "This is a fraud at the highest level and yet the @ECISVEEP continues to sleep," she said in a social media post.

## Tourist guides to turn...

From Page 1

This training will empower guides to respond promptly and effectively in critical situations, administering CPR to stabilise tourists experiencing cardiac emergencies until professional medical help arrives. By ensuring guides are well-prepared and capable of delivering immediate care, the IATO aims to significantly improve the safety and well-being of tourists visiting various destinations across India, he added.

## Unease in NDA over...

From Page 1

Since then students across India are demanding a re-examination. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Sunday said NEET, 'masquerading' as a measure of merit, is a 'scam' and the Centre must stop defending the national test as it went against the interests of students and it is also against social justice and poor. Congress on Sunday said there are "serious questions" on the integrity of NTA and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered. The opposition party hoped that when

the new Standing Committees of Parliament gets constituted, it would take up an in-depth review of the NEET, NTA and NCERT. Congress has also questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the matter and asserted that only a Supreme Court-monitored forensic probe could safeguard the future of lakhs of young students. Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj too raised concern over "irregularities" in the NEET-UG examination and appealed to the public to come in support of the students demanding re-examination.

## Jeevan dayini Ganga in...

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Temperatures soared to 46.0°C, consistently remaining above 40°C for 23 days. In the last week of May, temperatures hit a record-breaking 47.8°C, the highest in 140 years. Contamination in Ganga WaterAs water levels decline, a study by Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has found alarming levels of phosphate, ammonium, and other heavy metal contamination in the waters of city ghats. The presence of fecal matter due to sewage and drainage discharge has also been detected. Research from BHU's Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development

revealed that at drainage discharge points like Garhwa Ghat, Ramnagar, and Assi, phosphate levels reached 0.5 PPM (1 PPM equals 1 milligram per liter), and near sewage discharge areas around Ramnagar, levels were as high as 2.7 PPM. Ideally, phosphate should not be present in the water. Ammonia levels were found to be 17 milligrams. Additionally, nitrate and sulfate levels in groundwater near Ravidas Ghat and Raighat were already double the WHO standards, affecting the river's water quality and increasing pollution levels. Heavy metals like cadmium, mercury, iron, nickel, and

copper were found near Assi Ghat. A study by BHU's Botany Department, which took samples up to 1500 meters downstream, revealed dangerous levels of these metals in the water. Professor Vishwambhar Nath Mishra from IIT and Mahant of Sankat Mochan Temple noted that fecal matter was found at all 84 ghats in Kashi, mainly due to domestic sewage mixing with the river. Consequently, water from any ghat in the Ganges is no longer suitable for ritual consumption. Preventing sewage from entering the Ganges is crucial for its cleanliness.



# Israel army to pause daytime fighting in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's military announced on Sunday that it would pause fighting throughout daytime hours along a route in southern Gaza to free up a backlog of humanitarian aid deliveries destined for desperate Palestinians enduring a humanitarian crisis sparked by the war, now in its ninth month. The "tactical pause" announced by the military, which applies to about 12 kilometres (7.4 miles) of road in the Rafah area, falls far short of a complete ceasefire in the beleaguered territory that has been sought by the international community, including Israel's top ally, the United States. If it holds, the limited halt in fighting could help address some of the overwhelming needs of Palestinians that have surged even more in recent weeks with Israel's incursion into Rafah. The army said the pause would begin at 8 am (0500 GMT) and remain in effect until 7 pm (1600 GMT). It said the pauses would take place every day

until further notice. The pause is aimed at allowing aid trucks to reach the nearby Israel-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point for incoming aid, and travel safely to the Salah a-Din highway, a main north-south road, the military said. The crossing has suffered from a bottleneck since Israeli ground troops moved into Rafah in early May. COGAT, the Israeli military body that oversees aid distribution in Gaza, said the route would increase the flow of aid to other parts of Gaza, including Khan Younis, Muwasi and central Gaza. Hard-hit northern Gaza, which was an early target in the war, is being served by goods entering from a crossing in the north. The military said the pause came after discussions with the United Nations and international aid agencies. Aid agencies, including the UN, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The pause along the southern route comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing the



Israeli police disperse a protester against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government during a call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group, in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday

AP/PTI

latest proposal for a cease-fire, a plan that was detailed by President Joe Biden in the administration's most concentrated diplomatic push for a halt to the fighting and the release of hostages taken by the militant group. While Biden described the proposal as an Israeli one, Israel has not fully embraced it and Hamas has demanded changes that appear unacceptable to Israel.

Israel's eight-month military offensive against the Hamas militant group, sparked by the group's October 7 attack, has plunged Gaza into a humanitarian crisis, with the UN reporting widespread hunger and hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of famine. The international community has urged Israel to do more to ease the crunch and has said the ongoing fighting, including in

Rafah, has complicated aid deliveries throughout the war. From May 6 until June 6, the UN received an average of 68 trucks of aid a day, according to figures from the UN humanitarian office, known as OCHA. That was down from 168 a day in April and far below the 500 trucks a day that aid groups say are needed. The flow of aid in southern Gaza declined just as the humanitarian need grew. More than 1 million Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced, fled Rafah after the invasion, crowding into other parts of southern and central Gaza. Most now languish in ramshackle tent camps, using trenches as latrines, with open sewage in the streets. COGAT says there are no restrictions on the entry of trucks. It says more than 8,600 trucks of all kinds, both aid and commercial, entered Gaza from all crossings from May 2 to June 13, an average of 201 a day. But much of that aid has piled up at the crossings and not reached its final destination.

A spokesman for COGAT, Shimon Freedman, said it was the UN's fault that its cargos stacked up on the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom. He said the agencies have "fundamental logistical problems that they have not fixed," especially a lack of trucks. The UN denies such allegations. It says the fighting between Israel and Hamas often makes it too dangerous for UN trucks inside Gaza to travel to Kerem Shalom, which is right next to Israel's border. It also says the pace of deliveries has been slowed because the Israeli military must authorise drivers to travel to the site, a system Israel says was designed for the drivers' safety. Due to a lack of security, aid trucks in some cases have also been looted by crowds as they moved along Gaza's roads. The new arrangement aims to reduce the need for coordinating deliveries by providing an 11-hour uninterrupted window each day for trucks to move in and out of the crossing.

# Sunak running out of time to change tune

AP ■ LONDON

With less than three weeks until Britain's election day, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is running out of time to change an ominous tune for his Conservative Party. The UK leader — who in recent days travelled to a Group of Seven summit and a Swiss conference on the Ukraine war — has been dogged by questions about whether voters are about to bring his time in office to an abrupt end on July 4. Polls continue to give the left-of-centre opposition Labour Party under Keir Starmer a double-digit lead over Sunak's Conservatives, who have been in power for 14 years under five different prime ministers. Sunak's attempts to close the gap have had little apparent impact. The biggest splash he's made in the campaign so far was a gaffe — the prime minister's decision to skip an international ceremony in France on June 6 marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. He has been apologising ever since. Commentators are starting to talk about doomsday scenarios for the Conservatives, who have governed Britain for almost two-thirds of the past 100 years and won 365 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons in the 2019 election. University of Strathclyde politics professor John Curtice, one of Britain's most respected polling experts, said Conservative support is at its lowest point in UK polling history, and Sunak "must be beginning to doubt his decision to call the election early." In the past week, both Conservatives and Labour have released their election manifestos, the detailed packages of promises that form the centrepiece of their pitch to voters. The Conservatives focused on reducing immigration and lowering taxes, pledging 17 billion pounds (USD 22 billion) in tax cuts by 2030, to be paid for largely by slashing welfare costs. Labour promised to get the economy expanding after years



of sluggish growth by establishing a new industrial policy, investing in infrastructure, cutting planning red tape and building 1.5 million new homes. It has promised not to increase personal taxes, but the Conservatives say the tax burden will rise under Labour. Critics say neither party is being upfront about the tax increases that would be needed to repair public services left threadbare after years of Conservative-led spending cuts, Brexit, a global pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis triggered by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. "The gaping hole in both parties' manifestos is a reckoning with the scale and severity of the fiscal problems that will confront whoever wins the election," said Hannah White, director of Independent think-tank the Institute for Government. The Conservatives' electoral prospects worsened when populist firebrand Nigel Farage entered the race at the helm of the right-wing party Reform UK. Though it is unlikely to win many seats in Parliament, Reform's vote share appears to be rising, largely at the expense of the Conservatives. In recent days, the Conservative message has shifted from aiming at victory to warning that voting Reform could help Labour win a landslide. "If you vote for anybody else other than a Conservative candidate, you're going to get a Labour government with a large majority," Transport Secretary Mark Harper told the BBC on Sunday.

## Two killed in shooting at Texas park

Texas (AP): A shooting in a Texas park left two people dead and several wounded on Saturday, authorities said. The victims were shot shortly before 11 pm Saturday during a Juneteenth celebration at Old Settlers Park in Round Rock, about 19 miles (30.5 kilometres) north of Austin. An altercation began between two groups during a concert at the event and someone started shooting. Round Rock Police Chief Allen Banks said during a news conference at the scene. The two victims who were pronounced dead at the scene were not involved in the altercation, Allen said. The shooting occurred near a vendor area away from the stage set up for the concert, Allen said. Police officers and fire department personnel who were attending the event immediately began providing emergency medical care to multiple wounded victims, who were then transported to local hospitals, Allen said.

## Nine injured in Detroit suburb shooting

AP ■ ROCHESTER HILLS (US)

Nine people were injured, including two young children and their mother, after a shooter opened fire at a splash pad in a Detroit suburb where families gathered to escape the summer heat Saturday. Law enforcement tracked a suspect to a home, where the man died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound, authorities said. An 8-year-old boy was shot in the head and in critical condition Saturday night, Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said during a news conference. The boy's mother also was in critical condition after being wounded in the abdomen and leg, and his 4-year-old brother was in stable condition with a leg wound. Authorities initially said they believed as many as 10 people had gunshot wounds from the shooting in Rochester Hills, but that number was revised after they checked with area hospitals. The other six victims, all 30 or older, were in stable condition, Bouchard said. They

included a husband-and-wife couple and a 78-year-old man. The shooting happened just after 5 pm at a city park featuring a recreation area with a nonslip surface where people can turn on sprays and fountains of water to play in. Bouchard said the attack appeared to be random, with the shooter driving up to the park, walking to the splash pad and firing as many as 28 times, stopping multiple times to reload. At least one witness reported that the shooter appeared to use two hand guns during the attack, but that has not yet been confirmed, the sheriff said. In the chaos, "People were falling, getting hit, trying to run," Bouchard said. "Terrible things that unfortunately all of us in our law enforcement business have seen way too much." The gunman was "apparently in no rush. Just calmly walked back to his car," the sheriff said. Police heard the 911 call reporting the shooting as it came in, Bouchard said, because the



agency uses a service that simultaneously sends emergency calls to first responders. An officer was at the scene within two minutes, he said. Bouchard said the first deputies who arrived immediately began providing first aid including tourniquets. Officers also were able to quickly come up with a likely address, and a car matching the suspect's vehicle was at the residence. Deputies surrounded the home and tried to make contact with the suspect inside, to no avail,

ing to Bouchard. Officials did not release the man's name. Bouchard described him as a 42-year-old white man and said officials believe he lived with his mother. The man's mother was notified, Bouchard said. "In terms of the why, I don't know," Bouchard said of the gunman's motive. At the splash pad, authorities found a handgun, three empty magazines and 28 spent shell casings. At the home, they recovered a semiautomatic rifle and another handgun believed to have been used by the suspect to take his life, Bouchard said. Police cordoned off the area with tape and dozens of yellow evidence markers lay on the ground among colourful folding chairs. "When I got on scene I started to cry because I know what a splash pad is supposed to be," a place where people gather and have fun, Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett said. The shooting was a reminder "that we live in a fragile place," Barnett said.

## US military targets Houthi radar sites after a merchant sailor goes missing

AP ■ DUBAI

The US military unleashed a wave of attacks targeting radar sites operated by Yemen's Houthi rebels after one merchant sailor went missing and the vessel he was on caught fire in the latest Houthi strike on shipping in the crucial Red Sea corridor, authorities said Saturday. The attacks come as the US Navy faces the most intense combat it has seen since World War II in trying to counter the Houthi campaign — attacks the rebels say are meant to halt the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. However, the Iranian-backed rebel assaults often see the Houthis target ships and sailors who have nothing to do with the war while traffic remains halved through a corridor vital for cargo and energy shipments between Asia, Europe and the Mideast. US strikes destroyed seven

radars within Houthi-controlled territory, the military's Central Command said. It did not elaborate on how the sites were destroyed and did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press. "These radars allow the Houthis to target maritime vessels and endanger commercial shipping," Central Command said in a statement. The US separately destroyed two bomb-laden drone boats in the Red Sea, as well as a drone launched by the Houthis over the waterway, it said. The Houthis, who have held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014, did not acknowledge the strikes, nor any military losses. That's been typical since the U.S. began launching airstrikes targeting the rebels. The Central Command said one commercial sailor from the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk cargo carrier Tutor

remained missing after an attack Wednesday by the Houthis that used a bomb-carrying drone boat to strike the vessel. "The crew abandoned ship and were rescued by USS Philippine Sea and partner forces," Central Command said. The "Tutor remains in the Red Sea and is slowly taking on water." The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said Saturday afternoon that the Tutor was "still on fire and sinking." The missing sailor is Filipino, according to the state-run Philippine News Agency, which cited Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacadac. He said most of the Tutor's 22 mariners were from the Philippines. "We're trying to account for the particular seafarer in the ship and are praying that we could find him," he said on Friday night.

## New Caledonia reopening its international airport and shortening curfew

Paris (AP): The French Pacific territory of New Caledonia is shortening its overnight curfew and reopening its international airport that was closed to commercial flights for more than a month because of deadly violence that wracked the archipelago where pro-independence Indigenous Kanaks want to break from France. La Tontouta airport that links New Caledonia's capital, Nouméa, to Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore and other Pacific hubs will reopen Monday, the territory's high commissioner announced in a statement on Sunday. The overnight curfew is also being shortened by two hours, its start pushed back from 6 pm to 8 pm, because of "the improvement in the situation and in order to facilitate the gradual return to normal life," the high commissioner said. Violence that flared on May 13

over controversial voting reforms led to nine deaths, including two gendarmes, and widespread destruction of shops, businesses and homes. Tourists trapped by the airport's closure were evacuated on military flights. With France now plunged into frenzied campaigning for snap parliamentary elections, French President Emmanuel Macron has suspended the reforms that would have altered voting rights in New Caledonia. The revolt prompted France on May 15 to impose a state of emergency on the archipelago and rush in reinforcements for police who were overwhelmed by armed clashes, looting and arson. Both sides of New Caledonia's bitter divide — Indigenous Kanaks who want independence and those loyal to France — erected barricades, either to revolt against authorities or to protect homes and properties.

## S'pore rushes to clean up oil slick after boat hits ship

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

An oil spill caused by a dredger boat hitting a stationary cargo tanker has blackened part of Singapore's southern coastline, including the popular resort island of Sentosa, and sparked concerns it may threaten marine wildlife as a clean-up operation was underway on Sunday. The Netherlands-flagged dredger Vox Maxima struck the Singaporean fuel supply ship Marine Honour on Friday. It damaged the cargo tank on Marine Honour, which leaked oil into the sea. Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority said in a statement late Saturday the oil leak from the vessel had been contained, and that the oil that escaped from the damaged tanker had been treated with dispersants. But due to the tidal current, it said the treated oil had land-

ed along shorelines including at Sentosa and other southern islands, a nature reserve and a public beach park. Sentosa, which attracts millions of visitors annually, houses one of Singapore's two casinos, golf courses and Southeast Asia's only Universal Studios theme park. Part of the beachfront at the public park and at the nature reserve have been closed to facilitate clean-up efforts, it said. The Sentosa beach will remain open to the public but sea activities and swimming are prohibited. On Sunday, workers in orange suits were seen scooping up sand in a clean-up operation at an empty beach in Sentosa. Black water washed up on the oil-stained shore. Authorities have deployed 18 crafts for the clean-up efforts and laid close to 1,500 meters

of container booms, temporary floating barriers to trap the oil spill. "More will be laid over the next few days to prevent further spread of oil onto the shore, and facilitate the recovery of the trapped oil off the affected shorelines and lagoons to prevent them from going back to sea," the statement said. Conservationists and biologists are monitoring the full extent of the damage on marine and wildlife. Local conservation group Marine Stewards reportedly said there were photos of dead fish, otters and kingfishers covered in oil slick. Group founder Sue Ye told Singapore Straits Times that oil spills smother and suffocate fish, birds and marine animals that have to go to the surface for air, such as turtles and dolphins.

## Li promises more pandas, urges Aus to put aside differences

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia on Sunday focused on positive aspects of the bilateral relationship including shared giant pandas and a rebounding wine trade as he promised a new breeding pair of the rare bears and urged both countries to put aside their differences. China's most powerful leader after President Xi Jinping arrived late Saturday in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia state, which has produced most of the Australian wine entering China since crippling tariffs were lifted in March that had effectively ended a 1.2 billion Australian dollar (\$790 million) a year trade since 2020. Li visited Adelaide Zoo, which has been home to China-born giant pandas Wang Wang and Fu Ni since 2009, before he was to have lunch at a restaurant at Adelaide winery Penfolds Magill Estate.

He announced that the zoo would be loaned another two pandas after the pair are due to return to China in November. "China will soon provide another pair of pandas that are equally beautiful, lively, cute and younger to the Adelaide Zoo, and continue the cooperation on giant pandas between China and Australia," Li said in Mandarin, adding that zoo staff would be invited to "pick a pair." Li was impressed by the 18-year-old male Wang Wang's appetite and indifference to his high-ranking visitors. "The panda is very obsessed with eating and doesn't pay attention to us even when we are the people from its hometown visiting," Li said at the panda enclosure. "It has completely treated here as its second hometown," Li said. "Very pretty, adorable, with charming naivety." The pair are the only pandas in the Southern Hemisphere and failed to produce offspring in

Australia. Foreign Minister Penny Wong thanked Li for ensuring that pandas would remain the zoo's star attraction. "It's good for the economy, it's good for South Australian jobs, it's good for tourism, and it is a signal of goodwill, and we thank you," Wong said. Tom King, the managing director of Penfolds, one of Australia's oldest wineries, told Chinese state media ahead of Li's arrival that such visits helped strengthen economic and cultural ties. "It's pleasing to see the stabilizing of relations between the Australian and Chinese governments, including regular high-level visits between the two countries," King was quoted as saying by the Global Times newspaper last week. Li's visit is the first to Australia by a Chinese premier in seven years and marks an improvement in relations since Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's center-left Labor Party was elected in 2022.



Li noted that Albanese in November was the first Australian prime minister to visit China since 2016. "China-Australia relations were back on track after a period of twists and turns, generating tangible benefits to the people of both countries," Li said, according to a translation released by the Chinese Embassy in Australia on Sunday. "History has proven that mutu-

al respect, seeking common ground while shelving differences and mutually beneficial cooperation are the valuable experience in growing China-Australia relations, and must be upheld and carried forward," Li added. Hundreds of pro-China demonstrators, human rights protesters and democracy activists gathered outside the zoo before Li's visit. Among the protesters was for-

mer Hong Kong lawmaker Ted Hui, who fled to Australia three years ago to avoid a prison sentence for his activism. He said the panda offer was a cynical move to soften China's image and to distract from the government's human rights failings. "It's a public relations move by the Chinese regime and, disappointingly, the Australian government is reciprocating by welcoming him and shaking hands," Hui said. Hui said Li showed cowardice by entering the zoo by a rear entrance while most of the protesters and China supporters had gathered at the main entrance. But Hui and other protesters were able to shout slogans at Li from a distance inside the zoo. China initiated a reset of the relationship after the previous conservative administration's nine years in power ended. Relations collapsed over legislation that banned covert foreign interference in Australian

politics, the exclusion of Chinese-owned telecommunications giant Huawei from rolling out the national 5G network due to security concerns, and Australia's call for an independent investigation into the causes of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing imposed an array of official and unofficial trade blocks in 2020 on a range of Australian exports including coal, wine, beef, barley and wood that cost up to AU\$20 billion (\$13 billion) a year. All the trade bans have now been lifted except for Australian live lobster exports. Trade Minister Don Farrell predicted that impediment would also be lifted soon after Li's visit with Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao. Wong said Li's visit was the result of "two years of very deliberate, very patient work by this government to bring about a stabilization of the relationship and to work towards the

removal of trade impediments." "We will cooperate where we can, we will disagree where we must and we will engage in our national interest," Wong told Australian Broadcasting Corp. before joining Li for lunch. Li's agenda becomes more contentious after he left Adelaide late Sunday for meetings in the national capital, Canberra, on Monday and a Chinese-controlled lithium processing plant in resource-rich Western Australia state on Tuesday. Albanese has said he will raise with Li during an annual leaders' meeting recent clashes between the two countries' militaries in the South China Sea and Yellow Sea that Australia argues endangered Australian personnel. Albanese will also raise the fate of China-born Australian democracy blogger Yang Hengjun, who was given a suspended death sentence by a Beijing court in February.



# Income tax relief for those in lowest slab may need to be considered in Budget: CII

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Income tax relief for the people in the lowest slab may need to be considered in the upcoming full Budget for 2024-25 considering the high levels of inflation, according to newly-elected CII President Sanjiv Puri. In an interview with PTI, he also suggested creation of an institutional platform for consensus building between the Centre and states to successfully carry out all reforms, including those related to land, labour, power and agriculture. The industry body also said it does not see compulsions of coalition politics hampering the reforms in the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In stead, it believes that the performance of Indian economy and the success of policies in the previous two stints would set the base to accelerate the process. "Broadly, I would say at this point of time it is public capex, adherence to fiscal glidepath, roadmap for investment in the social infrastructure, green fund and greater investment in the rural sector. These are the broad principles," he said, when asked about CII's expectations from the upcoming full Budget for 2024-25. The wholesale inflation rose for the third consecutive month in May at 2.61 per cent on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, and manufactured



items. The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation was 1.26 per cent in the previous month. It was (-) 3.61 per cent in May 2023. Earlier this month, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may consider "further policy actions" only if it is confident of headline inflation staying put at 4 per cent. Das said it is the central bank's core objective to align the inflation rate with the 4 per cent target, and added that no action on rates will be possible till the RBI is confident of it remaining at or below 4 per cent. As per CII's estimate, Puri said inflation is "probably going to be around 4.5 per cent this year" on the back of an expected good monsoon, which has in the past led to

moderation of food inflation. On the tax side, he added, "What we are suggesting is that the process of simplification should continue. There are certain suggestions relating to capital gains, which are different for different instruments. Can it be rationalised?" Puri further said there are some operational difficulties in TDS (tax deducted at source) and multiplicity of rates and CII would prefer simplification of these. "...Over a period of time as far as customs is concerned, we should move to a three-tier structure, primary at the lowest level, intermediates in between and then the finished goods and all over a period of time should be moderate rates with some exclusions, as deemed appropriate," he added.

Under the old regime, Income tax exemption limit is applicable on income up to Rs 2.5 lakh for individuals whereas under the new regime, the exemption limit is on income up to Rs 3 lakh. The CII president also expressed optimism that the reform process should strengthen going forward. Puri said he was hopeful that food prices may moderate on the back of a good monsoon going forward, sharing that CII estimates inflation to be around 4.5 per cent in the near future, and expects the Reserve Bank to cut the key interest rate somewhere in the second half of the current financial year starting from October. "We think that in the second half of the year, we should see some easing of interest rates," the CII president said.

# SOP in final stages to facilitate visa for Chinese technicians needed in manufacturing units: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After formulating a standard operating procedure (SOP) for streamlining visa approvals for Chinese professionals whose expertise is required by vendors under the PLI scheme, the government is in the final stages to put in place similar processes for other manufacturing units, an official said. The move assumes significance as some domestic manufacturing firms have flagged the issue of delay in getting visas for Chinese technicians, who are required for works like installation or repair of certain machines, besides training workers in India. "Most of the PLI (production-linked incentive scheme) visas have been taken care of. For general manufacturing also, we are trying to create a better streamlined SOP... That is with the Ministry of Home Affairs. It's at the final stages. We are hoping to sort it out. We have done a lot of sensitisation," the official said. The rollout of SOPs does not require any approval from the Union cabinet as it is an internal process to relax norms "a bit" for facilitating visa applications of Chinese professionals or technicians whose expertise is required by domestic manufacturing units, the official added. Normally, these experts require a visa for 3-6 months.



Hailing the move, an industry official said an SOP will help greatly as these manufacturing units need some expertise from Chinese professionals. "The SOP will be a very good decision. Chinese technicians are working in countries like Vietnam and Cambodia in the footwear sector. They are affordable also compared to Taiwanese or other experts. It will help upscale our production," leading footwear manufacturer and Chairman of Chennai-based Farida Group Rafeeq Ahmed said. The PLI scheme was announced in 2021 for 14 sectors, including telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical

devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high-efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore. So far, Rs 9,700 crore has been disbursed to PLI beneficiaries. In 2023-24, the figure was Rs 6,800 crore, the official said. Investments by Chinese firms in India are also subject to greater scrutiny after the issuance of press note 3 by the government in April 2020. Under Press Note 3, the government has made prior approval mandatory for foreign investments from countries that share a land border with India. These countries are China,

Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan. As per that decision, FDI proposals from these countries need government approval for investments in India in any sector. India has received only USD 2.5 billion foreign direct investments (FDI) from China during April 2000 and March 2024. According to industry experts, trade and investment relations between the two countries are not so cordial after the border standoff. The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved, though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for normalisation of overall ties. Indian companies face issues in exporting goods to China because of non-tariff barriers there. India's exports to China in 2023-24 stood at USD 16.65 billion as against USD 15.3 billion in 2022-23, while imports surged to USD 101.74 billion from USD 98.5 billion in 2022-23. The government has taken a series of steps, such as rolling out PLI schemes and mandatory quality control norms, to reduce dependence on Chinese goods.

# With 30 per cent topline growth, Godrej Appliances expects to join billion-dollar club in FY25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Home-grown firm Godrej Appliances expects to become a billion-dollar company by the end of this fiscal, led by a 30 per cent growth in topline, a senior company executive said. The company is "very optimistic" about the short-term and mid-term outlook of the domestic market, during which it will launch new products and has plans to launch around 50 new models across categories in FY25, its Business Head & Executive Vice President Kamal Nandi told PTI. Godrej Appliances, a unit of Godrej & Boyce, recorded 60 per cent overall growth in the first quarter, led by an unprecedented demand for air-conditioners. "We have registered over 60 per cent growth in Q1 and expect to close the quarter at 50-60 per cent growth. While demand is slower in the south and west, north and east are improving. Overall, we expect to close the quarter with over 50 per cent growth," Nandi said. In categories such as air-conditioner, Godrej Appliances recorded over 100 per cent growth in sales, as some other makers have reported. In the air-cooler segment, the Godrej group firm saw over 125 per cent growth and more than 25 per cent in the refrigerators segment in the



June quarter so far. "Even if consumption slows in the festive season and the September quarter, we anticipate a normal growth of about 15 per cent over last year, aiming to close the year around 30 per cent, plus growth overall," he said. Godrej Appliances closed 2023-24, around Rs 6,000 crore. According to Nandi: "We are expecting a 30 per cent increase, aiming for close to Rs 8,000 crore." Asked if Godrej Appliances would become a billion-dollar company by the end of FY25, Nandi said, "Yes, we are expecting to reach that target." Godrej Appliances operates in segments such as air conditioning, refrigerators, washing machines and kitchen appliances such as microwave ovens. Besides, it is also present in the commercial appliances space, such as in vending machines, and is expanding its range of medical refrigerators.

# Indian room air-conditioner market to reach ₹50,000 crore by FY29: Voltas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The India room air-conditioners (RAC) market is likely to grow at a healthy CAGR of 12 per cent to reach Rs 50,000 crore by FY 2028-29, Tata group firm Voltas said in its latest annual report. The competition in the Indian RAC market has "intensified" with the presence of homegrown and leading foreign players, said Voltas, a market leader in the segment. Moreover, the competitive "intensity is going to increase" further in the near future, the company said while discussing challenges and opportunities. Factors like increasingly hot summers, rising disposable

incomes, and the quest for a better lifestyle with easy access to consumer finance are likely to drive growth for this room air-conditioner segment. "The Indian RAC market is expected to grow at a healthy CAGR of 12 per cent to reach a figure of Rs 50,000 crores by 2028-29," said Voltas. Voltas sold over 2 million AC units in 2023-24, which, according to the company, was the highest number of ACs ever sold by any brand in a single year. "Voltas also sold 1 million AC units in an incredibly short time frame of just 110 days from January 1, 2024, till April 20, 2024," it said. This season several companies have reported over two-fold growth in April and May as



sales skyrocketed in the blistering summer, when the mercury was touching around 45 degrees, creating a new record at several places. "Moving ahead, Voltas aims to reinforce its market leadership through the expansion of Exclusive Brand

Outlets (EBOs) and other channels," it said. Besides RAC, competitive intensity is also going to increase in Commercial Air Conditioning (CAC) where leading foreign players have started focusing on this sector. "The demand for commercial

air conditioning is increasing across industries and commercial establishments, and driven by a focus on comfort and sustainability," the report said. Earlier, the Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association had said that this year, it expects record sales of RAC, taking the annual sale of around 14 million units in 2024. However, Voltas, in its report, also said the recent implementation of QCO (Quality Control Orders) norms affects the imports of components, which pose challenges for the industry. Still, the Indian air condition industry is highly dependent on imports for components,

which is around an average of 65 to 70 per cent of the product value. Over commercial refrigeration (CR) products, Voltas' annual report stated it will continue to grow over 10 per cent per annum till FY 2028-29. In this segment, "many of the product categories are likely to register high double-digit growth," it claimed. "Under the 'Make in India' initiative, many brands have set up new facilities and expanded local manufacturing. With this large local manufacturing base in key categories, competition has become intensive, leading to market share and profitability challenges," it noted.

# CBIC cautions public against frauds in name of Indian Customs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday asked public to stay alert and discern the modus operandi of fraudsters committing fraud in the name of Indian customs. In a statement, the CBIC said various incidents have come to light through news portals/social media platforms of fraudulent persons posing as Indian Customs officers cheating the

public of their hard-earned money across the country. These frauds are primarily done using digital means like phone calls or SMS, and are focused on extracting money through the 'purported' fear of immediate penal actions. In order to counter these frauds through public awareness, CBIC is mounting a multi-modal awareness campaign that includes newspaper advertisement, SMS/e-mails to the general public, social media campaign, besides awareness

campaigns by CBIC field formations. The CBIC also advised the public to take measures to safeguard themselves from becoming a victim of such scams by discerning the modus operandi of fraudsters, protecting their information, verifying antecedents of caller and reporting such acts by staying alert. Some of the common modus operandi used by fraudsters are fake calls/SMS. Fraudsters posing as courier officials/staff target the

unaware people via calls, text messages or e-mails claiming that Customs have held a package or parcel and requires payment of Customs duties or taxes before it can be released. Then these fraudsters impersonate as customs/police/CBI officials demanding payment of customs duty/clearance fees for packages/gifts that purportedly have been received from a foreign country. Targeted individuals are asked to make payments for the release of their goods.

# PwC India expects upswing in small, mid-size M&A transactions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

PwC India anticipates an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size M&A (merger and acquisition) transactions and growth fundings driven by increasing investors' confidence. The year 2023 witnessed the emergence of a nuanced M&A landscape, with investors showing interests in diverse strategies and larger-scale ventures, even amid an overall decrease in PE investment, said Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC in India. While PE deals were higher in

volume, strategic deals dominated the top deals -- and domestic deals with group-level consolidations were a prominent theme. The first quarter of 2024 marked a resurgence in deal value and volume. According to a PwC report, top 10 deals of 2023 included JV buyouts, strategic investments, PE buyouts, and stock mergers, and contributed to 21 per cent of the total deal value. While PE deals were higher in volume overall, strategic deals dominated the top deals with domestic deals and group-level consolidations as a significant theme.

# Essar to invest ₹30,000 crore in green hydrogen plant in Gujarat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Essar Group plans to invest Rs 30,000 crore over the next four years in setting up a green hydrogen plant at Jamnagar in Gujarat as the metals-to-infrastructure conglomerate eyes clean energy as a key pillar for its new phase of growth. The conglomerate is looking to decarbonise its oil refinery in the UK, construct a green steel plant in Saudi Arabia, and build an LNG and electric ecosystem to decarbonise long-haul heavy trucks, Prashant Ruia, director of Essar Capital, which manages the group's portfolio of investments, said. It is also considering an entry into mining of critical minerals, mainly used in electric vehicle batteries, solar panels and wind-turbine magnets.

Essar Future Energy plans to develop 1 gigawatt of hydrogen capacity along with associated green molecules capacity of 1 million tonne per annum in Jamnagar over the next four years, he said in an interview with PTI. "We are going to invest around Rs 30,000 crore (in the green hydrogen project in Jamnagar)," he said. Essar will use 4.5 GW of renewable energy by a sister concern Essar Renewables to split water molecules to produce hydrogen and oxygen. Hydrogen, the cleanest known source of energy in the world, so produced can be used to power vehicles, generate electricity, power industry and heat homes and businesses. Hydrogen, which on burning produces only water, however cannot be shipped and is



instead used to make green ammonia which can be easily transported. "The idea is to create green molecules that can be transported directly rather than green ammonia. Because you carry green ammonia and then you

convert it into hydrogen. That cost is very high. So we are trying to build a complex which can make green molecules from hydrogen and largely in the biofuels space and export that," Ruia said. The conglomerate, which

turned debt-free in 2022 after selling some infrastructure assets, will expand its capacity to generate electricity from coal alongside building a renewable energy platform. "The idea is to grow to about 10,000 MW over the next 3-5 years," he said. This includes Essar Power expanding its 1,200 MW Salaya-DevBhoomi Dwarka thermal power plant by an additional 1,600 MW to meet Gujarat's base-load needs. In the realm of green mobility solutions, Essar is focused on building an LNG and electric ecosystem to decarbonise long-haul heavy trucks, contributing to a cleaner transportation sector, he said. It has a fleet of 450 to 500 LNG-powered trucks that are used by different industries for their logistics needs, he said.

Trucks are the biggest polluters on the road, producing some 110 tonne of carbon dioxide per truck. There are 4 million trucks in the country and the number are slated to double in the near future. Replacing diesel in trucks with LNG, helps cut CO2 emissions by 30-35 per cent. Also, gas does not produce nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulfur oxides (SOx) which cause acid rain and air pollution. Alongside, the group also has a fleet of electric trucks. Emissions from electric vehicles are zero. "So what we're trying, if you take the combination of the two you can reduce about 60-70 per cent of the CO2," he said. Essar is also building a retail network to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) to trucks, he said adding LNG-powered trucks can run for 1,300-

1,400 kilometers on a full tank while electric trucks have a range of around 150-km. "So short-range is electric and longer range can be LNG," he said. Besides, the group is producing gas from coal seams from a block in West Bengal, he said. Its arm, Essar Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Limited (EOGEP), India's leader in the coal bed methane industry, contributes nearly 65 per cent of the country's total coal bed methane production and aims to increase its contribution to India's total gas production to 5 per cent within the next five years. Gas produced from coal-seams, called coal-bed methane, can be used as CNG for running automobiles as well as generating electricity

and making fertilizer. "We are today India's largest CBM player. We do about a million cubic meters of gas per day which is very small," he said. "Our idea is to grow that so we are investing Rs 2,000-3,000 crore to increase the gas-based portfolio." The firm is also exploring for shale gas in the Raniganj CBM block in West Bengal. "India has not yet had a commercial success shale. We all know the revolution in the US because of shale. So we feel that there are some opportunities there. We are going to explore that... So please do not get excited yet but we are trying," he said. Essar plans to invest USD 3.6 billion to decarbonize its Stanlow refinery in the UK and another USD 4 billion to set up a green steel plant, which will use hydrogen, in Saudi Arabia.





# JP NADDA'S TO-DO LIST

Back as Union Health Minister, Nadda has his task cut out for him: Restoring NEET credibility, achieving Universal Health Coverage with reduced Out-of-Pocket Expenses for the poor, and harnessing tech to extend healthcare access to remote areas among others, experts tell **ARCHANA JYOTI**

## Cancer, blood disorder patients need a healing touch

- All cancer patients and all aplastic anemia patients should be eligible for PMJAY scheme
- Patients with thalassemia should have access to NAT tested safe blood
- Patients with hemophilia should have access to long acting factors and non-factor replacement treatment that offers advantage of prevention of bleeds
- Bone marrow transplantation (Allogeneic) should be covered under Ayushman Bharat



**DR NITA RADHAKRISHNAN**  
Associate Professor and HOD of pediatric haematology-oncology at Child PGI, Noida, UP

- Weight based packages should be made available under Ayushman Bharat scheme for cancers and blood diseases



JP Nadda took charge as Union Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in Delhi recently. Prataprao Jadhav, Anupriya Patel, MOSES (MoHFW) and Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra were also present during the occasion (PIB photo)

## Enhanced access and quality healthcare a key

- Strengthen Primary Healthcare: Expand and utilize Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) for comprehensive primary care, early disease detection, and preventive healthcare.
- Enhance Healthcare Access and Affordability: Refine the Ayushman Bharat scheme for broader coverage and address service delivery gaps to maximize impact.
- Improve Immunization Coverage: Continue Mission Indradhanush to maintain high immunization rates, especially in low-coverage regions, and include new vaccines.
- Boost Eye Care Services: Strengthen the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) to improve screening, treatment, and outreach in rural areas.
- Promote Public Health and Sanitation: Expand Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to enhance sanitation and hygiene.
- Address NCDs: Develop strategies to manage diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases, promoting healthy lifestyles and accessible treatments.
- Enhance Mental Health Services: Integrate mental health into primary healthcare, ensuring accessible and affordable mental health care for all.
- Ensure Health Workforce Development: Invest in training and capacity building for healthcare professionals, strengthening medical education and continuous professional development.
- Foster Innovation and Research: Support



**DR MAHIPAL S SACHDEV**  
Padmashri Awardee  
Chairman & Medical Director Centre for Sight Group of Eye Hospitals

- healthcare innovation through research and development, leveraging technology to improve healthcare delivery and outcomes.
- Expand Public-Private Partnerships: Utilize under-utilized private healthcare capacity through schemes like Ayushman Bharat, especially in underserved areas.
- Improve Government Healthcare Facilities: Focus on enhancing existing government healthcare infrastructure and service provision.
- Rationalize Service Charges: Streamline reimbursement processes for private hospitals under schemes like CGHS, ensuring good quality care for beneficiaries.
- Simplify Compliance Processes: Simplify statutory compliance for hospitals, particularly for smaller setups, and develop frameworks recognizing day care and short-stay treatment services.
- Restore NEET Credibility: Ensure the credibility of NEET to maintain trust in the medical college entrance process and the quality of medical education.

## Surging AMR demands urgent action

The silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an urgent health priority, posing a significant threat to public health, food security, the environment, and the global economy. AMR arises from the excessive and irresponsible use of antibiotics, compounded by poor sanitation, inadequate diagnostics, and lack of regulation on over-the-counter antimicrobial availability. The National Action Plan to Combat AMR (NAPAMR), initiated in 2017, is currently under revision, with NAPAMR 2.0 in progress. The updated plan emphasizes a 'One Health' approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health to provide a comprehensive response. However, effective implementation demands robust efforts at both state and healthcare facility levels. Despite only five states having developed their State Action



**DR SANGEETA SHARMA**  
Professor & Head, Neuropsychopharmacology, IHBAS & President, DSPRUD, Delhi.

Plans (SAPs), there is an urgent need for nationwide enforcement. NAPAMR 2.0 must address the gaps identified in the initial plan, incorporating a triple shield strategy focused on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), Diagnostic Stewardship (DS), and Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS). IPC aims to reduce the spread of infections through stringent hygiene protocols, while DS ensures accurate and

timely diagnosis to avoid unnecessary antibiotic use. AMS promotes the responsible use of antibiotics, reducing the development of resistance and ensuring the effectiveness of treatments. As heatwaves sweep through a large number of pockets in India, the urgency of addressing AMR becomes even more pronounced. High temperatures can exacerbate health conditions, including those linked to AMR, highlighting the need for robust, climate-resilient healthcare strategies. To mitigate the impact of AMR, it is crucial to enhance policy frameworks, strengthen healthcare infrastructure, and promote education and awareness. Immediate and coordinated action is essential to combat this silent pandemic, safeguarding health and ensuring the sustainability of our antimicrobial resources for future generations.

## Prioritise prevention, support for cancer survivors, strengthen healthcare infrastructure

Only 1% of female cancer patients in India undergo cervical cancer screening, highlighting a significant gap in preventive healthcare. Comprehensive nationwide screening initiatives are necessary to raise awareness and accessibility. Hence, educating women about the importance of regular screenings and ensuring healthcare facilities is the need of the hour. Early Diagnosis and Treatment Advancements: Early diagnosis has led to an increase in cancer survivors. Emphasizing "prevention is better than cure" is crucial, advocating for regular health check-ups and awareness of available screening tests to detect cancers early when treatment outcomes are better. Support Systems for Cancer Survivors: There's a need for comprehensive support



**DR NEGI**  
Chief Executive Officer, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre (RGCIRC), Delhi

systems post-treatment. This includes access to quality healthcare services such as rehabilitation, mental health support, and survivorship programs. Enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life for cancer survivors requires sustained government support and healthcare infrastructure. Healthcare Coverage under Ayushman Bharat: Extending coverage to everyone above 70

years and potentially increasing coverage limits for critical illnesses like cancer is required. The current Rs. 5 lakh coverage is not adequate for extensive cancer treatments, which can cost significantly more. This adjustment would alleviate financial burdens on patients and their families during critical healthcare episodes. Expansion of Healthcare Infrastructure: The healthcare sector needs substantial government support to expand primary healthcare facilities, incentivize private sector participation, and increase the availability of healthcare professionals. This includes policies to boost healthcare expenditure to 2.5% of GDP, aligning with global healthcare standards and enhancing overall healthcare access and quality.

## Integrate Oral health in UHC



**DR MAHESH VERMA**  
Padmashri Awardee, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU), Delhi

Oral health has been significantly overlooked in India's National Health Policy (2017) and the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which currently only covers severe inpatient dental cases. This omission neglects a crucial component of overall health, as highlighted by the WHO in 2022, urging all countries to integrate oral health into their health policies. Oral diseases, are more prevalent than mental disorders, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancers combined. These cost approximately USD710 billion annually in treatment and productivity losses. Poor oral health also increases risks for NCDs. Hence, incorporate comprehensive oral health care Policy in the National Health Policy, making it an essential part of health services and Ayushman Bharat scheme to cover preventive and routine dental care. Because dental care is not covered under Ayushman Bharat, people avoid going doctors until they become life threatening. Integrate oral health into the government's 100 days programme, with clear, actionable steps.

## Invest funds in collaborative upstream discovery

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of drug development. Many drugs were quickly developed globally but were not readily available to developing countries, including India. This underscores the necessity of investing in our drug development capabilities to prepare for future viral pandemics. Drugs are the first line of treatment for saving lives before vaccines can be widely administered. A crucial aspect of preparedness includes supporting upstream R&D, such as discovery research to identify promising novel antivirals. This is vital for building a pipeline for future



**DR KAVITA SINGH**  
Director, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative, South Asia

viral pandemics. There is an urgent need to invest sustained funds into collaborative upstream discovery through our existing academia, research institutes, and their partners. This allows pooling of shared

resources, experience, and expertise, accelerating innovation in drug development. Policies encouraging innovative pooled financing mechanisms, engagement with multilateral development banks, funds under CSR, and contributions from the pharma/biotech industries are important for this risky venture. To effectively mentor drug discovery groups, a call from the government encouraging experts to contribute would significantly enhance our capabilities and ensure the success of these initiatives. Finally, prioritizing R&D through collaborative efforts is needed.

## Restore credibility of NEET, act against the culprits

The piousness and transparency of the NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) examination, a critical gateway for medical aspirants in India, has come under the shadow. It is facing numerous issues, including allegations of paper leaks and irregularities in results with so many toppers announced. This has led to a loss of trust among students and stakeholders. We want that confidence in the examination process is restored, fairness, and accountability of those responsible for the mishandling of the examination. One thing that is important is that there should be an unbiased committee which examine where the fault has occurred. NTA should be held responsible for the catastrophe it has caused in the NEET UG exams. Their clarification in each aspect is not doing justice to the dreams of 24 lakhs aspirants. Either they have yet not



**DR ROHAN KRISHNAN**  
Orthopaedic Surgeon, MAMC, Delhi  
Co-founder, Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA)

discovered their error which is sad , or they are trying to hide something which is more sad and pathetic. It is high time that DG of NTA should resign and take moral responsibility of the mayhem and chaos. We are talking about 1500 students who will be given the chance to reappear in the examinations, but not all those students who want to take re-exam and who believe that there has been some fault. We can give a chance to everyone who wants to re-appear and the best of the two marks will be considered for merit.

## Challenges in med education, healthcare and emergencies

There seems to be concern and legal challenges around a significant medical exam that young doctors must take. This is causing distress among students and parents alike. Resolving this issue promptly is crucial to alleviate anxiety and ensure fairness in the medical education system. It is without saying that there is the overwhelming presence of the private sector in healthcare (accounting for over 75%). Hence there is a need for stronger collaboration between the government and private entities. This partnership could improve healthcare access and quality, especially in underserved areas. There's criticism that the government healthcare infrastructure is not up to the mark, leading to the dominance of private healthcare providers. Auditing government expenditures on healthcare to set fair pricing benchmarks for the private sector, could promote transparency and



**DR AJAY SWAROOP**  
ENT, Chairman- Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

affordability. It is time that we are prepared for Covid-19 like health emergencies. This includes adequate infrastructure (such as oxygen supply and hospital beds) and healthcare personnel to handle crises effectively. Issues such as overcrowding and communication gaps between doctors and patients in government hospitals and private hospitals need to be addressed to curb growing violence among patients/medicos. There should be high-level committees or experts to propose policies to ensure equitable healthcare delivery.

## Volunteer docs for better healthcare

Anaemia is a significant public health challenge in India. Hence we would suggest the new Minister to announce a National Anemia Day. This will ensure that all efforts are concentrated towards eradicating anaemia and improving public health outcomes across India. Also, addressing thalassemia effectively requires making it a notifiable disease so that by raising awareness, identifying hotspots, and promoting early detection and prevention, we can significantly reduce the prevalence of thalassemia in India. Our goal is to ensure that by 2030, India moves towards being free of



**DR RAHUL BHARGAVA**  
Principal Director & Chief of BMT, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram

thalassemia, improving the quality of life for future generations. At least one BMT Centre should be set up in the government hospital in each state. Here I would also suggest the new Minister to

consider inviting volunteer doctors from private sector for government healthcare projects which can have numerous benefits. Many rural and underserved areas in India lack access to specialist care. Volunteer doctors can fill this gap by providing essential medical services, including surgeries, consultations, and diagnostic care, which may otherwise be unavailable. Experienced volunteer doctors can train and mentor local healthcare staff, enhancing their skills and knowledge. This can lead to long-term improvements in healthcare quality and patient outcomes.

## Enhance med edu, access, and ethics



**DR DS RANA**  
Nephrologist, Chairman-Sir Ganga Ram Trust Society, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

Medical education standards and the quality of doctors must be prioritized. Among these, it's crucial to emphasize the significance of medical educators finding their profession attractive and fulfilling. However, when selecting individuals for teaching positions, there should be no compromises. Only the most competent and dedicated educators should be chosen, as the quality of teachers directly influences the caliber of students they produce. \*Doctors from both private and public sectors should provide medical assistance in rural areas. This can enhance healthcare access and quality, ensuring that comprehensive medical expertise reaches underserved communities, including quick emergency response and ambulance availability, is crucial, even in rural areas. \*The medical framework operates on an undeniable foundation. Despite the perception that all patients seeking medical care are being taken advantage of, only 5 percent actually encounter such exploitation. Whereas, The majority of doctors strive to save and improve patient health.



**MYLSWAMY ANNADURAI**  
Former Director of ISRO known as 'Moon Man of India'

most remote parts of the country. Also, India's reliance on imported medical equipment poses challenges, including higher costs and supply chain vulnerabilities. To address this, there is a need for closer collaboration between Indian medical practitioners and technologists to develop cost-effective, indigenous medical solutions. By focusing on research and development within the country, India can produce affordable and innovative medical equipment tailored to its-specific needs, reducing dependence on imports.



# BANGLADESH LOOK TO SEAL SUPER 8 SPOT IN CLASH AGAINST NEPAL

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN (ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES)

Bangladesh will look to iron out their flaws and seal the second Super Eight spot from Group D when they take on a tricky Nepal in the T20 World Cup here on Monday.

With four points, Bangladesh are all set to progress further in the tournament from the last group in the competition but a spirited Nepal will pose a strong threat.

Even though they have not yet won a game and are out of race for the next round, Nepal's confidence will be sky high after they nearly pulled off a win against South Africa and will be keen on fulfilling their dream of beating a Test-playing nation before signing off.

The equation for Bangladesh, however, could change if they lose to Nepal by a big margin and the Netherlands manage to do the same against a struggling Sri Lanka - an unlikely scenario indeed but this tournament has thrown its share of surprises.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Bangladesh:** Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Taskin Ahmed, Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib Al Hasan, Tawhid Hridoy, Mahmud Ullah Riyad, Jaker Ali Anik, Tanvir Islam, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib. Travelling reserves: Afif Hossain, Hasan Mahmud.  
**Nepal:** Rohit Paudel (c), Aasif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee.  
**Match starts at 5:00AM IST.**

**SRI LANKA LOOK TO SIGN OFF ON A HIGH:** Gros Islet (St Lucia): Wary of the Dutch firepower and current form, the 2014 champions Sri Lanka, who are placed fifth in Group D, will take on the third-placed Netherlands. Already out of reckoning for the



Super Eight round, Sri Lanka's pride will be at stake given they have had a tournament to forget, marred with multiple issues on and off the field. For the Scott Edwards-led Netherlands team, there will be a

great deal of motivation to bring out their best and hope for a big win as well as luck to favour them. Netherlands have notched wins in two out of three games in this tournament yet they find

themselves nearly eliminated in a tight Group D, from which South Africa have already sailed through.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Sri Lanka:** Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis

(wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunieth Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka.  
**Netherlands:** Scott Edwards (c&wk), Aryan Dutt, Bas de Leede, Daniel Doram, Fred Klaassen, Logan van Beek, Max O'Dowd, Michael Levitt, Paul van Meekeren, Sybrand Engelbrecht, Teja Nidamanuru, Tim Pringle, Vikram Singh, Viv Kingma, Wesley Barresi.  
**Match starts at 6:00AM IST.**

**NEW ZEALAND EYE CONSOLATORY WIN OVER PNG:** Tarouba (Trinidad and Tobago): A consolatory win over a lowly Papua New Guinea would be the best that the New Zealand can walk away with in this T20 World Cup, with curtains coming down on their campaign prematurely. For a team as consistent as New Zealand in ICC tournaments, the

Kiwis have paid a heavy price for being sluggish at the start as a couple of defeats upfront led to their surprisingly early exit.

The game will, however, carry a massive significance for the Kiwi group as Trent Boult has confirmed this is his last T20 World Cup for the country and the Kane Williamson-led side will be motivated to give their best against PNG, who have lost each of their three matches so far.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (c), Finn Allen, Trent Boult, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway (wk), Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee.  
**Papua New Guinea:** Assadollah Vala (c), Alei Nao, Chad Soper, CJ Amini, Hila Vare, Hiri Hiri, Jack Gardner, John Kariko, Kabua Vagi Morea, Kipling Doriga (wk), Lega Siaka, Norman Vanua, Sema Kamea, Sese Bau, Tony Ura.

## Australia crush Scotland by 5 wickets



PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

Australia did their arch-rivals England a massive favour with a five-wicket win over a gritty Scotland as the Richie Berrington-led side crashed out of the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage race here.

With England hammering Namibia earlier in the day in a rain-truncated game, all that Jos Buttler's side needed was Australia's win over Scotland to get a lifeline.

Australia scored 186/5 while chasing 181 in 19.4 overs after Scotland fought right until the end to keep their hopes alive. After putting on a formidable total on board, Scotland had even reduced an edgy Australia to 60/3 at one stage but their most successful batters in this World Cup - Travis Head (68) and Marcus Stoinis (59) - delivered again.

"We spoke about sticking to our plans. Scotland are a good team, they have improved a lot and we certainly want to respect them," Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh said after the win.

"We just wanted to stay

consistent and if we fail, we fail our way. Whenever our team is challenged, it brings the best out of us. Today we were challenged and it was a good experience and a good game of cricket. We start fresh now," he added.

With Australia's chase appearing to be falling apart, the in-from Head and Stoinis joined forces to bring them back in the game.

On a wicket where batters could swing their willows without fretting much over the pace or movement off the surface, the two seasoned campaigners put the Scottish resolve to a stern test with a sturdy 80-run association for the third wicket off only 44 balls.

Head smacked four sixes and five fours to top score with 68 off a mere 49 balls but Stoinis was more aggressive, cracking nine fours and two sixes to make a quickfire 59 from a mere 29 balls.

But before that, there were some nervous moments for the former champions when David Warner (1) was removed from the equation early, skipper Mitchell Marsh



failed to impose himself, and Glenn Maxwell's torrid run with the bat continued. Maxwell was done in by one from Mark Watt that straightened enough to beat his bat and crash into the top of the off-stump, extending the all-rounder's struggles further with the bat, even though he claimed two wickets in the first half.

"I think the guys can hold their head high. We played some really good cricket throughout the tournament. It was a great learning for us. Obviously, we are a bit disappointed given the position we were in. We came here to qualify but couldn't do that," Scotland captain Berrington said.

Earlier, Scotland put their best foot forward in terms of setting a formidable total against the heavyweights, finishing at 180 for five after being asked to bat first.

Australia had expectedly rested some of their frontline pacers and their absence was felt with the others not producing as much impact and control as their first-choice bowling attack can.

Brandon McMullen was the star with the bat for the Scots as he took on the Australian bowling, hitting six sixes and two fours to race to 60 from a mere 34 balls and set up a strong platform for his side following an early blow.

Aston Agar had cleaned up opener Michael Jones for two in the first over but the pair of McMullen and George Munsey produced an excellent recovery for Scotland, putting on 89 runs for the second wicket in a mere 48 balls.

If McMullen was more belligerent of the two, Munsey played his part well with a 23-ball 35, which was studded with three sixes and a couple of fours.

After the pair was separated, Scotland skipper Richie Berrington took charge of taking his side forward as he forged multiple crucial stands with the following batters to take them to 180.

Berrington made 42 not out from 31 balls with two sixes and a four to keep pushing on for the Scots, even as Australia looked to pull things back in the last five overs, conceding 42 runs.

## No concerns about Kohli's form, couple of dismissals will not change anything: Rathour



PTI ■ LAUDERHILL (FLORIDA)

Virat Kohli's string of single digit scores in the ongoing T20 World Cup is hardly a concern as he has been in superb touch during nets and is looking hungrier than ever ahead of the Super Eight, India's batting coach Vikram Rathour said.

Kohli, who was the highest run-scorer in the IPL, went through a dry run so far scoring 1, 4 and 0 against Ireland, Pakistan and USA respectively.

The moment the question popped up at the post-match media conference after the game against Canada got washed out on Saturday, Rathour was ready with the answer.

"I love it when every time I come there is a question about Virat Kohli, whether he is doing well or not. No concern at all, no concern at all," Rathour said.

"He (Kohli) has been batting

superbly from the tournament that he came from (IPL). Couple of dismissals here, doesn't change anything, he is batting really well."

Rathour is confident that India's No. 1 batter would come good when it matters the most.

"Actually, it's good that he is a little hungrier, he is really keen to do well and really switched on. It's a good space to be as a batsman, I think."

"Looking forward to some good games and we've watched some good innings from him."

The batting coach sidestepped the query about whether playing four all-rounders, including Shivam Dube and Axar Patel, is cast in stone or not.

"Again, we need to be a flexible team. We need to look at the conditions that are in front of us and be ready to deal with those. So as a team, we are going to be really flexible, I think."

"We'll react to what (conditions) we get on the day. We have enough sources in our team to deal with any kind of conditions," he said.

Some game time in Florida ahead of Super Eights would have surely helped, he said.

"But if the game had happened that would have really helped us. We were really looking forward to playing a game, to play a good game of cricket. There's always a concern when you play a game in conditions like this that some injury can happen."



## Italy concedes goal after 23 seconds but recovers to beat Albania 2-1 at Euro 2024

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)

By conceding a goal after just 23 seconds, Italy made the worst possible start to its European Championship title defense.

Thankfully for the Azzurri, it soon got much better.

Italy recovered from letting in the quickest goal in the tournament's 64-year history to beat Albania 2-1 in Dortmund on Saturday in an atmospheric Adriatic derby that immediately threatened an upset.

Nedim Bajrami thrilled a heavily pro-Albanian crowd at Westfalenstadion by pouncing on a throw-in by Italy left back Federico Dimarco that failed to reach teammate Alessandro Bastoni, before taking a touch and smashing a rising shot inside the near post.

Within 16 minutes, the Italians were ahead as Bastoni headed in Lorenzo Pellegrini's cross to the back post in the 11th then Nicolo Barella struck home a swerving first-time shot from the edge of the area.

Barella was one of five survivors from the team that started for Italy in the penalty-shootout win over England in the 2021 European Championship final.

The pressure was on Italy's new-look side under Luciano Spalletti to win its opener given the other teams in Group B are three-time champion Spain and Croatia, a World Cup semifinalist in 2022. Spain beat Croatia 3-0 earlier Saturday.

Bajrami's goal gave the Azzurri a jolt and created some history - it was much quicker than the previous fastest in the tournament's lifespan, which was 67 seconds by Russia's Dmitri Kirichenko in 2004.

Yet they controlled the game after that, dominating possession to a backdrop of jeers and boos from a sea of Albanian red in the crowd.

"They showed there was a gulf in class by playing good football ... we played the game the right way," Spalletti said.

"The scoreline doesn't reflect the difference between the two teams."

It's now just one loss in 12 matches under Spalletti, who took over last August - three months after leaving Napoli following its Italian league triumph - and was tasked with restoring national pride after Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for a second straight time.

Italy is clearly more at home in the European Championship these days as it goes for a record-tying third title.

Making its second appearance at a European Championship, Albania - coached by former Barcelona and Arsenal defender Sylvinho - nearly grabbed a draw in stoppage time only for Rey Manaj's deft chip to deflect just wide off the back of Gianluigi Donnarumma, Italy's goalkeeper and captain.

"We need to play in lots of Euros and World Cups so we can get better," Sylvinho said. "The first 25 minutes were tough but we were up against one of the favorites to win the comp."

"We didn't play those first 25 minutes well but we stayed in the game."

Euro 2024 has gotten off to a fast start.

Saturday started with Switzerland beating Hungary 3-1 in Cologne and that, after host Germany's opening-night 5-1 thrashing of Scotland on Friday, means there has been 16 goals so far - an average of four a game.

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Bishweshwar Nandi, a recipient of the prestigious Dronacharya award for outstanding contribution to gymnastics, is pinning hopes on Tripura's gymnasts to shine on the global stage.

Nandi is also the coach of top gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who had finished fourth in the vault final at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

"Tripura has great prospects in gymnastics... Six to seven girls are showing potential to perform well not even at the national level but also on the global stage. Gymnastics is a highly competitive, injury prone and technical game. Proper guidance from the coach is very important," Nandi told PTI.

## Tripura has great prospects in gymnastics: Nandi

He lauded the state government for providing good facilities at the Netaji Subhash Regional Coaching Centre (NSRCC) here for development of gymnastics.

"During the rigorous training, boys and girls develop injuries, which is a major concern in this sport. The coach needs to walk the extra mile to ensure that the gymnasts remain physically fit," Nandi said.

The award-winning coach said he is "in search of a second Dipa", which would become a reality "when proper coaching and environment meet at one point".

Asserting that Dipa shattered many



myths surrounding Indian gymnastics, Nandi said gymnasts from Odisha, Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and a few southern states are also performing well.

Dipa, hailing from Tripura, recently became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the Asian Senior Championships, after she clinched the yellow metal in the women's vault event in Tashkent.

"As I said, providing proper guidance to budding gymnasts is the most important duty of coaches in order to make them perform well at global tournaments," he said.

## Kylian Mbappé and France aim to start with a win

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

World Cup runner-up France is one of the favourites for Euro 2024 and starts its campaign Monday in Dusseldorf against Austria.

Poland and the Netherlands are the other teams in Group D. Kickoff is at 9 pm local time (1900 GMT). Here's what to know about the match:

**MATCH FACTS:** France had a strong 2023 with eight wins from 10 games and only one loss, to Germany. Four games this year have already included a 2-0 loss - again to

Germany - in a March friendly and a 0-0 draw with Canada last week in France's last game before Euro 2024.

France's players have been speaking out on politics ahead of upcoming elections, with forward Marcus Thuram calling on French people to "fight daily" to keep the far right out of power. Teammate Ousmane Dembélé urged people to vote ahead of the first round of elections on June 30.

Coach Ralf Rangnick has revitalized Austria since taking over in 2022 and

turned down Bayern Munich to stay with the team.

Austria comes into Euro 2024 on a seven-game unbeaten run with just three goals conceded during that time. A 2-0 win over Germany in November and a 6-1 demolition of Turkey in March were the highlights.

**TEAM NEWS:** France midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni hasn't played since he missed Real Madrid's Champions League final with a foot injury. N'Golo Kanté played the defensive midfield role in France's two pre-

tournament friendlies, his first international games since 2022.

Austria trained at full strength Friday in Berlin except for defender Gernot Trauner. Coach Ralf Rangnick said he was being rested but wasn't injured.

Attacking midfielder Christoph Baumgartner says Austria's attacking players will focus on helping out their defence by trying to put Kylian Mbappé and Dembélé under pressure.

**BY THE NUMBERS:** Mbappé is on course to play

his 80th game for France and a hat trick would take him to 50 career international goals.

Mbappé scored in France's last two games against Austria, a 1-1 draw and a 2-0 win, both in 2022.

Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann will be only the fourth French player to make 130 international appearances if he plays against Austria.

Austria midfielder Christoph Baumgartner has scored in each of the team's last five games.

Germany is familiar territory

for Austria's players. Eight of the starting line-up for its 1-1 friendly draw against Switzerland last week play for German clubs.

**WHAT THEY'RE SAYING:** "In just one week he reminded us all why he was one of the best midfielders in the world and we are very happy to have him with us." - France forward Marcus Thuram on teammate N'Golo Kanté's form after nearly two years away from the team.

"Now, there's a very special tingling feeling once again, of course."

**NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER**

No.E-507204/3

The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from PWD (Bldg) registered appropriate class of contractor for 3 building works in different schools as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website <https://www.assamtenders.gov.in>.

The last date of submission of tender is 09-07-2024 upto 2:00 PM.



Sd/-Mission Director,  
Samagra Shiksha Axom  
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/271/24/17-Jun-24