



**OPINION 6**  
INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY  
UNDER MODI 3.0

**WORLD 9**  
RUSSIA, N KOREA SIGN STRONGEST  
DEAL SINCE COLD WAR

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX EXTENDS GAIN  
FOR FIFTH DAY

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY JUNE 20, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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TO SHINE ON  
BIG STAGE  
12 SPORTS

# Modi 3.0 bonanza for farmers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In its first Cabinet meeting after assuming the third consecutive term, the Modi Government 3.0 on Wednesday raised the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by 5.35 per cent to ₹2,300 per quintal for the 2024-25 kharif marketing season. The MSP for 'common' grade paddy has been raised ₹117 to ₹2,300 per quintal, while for the 'A' grade variety it has been hiked to ₹2,320 per quintal for the upcoming Kharif season. The highest absolute increase in MSP over the previous year has been recommended for oilseeds and pulses viz nigerseed (₹983/- per quintal) followed by sesamum (₹632/- per quintal) and tur/arhar (₹550/- per quintal). The Union Cabinet has increased the MSP for all 14 crops, including paddy, ragi, bajra, jowar, maize and cotton which will have a financial implication of ₹two lakh crore for the Government and entail gain of ₹35,000 crore to farmers over the previous season. Announcing the MSP increase, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Cabinet has approved the minimum support prices for 14 Kharif (summer) crops based on recommendations from the Commission for



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw speaks during a Cabinet briefing on Wednesday

PTI

Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The MSP for Jowar has been increased by ₹191 per quintal from ₹3,180 to ₹3,371 per quintal. The MSP for Bajra has been increased to 125 per quintal from ₹2,500 to ₹2,625 per quintal; Ragi by 444 from ₹3,846 to ₹4,290 per quintal and Maize by ₹135 from ₹2,090 to ₹2,225 per quintal. The MSP for tur/arhar also increased by ₹550 from ₹7,000 to 7,550 per quintal; Moong by 124 from ₹8,558 per quintal to ₹8,682 per quintal; Urad by ₹450 from ₹6,950 to ₹7,400; Groundnut by ₹406 from ₹6,377 to 6,783 per quintal and Sunflower Seed by ₹520 from ₹6,760 to ₹7,280 per quintal. The hike in paddy support price comes despite the Government sitting on surplus rice stocks, but it is

significant ahead of elections in states like Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Delhi. "The increase in MSP for Kharif crops for marketing season 2024-25 is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all-India weighted average cost of production. The expected margin to farmers over their cost of production are estimated to be highest in case of bajra (77per cent) followed by tur (59 per cent), maize (54 per cent) and urad (52 per cent). For rest of the crops, margin to farmers over their cost of production is estimated to be at 50 per cent," the Ministry of Agriculture said in a statement. Vaishnaw said the Government had a clear

## ₹ 2,870 cr development plan for Varanasi airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday approved a development plan worth Rs 2,869.65 crore for the Varanasi airport that will entail constructing a new terminal building, extending the runway and expanding the total annual passenger handling capacity to 9.9 million passengers per annum. The Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport at Varanasi, the Lok Sabha constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, can currently handle 3.3 million passengers per annum. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Modi, cleared the proposal by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the development of the airport, including construction of the new terminal building, apron and runway extension, parallel taxi track and allied works. "The estimated financial outgo will be Rs 2,869.65 crore for enhancing the passenger handling capacity of the airport to 9.9 million passengers per annum (MPPA) from the existing 3.9 MPPA. "The new terminal building, which encompasses an area of 75,000 sqm is designed for a capacity of 6 MPPA and for handling 5,000 Peak Hour Passengers (PHP)," an official release said. As part of the development plan, the dimensions of the runway will be extended to 4,075 m x 45 m and a new apron will be constructed to park 20 aircraft. Further, the airport will be developed with focus on environmental sustainability through energy optimisation, waste recycling, carbon footprint reduction, solar energy utilisation, and incorporation of natural daylighting.

policy decision taken in the 2018 Union Budget that MSP should be at least 1.5 times the cost of production, and this principle was followed in the latest MSP hike. The cost was scientifically calculated by CACP, he added. The Food Corporation of

India currently holds a record stockpile of around 53.4 million tonnes of rice, which is four times the required buffer for July 1 and sufficient to meet demand under welfare schemes for one year without any fresh

Continued on Page 8

# Monsoon off to a slow start

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 2024 monsoon season in India is off to a slow start, characterised by delayed progress and uneven rainfall distribution across the country with the India Meteorological Department saying the country will witness below-normal monsoon rainfall in June this year. This is likely to impact agricultural yields and food security, especially the Kharif crop, given that it is largely sown in June and July. While southern and some northeastern regions may see normal to above-normal rains, many areas in northwest and Central India face significant shortages. With at least 52 per cent of India's cultivated area relying on monsoon rains, the implications for agriculture are considerable. The monsoon is also crucial for replenishing water reservoirs, which are essential for drinking water and power generation. In an update on the arrival of monsoons in the country, the IMD on Wednesday said, "The average June rainfall for the country as a whole is most likely to be below normal, i.e. less than 92 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA)." Amid blistering weather being reported from parts of India



People use scarfs to shield themselves from the hot sun on Wednesday

Pioneer

since March, the country has received 20 per cent deficient rains since the southwest monsoon set in over Kerala on May 30, with the rain-bearing system making no significant progress between June 12 and 18, the weather department said.

However, conditions are now favourable for further advancement of the monsoon into parts of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, northwest Bay of Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand over the next three to four days, it said. "India received 64.5 mm of

rainfall between June 1 and 18 which is 20 per cent less than the long-period average (LPA) of 80.6 mm," it said. Since June 1, northwest India has recorded 10.2 mm of rainfall (70 per cent less than normal), central India 50.5 mm (31 per cent less than normal), the south peninsula 106.6 mm (16 per cent more than normal), and east and northeast India 146.7 mm (15 per cent less than normal). Meanwhile, normal to above-normal rainfall was expected in most areas of the southern peninsula and some parts of

Continued on Page 8

## India-Canada ties hit new low over Nijjar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/OTTAWA

Even as Canada's Parliament marked the first anniversary of slain Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar's death by holding a moment of silence in the House of Commons on Tuesday, India reminded the world of the Kanishka bombing in 1985, the most heinous terror-related air disasters in the history of civil aviation. Nijjar was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, on June 18 last year. Canadian police have arrested four Indian nationals in connection with the murder. Diplomatic ties remain frosty between the two countries over anti-India activities being carried out from the soil of Canada and alleged



involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar, a Canadian citizen.

"India stands at the forefront of battle against the menace of terrorism and works closely with all nations to tackle this global threat," India's Consulate General in Vancouver said as it reminded the world of the Kanishka bombing, the most heinous terror-related air disaster in the history of civil aviation.

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

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

The Consulate General of India has planned a memorial service to mark the anniversary of the bombing. "India stands at the forefront of countering the menace of terrorism and works closely with all nations to tackle this global threat," the Consulate General of India in Vancouver posted a social media message later Tuesday.

Continued on Page 8



## Setback for Kejriwal as court rejects bail plea

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The judge hearing Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's bail petition extended his judicial custody till July 3. On Wednesday, he was produced before the court through video conference on expiry of his judicial custody granted earlier. The counsel appearing for Kejriwal opposed the ED's application seeking extension of his judicial custody, saying there were no grounds to justify his continued incarceration. Opposing the bail application of Kejriwal, the Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday claimed that Kejriwal demanded ₹100 crore bribe from the South Group for his party in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. The ED told the court that if AAP, which has been arrayed as an accused in the case, the person in charge of the party will be held culpable. The ED told the court that when former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was made an accused in the case, the AAP was not named as an accused. "Kejriwal demanded bribe. He asked for bribe of ₹100 crore. Kejriwal asked for funds for the AAP. Kejriwal demanded kickbacks from South Group. You can't say he is not guilty of offence. If AAP commits a crime, then every person in charge of the party will be deemed to be guilty," the ED told Special Judge Niyay Bindu. "Now AAP has been made an accused. Kejriwal is responsible for the conduct (of the party)," it added. Kejriwal is the National Convenor of AAP.

Continued on Page 8

## MP's daughter runs car over sleeping man

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Daughter of a Rajya Sabha member was arrested by the Chennai Police on Tuesday morning in connection with the death of a painter who was sleeping on the pavement. On Monday night Beeda Madhuri (33), daughter of Rajya Sabha MP and former Kavali (Nellore) MLA Beeda Masthan Rao, was driving her BMW car accompanied by her friend and ran over Satish who was lying on the pavement. Masthan Rao belongs to YSR Congress. According to police, the deceased was under the influence of alcohol. Maduri arranged for shifting the grievously injured Satish to hospital and drove away. But he succumbed to injuries late Monday night and this gave rise to massive protest by the residents of the locality, most of them belonging to the working class. Maduri on being informed about the death of Satish, surrendered before the traffic investigation wing of Chennai Police and she was charged under Section 304 (A) of the Indian Penal Code , for causing death by negligence. Section 304 (A) carries with of punishment of imprisonment for two years or fine or both and is a



Cops at the accident site in Chennai

cognisable and bailable offence which could be triable by the magistrate of the first class. She was let off on bail. Though the locals alleged that she was under the influence of alcohol, the police refuted the same and said there was nothing to suggest that the lady had consumed alcohol. But they were not forthcoming when asked whether her blood sample has been collected and sent for testing.



## Two BJP workers killed by TMC in West Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The post poll violence continued in Bengal unabated leaving two BJP workers dead in the past 24 hours, sources said. Gaur Hari Maity of Arjun Nagar in Bhagwanpur village under Bhupatinagar Police Station was beaten to death by alleged TMC goons, his family members said. "Local TMC men had come looking for Shashanka Maity the son of Gaur Hari but getting the wind of it he fled the home... when they could not find him they abducted his father Gaur Hari and took him to an unknown destination where he was beaten to death," locals said. The area falls under Kanthi Lok Sabha constituency from where BJP candidate Dibyendu Adhikari won in the recently concluded general elections. "The deceased was taken to the hospital where he was declared 'brought dead'," a district level police officer said adding the "police have started investigations."

Continued on Page 8

## Two terrorists killed ahead of Modi's Srinagar visit

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In course of the security forces' drive to sanitise Jammu and Kashmir ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Srinagar visit for this year's International Yoga Day function on June 21, two terrorists were gunned down in the Hadipora area of PD Sopore in North Kashmir's Baramulla district. Two security personnel, including one Army jawan, also received injuries during the operation. Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Police have declared Srinagar city as a temporary 'red zone', and banned the operation of drones ahead of PM's visit. This will be Modi's first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after being sworn in as the Prime Minister for the third time. Till the time of filing of this report, the identity of the slain terrorists could not be ascertained as the security forces were still conducting searches in the area and were yet to retrieve the bodies of the slain terrorists from the encounter site. Chinar Corps, in a post on X, stated that the operation was



Security forces personnel during an encounter with militants, in Hadipora, Baramulla

PTI

conducted on receipt of specific information about the presence of terrorists in the area. "On specific intelligence input regarding the presence of terrorists, a Joint operation was launched by the Indian Army and Jammu and Kashmir police on Wednesday in the Hadipora area of PD Sopore; two terrorists were eliminated; the operation is still in progress." Meanwhile, in a significant development, the Jammu and Kashmir police have arrested

one person for harbouring terrorists behind the terror attack on a pilgrim bus in Reasi on June 9. Addressing a press conference in Reasi SSP Mohita Sharma said, "A breakthrough has been achieved in the case of the terrorist attack on the pilgrim bus which was coming from Shiv Khori on 9th June. In this case, one accompish of the Reasi terrorists identified as Hakam, 45, has been arrested by the J&K Police at Reasi. Continued on Page 8



# Akbarnagar: Over 1,200 illegal structures razed



A view of Akbarnagar where the demolition drive was completed on Wednesday

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PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The demolition work of illegal buildings on the river bed of Kukrail river in Akbarnagar has been completed, officials of the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) on Wednesday said. Around 1,169 illegal residential properties and over 100 commercial properties were demolished using heavy machinery,

including bulldozers, they said. The demolition work to vacate the illegal encroachment over an area of 24.5 acre land began in December last year. Over 1,320 illegal structures, including the religious places of both Hindu and Muslim communities, have been demolished in the area. The LDA officials said that around 100 buildings were demolished on Tuesday and

added the work of clearing the debris will be undertaken now. The families living in Akbarnagar who lost their houses have been provided alternate accommodation under the PM Awas Yojna in other part of the city. Over 1,800 families of Akbarnagar have received the accommodation. The state government has proposed to develop an eco-tourism hub in the area.

# Four traffic cops suspended for extortion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Four traffic police personnel were suspended in Lucknow late Tuesday night for their alleged involvement in extortion from auto, taxi, and bus drivers. The suspended officers include traffic police sub-inspector Umesh Singh, and constables Shubham Kumar, Vivek Vishal Dubey & Sachin Kumar. The suspensions followed multiple complaints about these officers harassing

and extorting money from drivers. A senior police officer stated that the four traffic police personnel were deployed at Kamta trisection and Vibhutikhand areas, where they regularly stopped vehicles, including buses, and extorted money from the owners and drivers. Upon receiving complaints from bus and car drivers, a confidential investigation was conducted by the joint commissioner of police (law and order).

“Upon finding the allegations to be prima facie true, orders were issued for the suspension of Umesh Singh, Shubham Kumar, Vivek Vishal Dubey, and Sachin Kumar. Additionally, instructions were given to register FIRs against these four personnel at the Vibhuti Khand police station,” added the officer. Sufficient audio and video evidence was provided by the complainants to substantiate their allegations. Extortion

from vehicle drivers is a common issue in the area, which sees high passenger volumes as it is the hub of several government offices. A large number of passengers travel from the polytechnic crossing and Kamta trisection for short to long distances. A few years ago, a similar action was initiated against a gang, in cahoots with the traffic and civil police, that extorted money from drivers. That action was directed by senior

officials and closely monitored to ensure strict measures against the miscreants, who were later arrested. However, the extortion did not completely stop. It lessened at the polytechnic crossing but increased in other areas. The high number of passengers travelling to and from Kamta to eastern locations in UP provides a lucrative opportunity for drivers, which some traffic policemen exploit,” sources said.

# Class XII girl student electrocuted, critical

Lucknow (PNS): A Class XII girl student from an institute in Bakshi-Ka-Talab police station area sustained severe burns on June 16 after coming into contact with a high-tension power line while plucking mangoes on the campus. The student, said to be in a critical condition, is under treatment at Civil hospital. On Tuesday, her brother Adarsh Singh filed a complaint against institute owners Omkar Yadav & Abhishek Yadav, and managing director Ratna Singh. The 19-year-old victim, Purnima Singh of Mahingwa, is a student of Kumhrawan Inter College and is pursuing a computer diploma at GCRG Institute under Deen Dayal Vikas Yojana. According to Adarsh, he received a call from the institute at 5:30 pm on Sunday informing him that his sister had been admitted to Civil hospital due to injuries from an electric shock. Institute manager Balvinder

explained that a high-tension power line runs above the mango trees on the campus. On Sunday, while plucking mangoes with an iron rod, it touched the high-tension line, causing Purnima to get electrocuted. Adarsh accused the institute of negligence. He stated that his sister needed a ventilator, but he could not afford the medical bills. “The institute is not willing to listen to us or help,” he alleged. Adarsh further alleged that the warden was asleep during the incident and that the institute had never requested the power corporation to relocate the high-tension line. SDO (Itaunja) Rajkumar Yadav confirmed that the institute receives power from the Kathwara sub-station. “If a request to shift the high-tension line had been made, it would have been removed. The matter is currently under investigation,” he said.



First Chairman of UP Real Estate Appellate Tribunal Justice Devendra Kumar Arora retired on Wednesday. Member (Administrative) of UP Real Estate Appellate Tribunal Rameshwar Singh congratulated the retiring chairman on his illustrious career in the judiciary. Justice Devendra Kumar Arora was appointed as the first Chairman of UP Real Estate Appellate Tribunal on June 20, 2019 after its notification of on March 30, 2019. The farewell ceremony was held at UP REAT office at Indira Bhawan in Lucknow.

# Youth who stole ornaments held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the recent case of theft at a jeweller's shop in Bhoothnath Market, Indira Nagar, a young man from Kanpur was arrested on Wednesday. The accused, Fahim Ahmed from Kidwai Nagar, is the son of a prominent baker in Kanpur. On the fateful day, he and his sister visited Lucknow as she had to take the UPSC exam. According to the police, Fahim went to the shop to pass the time but succumbed to greed upon seeing the glittering gold ornaments and planned to steal them. He parked his car near Panchwati Park and entered the air-conditioned

jewellery shop to escape the scorching heat. There, he devised a plan to trick the shopowner and steal the ornaments. Fahim asked the shopowner, Siddharth Rastogi, to show him some ornaments. He selected two gold chains and two gold bracelets and told Siddharth he would pay online after receiving money in his e-wallet, pretending to talk to his family on his mobile phone. CCTV footage showed him standing up with his phone to his ear before suddenly running out of the shop. Siddharth raised an alarm and ran after him, with fellow shopowners joining the chase. Fahim jumped a low-height boundary wall in a park and disappeared. DCP (North) Abhijeet R Shankar stated that Fahim went to a shop in Laxmanpuri

Lane, where he hid for some time, pretending to be a customer, before booking a cab to return to his car. The police obtained a lead after scanning the CCTV footage. They contacted the cab driver, obtained Fahim's mobile number, and traced his location using his car's registration number. Fahim was arrested at his address in Kanpur. According to the police, Fahim confessed to his crime, explaining that he had visited Lucknow to drop off his sister for her exam. Thereafter, he went to Bhoothnath Market to pass the time, but greed got the better of him. After committing the crime, he picked up his sister from the exam centre and quietly drove back to Kanpur. The DCP said it was Fahim's first crime, according to preliminary investigations.

# Youth opens fire on friend's acquaintance over petty issue

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth allegedly shot at his friend's acquaintance over a petty issue in Gomti Nagar on Sunday night. A case of attempt to murder was registered on Tuesday against the accused and his two accomplices, and the police are actively searching for them. The victim, Shivam Chauhan of Vastu Khand, suffered a bullet injury to his thigh and received treatment at RML Hospital. According to reports, Shivam had gone to visit his friend Utkarsh Saxena at the latter's residence in Amrapali Awadh Apartment, Indira Nagar, to celebrate their friend Aquib's birthday. Around 12:15 am on Monday, Utkarsh received a call from his friend Udit Sarraf of Faizabad, who informed him that it was also his birthday. Utkarsh invited Udit to join them. Around 2 am, the group went

out and reached Fun Republic Mall in Gomti Nagar. On the way, Shivam put on Udit's goggles as a friendly gesture. However, known to be snobbish, Udit did not appreciate this and demanded his goggles back. When Shivam said he would return them later, Udit became irate and started abusing Shivam. Udit and his aides then started beating Shivam. Utkarsh intervened to stop the fight. In the midst of the altercation, Udit pulled out a pistol and fired at Shivam three to four times. One bullet hit Shivam's thigh while the others missed the target. The accused fled the scene. Utkarsh took Shivam to the hospital and Shivam later filed a complaint with police. A police spokesperson said that a case for attempted murder under Section 307 of the IPC and other charges had been registered and that the accused were being tracked

down. Meanwhile, a 50-year-old man died in a freak incident in Nigoha on Tuesday night. Ranjeet Yadav of Mastipur village in Nigoha was sitting at the gate of his house when a car from Rae Bareilly lost control and hit him. He was rushed to the Trauma Centre II at SGPGI where he succumbed to injuries. In another incident, a 54-year-old man was found dead at his rented accommodation in Gomti Nagar on Wednesday. Reports said that Ram Bahadur, originally from Ambedkar Nagar district and employed as a tiler, resided in a tin-shed room on the first floor of a house in Chhoti Jugauli. Landlord Atul noticed a foul smell emanating from the room and found Ram Bahadur's body in a swollen state. He informed police. It is suspected that he might have succumbed to the excessive heat.

# BSP leader joins RLD

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party's Bprominent Muslim leader Izhar Ahmed Shah on Wednesday joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal. Shah was given the primary membership of the RLD by Union Minister of State with independent charge and RLD national president Jayant Chaudhary at the party office in Delhi. RLD national secretary Anupma Mishra pointed out that Shah comes from a prominent political family which has always been at the centre stage of politics in Bahrach and Devipatan divisions for many decades. He said Izhar Ahmed Shah had been in active politics since 2006 and had contested elections from Matera Vidhan Sabha constituency in Bahrach on a BSP ticket and had also held many important positions in the Bahujan Samaj Party till he said goodbye to Mayawati. Mishra said Shah not only

had a mass base in that area but he could carve out a new vote base for the RLD due to his strong hold in his constituency. Political analysts said Shah's joining the RLD may cause heavy loss to the BSP in that area. They said the RLD was looking for a strong face in this area for a long time to expand its horizons and create a vote base for the party and in the form of Izhar Ahmed Shah the RLD leadership had found that face. The party insiders said Mishra was instrumental in bringing Shah into the RLD fold. Of late, RLD has become the best option for leaders of various political parties looking for better fortune in politics. In the past, leaders from various parties have joined the RLD in Lucknow. Mishra said that he was currently focusing on strengthening the party in the Purvanchal and Devipatan division and was looking for faces who had a clean image.

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## NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME PAVNEET SAIL TO PAVNEET BHATIA W/O KARAN SAIL R/O 118/491, LAJPAT NAGAR KANPUR

## NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME ANAYA AGARWAL TO ANAYAA AGARWAL D/O: VIKASH AGARWAL R/O: PLAT NO 440, 3rd FLOOR YOG TOWER, CIVIL LINES KANPUR,

## NOTICE

I, Kamlesh Devi W/o Babu Singh Urf Udaibhan my House property situated at 698 Bandhuhar Road, Civil Lines, Unnao, original chand deed registered in S.R.O., Unnao Jild No. 2597 Pages 397 to 418 SI.No. 856 dt. 31.01.2003, was lost, I have not used the said sale deed in any financial institution. FIR/LAR No. 20240000502241 Dt. 13.06.2024

## NOTICE

I bring to you kind notice that my name is Vidya Wati Age 74 Years W/o Ganga Prasad R/o Vill. Mawaiya Mafi Tahsil & Distt. Unnao I have change my name Ganga Dei to VIDYA WATI W/o Ganga Prasad as the above address vide affidavit dt. 18.06. 2024

## NOTICE

NOTICE  
I, ABHISHEK SONKER holder of Indian Passport No:Z3559226 issued at ABU DHABI on 01/04/2018 and Permanent Resident of 76/467 COOLIE BAZAR KANPUR 208001 U P and presently residing at FLAT NO 1203 BLDG NO 44 AL AIN TOWER HAMDAN ST SAFRAN ST AL DANAH ABU DHABI UAE do hereby change the name of my minor child MUSKAAAN holding Indian Passport No:T6716588 issued at ABU DHABI on 24/11/2019 from MUSKAAAN to MUSKAAAN ABHISHEK (Given name) SONKER(Surname) with immediate effect.

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## NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM ABHISHEK KUMAR PAHARIYA TO ABHISHEK PAHARIYA. ABHISHEK PAHARIYA S/O RISHI KUMAR PAHARIYA R/O GANDHI GANJ PATEL CHOK POST-KARWI CHITRAKOOT

## NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that Satyendra Kumar and Satyendra Kumar Rai are the same person, that the name of the sworn person is Satyendra Kumar Rai registered in PAN card, Aadhar card, bank account, the sworn person also wants to register his name as Satyendra Kumar Rai in the passport. Whereas the name of Satyendra Kumar is wrongly registered in the passport. Satyendra Kumar Rai, s/o Badranath Kumar, R/o- 638/4, Basant Bihar, Behind Vikramaditya Sector-14, Indira Nagar, Lucknow UP

## NOTICE

I Suresh Kumar Jatariya S/o Shri Dhaniram Jatariya R/o 51 C 13, Chandra Nagar, Lal Bangla, Kanpur-208007 have changed my name to Suresh Jatariya for all future purposes.

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## CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as Mamata Prajapati D/o Ramabadan R/o Karanpura, Deoria, Uttar Pradesh - 274204 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Riddhi Prajapati PD(535)C

# Reel-life cop meets DGP

Lucknow (PNS): Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui is gearing up to enthral audiences with his latest film 'Rautu Ka Raaz'. To connect with his fans and generate excitement ahead of the movie's release, Nawazuddin visited Lucknow on Wednesday. During his visit, Nawazuddin also made a stop at the UP Police headquarters in Lucknow. Playing a police officer in the film, he met real-life police officers, including DGP Prashant Kumar, the PRO, and inspectors. He shared insights and experiences about portraying the role of a cop on screen. Speaking about the film, Nawazuddin mentioned that it is set in the picturesque village of Rautu Ki Beli in Uttarakhnad. “The film premiered at the 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) last year where it received a warm reception. Now, it is scheduled for its OTT premiere on June 28,” he said. Discussing the storyline, Nawazuddin explained that the movie revolves around the mysterious death of a warden at a school for visually impaired students in Rautu Ki Beli, a town that has not seen a murder in over 15 years. His character, SHO Deepak Negi, along with his team, embarks on solving this rare and high-profile murder case. The film portrays a unique camaraderie between Negi and sub-inspector Dimri (played by Rajesh Kumar), who are stirred from their lethargy by the investigation. “I am thrilled to be in Lucknow to promote my film. The people of Lucknow are warm and welcoming, and it feels great to keep returning to this city. I urge Lucknow residents to extend the same love to Rautu Ka Raaz that they have shown to me,” Nawazuddin said.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

MLA Dr Rajeshwar Singh from Sarojininagar constituency laid the foundation for the innovative initiative, Ran Bahadur Singh Digital Education and Youth Empowerment Centres, in memory of his father. On Wednesday, during events held at Katiyar Market, Rasoolpur Road, Harauni, and Latifnagar, the MLA inaugurated four centres. These centres have

been established with five computers each, furniture, internet routers, training materials, and other resources. After the inauguration of the four centres in the first phase, the goal is to establish 100 more in all village panchayats and urban wards of Sarojininagar. At these centres, free 45-day computer training will be provided to the youth, including Tally software, MS Office, and MS Excel, enabling them to secure jobs in accounting, data



# UP expediting Ghatampur and Obra thermal power projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Rajya T Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited is expediting the execution of the Ghatampur and Obra C thermal power projects to meet the growing energy demand in the state. The combined capital expenditure of these projects is more than Rs 32,000 crore. The two projects will generate a total of 3,300 megawatt electricity augmenting the state's own power generation. The state government recently approved the revised estimated expenditure of these projects coming up in Kanpur (Ghatampur) and Sonbhadra (Obra) districts. According to the revised estimates, the Ghatampur project (1,980 MW) is estimated to cost Rs 19,000 crore. It is being developed by central PSU Neyveli Uttar Pradesh Power (NUPPL), a joint venture of Neyveli Lignite Corporation

India (NLCIL) and UP Thermal Power Generation Corporation. All the three units of the Ghatampur project are likely to be commissioned in 2024-25, and the state will get 75 per cent share of the total power generated. The estimated cost of the Obra C thermal power plant (1,320 MW) witnessed a cost overrun of Rs 1,300 crore from Rs 11,705 crore to Rs 13,005 crore, owing to price variation, exchange rate and fluctuations. A government official said the state would meet 70 per cent of the augmented cost of Obra through borrowings, and the remaining portion of 30 per cent would be provided through share capital. The state will get the entire power generation from Obra. The UP cabinet had in August last cleared the proposal for setting up the 1,600 MW Obra D thermal power plant in a joint venture with UPRVUNL. The

proposed plant comprising two ultra-modern units of 800 MW each is expected to be ready for production in the next five to six years. Though the state is bullish on the green energy spanning solar energy and green hydrogen, it is simultaneously ramping up thermal generation to meet the energy demand. At the time of the heatwave sweeping entire north India and Uttar Pradesh, UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) clocked the highest peak energy demand of 30,240 MW even after the state electricity consumption breached 653 million units. UPPCL Chairman Ashish Kumar Goel said arrangements were being made to meet the growing electricity demand. Meanwhile, the UP Sugar Mills Cogen Association has urged UPPCL to raise the tariffs for power generated by cogen plants of sugar mills.

PPGCL

Regd Office: Shatabdi Bhawan, B12 & 13, Sector 4, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301  
Plant Address: PO- Lohgara, Tehsil-Bara, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh-212107  
Phone : +91-120-6102000/6102009 CIN: U40101UP2007PLC032835

**NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited invites expression of interest (EOI) from eligible vendors for "1000 mm ACW inlet pipe (Raw Water) hot tapping (Line Stoppage) along with spares and consumables without disturbing flow to other units" for 3x660 MW Thermal Power Plant at Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited, Bara, Dist. Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India. Details of pre-qualification requirements, bid security, purchasing of tender document etc. may be downloaded using the URL- <https://www.ppgcl.co.in/tenders.php> Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**डीबी०एस० कालेज, गोविन्द नगर, कानपुर**

**संशोधन आदेश**

अंग्रेजी समाचार पत्र दि पायोनियर के दिनांक 19 जून, 2024 के संकरण में डीबी०एस० कालेज, कानपुर के द्वारा प्रकाशित कराये गये विज्ञापन, जो कि महाविद्यालय में तृतीय श्रेणी कर्मचारियों पुस्तकालय सहायक, प्रयोगशाला सहायक एवं कनिष्ठ सहायक के रिक्त/रिक्त होने वाले पदों के संबंध में है, में आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा करने की तिथि 02 जुलाई, 2024 के स्थान पर 03 जुलाई, 2024 की जाती है। अतः उक्त प्रकाशित विज्ञापन को इस सीमा तक संशोधित माना जावे।

**गौरवेंद्र स्वरूप, सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति**

**डी०ए-वी० कालेज, कानपुर**

**आवश्यकता**

महाविद्यालय में तृतीय श्रेणी कर्मचारी कनिष्ठ सहायक-02 पद, प्रयोगशाला सहायक (भौतिक विज्ञान) एवं टेक्नीशियन (भौतिक विज्ञान) का एक-एक पद रिक्त है। उक्त रिक्त पदों 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 अर्थी सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति के कार्यालय 15/96, सिविल लाइन्स, कानपुर से दिनांक 04 जुलाई, 2024 तक निधारित आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा कर सकते हैं।

**कुमकुम स्वरूप, सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति**



# SSF jawan deployed at Ram temple dies of bullet injury

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another incident within the high security zone of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a jawan deployed for the security of the temple died after being hit by a bullet in suspicious circumstances in the early hours of Wednesday.

His body was found with a bullet injury on his forehead. The jawan was deployed near the VIP gate being built in front of Koteswar temple. Ram temple is 150 metres away from this place.

Soon after hearing the gun shot, the security personnel deployed with the jawan immediately took him to the hospital. Thereafter, he was taken to the trauma centre where he was pronounced dead by the doctors.

After the news of the jawan being shot under mysterious circumstances reached the senior officers, both the IG and the SSP of Ayodhya reached the

spot along with a forensic team and other experts to probe the incident.

The jawan, identified as Shatrughan Vishwakarma (25), had joined the Special Security Force (SSF) from Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in 2019. Shatrughan, who hailed from Kajpura village under Sammanpur police station of Ambedkar Nagar, was not married yet. He is survived by his four brothers while his father has died.

The SSF has been deployed for the security of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The police and forensic team are investigating the incident site. An investigation is being conducted to find out how the jawan was shot in the middle of his forehead. The fellow security personnel posted on duty are also being questioned. They had taken Shatrughan to the hospital.

SSP Ayodhya Rajkaran Nayer claimed that he was

informed by the guard commander that one of the jawans deployed on duty at the temple complex had shot himself so they rushed and shifted the injured to hospital where he was pronounced dead. Further investigations are on, he claimed.

Shatrughan is the second jawan deployed for the security of Ram temple that has died of bullet injury while one was injured. Earlier on March 26 this year, commando Ram Pratap posted in the Ram temple premises was accidentally shot. He was cleaning his AK 47, when the bullet fired. He was brought to the King George's Medical University Trauma Centre in Lucknow for treatment where he recovered.

Apart from this, PAC jawan Kuldeep Kumar was also hit by a bullet in the red zone of the Ram Janmabhoomi complex on August 25, 2023. He also died from the bullet of his own service revolver.

# Another battle of titans on cards in UP bypolls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After the success of the INDIA bloc comprising Samajwadi Party and the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, the stage is set for another battle of the titans. The battle will be fought in bypolls to nine assembly constituencies over the next few months. However, it is to be seen whether the bonhomie between SP and the Congress will continue in UP. A total of nine MLAs from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and prime opposition SP won various Lok Sabha seats. Most of them have already resigned from the assembly to retain their Lok Sabha seats. Seen as a positive step towards the stability of the alliance, the SP has welcomed Rahul Gandhi's decision to retain the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seat and vacate the Wayanad seat in Kerala, after winning both in the recent general elections. SP leaders have called it a calculated move ahead of the 2027 UP assembly polls.

In a post on social media site X, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said, "The symbol of public aspiration, the INDIA bloc, will stay firm on its commitment towards public service, will stay united, and will continue to be committed towards the Constitution, democracy, reservation, honour, dignity and pride of the people, towards eradicating unemployment, price rise, corruption." "Indeed, it is a big political development. We welcome the Congress decision. It is after a long time that the Congress managed to mark its presence in UP. The presence of Rahul Gandhi would surely help the party in the upcoming 2027 state assembly elections," Rajendra Chaudhary, chief spokesperson of the SP, said. The SP has already announced that the alliance with the Congress would continue in the bypolls expected to be

held on some assembly seats to be vacated by MLAs who contested and won the Lok Sabha elections

He was a little reluctant though to comment on the fate of the coalition for the 2027 assembly elections. However, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and several other leaders have spoken out favourably for the alliance.

"INDIA bloc will stay together. Long live INDIA bloc," Akhilesh said during the alliance's meeting in New Delhi after the Lok Sabha poll results were announced on June 4. The SP-Congress combine under the INDIA bloc tasted unprecedented success in UP, surpassing both the BJP and the National Democratic Alliance tallies for the first time. Of the 80 UP Lok Sabha seats, the SP alone bagged 37 and the Congress six, adding up to 43 for the INDIA bloc, while the BJP bagged 33 and its allies three more, making it 36 for the NDA. The Congress too has confirmed that the alliance will remain in the bypolls, seen as semi-finals to the assembly elections. "The alliance will continue. We will be in play in the forthcoming bypolls also. And there will be seat-sharing discussions," said a Congress leader. The assembly constituencies where by-elections will be held soon are Karhal, Khair (Aligarh), Kundarki (Moradabad), Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Phulpur (Prayagraj), Ghaziabad (Ghaziabad), Majhawan (Mirzapur), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), and Milkipur (Ayodhya). While the Congress and SP are yet to announce their alliance for the assembly polls, given the warmth between the leaders and the seamless coordination between the cadres of the two parties, it is a foregone conclusion that the pact is likely to continue.



Lucknow sizzled at 43.1 degree Celsius on Wednesday. The local forecast is clear skies with hot winds blowing over. The maximum temperature is expected to be 44 degree Celsius. Heatwave conditions are likely at midday and afternoon

Pioneer

# PM preserving India's cultural heritage: Yogi

**Lucknow (PNS):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University in Bihar on Wednesday. On this occasion, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated the people of the country. Chief Minister Yogi wrote in his post on X, "The inauguration of the new campus of Nalanda University in Bihar by the Prime Minister is a vivid testament to his commitment towards preserving India's cultural heritage and promoting educational development. The revitalisation of Nalanda University in its contemporary form will rejuvenate India's illustrious ancient legacy of unparalleled intellect, boundless knowledge, exceptional education, and rich cultural heritage on the global stage of education. This is a 'Amrit Kaal' for the revival of India's ancient glory in education and culture. Congratulations to the people of the country and heartfelt gratitude to the prime minister!"

# 'Catch the Rain' campaign progressing rapidly in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 'Catch the Rain' campaign, initiated on the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is rapidly progressing across Uttar Pradesh. This year marks the fifth phase of the campaign, which runs annually from March-April to November since 2019. The campaign focuses on several water conservation activities, including the rejuvenation and reuse of traditional water bodies, bore well recharge, watershed development, intensive afforestation and the revival of small rivers. Additionally, public awareness programmes on the theme of 'Nari Shakti to Jal Shakti' and other water conservation related works are being organised according to the hydro geological situation of the districts. All government and semi-government buildings in the districts are mandated to install rooftop rainwater harvesting systems. Furthermore, instructions have been given to clear silt and any other obstructions in the water flow of Amrit Sarovars (lakes) of the districts. As of June 18, Pilibhit, Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, Barabanki and Gonda are the top five districts in terms of mandatory installation of rooftop rainwater harvesting system (RTRWH) on government and semi-government buildings of the districts, with 100 per cent completion of the work. In maintaining Amrit Sarovars, Gorakhpur, Maharajganj, Prayagraj, Azamgarh and Barabanki lead the way, having completed the desilting and clearing of vegetation in these sarovars. Along with this, the work of Amrit Sarovars under construction has also been completed. During a recent review of the 'Catch the Rain Campaign 2024', Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra emphasised that this initiative is a top priority of both the Central and state governments.

# Tension in Aligarh after youth lynched over suspicion of theft

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Communal tension flared up in Aligarh after a youth, who was lynched on suspicion of theft, died on way to hospital.

Members of both Hindu and Muslim communities indulged in heavy brick-batting and also staged demonstrations. Markets were also forcibly closed by an agitated mob which created ruckus. Later senior officers, including IG Aligarh Range Shalabh Mathur, the SSP Aligarh along with police force from at least a dozen police stations reached the spot and somehow defused the situation by registering a murder case in the matter and later also took six persons in custody.

A heavy police force is still camping in the area to avert any untoward incident. The victim was laid to rest amidst deployment of heavy force.

Reports said that in Aligarh city's busiest Mamu Bhanja locality, some people caught a youth on the suspicion that he was a thief. The youth was allegedly trying to enter the house of a cloth merchant Mukesh Chandra Mittal on Tuesday night. Mittal has a shop on the ground floor of his residence in Mamu Bhanja locality and lives with his family on the upper floor, the way to which is through a fence next to the shop. On Tuesday, due to it being a weekly closure day, Mittal and his family members were at home. At night, Rahul, an acquaintance of Mittal's son Rohit, came to meet him and left the door open. He claimed that when he was returning, he saw a youth trying to enter the house for theft so they nabbed and thrashed him.

On being informed by some residents, the police reached the spot and the youth was taken to the district hospital in a critical condition but the doctors pronounced him dead. The news of the death of the

victim, identified as Mohammed Farid, spread like a wild wire. Till morning, the video of the incident also went viral and this worsened the situation. Several leaders from the opposition parties gathered outside the hospital, demanding that a case be registered and the accused be arrested.

In the meantime, the family members and several neighbours of Farid also reached the hospital and staged a demonstration. Soon after receiving information about the demonstration, senior officers reached the hospital with heavy police force. The situation took an ugly turn when the traders belonging to the other community learnt about the demonstration and they also gathered, forcibly got the market closed and reached the hospital demanding that a case of theft be registered against Farid for entering into a house.

Later both the sides came to a head resulting in heavy stone-pelting and ruckus in the area. The senior officers somehow chased away the troublemakers and convinced the victim's family that a case of murder would be registered against those involved in the brutal attack of Farid on suspicion of theft and they would be arrested. They also got a case registered and took six of the accused in custody after which the family allowed the burial of the body of the victim.

Sources said that even after the situation became normal, the markets of most areas of the old city remained closed. The shutters of the shops were not lifted even in the Hindu-dominated areas. Looking at the atmosphere of the city, the sector scheme has been implemented and the city has been divided into eight sectors. Magistrates and circle officers have been deployed in each sector. and they will remain active 24 hours to deal with any situation. One company of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and

more than half a dozen PAC companies have also been deployed to avert any untoward incident.

SP (City) Mrigank Shekhar Pathak said that a youth, who entered the house of a cloth merchant in Mamu Bhanja locality, was thrashed on the suspicion of theft. He said the youth died while being taken to the hospital. He said the entire matter was being investigated and action would be taken by registering a case on the basis of the complaint.

According to a complaint filed by the victim's family, Farid was returning home from work when he was mobbed and thrashed by some residents on Tuesday night in the Mamu Bhanja locality over suspicion of theft. Meanwhile, according to IG Aligarh Range Shalabh Mathur, a case under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code had been registered against half a dozen locals for beating a person to death. The IG confirmed that six people had been arrested on the basis of a complaint filed at Gandhi Nagar Park police station in Aligarh.

## CPI-ML DEMANDS PROBE

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) has demanded an impartial and high-level probe into the mob lynching of Mohammed Farid in Aligarh late Tuesday night. CPI-ML state secretary Sudhakar Yadav said in a statement issued on Wednesday that attacks on minorities and Dalits were increasing in Uttar Pradesh after the Lok Sabha elections. The CPI-ML leader alleged that due to the protection being given to the musclemen in the Yogi Adityanath government, incidents of murder and injustice were taking place against people belonging to the weaker section. "This is the failure of the Yogi government," he said, and demanded adequate compensation to the family of the deceased.

# Counting of Sarus cranes to commence today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In line with efforts to conserve Uttar Pradesh's state bird, the Sarus crane, the state government, under the direction of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, will commence the counting process on Thursday.

The counting of Sarus cranes is taken up twice a year, during summer and winter seasons. This year, the counting will take place over two days starting Thursday, with sessions to be conducted both in the morning and evening with the cooperation of officers and employees of the Forest department as well as students and nature lovers. The Yogi government's efforts to conserve the Sarus crane are showing promising results. In the 2023 count, 19,522 Sarus cranes were recorded in Uttar Pradesh. Each divisional forest officer will submit the count and photographs of cranes found in their respective divisions to the chief forest conservator, eco development, Lucknow by July 1. The divisional forest officer will be the coordinator of their respective areas. The forest



guard will be the leader of the counting team.

In regions with abundant wetlands, multiple teams will be formed for the Sarus crane count. Public awareness initiatives will inform the general population about this effort. Schools, colleges, children, nature enthusiasts, and NGOs have been encouraged to participate in the count, and participants will receive certificates for their involvement. In the year 2024, the counting will be done at each counting site from 6 am to 8 am and 4 pm to 6 pm. The highest count between these two sessions will be considered the actual number.

# Glass bangle industry faces new adversary — climate change

PTI ■ FIROZABAD

The next time you see glass bangles, shimmering delicately on a woman's wrist or glittering in a shop, think of climate change.

It's a link that is neither unlikely nor far-fetched but a living reality for lakhs of workers bearing the brunt of rising temperatures that have combined with furnace heat to add up to multiple health complications. For generations, artisans in the famed 'City of Glass' have braved the heat of furnaces to mould glass into bangles. The new adversary in already perilous working conditions is climate change, impacting on the future of the ₹1,000 crore industry that employs five lakh people. Bangles are crafted through a meticulous process that begins with melting glass. For glass bangles, molten glass is drawn into thin tubes, cooled and cut into the desired lengths, which are then reheated and shaped around a mandrel to form circles.

Aastha Dev, who has been working in the traditional

industry, where the skill of moulding glass into bangles has been passed down from generation to generation, has been hospitalised twice in the last one month after repeated dehydration and isn't sure how long her health will hold out. "It's like working in an inferno," the 35-year-old told PTI. "Earlier, the heat was something we could manage, but now, with the temperatures outside also climbing, it's become unbearable. Many of us fall sick but we have no choice but to continue working. But for how much longer?" The bangle factories, predominantly small-scale units, lack proper ventilation and cooling systems. During peak summer months, temperatures inside these workshops can soar above 50 degrees Celsius. And when outside temperatures themselves cross 45 degrees Celsius with a heat index of 50 degrees Celsius as in this unprecedented summer, the situation seems impossibly exacerbated. Workers often suffer from heat exhaustion, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses. "By midday, it feels like I'm suf-

focating. My head spins, and my skin burns. We drink a lot of water, but it's never enough. There are days when I feel like I might just collapse," said 22-year-old Rajesh Kumar.

"Some days, we have to take breaks just to catch our breath. It's especially hard for older people working with us and those with underlying health issues," the young man added. Kamlesh, a 50-year-old diabetic who works in the furnace of the bangle factory, is one such person. "Many of us have been hospitalised due to dehydration. In hospitals we are just given saline drips, and we bear its cost on our own. I earn ₹300 per day. How can we pay medical bills with that income," he said. The situation is particularly dire for women workers who make up a significant portion of the workforce. They often endure longer hours and more physically demanding tasks. They are often tasked with designing, painting and embossing each bangle. This has to be done when the bangle is at a particular temperature. "There are many cases of work-

ers fainting. We take turns to step out just to breathe but even outside it is so hot that it is barely a relief. Summers have always been difficult but this year almost all of us are battling one or the other ailment related to heat," Reena, who has been working in the industry for a decade, told PTI.

The claustrophobic glass workshops of Firozabad might seem many worlds removed from global forecasts of heat warning. But they are clearly not. Climate change and the El Nino phenomenon have greatly contributed to this extreme heat across Asia, including India, according to the World Weather Attribution group. World Weather Attribution uses weather observations and climate models to understand how climate change influences the intensity and likelihood of extreme weather events.

In 2024, global heat records were broken every month. This trend began with the warmest January on record since 1850, continued with the hottest March and now May 2024 is set to become the 12th consecutive month of record-breaking tem-

peratures. Health experts have voiced concerns over the long-term implications for the glass workers.

"Prolonged exposure to such extreme temperatures can lead to chronic health conditions like cardiovascular disease and asthma among others," said Dr Sajid Ahmed, a local physician who frequently treats workers from the bangle factories. "We're seeing an increase in cases of heat stroke, respiratory issues, and severe dehydration. It is alarming," he said. Factory owners acknowledge the harsh conditions but feel constrained by economic pressures. Some factory owners said they are experimenting with basic cooling solutions like installing fans and improving hydration facilities.

"But the industry is such that it demands the heat as glass can melt only at a particular temperature so it will be that hot. We know it's tough for the workers," admitted Omkar Singh, who owns the Natraj bangle factory. "The nature of the industry is such that these workers have to work near furnaces, near heat. We have a cold

water supply for them," he said. How far these measures go in actually ameliorating the problems is debatable. "We need more substantial support from the government and larger industry stakeholders. Subsidies for better equipment, health check-ups, and education on heat management can make a significant difference," said Ramesh Singh, a bangle factory worker and labour union worker. Recent studies have highlighted the impact of climate change on traditional industries like that of Firozabad's glass industry. According to a study by the International Labour Organization (ILO), workers in industries relying on high heat processes are at a higher risk of heat-related health issues as global temperatures rise. The ILO projected in its 2019 report that India could lose 5.8 per cent of working hours, equivalent to 34 million full-time jobs, due to global warming by 2030. This productivity loss will impact income and livelihoods, particularly for informal workers who are most vulnerable to extreme heat.

# UP govt to honour divyang achievers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government will honour talented differently-abled achievers and also those individuals and institutions rendering yeoman service to them, on December 3, on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities department has invited applications for the state-level awards to be presented on December 3. The deadline for receiving applications is July 15. State-level awards are presented on the occasion of 'World Disability Day' on December 3 every year to the skilled persons with disabilities/self-employed PwDs, service of PwD and excellent placement officers, persons/institutions who have done excellent work for the empowerment of PwDs. Organised in 12 categories, these awards are governed by the State Level Award Rules, 2017, established by the

## The Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities department has invited applications

Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities department. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Backward Class Welfare and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Narendra Kashyap, stated that applications are being invited for these awards as per the rules, with extensive publicity. Interested individuals or institutions can apply using the prescribed format by July 15, through the district empowerment of persons with disabilities officer of their respective district. He urged all eligible candidates and institutions engaged in outstanding work in the disability sector to apply promptly, ensuring their contributions are duly recognised.



# PM reviews work at Sigra stadium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

After taking part in all the scheduled events, including Kisan Samman Sammelan, Ganga Aarti and offering prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple on first visit to his parliamentary constituency during his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday night made a surprise inspection of Sigra stadium, taking stock of indoor sports complex. He was accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The PM stayed at BLW Officers' Guest House for the night before leaving for his visit to Nalanda in Bihar on Wednesday morning. At Sigra stadium the PM reviewed the work underway to build the stadium and sports complex in Varanasi. Once ready, it will cater to the needs of the youth and further enhance sporting culture in Varanasi. With the efforts of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducting a surprise inspection at Sigra Stadium on Tuesday night.

central and state governments, a National Centre of Excellence Stadium is being constructed to provide more facilities to the players of Purvanchal (eastern UP). Almost all sports will be held

in the stadium and players of all the games will be trained too so that the players of Purvanchal need not go far to play. Besides, sports lovers will get to see international level matches in Varanasi

itself as Dr Sampurnanand Sports Stadium, popularly known as Sigra Stadium, is being redeveloped and its buildings will be green buildings. On the initiative of the chief minister in collabora-

tion with Khelo India and Smart City, MHPL India Private Limited, Kanpur, built its first phase in record time on EPC (Engineering Procurement and Construction) mode. The work of the first phase of the stadium has been completed and the work of the second and third phases is proposed to be completed by July. The stadium will have the facility to play more than 20 indoor games like badminton, handball, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, weightlifting, squash etc. There will be an Olympic level swimming pool along with a warm up pool. A banquet hall will also be built along with gym, spa, yoga centre, pool billiards and cafeteria. Along with this, multi-level modern indoor stadium is also being built keeping in mind the standards of para sports, so that para sports competitions can also be held here.

## Farmers can withdraw DBT money at doorstep through postman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the highly anticipated 17th instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) in the 'Kisan Samman Sammelan' programme organised in Varanasi on Tuesday, the beneficiaries farmers and their families were delighted. The PM transferred ₹20,000 crore to the accounts of more than nine crore beneficiary farmers

across the country through DBT. Now, these farmers can withdraw this amount from their bank accounts directly at their doorstep. Postmaster General of Varanasi and Prayagraj Regions Krishna Kumar Yadav said that beneficiary farmers can withdraw the DBT amount received in their bank accounts through a postman at their doorstep. For this, farmers need not to visit any bank branch or ATM. An amount of up to ₹10,000 can

be withdrawn in a day from any Aadhaar linked bank account through Aadhaar Enabled Payment System at doorstep. The post office does not charge any fee for this. Under the PM-KISAN, beneficiary farmers receive financial assistance of ₹6,000 every year. This amount is transferred to their bank accounts through DBT in three instalments of ₹2,000 each at an interval of every four months.

## Prof Dubey gets IAA Voice Award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Renowned critical care physician and author Professor Rajeev Kumar Dubey was presented with the prestigious India Authors Academy (IAA) Voice Award at the IAA Literature Festival held at Mumbai recently. "I am deeply

honoured to receive this recognition from the India Authors Academy," said Prof Dubey. The award underscores Prof Dubey's remarkable contributions to Indian literature and poetry. Working as professor of Anaesthesiology department in Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu

University (IMS-BHU), Prof Dubey is a respected figure in critical care medicine. His books and articles have garnered widespread acclaim, and his literary works have captivated readers across the country. He has keen interest in Indian culture, spirituality and sustainable environment.

## Ajay Rai assures justice to assault victim's family

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) president Ajay Rai visited Benipur village on Wednesday enquiring about the well-being of the family members at the house of the deceased farmer Munni Lal Maurya. According to Rai, recently in Benipur village (Mahesh Patti) of Varanasi parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, poor farmer Munni Lal Maurya and his entire family, which included women and children, were brutally beaten up by 'power-backed' goons. "In this horrific incident, Munni Lal Maurya died while other members of his family suffered serious injuries. The saddest thing about this incident is that the victim's family had informed the local police administration about it, but the police did not take any action. If the police had become active in time, Munni Lal would not have lost his life" he said, alleging that the local district BJP president was also aware of this entire incident, but he did not take it seriously because the perpetrators of the incident were BJP workers. The Congress leader further said that it is surprising when just a day ago the PM held a Kisan



Samman Sammelan just two to three kilometers away from Benipur village and several union and UP ministers and MLAs were present there, but not a single BJP leader, minister or MLA took the trouble to enquire about the condition of the victim's family. Rai said he met the victim's family and shared their grief. "My full sympathy is with the victims. I will try my best to ensure that the victim's family gets justice, no matter how much the criminals are supported by the power," he said. Rai was accompanied by district Congress president Rajeshwar Singh Patel, Rajiv Gautam, Rajuram, Dr HN Singh, Santosh Maurya and many others. Meanwhile, while addressing a press conference, the UPCC chief that the PM returned after another visit to his constituency, including a night stay, but this time too the city did not get any answer to

the questions related to the public problems. "This visit was also just another event to welcome the PM who did not communicate with the public representatives to get a proper feedback", he said, adding that all schemes are meaningless for farmers till they do not get the MSP. According to him, the health services of Kashi are on a ventilator. "Heart attacks increased due to post-Covid and Covishield effect, but the hunger strike of former head of cardiology department in IMS-BHU was snubbed and 94 teachers who were moral supporters received notices, but the PM did not take any cognizance of these serious issues during the tour", he said. He said the PM participated in Ganga Aarti and took part in another event related to Ganga, but did not pay any attention to the unprecedented decline in its water level.

## Emphasis on use of 'TB Aarogya Sathi'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To support the treatment of tuberculosis patients as well as to get information about TB disease, emphasis is being laid on the use of 'TB Aarogya Sathi' application at all 23 TB units of the district. This app will not only help TB patients in treatment and care, but also with the help of the app sitting at home, one can get all the information about this disease. District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai said that any TB patient can log in to the 'TB Aarogya Sathi' app with his treatment that is Nikshay ID. With its help, the patient can also get information about his treatment and financial assistance from the government. The DTO said that a normal person can get information about TB disease testing facility, symptoms, treatment, prevention etc in this app without logging in. Whereas a TB patient can log in and get information about his treatment progress, nutritional counselling, screening tools, amount (₹500) received every month during treatment under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana and other related information. Also, through the app, TB patients can link their bank account to their Nikshay ID and validate it.

## Businessman's 14-yr-old son kidnapped

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The 14-year-old son of a businessman was kidnapped by miscreants. The police have launched a search for the boy and CCTV footage of the city is being scanned. In a footage the boy is seen walking. The family has accused a neighbour of kidnapping. The incident happened in Kalindipuram under Dhoomanganj police station. After a complaint was registered, the police questioned the neighbor about the matter, but he denied knowing the boy. According to the police, Dilip Singh of Kalindipuram, is a stationery and paper businessman. He has two children, daughter Anshika and son Saksham. Saksham's mother Namrata said her son went to play in the park in front of the house on June 17 around 5.30 pm. When he did not return till 8 pm they started looking for him. Saksham's family members said that they had questioned his friends who said that he did not come to play. He was also not found at relatives' place and was not found anywhere. The family members searched the CCTV cameras installed on Kalindipuram

road. Saksham was seen walking in many footages. In one camera, he was seen going near the railway station. His mother said that he did not have money and he could not buy a ticket. Dhoomanganj inspector Vaibhav Singh said that a case of kidnapping has been registered and the matter is being investigated. Phone numbers are being traced. What is the motive behind this incident? The answer to this question is being sought. The child will be rescued as soon as possible, he added. **REDUCED TO ASHES:** Entire household items were reduced to ashes when a massive fire broke out due to a leakage in a gas cylinder while food was being cooked in a house in Meja here on Wednesday. Within a short while, the fire engulfed the entire house. As soon as the fire broke out, the family members and the villagers from the neighbourhood rushed to extinguish the flames. An attempt was made to extinguish the fire for hours. But by the time the fire in the house was brought under control the entire household items were reduced to ashes. Vinod of Khminiya village

under Manda police station of Meja tehsil lives with a joint family of his three brothers. While cooking owing to leakage the gas cylinder suddenly caught fire. Gradually the fire engulfed the entire house. As soon as the family came to know about this, people ran to extinguish the fire. With the help of villagers, two children and three women trapped in the house were somehow evacuated. The villagers somehow extinguished the fire. The victim's family said that the household goods worth around ₹ 3 lakh were burnt to ashes. They include utensils, beds, clothes, grains, jewelry, furniture and entire household items. Meja MLA Sandeep Patel said that proper compensation will be provided after meeting the victims. Meja police station in-charge Rajesh Upadhyay said that he along with the force rushed to the spot after getting information of fire broke out due to a leakage in the gas cylinder. Majority of the households were reduced to ashes by then as the fire was took a formidable form. However, no causal-ity was reported, he added. **HELP SOUGHT:** Troubled by land mafia, an elderly woman

has sought the help from police officers and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The matter belongs to Bhulai Ka Purva under Shivkuti police station area. The victim Parvati Devi (75) has accused the land mafia of trying to take possession of her land. The woman said when she lodged a protest the land mafia assaulted her son Dharendra. Now the family is being threatened with dire consequences. The woman has complained to the police station. The matter has reached the police officers. In a letter sent to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the woman alleged that a few days ago the land mafia entered the house with 20 bullies. They allegedly broke the boundary to capture the land and the gate. The whole family was beaten up brutally and her daughter -in-law Sita Devi was pushed. Shivkuti Station House Officer (SHO) Sanjay Gupta said that there is a land dispute between them. Both sides have indulged in scuffle several times. Even before this, action was taken by registering a case. However, a complaint has been received and action will be taken accordingly.

## 37-year-old man found dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A man was found dead under the flyover near JK Colony Chauraha in Chakeri police station area on Tuesday evening. On getting information the police rushed to the spot and identified the body as of Joseph Dayal (37), resident of Ompurwa. Kin informed that Joseph, being a liquor addict, used to quarrel with family members, hence he was thrown out of the home about a year ago. He used to beg under the flyover. It was also informed that his brother Denial would deliver him a tiffin daily. On Tuesday afternoon also, Denial delivered the tiffin and returned. In the evening, Joseph was found dead with blood oozing from his mouth. SHO Ajay Prakash Mishra said the body had been sent for autopsy. The kin did not blame anybody for the incident. The exact cause of death will be ascertained on receipt of the autopsy report, SHO said. **YOUTH HIT BY TRAIN, DIES:** A youth who had arrived from Delhi was fatally

knocked down by a speeding train in front of the yard near Jhinjhak railway station in Kanpur debat late on Tuesday night. After probe, GRP sent the body for autopsy. Shiv Kumar of Jawahar Nagar, Sheoli (Kanpur debat) was employed in a private firm in Delhi. On Tuesday night he arrived at Jhinjhak from Rewa Express. After alighting at the Jhinjhak railway station, when he was crossing the track, he was hit by the speeding train going to Delhi from Kanpur in front the yard and died on the spot. GRP outpost incharge Arpit Tewari rushed to the spot and carried out probe. During search, the police recovered the train ticket from Anand Vihar, Delhi to Jhinjhak, ID and mobile phone from his possession. Outpost Incharge Arpit Tewari said the mishap took place when the youth was crossing the railway track. The body had been sent for autopsy, he said. **WOMAN DIES:** After six days of the death of her husband due to prolonged illness, a woman was allegedly also poisoned to

death by her family members in Hasanganj Kotwali police area of Unnao. Pinki Kashyap (45) wife of Late Jagdish Kashyap of Hasanganj (Unnao) was lying unconscious on Mohan-Bangermau road on Tuesday night. A junior engineer of Electricity department passing from there saw her and informed the Kotwali police. Kotwali incharge Chandra Kant Mishra rushed to the spot and took the woman to CHC, Hasanganj, for treatment. Due to her serious condition, she was referred to the district hospital where she died on Wednesday morning. Her daughter Naina rushed to the mortuary and informed that after death of father six days ago due to prolonged illness, uncle had called her mother with the Aadhaar card on pretext of transferring the land in her name. During visit to his house, he offered some poisonous substance to her which led to her killing. Naina said she had been living with her maternal grandparents since childhood. Kotwali incharge sent the body for autopsy after panchnama. On receipt of autopsy report,

exact cause of her death would be ascertained, he said. Meanwhile an adolescent body of Kanpur, who had arrived with friends for bathing in the Ganga at the Chandan Ghat, Jajmau of Unnao district, drowned on Wednesday morning. After he slipped into the area where water was deep, divers were pressed into service who recovered his body which was sent for autopsy. Sukchand Ali (16) along with friends Hasan, Sanidul and Mazidul had gone at Chandan Ghat of Jajmau on the Kanpur-Lucknow national highway for bathing in Ganga. While bathing he began to drown. When friends raised alarm, people rushed to spot and informed the Jajmau outpost and kin of the deceased. Police pressed the divers who recovered the body after around three hours. In Etawah four passengers were injured when a Roadways bus was hit by an unidentified truck near Bharthana overbridge in Bakewar on Kanpur-Agra highway on Tuesday night. After colliding with the bus, truck driver escaped from the spot.

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY**  
HARBOUR WORKS DIVISION NO.1  
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE  
e-TCN No.CE/HWD/ACCTS-01/24/195,  
dtd. 12.06.2024.  
Name of the Work: "Upgradation of existing Plot (siding Plot RRS-5) inside Harbour area of PPA". Put to tender value: Rs.1,46,11,908.80 plus GST as applicable. Last date & time of submission of tender through online bidding is 04.07.2024 up to 17:15 Hrs. For details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.  
Sd/-Executive Engineer,  
Harbour Works Division No.-I  
Paradip Port Authority  
PPA/PR/18-2024-25 dtd.18.06.2024

**GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR**  
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/52/2024  
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:-  

Sr. No.	Item	Quantity
1	Imaging of Part-C & Part-D of OMR front cover. Scanning of OMR front cover having part-C and Part-D with Scan no. and processing of Data in the form of marks list.	10 Lac for Two Semester (5 Lacs per Semester)

  
Closing Date & Time: 10-07-2024 at 5:00 p.m.  
For details log onto [www.eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://www.eproc.punjab.gov.in)  
Note: Any Corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.  
Assistant Registrar (General)  
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar  
NA/12/23496/2023/34714 Dated CHD :- 6/19/2024

**verka**  
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.  
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX No. 0172-5041812,66  
Notice Inviting e Tender  
www.verka.coop  
e- tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following item :-  

Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
<b>For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh</b>	
i. C.Boxes for :-	Half yearly/
• Export Ghee Tins and Defence WMP Tins	40K
• Aseptic Packaging	16 Lac
• Different Milk Products	1 crore
ii. Bulk Milk Cooler	Annual/
i. 500 Ltr	10 No's
ii. 1000 Ltr	80 No's
iii. 2000 Ltr	50 No's
iv. 3000 Ltr	10 No's
v. 5000 Ltr	10 No's
iii. AMC's	Annual/ 669 No's

  
NOTE:  
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. [www.verka.coop](http://www.verka.coop) & e Tendering portal i.e. [eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in).  
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.  
NA/12/23499/2023/34719 Dated CHD :- 6/18/2024 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

## Khichdi distributed among poor on Rahul's birthday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The birthday of Congress MP and former national president Rahul Gandhi was celebrated by distributing 'khichdi' among the poor near Khichdia Baba Temple in

Dashashwamedh area here on Wednesday. The party workers also played to the Almighty for Rahul Gandhi's long life. On the occasion, programme coordinator Manish Morolia,

Brahma Dutt Tripathi, Akash Tripathi, Akash Mehrotra, Vivek Yadav, Narsingh Das Verma, Samajwadi Party secretary Ravi Yadav, ward president Deepak Yadav, Krishna Dixit,



Congress Committee's state general secretary Om Prakash Ojha, senior Congress leader Ganesh Shankar Pandey,

Akash Prasad, Ramesh Sharma and many Congress and INDIA Bloc party members were also present.

## Complicated surgery performed successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Another case of serious eye injury due to dog bite was reported at Trauma Centre in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) recently. Prior to that on May 30, the right eye of an eight-year old girl from Nagara in Ballia district was badly scratched by a pet dog (Labrador) where complex surgery was performed successfully on the same day by oculo-plastic surgeon Dr Rajendra Prakash Maurya in Trauma Centre. Then another eight-year old girl from Sonoura, Aurangabad district in Bihar was badly bitten by a street dog. After local first aid at Aurangabad, the girl was brought to the Trauma Centre in BHU recently and information about the same was given to Professor-in-charge of Trauma Centre, Prof Saurabh Singh who immediately con-

**Eight-year old girl from Sonoura, Aurangabad district, was badly bitten by a street dog. After local first aid at Aurangabad, the girl was brought to the Trauma Centre in BHU**

tacted to Dr RP Maurya of Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Banaras Hindu University. Dr Maurya immediately admitted the girl under him supervision in Trauma ward and started all necessary treatment. The dog had completely chewed off both the eyelids of girls right eye. Both upper and lower eyelids were missing only the eyeball was intact. Next day, three and half hour long complex surgery was performed by Dr Maurya and his resident team. Dr

Maurya said first anti rabies injection were given around the wound and free skin graft was taken from behind the ear pinna and rotational /pedicle flap was taken from temporal area to reconstruct the missing eyelids and a total 70 stitches were applied inside and outside. Dr Maurya said that now girl will be able to see normally and newly reconstructed eyelid will work completely. All medications, vaccines and sutures materials etc used in surgery were provided free-of-cost by Trauma Centre administration. For the successful surgery, Dr Maurya gave his special thanks to Prof Saurabh Singh, OT staff, anaesthesia team and his assistants Dr Priyanka Singh, Dr Ekagrata Shukla and Dr Nirmal for their support. On the surgeon's advice, the family is keeping a close watch on the street dog.

## New building of Indian Bank's zonal office and main branch inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Banda District Magistrate DM Durga Shakti Nagpal along with General Manager, Indian Bank, Lucknow, Sudhir Kumar Gupta inaugurated the new building of zonal office and main branch of Indian Bank, Banda, on Tuesday. DM praised the construction of new building and motivated the officers to provide quick services to customers and dispose of the work. General Manager Sudhir Kumar Gupta said the Indian Bank is committed to providing benefit of all the government schemes up to the last rung of the society. He said the work of digitalisation of the bank was on at a rapid pace. The benefit of its revamped infrastructure would facilitate large number of customers affiliated to the bank.



DM Durga Shakti Nagpal and GM Indian Bank Sudhir Kumar Gupta inaugurating the new building of bank's zonal office and main branch in Banda on Tuesday

Chief Development Officer (CDO) Ved Prakash Maurya, Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Rajesh Kumar Verma, zonal chief Ghanshyam Kumar

and deputy zonal chief Apritam Awasthi were also present. The customers affiliated to different branches were all praise for the bank's works and activities.



## MODI INAUGURATES NEW NALANDA VARSITY CAMPUS

# Knowledge cannot be destroyed by fire: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI/RAJGIR(BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asserted that he wanted India to re-emerge as the world's "most prominent knowledge centre" with an "advanced and research-oriented" higher education system.

Modi, while inaugurating the new Nalanda University campus in Rajgir, called upon students to always remain curious and courageous. The varsity is named after the world-renowned ancient seat of higher learning, which was razed by invading armies in the 12th century.

Modi said Nalanda bore testimony to the fact that "knowledge cannot be destroyed by fire", and that India was looking forward to playing its role in the 21st century, "which belongs to Asia", by becoming a developed country by 2047.

He underscored that history was proof that all developed countries became economic and cultural leaders only after they made a mark in the field of education.

"Our country, too, enjoyed



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Sinha and other delegates during the inauguration of Nalanda University, in Nalanda district, Bihar on Wednesday

such a status in the ancient times when seats of learning like Nalanda and Vikramshila were flourishing," said Modi, who also made a mention of the International Yoga Day celebrations, due in a couple of days, to stress that India was continuing with cultural exchanges on a global scale. "It is my mission that India re-emerges as the world's most prominent knowledge centre. To this end, the spirit of

innovation is being inculcated into our children from a very early age. More than one crore children are getting exposed to latest technology at 'Atal Tinkering' labs. The Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan missions are also boosting their interest in science," he said. Modi also pointed out "till about a decade ago, we had only 100 startups. The number has swollen to more than 1.30 lakh. We are also filing a record

number of patents and publishing research papers. Our government has announced a special fund of Rs 1 lakh crore to give a fillip to research and innovation". "It is our endeavour to build, in India, the world's most comprehensive and complete skilling system, and advanced research-oriented higher education system. The efforts have started showing results. Our universities' global

rankings have improved. Till a decade ago, only nine educational institutions had QS rankings. Now, the number has reached 46," the PM asserted. The Prime Minister, who reached the venue after spending a few minutes at the ruins of the 'Nalanda Mahavihara', expressed delight at having got the opportunity "within 10 days" of return to power for a record third term in office.

He also highlighted that the country has "lived, through ages, a sustainable model in which progress was achieved while taking care of the environment".

The prime minister informed that on an average, India has witnessed setting up of one university every week in the last 10 years, along with establishment of an industrial training institute (ITI) every 10 days. "There has been a new Atal Tinkering Lab every second day, two new colleges every day. We have 23 IITs. The number of IIMs has reached 21, from only 13 a decade ago. During the period, the number of AIIMS trebled to 22 and the number of medical colleges doubled.

## Tibetans have right to self-determination: McCaul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI/DHARAMSHALA

The Tibetan people have the right to self-determination, US House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Michael McCaul said on Wednesday, asserting they have a unique culture and religion, and they should be able to freely practice their religion.

McCaul, who is leading the US Congressional delegation that met the Tibetan spiritual head the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala, said that is why we are here today in defiance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Speaking at a facilitation function organised by the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), he said even after violence and forceful removal from his home by the CCP, the Dalai Lama continues to preach tolerance, peace and forgiveness.

McCaul asserted that people are free in a democracy while they are enslaved in tyranny. "The Tibetan people possess a distinct religion, culture and historic identity and they should have a say in their own future. You should be able to freely practice your religion and that is why we are here



Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama being greeted by US representative Michael McCaul during a meeting with US Congressional delegation at his residence, in Dharamsala

today in defiance of CCP warning," McCaul said. "Our delegation received a letter from the CCP warning us not to come here, they repeated their false claim that Tibet is part of China since the 13th century but we did not let the CCP intimidate us and we are here today," he said, adding the Dalai Lama, people of Tibet and United States of America know that Tibet is not a part of China. McCaul said the timing of this visit cannot be better as last week the House of Representatives and the Congress passed Resolve Tibet Bill, which makes it clear that

Tibet has its own unique culture, language and religion, and has the right to self-determination.

This bill, which will be signed in the coming days, also requires to aggressively challenge the CCP propaganda about Tibet, he added. The delegation consisting of former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congress members Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern and Ami Bera led by McCaul, called on the Dalai Lama ahead of the function and held discussions.

## Oram praises role of ASHA, anganwadi workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram on Wednesday emphasised the critical role of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) and anganwadi workers in combating not only the Covid-19 pandemic but also in achieving the government's ambitious goal of eradicating sickle cell disease in India.

Speaking at an event marking World Sickle Cell Day at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, Oram highlighted that while top experts and doctors contribute significantly to the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Eradication Mission, success hinges on the involvement of grassroots workers.

"ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) and anganwadi workers are the ones who work at the gram panchayat level. They worked



more than the top doctors during the pandemic. I can say this with confidence," said Oram, who recently assumed office as the tribal affairs minister for the third time. "Therefore, until we engage ground-level workers in this

mission, it will not be successful. When malaria was prevalent, a malaria inspector would visit every house in the village to take samples. We need to adopt a similar approach to eradicate sickle cell disease," he added.

The minister also said that while top doctors can plan and share their knowledge and resources, it is the ground-level workers who have to actually work.

Oram suggested involving major companies operating in tribal areas in the mission to tackle sickle cell anaemia.

On July 1 last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Eradication Mission in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, with the aim of eradicating the disease by 2047.

On the occasion, earlier Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the government's commitment to overcoming sickle cell disease, and said it has been working on aspects like creating awareness, universal screening, early detection and proper care. "On World Sickle Cell Day, we reiterate our commitment to overcome this disease. Last year, we launched the National

Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and have been working on aspects like creating awareness, universal screening, early detection and proper care," Modi said in a post on X. "We are also leveraging the power of technology in this area," he said.

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited blood disorders that affect haemoglobin, causing red blood cells to become sickle-shaped and block blood flow, which can lead to serious complications such as stroke, eye problems, and infections.

The government aims to screen seven crore people up to 40 years of age as part of the mission. State governments have already screened 3.5 crore people, detecting 10 lakh active carriers and one lakh individuals with the disease.

A carrier is an individual who carries and can pass on a genetic mutation associated with a disease, and may or may not display symptoms.

## Jaishankar travels to Lanka today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Sri Lanka on Thursday in his first bilateral visit abroad in his second consecutive term in office.

The visit reaffirms India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and underlines New Delhi's continued commitment to Sri Lanka as its "closest" maritime neighbour and time tested friend, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. The MEA said Jaishankar's visit will add momentum to connectivity projects and other mutually beneficial cooperation across sectors between the two countries.

Jaishankar was last week part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's delegation at the G7 Outreach summit in Italy's Apulia region.

The trip to Sri Lanka will be Jaishankar's standalone bilateral visit after he assumed charge as the external affairs minister for the second term on June 11.



The MEA said the external affairs minister will have meetings with the Sri Lankan leadership on wide-ranging issues.

"This will be the external affairs minister's first bilateral visit after the formation of new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi," it said.

"Reaffirming India's Neighbourhood First Policy, the visit underlines India's continued commitment to Sri Lanka as its closest maritime neighbour and time tested friend," the MEA said in a statement. "The visit will add momentum to connectivity projects and other mutually beneficial cooperation across sectors,"

it said. Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe was among seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Modi and the Union council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on June 9.

## Restore statues to original places in Parliament complex, demands Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman over the shifting of statues of Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar and other national leaders to a new location in the Parliament complex and has demanded that they be restored to their original places.

Kharge said the statues of national leaders have been relocated to a separate corner "arbitrarily" without any consultation and this amounts to violation of the basic spirit of democracy.

"I wish to emphasise at the very threshold that such removal of these statues arbitrarily, without any consultation, violates the basic spirit of our democracy. Needless to mention that the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and other national leaders were situated at prominent locations after due deliberation and consideration.

Each statue and its location across the Parliament House complex held immense value and significance," Kharge said in his letter sent separately to the Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman.

The Congress chief, who is also the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, pointed out that there is a dedicated committee for installing portraits and statues of national leaders and MPs in the Parliament House Complex -



"Committee on the Installation of Portraits and Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in the Parliament House Complex" but the panel has not been reconstituted since 2019. "Hence, such decisions made without any proper discussion and deliberation with relevant stakeholders are against the rules and traditions of our Parliament. Therefore, I demand that the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and other national leaders who greatly contributed for the unity and integrity of our nation must be relocated to their original locations with due respect and regard," he wrote. The Congress has taken strong objection to the shifting of the statues. The opposition parties have often held protest marches and agitations within the Parliament complex before the statues of Gandhi and Ambedkar.

## Indian Army launches skin bank facility

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has launched a first-of-its-kind skin bank facility that aims to revolutionise the treatment of severe burn injuries and other skin-related conditions for service personnel and their families.

The defence ministry in a statement on Tuesday said the skin bank will be staffed by a team of highly-trained medical professionals, including plastic surgeons, tissue engineers and specialised technicians.

The Army Hospital (Research and Referral) here announced the opening of the skin bank facility, a first-of-its-kind to be established within the Armed Forces Medical Services, it said. "This landmark initiative aims to revolutionise the treatment of severe burn injuries and other skin-related conditions among service members and their families," the statement said.

This bank will serve as a centralised hub for the collection, processing, storage and distribution of skin grafts,



providing a "critical resource" for military medical centres across the country, officials said. By establishing this facility, the armed forces are ensuring that personnel and their families have access to the most advanced skin replacement therapies, they said.

The facility will adhere to the highest standards of quality control and safety, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the skin grafts, the statement said. DGMS (Army) and Col Comdt Lt Gen Arindam Chatterjee termed the launch of this skin bank as "a testament to the unwavering commitment to the

health and well-being of service members".

He added that the facility will not only enhance the quality of care, but also strengthen the ability to support those who have been affected by serious injuries.

"By having a dedicated resource for skin tissue, we can provide our patients with the most effective and personalised treatments, ultimately improving their chances of recovery and rehabilitation," Commandant, Army Hospital (R&R) Lt Gen Ajith Nilakantan, was quoted as saying in the statement.

## INS Sunayna completes short refit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's ship INS Sunayna, an Offshore Patrol Vessel based at Southern Naval Command entered Port Victoria, Seychelles on June 15 in company of Seychelles Coast Guard Ship (SCGS) Zoroaster. Zoroaster had recently completed her short refit at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE), India, officials said here on Tuesday. Upon arrival, INS Sunayna was warmly received by officials of



Seychelles Coast Guard and Embassy of India. During the ship's visit, personnel from Indian Navy and Seychelles Defence Forces will engage in official and social interactions and cross deck visits. The ship will undertake joint EEZ surveillance with the

Seychelles Coast Guard during the deployment. The visit is aimed at further strengthening the camaraderie and mutual cooperation between Indian Navy and Seychelles Coast Guard in line with the vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

## BJP, Congress war of words over NEET

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

BJP and Congress on Wednesday Bengaged in a political slugfest on NEET issue with the former demanding an apology from Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and the latter announcing it will hold nationwide protests on Friday over alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination demanding justice for students.

Seeking an apology from Priynaka, the BJP also sought legal action against her a day after the Allahabad High Court said the NTA can take action against a NEET aspirant who submitted fake documents alleging the testing agency failed to declare her result.

Latching on the high court's order, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged Priyanka had recently posted a social media message of this NEET aspirant who had made some "outlandish claims" about her result in NEET exam "including torn OMR, lesser marks being given to her". "Turns out this girl Ayushi Patel, who claimed her OMR was torn and marks were not correct, had provided fake documents even to court and made false claims about her OMR being torn," he wrote a social media message, citing Priyanka's June 10 post on the micro-blogging site.

He slammed the Congress accusing it of running a "jhooth ki dukan" and demanded that a probe be also conducted into the matter to ascertain if the Congress had "sponsored" Patel to make false claims.

Sharing on the social media the video of Patel claiming some irregularities in declaration of her NEET result recently, Priyanka had demanded that the government will have to take serious steps to correct these irregularities.

"Lakhs of children prepare hard for exams like NEET and spend the most precious moments of their lives in this preparation. The whole family puts their faith and strength in this effort. But year after year, paper leaks and irregularities related to results of these exams have come to the fore," she had written in her post.



"Shouldn't the accountability of the agencies conducting the exams be fixed? Shouldn't the government give up its careless attitude and seriously consider the exam system?" she also asked.

"We cannot see the dreams of our young friends being shattered like this. This injustice being done by the system with their hard work must stop. The government will have to take serious steps to correct these irregularities," she had said.

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday said Patel, who had alleged in her petition that the National Testing Agency (NTA) failed to declare her result and that her OMR answersheet was found torn, had submitted forged documents and the NTA can take legal action in the matter.

This came after NTA, on the direction of the high court's Lucknow bench, produced before it the original OMR answer sheet of the student which was found to be intact.

The NEET aspirant in her petition had claimed that NTA sent her a communication saying her result would not be declared as her OMR sheet was found torn. She had also posted a video on social media repeating the allegations that caused a stir amid the ongoing row over claims of irregularities in the conduct of the undergraduate medical entrance exam NEET.

The petitioner had demanded that her OMR sheet be evaluated manually. She had also called for an inquiry against NTA and demanded that the counselling for admission be stopped.

Meanwhile, Congress said it will hold protests in all state headquarters on Friday over the alleged irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET, demanding justice for the students.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Not so neat

The Supreme Court demands a comprehensive investigation into administrative negligence surrounding the NEET fiasco

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), serving as a critical gateway for students aspiring to enter undergraduate medical and dental programs in India, is at the centre of controversy. The Supreme Court of India has raised concerns about potential negligence in the administration of the exam, calling for an exhaustive investigation. Since the results were announced on June 4, the NEET exam has faced intense scrutiny due to various issues, including errors in the question paper, improper allocation of grace marks and allegations of paper leaks and fraud. In response, students and parents have called for a re-test, leading to numerous petitions being filed in courts. Despite National Testing Agency (NTA) officials denying any paper leaks, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan acknowledged that "some irregularities" had been detected at certain exam centers. NEET was introduced to standardize medical admissions across India, aiming to create a uniform criterion for entry into medical courses. However, since its



inception, the exam has faced a multitude of challenges, including allegations of fraud, question paper leaks and complaints of unequal access, which have sparked widespread debate and protests. In a pivotal decision, the Supreme Court of India has brought attention to serious concerns regarding the administration of the NEET exam, highlighting potential negligence and calling for a thorough investigation. Over the years, NEET has been marred by several instances of question paper leaks and cheating, which not only undermine the fairness of the examination but also cast a shadow over the credibility of the authorities responsible for conducting it. Such issues have been a recurrent prob-

lem, eroding trust in the system and fueling public discontent.

Additionally, there have been persistent concerns about accessibility and equity. It has been alleged that NEET inherently favors well-to-do students from urban areas who have better access to high-quality coaching and educational resources, thereby disadvantaging those from rural or economically weaker backgrounds. This perceived inequity has led to protests from various States and communities who feel marginalized by the current system. The Supreme Court's call for an investigation into possible negligence underscores the gravity of administrative lapses within the NEET examination process. There are allegations of corruption involving insiders within examination boards or associated entities who might be leaking papers or enabling cheating in exchange for bribes. Such internal corruption severely compromises the examination's integrity. Some States have expressed opposition to NEET, citing disadvantages for their students due to regional and linguistic differences. This opposition could reflect broader political dynamics, where certain political interests align against the centralization of medical entrance examinations. Indeed, a probe is crucial for restoring faith in the NEET process and ensuring that all aspiring medical students have a fair opportunity.

### PICTALK



Devotees gather to take a holy dip in the Ganga river on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra, in Haridwar

PTI

## Attain happiness by living in the moment

Embracing small moments and choosing to smile can transform not just our day, but the lives of those around us, making the world a happier place

I have often wondered if happiness is a choice or an effort. As I have aged, I realise that it is a choice for which one needs to make an effort. I understand that happiness derived out of immersing oneself in the moment is also meditative. A few years back, I was standing in the airport security queue with a grumpy face. It was an early morning flight for which I had to wake up in the dead of the night. I was also stressed as I had to make a presentation to my Board of Directors in a few hours. In short I had no reasons to be happy. In this self-made gloom surrounding me, my eyes fell on an old gentleman, standing patiently in front of me. His cheerful disposition even at that early hour, despite the struggle to navigate the slow moving long queue and the broad smile on his face as he walked jauntily for the mandatory check, was enough to light up the faces of everyone around him. He smiled at the security personnel, asked his name, introduced himself and still laughing, picked up his cabin baggage and moved on with



a spring in his steps. The usually taciturn security staff kept looking at the retreating back — with a smile on his face! We had a laughter club in my condominium complex. These sexagenarians to octogenarians burst into laughter at the drop of a hat, oblivious to the smirks of the other walkers. The laughter is forced, but the young at heart are immersed in the act. They have chosen to work for happiness, unmindful of the worry of the moment. Children do not need a reason to be happy — they do not even have to fake it. Each moment is a miracle for them. It would not be wrong to say that they live in the moment. The purity and

the sheer joy of their happiness is a sight to behold. I was a young boy of 9. My brother was 8. We were having annual sports in our school. The winter days were gloriously sunny. It was a pleasure to sit on the boundary wall to watch the young athletes. It was an equally satisfying act to clap for the winning heroes. We lost sense of time, so absorbed were we in the pleasure of the moment. This led my worried and irate father to march to the school and drag us back home. The lasting memory is that of our sitting on the boundary wall lost in the joy that it afforded us and not the subsequent thrashing. As we grew into adulthood, with accompanying respon-

sibilities of the daily grind, lines of frown started appearing on our foreheads. We forgot to even smile. We also forgot to make friends. We thought that the professionals that we spent time with could at best be acquaintances. We could not have been farther from truth. Friends are forever a source of joy. Now that we are in the winter of our lives, we realise that there is so much to be happy about. The act of waking up in the morning, or going about our routine with our hands and feet and many other such acts that we considered mundane in our younger days, are now sources of happiness. Everyone loves to spend time with a smiling person, avoiding a grumpy face. The world would be happier if all of us chose to be the lighted candle of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "When a happy person comes into the room, it is as if another candle has been lit."

(The writer conducts workshops on creative writing for young adults and corporate executives. Views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

In less than a week of assuming office as the Prime Minister for the largest democracy in the world, Mr Modi, is back where he excels. He was in Italy this week, meeting the leaders from the powerful group of nations also known as the G7. On the sidelines were several bilateral meetings with leaders of African, Arab nations, besides several clear messages to the primarily American and European groups leaders. This was PM Modi's first trip abroad, after assuming office for a third time (a remarkable feat in itself), where nearly 670 million voters, patiently waited in queues, under an extremely harsh summer sun, over a period of nearly two months, to choose the leader of the largest democracy. PM Modi and his party, despite, setting really ambitious expectations, could not manage a majority by itself and is now dependent on a bunch of pre poll alliance political parties, to lead the National Alliance Government. This assumes significance at a time when several parts of Europe, not to mention US are going their own set of democratic churns. The US goes to poll end of the year and voices on either side of the aisle

, are getting harsher and louder. Similarly the elections to the European Parliament, has thrown a resurgence of far right parties, which is likely to have an impact on the geo political dynamics for a long time. What Mr Modi may be comforted by, is the fact that he may not need to look around for carefully worded diplomatic Statements, while explaining the State of Indian democracy to the western nations. In the past few years, several questions have been raised across the western nations and in US regarding the health of the Indian democracy, its report card on minority rights, religious freedom, existence of press etc. The near majority verdict, by the Indian electorate, with ample scope of checks and balances to keep the party with highest seats under leash, a robust opposition presence in the parliament would be clear talk point for PM and his set of diplomats to set out a gold standard for democracy, when engaging with several nations. This becomes even more robust, given India's unblemished record of being a largely



IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, SEVERAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED ACROSS WESTERN NATIONS AND IN THE US REGARDING THE HEALTH OF THE INDIAN DEMOCRACY, ITS REPORT CARD ON MINORITY RIGHTS, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, THE EXISTENCE OF THE PRESS, ETC

# India's foreign policy under Modi 3.0



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Amid geopolitical tensions, Modi's engagements at the G7 reflect India's commitment to democratic principles and its positioning on the world stage



democratic nation, with a huge diverse population, in a neighbourhood, where there are several non democratic regimes, not to forget the second largest economy in the world China. Mr Modi, with his nearly three decades of experience as head of the State and nation, is not new to diplomacy and in several interviews, leading up to the general elections, has articulated his target of enhancing India's global image. The grand spectacle around G20 (not to forget back room diplomatic negotiations to arrive at a joint Statement), several high level State visits, a bunch of rescue operations carried out for citizens and neighbours from war torn areas, supply of emergency medicines during Covid, are all pointers towards the focus the Prime Minister's Office attaches on global reputational management. PM's first visit in his third term to meet the G7 leaders, is a reassurance of continuity, as well as scoping out newer engagement roadmaps with existing and potential new allies. Mr Modi's visit to Italy

comes at a time when the Ukraine war is unrelenting and despite severe reluctance, there seems to be chinks in the united European approach towards the aggressor Russia. Many of them, would have, similar concerns regarding Israel's war on terror, which has refused to die down in months. It may be recalled that both Israel and Russia are close allies of India and India has so far walked a tightrope when commenting both of these volatile situations. The dynamics of the past relationship, while building deeper relations with recent allies such as US are likely to be a sensitive diplomatic trope. It is no wonder, that PM Modi has picked up S Jaishankar, a seasoned diplomat as the External Affairs minister for a second term, to retain the continuity and foreign policy focus achieved during his last term. The evolving geo political landscape and India's role in global affairs would continue to be tested and chiselled in days to come.

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BATTLING THE HEAT

Madam — Apropos the news story "Battling the heat with tribal ammunition," published on June 19, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, I am struck by the diverse range of topics covered in these articles. From the historical significance of May Day to the ongoing challenges of terrorism and global security, each piece provides valuable insights into the complexities of modern society. The essay on the Kutia-Kondh tribes of Odisha, highlighting their traditional methods for coping with heat waves, is particularly noteworthy. It showcases the resilience and resourcefulness of indigenous communities in adapting to harsh environmental conditions. The article on China's two-front problem, discussing its growing confidence in its defence capabilities, is also thought-provoking. Overall, these articles demonstrate the breadth and depth of the newspaper's coverage, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the world around us.

Preeti Arya | Jind

### INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Madam — Apropos the news story "Child Development and National Progress," published on June 19, this is my response. The article rightly highlights the critical importance of investing in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to achieve the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India). With over 50 per cent of India's population below 25 years old, nurturing this demographic dividend through quality ECCE is paramount. The benefits of ECCE are multifaceted — it enhances learning outcomes, positively impacts personality development and bridges social equity gaps. Yet, India's current ECCE spending is a mere 0.1 per cent of GDP, far below the recommended 1.5-2.2 per cent. To make ECCE universally accessible, the article rightly suggests incorporat-

## Nurturing India's Startup Potential



Apropos the news story "Startups must innovate and execute for commercial success," published on June 19, this is my response. The article highlights the significant progress made by India's startup ecosystem in the past decade while acknowledging the challenges that young entrepreneurs face. The author rightly points out that the growth potential is vast, bolstered by supportive Government initiatives and the commitment of funders to nurture India's youth. The primary challenge lies in the dearth

of operational and financial management skills among young entrepreneurs, who often struggle with executing their innovative ideas. The author's emphasis on the need for comprehensive mentoring alongside financial support is well-founded. Funders like YEA play a crucial role in guiding startups in enhancing operational efficiency, managing finances and leveraging Governmental incentives. The author's emphasis on the importance of genuine innovation, meticulous planning, resilience and patience in entrepreneurship is commendable. Startups often aim for rapid multi-million-dollar or billion-dollar success, but true success hinges on sustained commitment, focus and perseverance. The article serves as a valuable reminder that building a thriving enterprise demands continual effort to benefit entrepreneurs, investors, clients and stakeholders alike. Overall, the article provides a balanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing India's startup ecosystem and the critical role of funders and mentors in nurturing the entrepreneurial potential of the country's youth.

Kularani Kapoor | Ranchik

ing it into the RTE Act, increasing public spending and enhancing social infrastructure. These steps will lay a strong foundation for India's future and help realise the dream of a developed nation. Investing in ECCE is a strategic imperative that cannot be overlooked if India aspires to become a global leader by 2047.

Roshan Naik | Kolkata

### ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS

Madam — Apropos the news story "Elder abuse remains an underreported crisis," published on June 19, this is my response. As a daily reader of the newspaper, I am deeply disturbed by the alarming statistics on elder abuse. The fact that 1 in 6 older adults experiences abuse in community settings is a stark reminder of the urgent need for concert-

ed action. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is a crucial step in raising awareness about this issue and empowering communities to identify and address it effectively. I believe that a multifaceted approach involving awareness, education, legal measures and societal change is necessary to address elder abuse. It is essential to educate both the elderly and the younger generations about the importance of respecting and caring for the elderly. The Government, NGOs and the private sector must collaborate to bridge the gap between policy and implementation, ensuring proper care for India's elderly population.

Pradeep Kumar | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE INFALLIBLE LAW OF KARMA



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Every action has a consequence, even if the timing of its return is not immediately visible

It is said that 'Honesty is the best policy'. But sometimes people get appalled when they see a dishonest corrupt person rising to the heights of success, power and fame while a sincere and kind person toiling it out without much success. As a result, often life seems unfair and the seeming injustice turns people bitter and revengeful. However one fails to understand an important fact that the law of karma is an eternal law that works on the simple principle of cause and effect- 'as you sow so shall you reap'.

We all know that the issue of corruption has stirred up numerous debates and agitations and attracted extensive coverage in the Indian media over the past few years. It is also a well known fact that in many countries taking and giving bribes, financial scams and misuse of public money have become a norm. Many times those involved in these activities go scot free and they lead a luxurious life and enjoy many privileges without being accountable for their nefarious deeds. But we forget that the law of karma is infallible and immutable.

As per this law every act or expression by a human being will be experienced by him/her in the same degree and nobody can escape the effects of this law. What we cannot see most of the time is how and when an action is punished or rewarded, as a result of which we get disillusioned. However, as per karmic law, sometimes the result of an action may be carried over to the next life and hence it says that there is always perfect justice in whatever happens.

This can be seen when we see someone who is born with physical, economic and social challenges. Why? Simply because past karma is carried over and experienced in the next birth. Thus, understanding the law of karma will help us to perceive life in a deeper and holistic way. Firstly, we must realise that the doer of karma is not the body but the being or the soul which is immortal and the eternal Law of karma facilitates and shapes the continuous journey or evolution of the human soul. We are here to express our true nature and experience the reward of that. Our expressions may be a subtle feeling or thought or they may be a visible action.



It is unfortunate that most people today are blind to their spiritual identity and law of karma, as a result of which they believe that they are here for one lifetime and so they can eat, drink, make merry and indulge in all pleasures through right or wrong means. But the fact is that such people may have wealth but they lack peace of mind, health and true joy. This narrow-minded limited view of human life has spawned vices such as lust, greed, ego and attachment. In the effort to have more, enjoy more and possess more, people have become totally callous about values like honesty, compassion, sharing and cooperation. Even when people suffer the result of their bad karma they do not realise that they have to improve themselves instead they blame others and become even more corrupt and vicious. If people could see in advance that each corrupt deed they commit would boomerang into a painful suffering or loss for them either in this life or in the future lifetime, they would never commit a wrong again. But they neither have the wisdom nor have the strength to live a life of total moral integrity. We must realise that richness of character is the most essential and real wealth that raises the value of human life, for, without this, a rich person may have temptations to commit more crime. But, it seems that there is little attention to these things. Today people have lost faith in God and good karma. But the law of karma is the most foolproof law that guarantees good return to those who do good. The time and place and the source from where it will come will vary. But the wheel of divine justice never fails. So, instead of seeking short-term pleasures and rewards through corrupt deeds let us live a righteous life and reap the fruit of abundant joy and wellbeing.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)*

# NAM faces challenges of neo-colonialism



GYAN BHADRA

The Non-Aligned Movement must rejuvenate its commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and resist the subtle encroachments of neo-colonialism

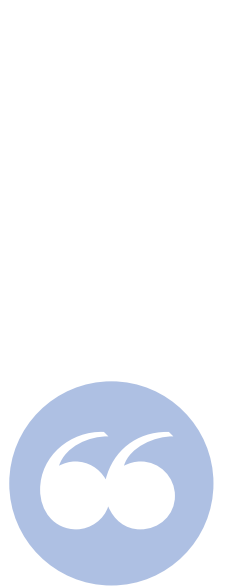
British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was quoted as saying : "Those who forget history and do not learn from it are condemned to repeat it". Churchill's remark coming as it did from excerpts of his 1948 speech delivered in House of Commons was purportedly made against his predecessor whose failure to re-equip the country with requisite arms and ammunition made second world war ineluctable. On one hand, he cast aspersions on the dark side of colonialism. Paradoxically on the other, he, the great liberator of Europe, opined that colonialism should have continued in Asia and Africa in the wake of winning second world war.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which India manned as a founding member in 1955, was established in the aftermath of the Second World War, ostensibly with a view to safeguard the country's sovereignty, integrity from the evil designs of colonialists. As is well known, during '50s and later a sizeable number of countries were unshackled from the chain of colonialism. They joined NAM en bloc ; and soon the organisation became a force to be reckoned with and played a pivotal role as a mouth-piece for freedom of its members in the world besieged by the Cold War. With diplomatic sleight of hand, its most vocal member-countries introduced in its organisational charter the "neutralist policy" to be followed by other member-countries. Under the diplomatic scheme of things, member-countries would resist temptations and allurements offered either by capitalist West or the communist East to make them their allies. Instead in the quagmire unleashed by two superpowers, the organisation opted the middle path and stood tall as "third formidable forum".

As a matter of fact, nothing illustrates the fact of NAM being a power broker more explicitly than the "swing votes" at the UN courted and shared by the east and west bloc. It provided succour to erstwhile have-not countries. Proof of pudding is in eating. The fact that most of the countries in the world refused to kowtow to either bloc spoke volumes about its sustenance as an independent entity. All this notwithstanding, Churchill was seemingly opinionated in his views about countries including India that they might have failed to learn from history. Without a powerful deterrent force against colonialism, possibilities for it to resurface again could not be ruled out. It might metamorphose into different forms in sync with different age.

Undeniably, after the collapse of Cold War, NAM's relevance was on decline. Many factors which constituted early and undisputed principles of the Movement were blown to smithereens. A case in point: Economic Self-reliance. In the charter of Movement, Self-reliance acquired an ideological role as bulwark against economic aggression perpetrated by multinationals and monopolistic commercial, financial and industrial companies. Conflicting nature of Statements emanating from member-countries and incidents of trading charges amongst them on diplomatically impertinent issues led to strengthen the belief that the organisation had digressed from its chosen path and its future seemed bleak. .

Today it goes without saying that the war of attrition against colonialism was far from over during the post-war period. What could not be pre-empted by NAM to happen was the rising graph of neo-colonialism presence in the countries ; and its pres-



AFTER ASSUMING THE OFFICE OF CHAIRPERSON, AZERBAIJAN VOWED TO WIN BACK A QUARTER OF THE TERRITORY OF ITS COUNTRY KNOWN AS NAGORNO-KARABAKH, WHICH HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED BY ARMENIAN NEO-COLONIALISTS FOR THREE DECADES

ence manifested itself by controlling countries through money, debt and media. Colonialism was replaced by neo colonialism - the control of countries through independent in name through many means, but namely through the media, money and debt. Herein, NAM's purpose remained unfulfilled.

In the context of Britain, King Charles III, while on a visit to Kenya, rendered his profound apologies for unleashing reigns of dictatorial oppression by his many predecessors within the colonised countries is a significant historical Statement. Now the United Kingdom's diplomatic intentions are clear. It seeks to enter into partnerships with countries based on motto of mutual respect. A free trade deal between the United Kingdom and India likely to be implemented in New Year may be cited as a case in point. That is slated to pave the way for bringing together the two countries as equals.

But France, once regarded as Britain's close competitor with respect to setting up colonial hegemony in countries has not expressed such feelings of remorse over its past deeds. On the contrary, they have the audacity to run their fiefdom of neo-colonialism with alacrity.

As a matter of fact, France is running its writ in so-called independent countries of West and central Africa by controlling two currencies, the west and central African francs. Notably the two currencies are used by 14 African countries. France's diktat is : these countries must deposit 50 percent of their foreign assets in the French Treasury. Obviously France's intention to maintain economic hegemony over them is loud and clear. These countries have been bearing the brunt of France's disdainful economic activities for decades after colonialism was considered to have ended. France behaved obsequiously with these countries for its own advantages.

Desperation of these nations—who are only independent in name and not in reality—could be gauged by the fact that in the past twelve months almost all countries in French-speaking Africa have asked

French military, diplomats and businessmen to leave their lands for good. More or less France is engaged in the same agonising activities against the countries in other parts of the world where France has daringly disallowed any further independence.

For instance, in 2021 the French territory of New Caledonia in the South Pacific faced the diabolical designs of France as the last of three independence referenda was deliberately thwarted by security pressure. The island of Corsica in the Mediterranean witnessed the murder of a freedom fighter which eventually culminated into island-wide riots leaving 76 policemen injured in its wake.

Paradoxically France has even furthered its neo-colonial interests in countries which were never part of its erstwhile empire. In the last two years France has thwarted plans for a peace process in the south Caucasus, ostensibly to please Armenia with whom it has entered into deal of arms sales. French diplomats have publicly reprimanded Azerbaijan, Armenia's neighbour. Not only this, but also those diplomats instigated the million-strong Armenian diasporas in France to pressurise lawmakers in the French National Assembly to pass laws against Azerbaijan ; also they left no stone unturned in maligning the country in French media.

Whether to say unlikely coincidence or no coincidence at all, Azerbaijan is now at the helm of NAM as its chairperson. After assuming office of chairperson, Azerbaijan had vowed to win back a quarter of the territory of its country known as Nagorno-Karabakh which was illegally occupied by Armenian neo-colonialists for three decades.

In a 44-day war against Armenia in 2020 and later a 24-hour military operation against it in 2023, Azerbaijan finally got back its occupied territories. The fact of Azerbaijan winning back its occupied territories from Armenia did not go down well with France. It reflected in France's action of using its power initially and unabashedly to undermine European Union-

led peace negotiations from within; it sent senior French politicians - including the Mayor of Paris - to Nagorno-Karabakh before its liberation to praise Armenian separatist leaders. In sheer violation of international law related to war, France did not think twice before allowing its own citizens of Armenian descent to fight in the 2020 conflict without penalty.

There are no two opinions about the fact that in order to impede such attempts of geopolitical manipulation, NAM was set up. Azerbaijan's leadership has resuscitated the group which is evident from international media in far off Australia confirming and writing to vouch for it: "There is life in the Non-Aligned Movement Yet".

In January 2024, Uganda will take the Chairmanship baton from Azerbaijan. To Uganda's utter discomfiture; it is also shackled with tentacles of neo-colonialist powers who have asked this traditionalist country to abrogate a law on child protection.

The inherent motive of neo-colonialist powers is to widely spread and teach modern western social mores in Ugandan schools. The Ugandans have out rightly renounced this socially and culturally demeaning directive. It is also for India to stand with Uganda—independent and fellow NAM's member—and repudiate the unwarranted interference in the Ugandan education system.

With NAM rejuvenating in a new avatar (incarnation), it is high time for all its members alongwith its co-founder India to get their acts together and set up a cohesive group with a view to fight against the act of usurping the sovereignty and wherewithals of countries by neo-colonialists belonging to both western and eastern bloc.

If not intervened by NAM members now and left unchecked, the ever-burgeoning presence would get the world poorer, unsafe and susceptible to conflicts. Therefore Churchill's advice to learn from history has not lost relevance in these modern times.

*(The author is a columnist, views are personal)*

# Navigating farmer discontent amid unfulfilled promises

As the Govt embarks on its third tenure, winning back the trust of the farming community will require genuine and substantial reforms that prioritise farmers' welfare

Agriculture has always been a cornerstone of India's economy and social structure. Despite its critical role, the sector has witnessed a turbulent relationship with the central Government in recent years. The Union Government's ambitious promises and subsequent policies aimed at revolutionizing agriculture have often been met with skepticism and anger from the farming community. This discontent was vividly reflected in the recent general election results in States like Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The deep-seated issues that plagued the sector, including the contentious farming laws and the unmet demand for legal guarantee to Minimum Support Price (MSP), continues to fuel



BK JHA

farmers' agony and anger. Around 65 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas, with 47 per cent reliant on agriculture. Despite India's rapid economic growth, agricultural income has stagnated, averaging about Rs 10,000 rupees monthly in 2019, with half of the families in debt and lacking traditional financing. Public spending on farming has declined over the past decade and needed reforms

have not been implemented. Consequently, the agriculture sector, which employs nearly half of India's workforce, contributes less than a fifth to the GDP. Modi's promise to double farmers' income by 2022 remains unfulfilled. The Modi Government's first tenure starting in 2014 saw a significant focus on agriculture, with promises to double farmers' income. However, these promises were overshadowed by controversies and policies perceived as anti-farmer. Agony and anger of farmers reached its tipping point in 2020-21 and nationwide protests began against controversial farm laws aimed at easing rules for crop sales, pricing and storage. The protests ended after Modi promised to repeal the laws.

Farmers demanded legally guaranteed MSP for 23 crops, set at 50 per cent above production costs, as recommended by scientist MS Swaminathan. While the Government sets MSPs for 22 crops, it primarily buys only wheat and rice for welfare programs and private buyers aren't legally required to pay MSP. The controversial farming laws were aimed at liberalizing the agricultural sector but were seen by many farmers as a threat to their livelihoods. The prolonged protests that followed led to the eventual withdrawal of these laws, yet the underlying discontent persisted. The recent Lok Sabha elections reflected this ongoing anger, with significant losses for the ruling party in agricultural strongholds. What

future awaits Indian Agriculture Ministers? Newly appointed Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will have to bring in all his expertise and experience of transforming Madhya Pradesh agricultural landscape at national level to address the challenges. He must curious and cautious about the fate of his predecessors. Initiator of the Soil Health Card scheme, under then Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh was never inducted in the Cabinet again. The scheme, intended to boost soil productivity, ended up mired in inefficacy and controversy. The subsequent minister, including Narendra Singh Tomar shifted to Madhya Pradesh State politics and now he is speaker in

Assembly. Recently, Arjun Munda, faced electoral defeat. Defeat of Junior Ministers Kailash Choudhary and Sanjeev Balyan also indicate farmers' dissatisfaction with the Government's agricultural policies. A critical demand from the farming community has been the legal guarantee of MSP. The Government's failure to address this demand has been a significant source of anger. Farmers argue that a legally guaranteed MSP would provide a safety net against market fluctuations and exploitation by middlemen. Despite multiple assurances, the Modi administration has not enacted legislation to this effect, fueling the perception that their interests are being ignored. Experts argue that legally guar-

anteeing MSP could create a fiscal burden and potential inflationary effects. However, opinions differ on this impact. Some believe that containing cultivation costs could mitigate inflation concerns. The cost of MSP implementation for all crops is also uncertain, varying with market prices, Government procurement quantities and duration. Estimates range widely, from CRISIL Market Intelligence & Analytics' 210 billion rupees to other analysts' 10 trillion rupees annually. A more effective approach might be direct income support linked to farmland investment. Additionally, revamping the current procurement process. Farmers could also benefit from a price stabiliza-

tion fund to cover the difference when market prices fall below MSP levels. This combination of strategies could better support farmers without causing significant fiscal or inflationary issues. In response to the ongoing challenges in the agricultural sector, the Modi 3.0 Government is poised to introduce several initiatives aimed at placating the agrarian community. Among these, the Krishi Sakhi Convergence Program (KSCP) stands out as a significant and ambitious effort. Modi 3.0 Government's focus on agriculture, marked by programs like the KSCP, reflects a recognition of the critical role farming plays in India.

*(The author is a senior journalist; vews expressed are personal)*



# Bombay HC allows release of film Hamare Barah after cuts

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After viewing the film and hearing both sides, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday allowed the release of the film 'Hamare Baarah' after its makers agreed to delete objectionable portions. Hearing a plea seeking a ban on the film for its derogatory content towards Islamic faith and the Muslim community, a HC division bench Justices B. P. Colabawalla and irdosh Pooniwalla viewed the film and suggested changes which both the movie makers and the petitioners agreed to. Originally slated for release on June 7 and then postponed to June 14, 'Hamare Baarah' -- which deals with a woman taking her father to court to allow her pregnant mother the right to terminate the pregnancy in order to save life -- is likely to hit the screens on June 21. The HC bench allowed the



release of 'Hamare Baarah' after the makers assured the court that the necessary changes would be made and a certificate would be obtained from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). One of the changes suggested by the court was that the film-makers would display on screen a disclaimer which is shown at the inception of the Film for a duration of 12 seconds. The message -- to be displayed on screen both in English for

12 seconds would read as follows: "According to the Sharia (law), Muslims are allowed to practise polygamy. According to the Quran, a man may have up to four legal wives only if there is a fear of being unjust to non-married orphan girls. Even then, the husband is required to treat all the wives equally. If a man fears that he will not be able to meet these conditions then he is not allowed more than one wife". The HC also imposed Rs 5 lakh cost on the makers of the movie for releasing trailers before obtaining CBFC certification. The court said that the filmmakers would donate the amount of Rs 5 lakh to Ideal Relief Committee Trust which will be used to provide relief to the people in times of natural disasters. In his petition, social worker Azhar B. Tamboli had contended that the film "distorted" the Quran, portrayed the Muslim community in a negative manner, and claimed that

the CBFC had flouted the Cinematograph Act, 1952, by incorrectly certifying it for release violating the Constitution Article 19(2) and 25. Earlier this month, the high court had postponed the release of the film. It later permitted the release after the makers said the objectionable portions would be deleted as directed by the CBFC. The petitioners then moved the Supreme Court, which stayed the release of the film and directed the High Court to hear and take an appropriate decision. At the hearing before the high court on Wednesday, the parties submitted consent terms to the Court and said that they had arrived at a consensus regarding removal of objectionable parts of the movie. The petitioners told the court that they had no objection to the release of the film once the changes suggested by the court are made.

# Reasi attack: Foreign terrorists handed ₹6,000 to OGW who acted as their guide

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An overground worker Hakimdeen, arrested by the Reasi police in the terror attack case on a pilgrim bus in which nine pilgrims were killed and 41 others were injured on June 9, was given a paltry sum of Rs 6,000 by the foreign terrorists for sheltering them and providing logistics support to execute the terror plot. According to police, Hakimdeen was arrested by the Reasi police from the Bandrahi area of the frontier Rajouri district. SSP Reasi Mohita Sharma Wednesday told reporters, "During preliminary interrogation, Hakimdeen has so far confessed that he sheltered three foreign terrorists for a paltry sum of Rs 6000". SSP Reasi also revealed that Hakimdeen worked as their guide, provided them with food and shelter, and escorted these foreign terrorists to the attack site by avoiding coming



on the radar of the CCTVs fitted across different locations. He was also handed over a sum of Rs 6000, SSP Reasi added. Sharing some more details about the terror incident SSP Reasi Mohita Sharma said Hakimdeen has also claimed he was present at the time of the attack and heard gunshots. He later escorted them (foreign terrorists) to their safe hideout.

She revealed the foreign terrorists visited his residence on at least three occasions. They stayed at his residence for one full day before he dropped them in Reasi near the attack site. SSP Reasi said both Rajouri and Reasi police are carrying out searches to track down the footprints of these foreign terrorists in the area. "We will not stop until those

terrorists are either arrested or neutralized". She maintained "Around 150 people have been picked up in connection with this case. Referring to alerts SSP Reasi clarified the police teams were on high alert in the wake of the swearing-in ceremony of the new govt and India-Pakistan match. We did not get any specific input regarding this attack..."

# Will work to protect dharma, unite society: Union Minister

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Wednesday said he would work to safeguard national interests, protect "dharma", unite society and try to bring funds for the development of Telangana and his Lok Sabha constituency of Karimnagar in the state. Sanjay Kumar, who reached Karimnagar in Telangana for the first time after assuming charge as a minister, told reporters that credit for his elevation as union minister goes to the party activists and their hard work. Prostrating on the ground as a mark of respect for his 'karmabhoomi' soon after reaching Karimnagar where he rose through the ranks as a leader in the saffron party, Sanjay Kumar said it is only possible in the BJP for a person like him to rise from being a corporator in Karimnagar to a union minister. He was accorded a rousing welcome by the party leaders and activists who showered



flower petals on him. Recalling that party activists had faced police action in the form of lathi charge, rowdy sheets and house arrests when he was Telangana BJP president during the previous BRS regime, he said he has now got recognition because of the hard work and sacrifices of the party workers. This post is dedicated to the party activists, he said. "I will use this responsibility of being union minister not for enjoying the post or to make money illegally, but for protecting the country and 'dharma', uniting society,

and bringing funds for Telangana and the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency. There is no question of misusing the post," he said. He also said he would remember the sacrifices of those who gave their life for the sake of Telangana statehood. He was given a guard of honour by the police and welcomed by government officials in Karimnagar. Sanjay Kumar retained the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency in the recent Lok Sabha polls by a margin of over 2.25 lakh votes.

# Karnataka mulls policy to boost groundwater recharge

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister for Minor Irrigation and Science and Technology N S Boseraju on Wednesday said the state government is contemplating formulating a new policy aimed at enhancing groundwater recharge throughout the state. The announcement was made during the inauguration of the three-day National Conference on Sustainable Groundwater Management for Water Security, organised by the Karnataka Science and Technology Academy. Speaking at the event, Boseraju pointed to the decline in groundwater levels and attributed this trend to the escalating urbanisation and deforestation. Emphasising the historical reliance on groundwater for industrial, agricultural, and domestic purposes, he said the depletion of this vital resource poses significant risks for future generations. "The exploitation of groundwater is intensifying while efforts to recharge it are



diminishing. The natural recharge processes are hampered by urban expansion. Immediate action is required to mitigate these effects, or our successors will suffer the consequences," Minister Boseraju was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office. Noting that the current drought has highlighted the need for water conservation and to prevent further groundwater exploitation, the Minister underscored the importance of implementing rainwater harvesting systems and promoting groundwater

recharge. He called for a collective effort to adopt sustainable practices and said the Directorate of Groundwater is actively considering a policy that would provide incentives for such initiatives. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has also shown interest in this regard. Boseraju also stressed the importance of raising awareness about advancements in groundwater management through national conferences and urged cooperation with relevant departments for effective implementation.

# Rain triggers landslides, flood-like situation in several Arunachal districts

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Incessant rain over the past few days had triggered landslides and flood-like situations in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, officials said on Wednesday. The state capital witnessed landslides at several locations, with waterlogging reported along the Doimuk-Potin Road and several stretches of the Itanagar-Yupia Road. A portion of NH-415 and a culvert were washed away at Karsingta sinking zone on Tuesday morning, severing connectivity between Nirjuli and Banderdewa. Vehicular traffic between these areas has been diverted via Gumto Road. With the IMD forecasting heavy rains in the state capital over the next few days, the district administration has urged residents in vulnerable areas to move to safer locations or designated relief camps. Eight relief camps have been established in the state capital to aid those affected by landslides and flooding, officials said. Landslides also damaged a few vehicles and a

newly constructed house in Banderdewa. Fortunately, no loss of human lives has been reported. Similar reports of landslides have emerged from other districts. Major rivers and their tributaries in the state are in high spate, though still below the danger mark. West Siang District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO) Dorjee Nima reported that several hectares of agricultural fields were damaged after water from the Hu stream, a tributary of the Yomgo river, flooded fields in Taba Sora village under Kodum circle. Aalo township also experienced artificial flooding due to an inadequate drainage system, they added. Chief Minister Pema Khandu, who also holds the Disaster Management portfolio, convened a meeting on Wednesday with officials to review monsoon preparedness. "Chaired a review meeting today with the Department of Disaster Management to assess our monsoon preparedness, in the presence of Hon'ble Advisor Disaster Management Shri Nakap Nalo Ji," Khandu posted on X.

## FROM PAGE 1

### MODI 3.0 BONANZA FOR FARMERS

procurement. The MSP was a major issue for farmers' protests which impacted the seats in Punjab, Western UP and Haryana in the Lok Sabha polls. Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the lowest rate at which government procurement agencies buy crops from farmers. It shields farmers from market fluctuations, offering stability and income security. MSP is crucial for ensuring fair prices for farmers and is determined by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), considering factors like production costs, market trends, and demand-supply dynamics. After the CACP submits its recommendations, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister of India, makes the final decision on MSP levels. Despite lower rainfall of about 20 per cent across the country since the start of the monsoon season on June 1, weather conditions are now favourable for further advancement of the rains, according to the meteorological department. As per the 3rd Advance Estimates of production for 2023-24, total foodgrain production in the country is estimated at 3288.6 Lakhs Metric Ton (LMT), and oilseeds production is touching 395.9 LMT. During 2023-24, kharif production of rice, pulses, oilseeds and nutri-cereals/Shree Anna and cotton is estimated to be 1143.7 LMT, 68.6 LMT, 241.2 LMT, 130.3 LMT and 325.2 Lakh bales, respectively.

### MONSOON OFF TO A SLOW START

northeast India, while below-normal rainfall is anticipated in

many areas of northwest and adjoining central India, as well as some parts of northeast India. As North and East India grapple with severe heat waves, other regions are poised for contrasting weather conditions, experiencing very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall over the next few days. West Himalaya and Sikkim are expected to witness heavy rainfall in the next 5 days which could lead to potential flooding and landslides in susceptible areas. Similarly, Assam and Meghalaya will also witness heavy rainfall periods between June 19th to 21 June and Arunachal Pradesh till 20 June.

### INDIA-CANADA TIES HIT NEW LOW OVER NIJJAR

"June 23, 2024 marks the 39th Anniversary of the cowardly terrorist bombing of Air India flight 182 (Kanishka), in which 329 innocent victims, including 86 children, lost their lives in one of the most heinous terror-related air disasters in the history of civil aviation," it said. The memorial is scheduled on June 23 at the Air India Memorial at Stanley Park's Ceperley Playground area in Vancouver. The Consulate encouraged members of the Indian diaspora to join the event in a show of solidarity against terrorism. The memorial service to be hosted by India comes amid strain in India's ties with Canada over the issue of Khalistan terrorists after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged in September last year of the 'potential' involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated Sikh terrorist. India has dismissed Trudeau's allegations as "absurd and motivated." India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements

operating from Canadian soil with impunity. India has repeatedly conveyed its 'deep concerns' to Canada and New Delhi expects Ottawa to take strong action against those elements. Nijjar, the chief of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), figured on the list released by the Indian Government with 40 other 'designated terrorists'. Four Indian nationals, including Karan Brar, Amandeep Singh, Kamalpreet Singh, and Karanpreet Singh, are accused of killing Nijjar. Nijjar's murder, in which Canada claimed the Indian government's role, has been a thorn in bilateral ties. However, earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy. Speaking about the meeting, Trudeau said he saw an opportunity to engage with the new government over economic ties and national security.

### TWO TERRORISTS KILLED AHEAD OF MODI'S SRINAGAR VISIT

The arrested man has been guilty of harboring terrorists multiple times. Besides providing food and shelter, the said person also acted as a guide helping the terrorists reach the spot of the incident. The arrested person is a prized catch as he helped the terrorists in execution of attacks. Further interrogation and investigation of the case is going on." According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Prime Minister Modi will participate in the 'Empowering Youth, Transforming J&K' event at Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar at around 6 pm on June 20. Prime Minister Modi will

inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects in J&K. He will also launch the Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP), the statement said. The prime minister will participate in the 10th International Day of Yoga event at SKICC in Srinagar at around 6: 30 am on June 21. He will address the gathering on the occasion and take part in the yoga session thereafter, it said.

This year's Yoga Day event underscores yoga's profound impact on young minds and bodies. The celebration aims to unite thousands in the practice of yoga, promoting health and wellness on a global scale. More than 7,000 people from different walks of life will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday to celebrate the 10th International Yoga Day on the banks of the famous Dal Lake in Jammu and Kashmir. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said it is an honour for the entire Kashmir valley to have the prime minister here on International Yoga Day. "It's an honour for the whole Valley to have Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on International Yoga Day. He will perform Yoga on the banks of Dal Lake with more than 7,000 people who will participate in the event on June 21," Sinha said. In Doda, a joint team of the Jammu & Kashmir Police and 4 Rashtriya Rifles successfully apprehended the civilian responsible for snatching a service weapon of a Special Police Officer (SPO) within 24 hours of the incident. The police said that the civilian was caught in a forest area near the Bhalla area of Doda district. Senior superintendent of police, Doda, Javed Iqbal, said a civilian identified as Muhammad Rafi had been arrested near his village.

Mohammad Rafi had fled away with an AK-47 rifle of Safar Hussain, a Special Police Officer, when the duo was on their way to Trown area in Bhalla on Tuesday. When they reached Pul Doda, Safar de-boarded the vehicle to buy some essentials, while Rafi fled away with the weapon.

### SETBACK FOR KEJRIWAL AS COURT REJECTS BAIL PLEA

During the arguments on his bail application, Kejriwal's counsel told the court that the entire case against him rested upon statements. "The statements are of those who have confessed themselves to be guilty. They are not saints here. They are those who are not only tainted but it appears that some were arrested and were given a promise of bail and promise of being granted pardon. Approvers. And there is another category who have not been arrested," the counsel said. According to the ED and the CBI, the South Group is a cartel of politicians, business people and others who lobbied for liquor licences for which they paid bribe to the Delhi's ruling party. Kejriwal's lawyer claimed there were contradictions in the statements made by several co-accused. "I won't be surprised if another statement is recorded to fill the lacunae. This is the process they follow. The investigations are always unending. Whenever they want they implicate anyone. This is the biggest instrument of oppression," he added. The ED opposed Kejriwal's application, asserting, "The requirement is not that you don't have (criminal) antecedents." "...that I hold a constitutional post is not relevant for grant of bail under PMLA. It may be an additional factor for refusing bail but the only factor which is

relevant is whether he is guilty," the ED counsel said. Refuting Kejriwal's argument that the only evidence the ED had got against him was "approvers' statements", the central agency said when it becomes difficult to secure evidence, approvers are made. "The law recognises it. You can't say there is inducement...So, it is what the law says," it said. The fact that the offence of money laundering has been committed is beyond doubt because the court has taken cognisance and it has not been challenged, it added. Co-accused Vijay Nair was media coordinator of AAP. He was coordinating. He used to hold meetings with those interested in liquor policy, the wholesalers. We have evidence that he was very close to Kejriwal. "Demand (for bribe) is established. The money has gone to Goa. It has gone to hawala dealers. We have recorded statements. Larger chunk of amount was paid in cash is also established. The entire trail has been established," the ED asserted while opposing Kejriwal's bail petition.

### TWO BJP MEN KILLED BY TMC IN WEST BENGAL

He said they will wait for the postmortem report to come to any conclusion ... all the angles are being investigated." Speaking to the media Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said that post-poll violence had become a regular affair in the State. "This is not one off case ... they killed another of our men at Cooch Behar ... where the TMC goons attacked the house of one of our workers Sanjay Burman ... who in a bid save himself by speeding off with his motorcycle ... met with an accident and died ... this was an accident induced by the TMC men

and we will demand justice against it" Early this month Hafizul Sheikh a BJP worker was allegedly murdered at Krishnagar in Nadia district. He had joined the BJP from CPI(M) and had worked for the saffron party. After the elections he was shot dead and beheaded. His assailants carried away his severed head as a trophy. The Wednesday's incident came in the midst of a BJP fact finding team led by former Tripura Chief Minister visiting Bengal. Reacting to the post poll violence former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad who was also a part of the team said what was happening in the name of post poll violence should stop adding "the BJP workers are being raped, their houses looted and they are being murdered ... Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who is a woman herself should feel ashamed of this" Adhikari said the BJP would continue to fight against the BJP adding Governor CB Ananda Bose should visit the affected areas and take of the situation himself. The incident comes a day after the Union Home Ministry informed the Calcutta High Court that it has no reservation if the deployment of central forces in Bengal was extended in the light of alleged post-poll violence. The Court on Tuesday directed the Centre to assess the situation and submit before it the facts on June 21 the next date of hearing. The BJP has been asking for extension of the deployment of central forces in Bengal. In separate PILs filed by Adhikari and BJP advocate Priyanka Tibrewal before the Division Bench of Justice Harish Tandon it was alleged that the TMC goons were attacking the members of the opposition particularly the BJP in the continued post poll violence. They demanded the delaying the withdrawal of central forces from Bengal.



# Russia, N Korea sign strongest deal since Cold War

AP ■ SEOUL

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a new partnership that includes a vow of mutual aid if either country is attacked, during a Wednesday summit that came as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

The deal, which the leaders said covered areas including security, trade, investment, and cultural and humanitarian ties, could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Both leaders described it as a major upgrade of their ties.

The two met as Putin visited North Korea for the first time in 24 years. The summit came as the US and its allies express growing concerns over an arms arrangement in which the country provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its war in Ukraine in exchange for econom-



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un exchange documents during a signing ceremony of the new partnership in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Wednesday. Putin and Kim signed a new partnership that includes a vow of mutual aid if either country is attacked, during a Wednesday summit that came as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

ic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile programme.

Kim said that the deal was the "strongest ever treaty" between the two nations, putting the relationship at the level of an alliance,

and vowed full support for Russia's war in Ukraine. Putin said that it was a "breakthrough document" reflecting shared desire to move relations to a higher level. The North Korean leader gave Putin a lavish welcome, meeting him at the airport Tuesday night, where the two shook hands, hugged twice and then rode together in a limousine in a huge motorcade that rolled through the capital's brightly illuminated streets, where buildings were decorated with giant Russian flags and portraits of Putin.

After spending the rest of the night at a state guest house, Putin attended a welcoming ceremony at the city's main square, filled with what appeared to be tens of thousands of spectators, including children holding balloons and people wearing coordinated t-shirts in the red, white and blue of the Russian and North Korean flags. Huge crowds lined up on the streets to greet Putin's motorcade, chanting

"Welcome Putin" and waving flowers and North Korean and Russian flags.

Putin and Kim saluted an honour guard and walked across a red carpet. Kim then introduced key members of his leadership including Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui; top aide and ruling party secretary Jo Yong Won; and the leader's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong.

As the talks began, Putin thanked Kim for North Korea's support for his war in Ukraine, part of what he said was a "fight against the imperialist hegemonistic policies of the US and its satellites against the Russian Federation". Putin hailed ties that he traced back to the Soviet army fighting the Japanese military on the Korean Peninsula in the closing moments of World War II, and Moscow's support for Pyongyang during the Korean War. Kim said Moscow and Pyongyang's "fiery friendship" is now even closer than during Soviet times, and promised "full support and sol-

idarity to the Russian government, army and people in carrying out the special military operation in Ukraine to protect sovereignty, security interests and territorial integrity".

It wasn't immediately clear what that support might look like. Kim has used similar language in the past, consistently saying North Korea supports what he describes as a just action to protect Russia's interests and blaming the crisis on the US-led West's "hegemonic policy". North Korea is under heavy UN Security Council sanctions over its weapons program, while Russia also faces sanctions by the United States and its Western partners over its aggression in Ukraine. US and South Korean officials accuse the North of providing Russia with artillery, missiles and other military equipment for use in Ukraine, possibly in return for key military technologies and aid. Both Pyongyang and Moscow deny accusations about North Korean weapons transfers, which would

violate multiple UN Security Council sanctions that Russia previously endorsed. Along with China, Russia has provided political cover for Kim's continuing efforts to advance his nuclear arsenal, repeatedly blocking US-led efforts to impose fresh UN sanctions on the North over its weapons tests.

In March, a Russian veto at the United Nations ended monitoring of UN sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear programme, prompting Western accusations that Moscow is seeking to avoid scrutiny as it buys weapons from Pyongyang for use in Ukraine. Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters in Pyongyang that the two leaders exchanged gifts after the talks.

Putin presented Kim with a Russian-made Aurus limo and other gifts, including a tea set and a naval officer's dagger. Ushakov said that Kim's presents to Putin included artworks depicting the Russian leader.

## French police shoot dead an attacker with screwdriver in Paris suburbs

**Paris (AP):** A French police officer in the northern suburbs of Paris opened fire and killed an attacker on Wednesday who assaulted a cleaning worker with a screwdriver and also injured another police officer, police said. The cleaning worker suffered "several blows" with the screwdriver, but the extent of the injuries wasn't immediately clear, police said. A police officer who sought to intervene also suffered an arm injury, police said. Another officer then opened fire, killing the attacker, police said. Police said they had no other immediate information about the attack in the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers, including about the attacker's gender or possible motives.

## Explosions in Chad's capital kill 9 people, 46 hurt

AP ■ N'DJAMENA (CHAD)

Nine people were killed and more than 40 injured when a fire set off explosions at a military ammunition depot in Chad's capital, an official said Wednesday. Government spokesperson Abderaman Koulamallah said 46 people were being treated for various injuries after the explosions jolted residents from their sleep late Tuesday in the Goudji district of the capital, N'Djamena. The situation has been brought under control, Koulamallah said. The explosions lit up the sky as thick smoke covered the clouds in the West African nation, setting off frantic efforts to extinguish the fire as residents fled their homes for safety.

The cause of the fire was not immediately clear, and President Mahamat Deby Itno said an investigation would be conducted.

"Peace to the souls of the victims, sincere condolences to the bereaved families and quick recovery to the injured," Deby said on Facebook. He later visited the scene of the accident as well as hospitals where the injured were being treated. People living in the area panicked, thinking the explosion was an armed attack, resident Oumar Mahamat said. Local media reported the blasts started just before midnight as nearby buildings shook and ammunition was thrown from the depot with explosive force. Authorities called on residents to stay out of the area, which was taken over by security forces gathering the scattered artillery shells. Allamine Moussa, a resident, called on the government to "come to our aid urgently" after he and other residents fled their homes. "Many families have recorded

deaths and it's sad," Moussa said. Chad, a country of nearly 18 million people, has been reeling from political turmoil before and after a controversial presidential election that resulted in Deby Itno's victory. He had led the country as interim president during the period of military rule that followed the death of his father in 2021. Cameron Hudson, an Africa expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the explosions might not be entirely coincidental and "feels more like a message" to the government, which has been embroiled in internal political tensions and as well as regional tensions over the war in neighboring Sudan. Recent claims about Chad's alleged involvement in the war in Sudan create an untenable position at home for Deby Itno, said Hudson, a former U.S. official. "A house divided cannot stand."

## Police detain 8 after revolt against French rule

**Paris (AP):** Police in the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia rounded up eight people on Wednesday, including an independence leader, who are suspected of having a role in the deadly violence that wracked the archipelago where Indigenous Kanak people have long sought to break free from France. The early morning round-up was part of an ongoing police investigation launched May 17, just days after unrest first erupted, into a wave of armed clashes, looting, blazes and other violence that turned parts of the capital, Noumea, and its suburbs into no-go zones. New Caledonia's prosecutor, Yves Dupas, said in a statement that eight people were detained from 6 a.m. in Noumea and its Mont-Dore suburbs. He said those taken in custody include Christian Tein, a leader of a pro-independence group that French officials alleged played a leading role in weeks of violence over contested voting reforms for New Caledonia.

## Yemen's Houthi rebels sink ship in Red Sea in second attack

AP ■ DUBAI

A bulk carrier sank days after rebels believed to have killed one mariner on board, authorities said early Wednesday, the second ship sunk in the rebels' campaign. The sinking of the Tutor in the Red Sea marks what appears to be a new escalation by the Iranian-backed Houthis in their campaign targeting shipping through the vital maritime corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The attack comes despite a monthslong US-led campaign in the region that has seen the Navy face its most-intense maritime fighting since World War II, with near-daily attacks targeting commercial vessels and warship. Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned-and-operated Tutor sank in the Red Sea, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said in a warning to sailors in the

region. "Military authorities report maritime debris and oil sighted in the last reported location," the UKMTO said. "The vessel is believed to have sunk." The Houthis, quoting foreign reports in media outlets they control, acknowledged the sinking. The US military did not acknowledge the sinking, nor did it respond to requests for comment. The Tutor came under attack about a week ago by a bomb-carrying Houthi drone boat in the Red Sea. John Kirby, a White House national security spokesman, said on Monday that the attack killed "a crew member who hailed from the Philippines". The Philippines has yet to acknowledge the death, but the man who had been aboard the Tutor has been missing for over a week in the Red Sea, which faces intense summertime heat. The use of a boat loaded with explosives raised the spectre of the attack in 2000 on the USS Cole, a sui-

cide assault by al-Qaida when the warship was at port in the Yemeni city of Aden, killing 17 on board. The Cole is now part of a US Navy operation in the Red Sea led by the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower to try and halt the Houthi attacks, though the rebels continue their assaults. The Houthis have launched more than 60 attacks targeting specific vessels and fired off other missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They've seized one vessel and sunk two since November. A US-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. In March, the Belize-flagged Rubymar carried a load of fertilizer sank in the Red Sea after taking on water for days following a rebel attack. The Houthis have maintained their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the US or the UK.

However, many of the ships they've attacked have little or no connection to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. The war in Gaza has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians there, while hundreds of others have been killed in Israeli operations in the West Bank. It began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage. A recent report by the US Defence Intelligence Agency acknowledged container shipping through Red Sea has declined by 90 per cent since December over the attacks. As much as 15 per cent of the world's maritime traffic flows through that corridor. Meanwhile on Wednesday, the Houthis said US-led airstrikes targeted Raymah, a province in Yemen under rebel control. The Houthi-controlled SABA news agency described a local radio station's building as being "totally destroyed" in the strikes.

## Ramaphosa sworn in as S Africa President

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Cyril Ramaphosa was sworn in for a second term as South Africa's President to head a coalition government on Wednesday, despite his failure to secure a majority in parliament for the African National Congress (ANC) in last month's election. Ramaphosa's ANC lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in 30 years in last month's elections. However, the ANC and the Democratic Alliance struck a historic deal to form a coalition government by setting aside their rivalry. While the ANC got 40 per cent of the vote in the election, the Democratic Alliance (DA) came second with 22 per cent. "I swear I will be faithful to the Republic of South Africa... I will obey, observe and uphold the constitution and all other laws of the republic," said Ramaphosa, 71, who was sworn in at the Union Buildings in Pretoria by Chief Justice Raymond Zondo. Ramaphosa said that South Africans should not be distracted by attempts to turn citizens

against each other as the country enters a Government of National Unity. "We must reject every attempt to divide or distract us, to sow doubt or cynicism, or to turn us against one another. Those who seek to stand in our way, those who seek to inflame tensions, will not succeed, because South Africans are resolute," Ramaphosa said at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, as thousands of guests, including heads of state and representatives from several countries looked on. The new government of national unity combines Ramaphosa's ANC, the centre-right DA and smaller parties. "Those who seek to undermine our institutions will fail because our democracy lives in the hearts of our people and will never be dislodged," he said, in what analysts believed was a clear reference, without naming them, to the Economic Freedom Fighters and Mkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the new party formed by ousted former president Jacob Zuma. These two parties, which came third and fourth in



the general elections last month, refused to join the Government of National Unity (GNU), because the African National Congress, which lost its majority since Nelson Mandela led it to victory in 1994, has teamed up with the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) for the GNU. The DA was born out of former whites-only parties and is still led largely by whites, although they have committed to following the Constitution and its principles of non-racialism.

Zuma has also challenged the validity of the elections, alleging irregularities, although his party has not provided any public proof of these claims yet despite going to court on the matter. "Nothing will distract us from serving the people and advancing their interests. We declare for all to know that neither discord nor dissent shall cause us to cast aside that which calls us to build a united, free, just, equal and prosperous nation.

"In our brilliant diversity, we gather to affirm our solemn conviction that this country belongs to all who live in it, as articulated in the Freedom Charter almost seventy years ago," Ramaphosa asserted. "We gather here, as people born of the same soil across our nine provinces that make up a unitary South Africa, determined that by our deeds we shall heal the divisions of our past, and overcome the ongoing inequalities and hardships of the present," he added. Confirming that the electorate had expressed its will by not giving a single party the full mandate to govern South Africa alone, Ramaphosa also conceded that the ANC government of the past three decades had failed the nation. "Above all, the people of South Africa have stressed that they are impatient with political bickering and the endless blame game among politicians and political parties. They want us to put their needs and aspirations first and they want us to work together for the sake of our country," he said.

## EU criticises France for excessive debt

**Brussels (AP):** The European Union's executive arm on Wednesday criticised France for running up excessive debt, a stinging rebuke at the height of an election campaign where President Emmanuel Macron is facing a strong challenge from the extreme right and the left. The EU Commission recommended to seven nations, including France, that they start a so-called "excessive deficit procedure", the first step in a long process before any member state can be hemmed in and moved to take corrective action. "Deficit criteria is not fulfilled in seven of our member states," said EU Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis, pointing the finger at Belgium, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Poland, in addition to France. For decades, the EU has set out targets for member states to keep their annual deficit within 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and overall debt within 60 per cent of output. Those targets have been disregarded when it was convenient, sometimes even by countries like Germany and France, the biggest economies in the bloc. This time, however, Dombrovskis said that a decision "needs to be based on, say, facts and whether the country respects the treaty, reference values for a deficit and debt and not based on the size of the country". The French annual deficit stood at 5.5 per cent last year. Over the past years, exceptional circumstances like the COVID-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine allowed for leniency, but that has now come to an end. Still, Wednesday's announcement touched a nerve in France, after Macron called snap elections in the wake of his defeat to the hard right of Marine Le Pen in the EU parliamentary polls on June 9. Le Pen's National Rally and a new united left front are polling ahead of Macron's party in the elections, and both challengers have put forward plans where deficit spending to get out of the economic rut is essential.

## Sudan accuses UAE of fuelling war with weapons to paramilitary rivals

**United Nation (AP):** The Sudanese government has accused the United Arab Emirates of fuelling the 14-month war in the African country by providing weapons to a rival paramilitary force. The UAE dismissed the allegation as "ludicrous," calling "a shameful abuse by one of the warring parties". The clash came during a UN Security Council meeting at which Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobebe warned that atrocities are being committed along ethnic lines in Sudan's western Darfur region. She urged an immediate ceasefire in the North Darfur capital, El Fasher, which is besieged by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, "to prevent further atrocities, protect critical infrastructure, and alleviate civilian suffering". Sudanese Ambassador Al-Harith Mohamed accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces of "destructively launching" its war with the Sudanese military and attacking civilians, aided by weapons from the UAE. He said that Sudan has evidence of the UAE supplying weapons and that the government will submit a file on UAE actions to the International Criminal Court. The UAE's ambassador, Mohamed Abushahab, said those were "false allegations" and demanded to know why Sudan's government refuses to return to peace talks. Turning to Sudan's ambassador seated beside him at the Security Council's horseshoe-shaped table, Abushahab said: "You should stop grandstanding in international fora such as this and instead take responsibility for ending the conflict you started." U.N. experts monitoring an arms embargo in Darfur reported "credible" evidence in January that the UAE sent weapons to the Rapid Support Forces several times a week from northern Chad. U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Tuesday reiterated a U.S. appeal to all "external actors to stop fueling and prolonging this conflict, and enabling these atrocities, by sending weapons to Sudan."

## Far-right leader backpedals on taking France out of NATO strategic military command

AP ■ VILLEPINTE

The far-right leader angling to become prime minister after France's upcoming parliamentary election backtracked Wednesday on his party's previous promise to pull out of NATO's strategic military command. National Rally president Jordan Bardella said at the Eurosatory arms trade show outside Paris in Villepinte that he "doesn't plan to question the commitments France has made on the international stage" if voters give his far-right party a majority that enables him to lead a new government, in what would be an awkward power-sharing arrangement with President Emmanuel Macron. Referring to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Bardella said that "France mustn't leave NATO's military command while we are at war, because it

would considerably weaken France's responsibility on the European scene and, obviously, its credibility with regard to its allies." The comments pulled back from a campaign promise made by his party in its manifesto for the 2022 French presidential election. "The priority will be to leave the integrated NATO command," the 2022 manifesto read, a move that would have taken French military staff out of the NATO body that plans operations, and weakened France's role and influence within NATO. This latest about-face comes as the National Rally is toning down previously announced positions in an attempt to win voters outside of its traditional base before the June 30 and July 7 two-round parliamentary election — the party's first real chance of forming a government. In spite of his comments

regarding NATO, Bardella maintained that he's firmly against sending troops to Ukraine. "I am opposed, unlike the president of the republic, to sending troops and sending French soldiers to Ukraine, because I believe that first of all, a majority of French people is opposed to this decision," he said. Macron said in March that sending Western troops into Ukraine shouldn't be ruled out. Bardella said that he supported sending continued French supplies of weaponry, ammunition and other military equipment and support to Ukraine "to enable Ukraine to protect itself," but that he was also wary of the risk of any direct escalation with Russia, noting that it is nuclear-armed like France. "My position has not changed. It is ... to hold the front and at the same time to avoid any risk of escalation with Russia, because Russia is a

nuclear power," he said. Bardella's eurosceptic anti-immigration party, and particularly its former presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, is known for its close ties to Russia. Le Pen has expressed reservations about supplying Ukraine with additional arms. Earlier this month, Macron dissolved the lower house of France's parliament in a surprise announcement, sending voters back to the polls, after his party was handed a humiliating defeat by the far right in the European Parliament election. In France, legislative elections decide the makeup of the parliament, not the occupant of the presidential Elysee Palace. Macron has a presidential mandate until 2027, and says that he won't not step down before the end of his term, although he might have to share power with a far-right-led government.

## Kuwait to give \$15K compensation to kin of Mangaf fire victims: Report

PTI ■ DUBAI/ KUWAIT

The Kuwaiti government will give USD 15,000 each as compensation to the families of the victims of the devastating fire that killed 50 people, including 46 Indians, in the southern Ahmadi Governorate, according to a media report. The massive fire which occurred at a seven-storey building in the city of Mangaf on July 12 was caused by an electrical short circuit in the guard's room on the structure's ground floor, according to Kuwaiti authorities. The building was home to 196 migrant workers, mostly Indians. On the orders of the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the victims' families will receive compensation amounting to USD 15,000

each (Rs 12.5 lakh), the Arab Times newspaper reported on Tuesday. Citing government sources, the newspaper said the compensation payments will be processed and delivered to the victims' embassies. Three other deceased were Filipinos, and the identity of one of the victims has not been established. The concerned embassies will ensure that the funds are distributed to the families of those affected by the fire, expediting the process and ensuring that the assistance reaches the victims' families promptly and efficiently, the report said. "This financial aid aims to support the bereaved families during this difficult time," the newspaper said. The Indian government had announced compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the families

of Indian nationals who lost their lives in the massive fire. The Kerala government last week said it will provide Rs 5 lakh financial assistance to the families of the people from the state who died in the fire tragedy. The Indians who died in the tragedy included 24 Malayalis. Kuwait's public prosecutor has launched an investigation into the incident. The probe aims to uncover the circumstances behind the incident, and what might have triggered the deadly fire, the public prosecutor said on X. A Kuwaiti citizen and several foreigners have been arrested in connection with charges of manslaughter and causing injuries due to negligence in security and safety measures following the fire incident.



# SBI Chairman pitches for tax relief on interest income in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has pitched for tax relief on interest income, saying it would help banks to garner savings that could be used for funding long-term infra projects. Currently, banks are required to deduct tax when interest income from deposits held in all the bank branches put together is more than Rs 40,000 in a year. With regard to savings accounts, interest earned up to Rs 10,000 is exempt from tax. "If at all some relief could be given in the Budget regarding tax on the interest earnings, it will be an incentive to depositors. Eventually, the banking sector uses deposits mobilised for the capital formation in the country," he told PTI in an interview. The Full Budget for 2024-25 is likely to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament next month. Given the current economic growth rate, the SBI chairman



is expecting 14-15 per cent loan growth during the fiscal year 2024-25. "Normally the way we look at it is that the GDP growth rate plus inflation and 2-3 per cent over that. That gives us the number around 14 per cent or so," he said. "Hence, 14-15 per cent credit growth depends upon the opportunities available for lending, and it meets our risk

appetite. We will be happy to grow at this pace," he said. As far as deposits are concerned, he said, it grew by 11 per cent last year. "And we have some elbow room available in terms of excess SLR...which ensures that we don't have any pressure on us to raise the deposit rates for supporting our loan-to-deposit ratio," he said.

The bank has an excess Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) between Rs 3.5 lakh crore and Rs 4 lakh crore. "Incidentally, I may add here that our loan-to-deposit ratio is around 68-69 per cent only. That leaves enough room for us to lend without having pressure on the deposit interest rates. Nevertheless, he said, "We always give importance to deposits. "That is the reason why we increased the interest rate for the short-term deposits recently because we felt that there's room for improvement...We should improve our deposit growth rate to some extent during this year. And our effort would be that we should at least grow around 12-13 per cent this year." Last month, SBI hiked the fixed deposit rate on select short-term maturity up to 75 basis points. For retail term deposits of 46-179 days, the rate increased by 75 basis points to 5.50 per cent against the earlier 4.75 per cent.

# Sensex extends gain for fifth day to scale fresh peak

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity index Sensex on Wednesday ticked higher to scale yet another lifetime closing peak of 77,337, while the broader Nifty retreated from the record high level amid a lack of immediate triggers. In a volatile trading session, the emergence of profit booking in consumer durables, capital goods and energy shares negated strong gains in banking and financial stocks. Rallying for the fifth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 36.45 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 77,337.59. During the day, it soared 550.49 points or 0.71 per cent to hit the fresh lifetime peak of 77,851.63. The NSE Nifty ended at 23,516, down 41.90 points or 0.18 per cent. Intra-day, it rose 106.1 points or 0.45 per cent to hit a new record of 23,664. "Strong buying in banking stocks helped Sensex sail through in a highly volatile trading session, while Nifty ended weak as investors booked profit in auto, metals, oil & gas, telecom and realty shares after the recent upsurge.



"Ahead of the Budget, markets may see stock & sector-specific activities on hopes the government may increase the outlay for sectors to push growth," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Wipro, Tech Mahindra and HCL Technologies were the gainers. On the other hand, Titan,

Maruti, Bharti Airtel, Larsen & Toubro, NTPC, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance and Power Grid were among the laggards. As many as 2,235 stocks declined, while 1,634 advanced and 103 remained unchanged on the BSE. "Tracking the positive global cues and robust undertone, the domestic market started on a firm note. But soon after, some hesitancy was seen in the benchmark index Nifty at the elevated zone, and a bout of profit booking was seen in the

initial trading hours. "Despite this, the bulls showed resilience, pushing the market into uncharted territory, which too was short-lived as another bout of profit booking, set in during the final hours," Osho Krishan, Senior Analyst - Technical & Derivatives, Angel One Ltd, said. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.91 per cent and smallcap index went lower by 0.58 per cent. Among the indices, realty declined 2.97 per cent, capital goods (2.15 per cent), oil & gas (1.97 per cent), power (1.86 per cent), industrials (1.82 per cent) and utilities (1.46 per cent). Financial services, IT and bankex emerged as winners. "Global stocks were mixed on Wednesday after US benchmarks rose to fresh records following the signs that the US economy may be slowing without falling into recession. Global stocks have broadly shrugged off political tensions in France and signs the Federal Reserve could wait until December to cut rates," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said.

# Most of top-level executives have positive perception of GST: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An increasing number of C-suite executives have a positive perception of GST with many highlighting further reforms like rationalising tax rates and effective dispute resolution process as focus areas to usher in GST 2.0, a Deloitte survey said on Wednesday. The Deloitte GST@7 survey, engaging C-suite and C-1 level executives across diverse industries through online platforms, highlights areas which have resulted in growing confidence in GST, specifically on the positive role of GST automation/ technology and consultative environment, in policy making. Reflecting growing confidence in GST, the survey found that about 84 per cent of respondents reported a positive perception of GST in

2024, up from 72 per cent in 2023 and 59 per cent in 2022. Automation of tax compliance, including e-invoicing, continues to be voted as a top performance area. Also, enhanced and continued stakeholder consultation, leading to the issuance of clarificatory circulars/instructions was considered as a positive move in policy making. The survey highlights the areas where more reforms are required; these include rationalising tax rates, offering an effective dispute resolution process, removing credit restrictions, adopting faceless assessments, liberalising export rules and implementing a compliance rating system. Goods and Services Tax (GST), which subsumed 17 local taxes and levies, was rolled out on July 1, 2017.

Marking the seven-year journey of GST, Deloitte India conducted the survey to capture India Inc.'s views on this transformational tax reform. According to the survey, 88 per cent of the top C-suite leaders indicated areas of challenge, including aspects around audits and assessments, underscoring the need for continued simplification, technology integration and capacity building. The survey respondents also suggested enabling effective dispute resolution mechanisms, with 91 per cent of leaders endorsing the extension of audit timelines to address issues and improve compliance. Additionally, more than 70 per cent of respondents advocated for aligning pre-deposit requirements for GST appeals



with the pre-GST era norms, aiming to streamline the dispute resolution processes. Deloitte India Partner and Leader Mahesh Jaising said, "India Inc. Has enhanced confidence in the workings and efficiency of the GST regime. Such positive sentiment is reflective of supply chain efficiencies, the benefits of tax, technology and continued stakeholder engagement on GST policy matters. "The survey reveals that it is time to push for further reforms to make the regime more robust, dynamic and responsive to taxpayers' needs. GST 2.0 should review the possibility of expanding the GST regime's tax base, rationalising tax rates, removing ITC restrictions, further export liberalisation for services, unlocking working capital and

addressing concerns related to operational areas of compliance," Jaising said. To support the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector, the survey suggests easing GST registration by implementing streamlined processes, such as virtual verification and standard documentation across the country. These measures can help MSMEs effectively navigate compliance challenges and contribute more robustly to India's economic growth. Jaising said: "78 per cent of MSMEs have shared a positive sentiment towards GST implementation this year versus 66 per cent in 2023... Key initiatives sought by MSMEs are paperless invoicing and that uniform registration guidelines across India will significantly ease compliance burdens."

## German auto component supplier ZF Group sells 7.5 per cent stake in its Indian subsidiary

PTI ■ MUMBAI

German auto component supplier ZF Group on Wednesday said it has sold a 7.5 per cent stake in its Indian subsidiary ZF Commercial Vehicles Control System (CVCS) India to increase liquidity and financial flexibility for growth. The sale of shares has no effect on ZF's control over ZF CVCS India, the company said in a statement. "ZF Group has sold 1,425,000 shares, equalling 7.5 per cent stake, in its listed Indian subsidiary ZF CVCS India to increase liquidity and financial flexibility for its growth plans. The transaction will strengthen the financial



flexibility of ZF allowing it to invest in its further growth, and in the dynamically developing Indian market," it said. The Friedrichshafen (Germany)-headquartered firm had commenced the commercial vehicle control system business in January 2022 following the acquisition of WABCO in 2020. ZF CVCS India is the market leader in the Indian CV

supplier industry and remains an important pillar in ZF's global growth strategy, the company said, adding that the Indian business has shown a strong operating and financial performance on the back of a supportive market environment. "The sale of shares has no effect on ZF's control of ZF CVCS India, as it is the long-term strategy of ZF to maintain a solid majority shareholding in the entity," it stated. The transaction will strengthen the financial flexibility of ZF, allowing it to invest in its further growth, and in the dynamically developing Indian market, ZF Group said.

## Escorts Kubota withdraws plan to set up new unit at Ghiloth in Rajasthan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Farm equipment and construction equipment firm, Escorts Kubota Ltd on Wednesday said it has withdrawn its plan to set up a new manufacturing plant at Ghiloth in Rajasthan due to failure to meet all the key requirements for a large-scale project. The company, which has lined up an investment of up to Rs 4,500 crore over the next three to four years to set up a new manufacturing plant, said it continues to explore alternate options with other states, including Rajasthan. Escorts Kubota had submitted an Expression of Interest



(EOI) to Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO) for the proposed acquisition of land in Ghiloth, Rajasthan, subject to requisite approvals and clearances, for setting up an integrated greenfield manufacturing facility, for expanding the existing capacities, the company said in a regulatory

filing. "...Based on the detailed assessment of the location, the company has reached a conclusion that the location does not meet all the key requirements for a large-scale project being planned and accordingly the company has withdrawn the aforesaid EOI," it added. One of the key factors for the company withdrawing the EOI was the state government's inability to commit to providing adequate industrial water for the project. However, Escorts Kubota in its filing said it is "committed to setting up an integrated greenfield manufacturing facility in line

with its Mid Term Business Plan (MTBP) and continues to explore the alternate options with other states, including Rajasthan". Through a new manufacturing plant, Escorts Kubota plans to double its domestic tractor production capacity to 3.4 lakh units annually, while also setting up new engine and construction equipment lines in phases. At present, the company has a total annual tractor production capacity of 1.7 lakh units. The main plant is located at Faridabad. Its engine production capacity is 1.5 lakh units annually with Kubota engines currently being imported.

## ICICI Prudential Life offers discount for women

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ICICI Prudential Life offers 15 per cent lifetime discount for women and an additional 15 per cent discount for salaried women on its term plan — iProtect SmartOption to choose cover against 34 critical illnesses including breast, ovarian, uterine and cervical cancers. The company endeavours to make life insurance more affordable for women. Additionally, salaried women will be eligible for an extra 15 per cent discount on the first year's premium, empowering them to provide financial security to themselves and their loved ones. iProtect Smart combined with the critical illness benefit, provides cover against 34 critical illnesses including ailments such as breast, ovarian, uterine and cervical cancers. This combination offers benefits of both health and life insurance. Importantly, the critical illness cover amount is paid out on diagnosis, providing the requisite financial resources for seeking immediate medical treatment, without disrupting the family's savings. As per The Lancet estimates, the incidence of cancer diagnosed in the under 50 years adult age group had a higher ratio of women. A single hospitalisation can cost upwards of ₹1 lakh in an urban private hospital, hence, it is essential for women to plan availability of financial resources to treat such critical ailments.

## Air India to launch premium economy class on select domestic routes from July

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Air India on Wednesday said it will launch premium economy class on select domestic routes from next month. As of now, Vistara is the only Indian carrier, which offers premium economy-class travel on its domestic routes. "Air India today unveiled a three-class configuration on its newly inducted narrow-body aircraft. Air India's A320neo aircraft will now offer a new business, an all-new premium economy and a new economy cabin experience on domestic and short-haul international routes," the airline said. The Tata Group-owned airline said it has refitted two new A320neo aircraft in a three-class configuration, featuring eight seats in



business, 24 seats with extra legroom in premium economy, and 132 in the economy category, offering a wider choice to its guests. This is the first time the airline has introduced premium economy cabins on its narrow-body aircraft. Delhi-Bengaluru-Delhi and Delhi-Chandigarh-Delhi are the two select routes on which the airline will offer premium economy seats, as per the airline. Air India has plans to introduce the three-class configuration to its entire full-service narrow-body fleet over the next year. Existing

aircraft are now being progressively inducted for refit, while new aircraft joining the fleet will be delivered with the new Air India experience, it said. "The introduction of a three-class cabin to Air India's narrow-body fleet and commencement of interior refits are important steps in the journey of enhancing the flying experience," said Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director at Air India. The latest upgrade of the narrow-body fleet, which operates on domestic and short-haul international networks, complements the upgraded wide-body experience now available on A350 fleet and new B777s, and on all other wide-body planes as they are refitted over the next two years, he said.

The new business cabins offer 40-inch ergonomic seats with deep 7-inch recline, an adjustable armrest, footrest and backrest, a tray table deployed at the push of a button that includes a PED holder and is extendable and multiple charging ports while the all-new premium economy category provides larger seats with four-way headrests, wider 32-inch seat pitch with a 4-inch recline, and other amenities such as a PED holder and USB charging port, Air India said. Earlier this month, Wilson had said that Air India will be retrofitting more than 100 planes, including 40 wide-body planes. Moreover, the airline had in December 2022 announced that it would be investing USD 400-million to refurbish its Boeing 777 and Boeing 787 wide-body aircraft fleet.

## India's seafood exports up in volume terms in 2023-24: Commerce Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's seafood exports have recorded a growth of 3 per cent in volume terms, but a decline of about 8 per cent in value during the last financial year, according to the data of the commerce ministry. Exports in volume terms have increased to 17,81,602 MT (tonnes) worth USD 7.38 billion during 2023-24 as against 17,35,286 MT (USD 8.0 billion) in 2022-23. "India recorded an all-time high export in terms of volume by shipping 17,81,602 MT of seafood...Despite the several challenges in its major export markets like the USA, European Union and the UK," D V Swamy, Chairman of Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), said. Frozen shrimp, with exports of USD 4.88 billion, retained



its position as the top item in the seafood export basket, accounting for a share of 40.19 per cent in quantity and 66.12 per cent in dollar terms. The US was the largest market for frozen shrimp (2,97,571 MT) in the last fiscal. It was followed by China (1,48,483 MT), the European Union (89,697 MT), Southeast Asia (52,254 MT), Japan (35,906 MT), and the Middle East (28,571 MT). The ministry said that black tiger shrimp exports too recorded healthy growth. "Frozen fish, the second largest exported item, fetched

USD 6.71 billion, accounting for 21.42 per cent in quantity and 9.09 per cent in USD earnings," it said, adding that in dollar terms, these shipments dipped by 2.31 per cent in 2023-24. The other key export products include frozen squid, Surimi, frozen cuttlefish, and frozen octopus. It added that the US continued to be the major importer of Indian seafood in value terms, with an import of USD 2.55 billion in 2023-24. It is followed by China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Canada, Spain, and Belgium.



# REGAN SETS A WORLD RECORD IN THE 100 BACKSTROKE AT THE US OLYMPIC TRIALS

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS

This world record was five years in the making for Regan Smith. What an up-and-down journey it's been. Bouncing back from a close-but-no-Olympics call in her first race, Smith set a world record in the women's 100-meter backstroke at the US swimming trials on Tuesday night. The 22-year-old Minnesota native touched in 57.13 seconds, easily beating the mark of 57.33 set a year ago by Australia's Kaylee McKeown. Smith was just 17 when she first set a world record in the 100 at the 2019 World Championships. But, she struggled to deal with the sudden, newfound fame, ceding dominance in the event to McKeown. "A long time coming," Smith said. "It's about time." There was never any doubt about Smith's talent, but a lack

of confidence was almost crippling at times. She's been working with a sports psychologist since October, which helped turn things around mentally. Her coach, Bob Bowman, best known for his work with 23-time gold medalist Michael Phelps, took care of the physical side with a gruelling training regimen. "This is incredibly rewarding," Smith said. "When I was a teenager, I had not done much. There was no pressure on me. I was always the youngest. No one expected much from me. I could go into it fearlessly." Once she tasted success, it was hard to get back on top. She made the US team for the Tokyo Olympics but finished third in the backstroke as McKeown took the gold. "I've always had it physically, but I didn't have it mentally," Smith conceded. "I just didn't have it up here," pointing toward her head. Showing how much her

confidence has grown, Smith bounced back emphatically after getting edged for a spot on the US team in the 100 butterfly, where she finished third behind Gretchen Walsh and Torri Huske. Flipping to her back, Smith set the second world record of the trials, following Walsh's mark in the semi-finals of the 100 fly. Katharine Berkoff claimed the second expected Olympic spot for the US with a time of 57.91. In the night's other final, Bobby Finke earned the right to defend the 800 freestyle gold he won in Tokyo with a time of 7 minutes, 44.22 seconds. Finke had to work hard to get to the wall ahead of 18-year-old Indiana phenom Luke Whitlock, who set a national age-group record at 7:45.19 and will likely head to his first Olympics with the second US spot. No one else was within 4 seconds of the top two. "I find I need pressure to do



well, at least in my eyes," Finke said. "So I feel like the more pressure I feel, then the more likely I am to do well. Happy with the time we got."

Whitlock splashed the water emphatically after going virtually stroke-for-stroke with the reigning Olympic champion, who swept the 800

and 1,500 free in Tokyo. He is expected to become the youngest male swimmer to make the US team since that guy named Phelps, who was 15

when he qualified for his first Olympics in Sydney in 2000. "It's really just over the last, especially the last two months, my training has really picked up and now just talking to my coach, we just had a really good plan," Whitlock said. "We kind of got everything planned out like a month and a half before this and I was just really confident with the work I've been putting in, so I knew I could execute it." Two of America's biggest swimming stars, Caeleb Dressel and Simone Manuel, had impressive debuts at the trials, though there's still work to do to return to the Olympics. Dressel was the third-fastest qualifier in the preliminaries and semi-finals of the men's 100 freestyle, both times finishing behind Jack Alexy and Chris Guiliano. The tattooed Floridian will have to beat at least one of them in the final on Wednesday night to earn a

chance to defend his Olympic title in that event. Manuel was the fastest qualifier in the women's 100 free preliminaries and took the second spot behind Torri Huske in the semi-finals. Dressel and Manuel are both coming back from long layoffs that cast doubts over whether they'd be able to qualify for Paris. Dressel was the winner of five gold medals at the Tokyo Olympics. He mysteriously walked away amid the 2022 World Championships, later revealing he needed an extended break to rekindle his love for the sport. Manuel, the first Black female swimmer to capture an individual gold medal, was diagnosed with overtraining syndrome ahead of the last Olympics. She barely managed to qualify for the U.S. Team, then shut down all physical activity under a doctor's care to allow her body to recover.

## Euro 2024: England faces Denmark in rematch of semifinal last time decided by Harry Kane goal

AP ■ FRANKFURT

England faces Denmark on Thursday as the leader of Group C at the European Championship after a 1-0 win over Serbia. Denmark was denied by Slovenia's late leveler in a 1-1 draw also on Sunday. They meet in Frankfurt at the Waldstadion where kickoff is at 6 pm local time (1600 GMT). Here's what to know about the match: Denmark's need for a win is greater, ahead of a final Group C game against a physically imposing Serbia team. The teams renew their rivalry from a Euro 2020 semifinal played three years ago at Wembley Stadium. England won 2-1 after extra time, sealed when Harry Kane followed up his penalty being saved by Kasper Schmeichel to score when the ball rebounded to him. Denmark did not easily forget

how England got that decisive spot-kick, for a foul awarded against defender Joakim Maehle - "a penalty which should not have been a penalty," coach Kasper Hjulmand said then. There is a familiarity between the squads with teammates at Manchester United, Crystal Palace and Brentford on either side of this game. Gareth Southgate is coaching England at his fourth tournament and will be less troubled than analysts and fans about the manner of victory over Serbia. England eased its way through the group stage at Euro 2020 - making at least two changes between each game - did not concede a goal, then accelerated through the knockout rounds. Southgate's main call could be if Trent Alexander-Arnold's long-range passing is retained in central midfield alongside Declan Rice. Recent debutants Kobbie Mainoo and Adam



Wharton are options. England's preferred left back Luke Shaw is still not involved in team training, and Kieran Trippier is set to continue on his less favored flank. Denmark has reported no injury concerns. A draw can be a good result for Denmark even if it ends the day third in the standings. Slovenia plays Serbia in the earlier game Thursday. In two previous Euros with a 24-team

tournament format - which sends four of the six third-place teams to the knockout phase - a team with three draws has done enough to advance. Another England win would set the team up to win Group C and face a third-place team in the round of 16. The group runner-up will face the Group A winner, likely Germany, in the vibrant Dortmund stadium.

However, England has never won two straight games to start a Euros tournament. Defender Simon Kjaer was an unused substitute against Slovenia and his Denmark record of 132 national-team games is now just one ahead of Christian Eriksen, who scored in that 1-1 draw. "We see it every day in training here, and he's such a nice guy as well. You know he has high standards that he sets and expects," said England midfielder Kobbie Mainoo, 19, on star teammate Jude Bellingham, who turns 21 next week. "Once the tournament starts you get into a rhythm. It came and we won it. So, we're confident now, we're happy," said England winger Bukayo Saka on winning the first game "We have it in our power to have a fantastic game against England where nobody expects us to win," Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand said.



## Grand Slam champions Osaka, Raducanu, Wozniacki and Kerber receive wild cards for Wimbledon

AP ■ WIMBLEDON (ENGLAND)

Former Grand Slam champions Naomi Osaka, Caroline Wozniacki, Angelique Kerber and Emma Raducanu have all been awarded wild cards for Wimbledon. The grass-court tournament starts on July 1. Osaka - a four-time major champion and former No. 1 player - and three-time Grand Slam winner Kerber returned from maternity leave at the start of this season. Currently ranked 113th, Osaka was the only player to take a set

from top-ranked Iga Swiatek at the French Open and followed that up with a quarterfinal spot last week in 's-Hertogenbosch, a warm-up event for Wimbledon. Former US Open champion Raducanu made her breakthrough at Wimbledon by advancing to the fourth round in 2021. She will be playing there for the first time in two years after undergoing wrist and ankle surgery in 2023. Kerber won the 2018 Wimbledon title and was runner-up at the All England

Club in 2016. She is also a former top-ranked player. Wozniacki returned from maternity leave last August. She's never got past the fourth round at Wimbledon, where she will be playing for the first time since 2019. British players Francesca Jones, Heather Watson and Yuriko Miyazaki were also included in the initial list of invitations. One main draw wild card remains to be allocated. Seven British players have been invited to play in the men's draw, including last year's junior champion Henry Searle.



## Former deputy head of Czech soccer association gets suspended sentence in match-fixing scandal

AP ■ PRAGUE

Former Czech Football Association deputy head Roman Berbr and other soccer officials were sentenced for their involvement in a match-fixing scandal on Wednesday. According to the verdict issued by the county court in the western Czech city of Plzen, Berbr was convicted of embezzlement and received a three-year suspended sentence and a 2 million Czech crown fine (\$86,500). Roman Rogoz, the former sports director of the Slavoj Vysehrad club, was given a four-year prison term and 400,000 Czech crown (\$17,000) fine while former player and soccer official Michal Kanik got 2 1/2-years suspended sentence and a fine of 130,000 Czech crowns (\$5,600). Another of the four key defendants in the case, former referee Tomas Grimm, was cooperating with the law enforcement authorities and previously received a suspended sentence. The prosecution demanded jail terms for Berbr and Kanik and can appeal the decision. Altogether, 16 people were convicted of of bribery, embezzlement and participation in an organized crime group that was involved in fixing at least 10 matches in 2019 and 2020 in the second and third-tier leagues and were mostly fined and banned from activities in soccer Wednesday. Four others previously received sentences.

## Brussels declines to host match between Belgium and Israel for security reasons amid war in Gaza

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The city of Brussels says it won't host a UEFA Nations League match between Belgium and Israel in September because of the "dramatic situation in Gaza" that creates a security headache for city officials. Brussels' first alderman Benoit Hellings said on Wednesday the city considers it impossible to organize the match, which was scheduled to take place at the Stade Roi Baudouin on September 6.

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators have repeatedly taken to the streets of Brussels since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas last year. Last month, ticket sales for the Belgium-Israel match were paused because of security concerns. Hellings said that Brussels officials discussed thoroughly the possibility of hosting the match with the federal government, police forces and the Belgian soccer federation (URBSFA). "Today, it is clear that the



announcement of such a match being held in our capital

will undoubtedly provoke major (counter-) demonstra-

tions, compromising the safety of spectators, players, residents and our police forces alike," he said in a statement. "The Red Devils' matches have always been moments of unity and togetherness. The humanitarian and security situation in Gaza and its repercussions force the (city) to inform the URBSFA that it is not possible to organize this match at the Stade Roi Baudouin." Ticket sales for other Belgium home matches in the tournament against France on

October 14 and Italy on November 14 are going ahead as planned. Belgium is currently playing at the European Championship in Germany. It lost its first group game against Slovakia. Brussels has been on security alert even before the war in Gaza started, with Belgium being hit repeatedly by extremist attacks. Last year, a soccer game between Belgium and Sweden was suspended at halftime following a gunman fatally shooting two Swedes in Brussels before kickoff.



## FC Barcelona shuts down its football academies in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World-renowned football club FC Barcelona has decided to shut down all its academies in India, 14 years after starting operations with an aim to train the country's kids in their famed 'La Masia (youth academy)' style. FC Barcelona did not provide any official reason for the closure. All its academies in the Indian cities of Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Pune will cease to exist from July 1. "FC Barcelona have informed the families involved in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune will cease to operate as Barca Academies from 1 July 2024," the club said in a statement which it uploaded on its website.

"Barcelona's presence in India began back in 2010 and since then thousands of youngsters have learned to play football in the Barca style and with the Club's values. "Furthermore, India was the venue for two Barca Academy APAC tournament in 2019 and 2020 and the academies have been an ever present in the 11 editions of the Barca Academy World Cup held in Barcelona during Easter Week," the club added. Football legends such as Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta, Sergio Busquets and Gerard Pique achieved their superstardom after undergoing training at the Barca Academy. In the statement, FC Barcelona expressed gratitude to all the families for their trust in the

project over the years, as well as to all the coaches, local staff, and Conscient Football, the club's India partner that has collaborated on the Barca academies project all these years. Barca Academy India was the largest grassroots football training and development initiative in India. As part of the venture, it set multiple football training centres in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Pune, organising programs, camps, leagues, tournaments, and exposure trips. Barca Academy is the flagship FC Barcelona school aimed at boys and girls between 4 to 17 years of age and its main objective is to provide a comprehensive training environment for their students.

## Tour and Saudis agree on some items with work still to go to finalise any deal

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The PGA Tour and the Saudi backers of LIV Golf reached consensus on several items during its meeting its recent meeting in New York. Commissioner Jay Monahan cautioned players "there is still work to do" before any agreement. Monahan sent players a memo after the PGA Tour policy board and the commercial PGA Tour Enterprises board held a joint meeting during the Travelers Championship in Connecticut. He did not share specifics, only saying the goal was to develop "a shared vision for the future of professional golf" that gives players the best global opportunities. The meeting with Yasir Al-Rumayyan, governor of the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia, and PGA Tour Enterprises board members including Tiger Woods, Adam Scott and Rory McIlroy, was May 11. Monahan also announced a few tweaks for the PGA Tour schedule in 2025, while saying the revamped model that caters to the top performers from the previous year are still creating roughly the same level of turnover. One big change involves Woods. The board approved an additional sponsor exemption in the \$20 million signature events specifically for Woods "as a player who has reached an exceptional lifetime achievement" of 80-plus wins in his career. Woods has played only four times this year - three majors and taking one of the four sponsor exemptions for his Genesis Invitational at Riviera, where he had to withdraw with the flu. The player-hosted signature events - Riviera,



Bay Hill and Memorial - are the only small fields with a cut. Monahan said the tour board and Player Advisory Council will study whether all the signature should have a cut. The board took no action. The board did approve a minimum 72 players for the signature events, creating an alternate list based on the current FedEx Cup standings for the players not already eligible. Players complained this year when fields dipped below 70. In the Arnold Palmer Invitational last year, the 69-man field meant one player - Nick Dunlap - had to start the tournament as a single. The Travelers Championship this week only has 71 players after McIlroy withdrew. The top 50 in the FedEx Cup are exempt for all the \$20 million events. More players competed in other events, particularly early in the season, which limited starts for players who had conditional status, such as those finishing Nos. 126-150. The board said it would not reshuffle the ranking of conditional players next year until they have had a chance to play three or four times.



## Alcaraz starts grass-court campaign with win over Cerundolo at Queen's Club

AP ■ LONDON

Carlos Alcaraz began his grass-court season by beating Francisco Cerundolo 6-1, 7-5 in his opener at Queen's Club, and Andy Murray was victorious in his 1,000th tour-level match. The 21-year-old Spaniard returned to action following his French Open title and extended his grass-court winning streak to 13 matches. The streak dates back to last year, when Alcaraz won the Queen's Club title before defeating Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon final. Alcaraz, ranked No. 2. Improved to 17-2 on grass for his career and 13-0 against players ranked outside the top 20 on the surface. Cerundolo is ranked No. 26. Alcaraz fell behind 2-5 in the second set and saved three set points on serve at 4-5 before clinching the win. He next faces Jack Draper. Meanwhile, five-time champion Murray beat Alexei Popyrin 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in what could be his final appearance at Queen's Club. It was his 1,000th tour-level match. "Really special to get the win today. Hopefully I can add a few more before I'm finished," said the 37-year-old Murray, who has signaled his intention to retire later this year. Dan Evans retired from his match against Brandon Nakashima after slipping on the grass behind the baseline at the start of the third set. On Sunday, the 34-year-old Evans was named to Britain's team for the Paris Olympics to compete in the men's singles tournament. He said Tuesday he's "heartbroken" that a potential knee injury might keep him out of Wimbledon and the Olympics.



# Kohli expected to shine on big stage as India ponder over Kuldeep question

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Virat Kohli will be expected to hit his straps after a lean run while left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav will anxiously wait for his chance when title-favourites India face a sprightly Afghanistan in their opening Super 8 fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday. The big talking point ahead of the game is the Indian team combination. Will India go in with the same line-up that worked for them in the group league stage or bring in their best spinner over the last 12 months, Kuldeep, at the expense of a specialist pacer now? At the start of the tournament, skipper Rohit Sharma had expressed his keenness to include all four all-rounders -- Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja -- in the playing eleven. That strategy suited the Indian team in the bowler-friendly conditions in New York and the captain is expected to retain the winning combination that stretches their batting till number 8. The only way to fit Kuldeep into the

team is to either drop Mohammed Siraj or Arshdeep Singh for the wily spinner. If that does happen, Siraj is most likely to be benched. If the two practice sessions of the Indian team are an indication, the pitch could offer plenty to the spinners making Kuldeep's case stronger. With the gentle breeze blowing across the Kensington Oval, the pacers should get the ball to swing in the powerplay. As is often the case, all eyes will be on Kohli, who is yet to log a double digit score in the tournament. His strategy to go for his strokes did not yield the desired results in New York but he is expected to be at his imperious best on the better wickets in the Caribbean. The 35-year-old is always operating at 100 per cent and the intensity he showed during the training sessions was a testament to his exemplary work ethic. Shivam Dube, who was brought into the side to hammer sixes in the middle and death overs, has sent the ball out of the park only once in this competition. The pitches in USA did not allow him to go after the spinners. He would be expected to change that in



the Super 8s and beyond. India's premier T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav too was back among runs against USA, albeit not

in his usual swashbuckling style. But the effort was enough to boost his confidence. Besides Kohli, runs are pending

from the bat of Hardik Pandya, who has been exceptional with the ball. On the bowling front, Arshdeep Singh has grown in confidence with

each passing game, playing perfect wingman to Jasprit Bumrah in both the powerplay and death overs. With the surface likely to aid the slower bowlers, Axar and Jadeja would be backing themselves to make a decisive impact in the game. Afghanistan, on the other hand, head into the Super 8 fixtures after a humbling loss to the West Indies in St Lucia. Their bowling attack, which allowed them to boss their first three games, was put to sword by the hard-hitting West Indies batters. Captain Rashid Khan saw the defeat as a blip in an otherwise impressive campaign, insisting that his team remains a worthy contender for a semifinal berth. "As a bowler, you need to come up with plans to keep the scoring to under 10. The morale is still pretty high and this loss does not affect us. We have achieved our first goal of reaching the Super 8s and now it is about taking the next step," Rashid had said. He will be heavily banking on left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who provided them with wickets in the powerplay and is currently the leading wicket-taker in the

tournament with 12 scalps. If he can the swing the ball back in like he has thus far, Rohit and Kohli will need to be on high alert. Rashid himself will be looking for wickets at a frugal economy rate in the middle overs. On the batting front, in-form openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran would be once again be crucial to the team's chances. **SQUADS:** **India:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj. **Afghanistan:** Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wicketkeeper), Ibrahim Zadran, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Najibullah Zadran, Karim Janat, Rashid Khan (c), Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Hazratullah Zazai, Fareed Ahmad Malik, Mohammad Ishaq, Nangeyalia Kharoze.



## Kettleborough, Illingworth to officiate blockbuster India, Australia Super 8 match

PTI ■ DUBAI

English duo of Richard Kettleborough and Richard Illingworth will officiate the blockbuster Group 1 Super Eight clash between India and Australia in the ongoing T20 World Cup in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia on June 24. India's opening Super Eight match against Afghanistan on Thursday will be officiated by the Australian pair of Rodney Tucker and Paul Reiffel, while David Boon will be the match referee. England's Michael Gough and South African Adrian Holdstock will officiate India's match against Bangladesh in Antigua on June 22. In other matches, Chris Gaffaney and Kettleborough, both members of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Umpires, will be the on-field umpires for USA's historic first-ever knockout match at the T20 World Cup, against South Africa on Wednesday. The co-hosts qualified in second place from Group A, in part thanks to a magnificent Super Over victory against Pakistan and will now take on the Proteas as well as England and fellow co-hosts West Indies in Group 2 of the Super

8s. Joel Wilson will be the TV Umpire for USA versus South Africa match, while he will also stand as on-field umpire alongside Gaffaney when the American team takes on England in Barbados on June 23. Allahudien Paleker, who is making his senior men's tournament debut in this competition, will be the fourth umpire. Illingworth and Michael Gough will oversee Australia's Super 8s opener against Bangladesh, while Nitin Menon and Ahsan Raza are the on-field umpires for England's meeting with the West Indies. Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, making history in this competition as the first Bangladeshi official at the T20 World Cup, is the TV Umpire for the England versus West Indies match, and will be the on-field umpire alongside Chris Brown for England's second Group 2 game against South Africa. Jeff Crowe, who has overseen more T20Is than anyone else, will be in the match referee for England's clashes against the West Indies and South Africa as well as Australia against India.

## USA GIVE SOUTH AFRICA A SCARE, LOSE BY 18 RUNS

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Resilient Andries Gous led a sensational fightback for USA but South Africa's experienced professionals pulled off an 18-run victory in their Group 2 Super Eight match of the T20 World Cup, here on Wednesday. South Africa-born Gous led a stunning fightback for USA with a 47-ball 80 not out studded with five sixes and as many fours to keep his side alive in the contest right until the final over, but the Proteas had the final laugh as they opened their account with two points in kitty. Chasing 195 even on a batting-friendly deck here at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium was going to be a monumental task for USA

against South Africa's bowling attack, but the Associate nation showed incredible gumption in finishing with 176 for six in reply. The South African-born Gous waged a lone battle of sorts for the majority of USA's reply, putting on an incredible 91-run stand for the sixth wicket with Harmeet Singh (38, 22 balls, 2x4s, 3x6s)m, but South Africa had just too many on the board. Even though Steven Taylor (24 off 14 balls, 4x4s, 1x6s) set the tone early for the USA at the top, others like Nitish Kumar (8), skipper Aaron Jones (0), Corey Anderson (12) and Shayan Jahangir (3) flopped with the bat which almost shut the doors on their side. Reduced to 76/5 in the 12th over with another 119 runs to



win, USA appeared down and out. But Gous, who has played U-19s for South Africa, and colts World Cup winner Harmeet went on a carnage of sorts to take their side as close as possible. He swung his bat at will and found gaps with

precision as South African bowlers, who had almost set up a comfortable win, were scurrying for cover. In tow, the left-handed Harmeet also dealt a few lusty blows, especially against Tabraiz Shamsi towards the end to keep USA in the hunt

even if the asking rate hovered around 15 runs per over. But at the end, it was Kagiso Rabada's (4-0-18-3) brilliance which ensured Proteas' win after he broke their stubborn partnership and allowed a mere two runs in the penultimate over. USA's resistance also ate into a significant chunk of South Africa's margin of win which would have been far bigger had the two not added 91 for the sixth wicket. Earlier, Quinton de Kock led the charge with a 40-ball 74 which set the tone for South Africa, whose top order finally came through with a robust show to power them to 194 for four in the first half. On a pitch expected to be slow and spin-friendly, De Kock defied odds to put the

USA bowlers to sword while bringing up his maiden fifty in the tournament, while South Africa put on 194 for four in 20 overs. De Kock's fireworks at the top and skipper Aiden Markram's fluent 46 also helped South Africa banish their top-order woes after the frontline batters had flopped collectively in the group stage. Towards the end, Heinrich Klaasen (36 not out) and Tristan Stubbs (20 not out) added 53 runs unbeaten for the fifth wicket in just five overs. De Kock led South Africa's charge following a meek start which saw Reeza Hendricks (11) being Saurabh Netravalkar's (2/21) latest victim in the powerplay, putting on 110 runs from a mere 60 balls for the second wicket with Markram.

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Mitchell Marsh is not just a captain but a true leader, Marcus Stoinis said eulogising his teammate but added that the current Australia group is easy to lead with everyone aware of their roles in specific situations. Marsh has been tasked with leading Australia to their second T20 World Cup title. "Mitchie is not a captain but a leader. The way he gets the groups together inspires it," fellow all-rounder Stoinis said on the "Unplayable" podcast. "He's been a leader for a longtime in this group. He has captained in the past at a younger age as well." It is not just Stoinis that has lavished praise on the all-rounder, the rest of the team also speaks highly of the 'Bison'. Marsh has had a love hate relationship with the fans, who booed him when his performance dropped leading the all-rounder to claim "most of Australia hates me". But Marsh witnessed a resurgence last year and has now become a fan favourite. He made his way back into the Test team and starred in Australia's stunning World Cup win in India. He also performed well in

## Marsh not just a captain but a leader: Stoinis



T20s. He was awarded with the prestigious Allan Border medal earlier this year. But Marsh was perhaps destined for big things given his father, Geoff Marsh was a former Australian ODI captain and World Cup winning coach. Growing up, he was surrounded by the likes of legendary captains Allan Border, Mark Taylor and Steve Waugh and that seems to have rubbed off on him. The 32-year-old had captained the Australian Under-19 team to the World Cup trophy, back in 2010. He also led Perth Scorchers in 31 matches in the Big

Bash League and was captain of the 2017-18 Marsh Cup-winning Western Australian team before graduating to become Australian T20 captain. Under his captaincy, Australia have entered the Super Eight stage at the ongoing T20 World Cup on the back of an unbeaten run in the group stage. Stoinis feels Marsh has it easy with the group in the West Indies with everyone knowing their roles and functioning like clockwork but the all-rounder is more then capable of being "creative" when required. "Not taking anything away (from Marsh), I think this group particularly is quite an easy group to lead. We have four best quicks, best spinner in the world and all-rounders. It's pretty much like clock work, most of us know when to bowl, where to field," Stoinis said. Australia have played all their group games in the Caribbean where the pitches can play slow and low, and may turn more as the World Cup wears on.



## Mandhana, Harmanpreet hundreds carry India to 4-run win over S Africa

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Ebullient hundreds of Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur were nearly upended by remarkable centuries from Laura Wolvaardt and Marizanne Kapp but India kept their nerves to beat South Africa by four runs in a last-over thriller to take an unassailable 2-0 in ODI series here Wednesday. India had beaten South Africa by 143 runs in the first match here on Sunday. It was a matter of margin once India posted an imposing 325 for three, riding on Mandhana's 136 (120b, 18x4, 2x6) and Harmanpreet's unbeaten 103 (88b, 9x4, 3x6), their seventh and sixth one-day tons respectively. However, the Proteas fought back through Kapp (114, 94b, 11x4, 3x6) and Wolvaardt (135 not out, 135b, 12x4 3x6), who added 184 runs off 170 balls for the fourth wicket, but could manage 321 for six. The Chinnaswamy pitch stayed true as compared to the previous match, and the Indian bowlers had to be precise in their line and length on this day to be effective. They did just that. At no point, the home bowlers allowed SA batters a free run, picking up wickets at regular intervals. Pacer Arundhati Reddy, who replaced Renuka Singh, gave India a good beginning,

beating the defence of Tazmin Brits with a delivery that came in by that bat. However, Mandhana gave crowd the moment of the day when she accounted for Sune Luus, caught behind by Richa Ghosh, to bag her maiden international wicket. Earlier, Mandhana and Harmanpreet added 171 for the third wicket to lift India to a formidable total. Wolvaardt's decision to have a bowl seemed vindicated as new ball bowlers - Ayabonga Khaka and Masabata Klaas - found appreciable bounce and movement under overcast skies. In fact, Khaka started with two maidens in a row as Mandhana, whom she later dropped on 69 off left-arm spinner Nondumiso Shangase, and Shafali Verma struggled for a move-on. In fact, Mandhana took 18 balls to open her account. A period of consolidation followed post Shafali's ouster as Mandhana and Dayalan Hemalatha added 62 runs for the second wicket. Hemalatha (24), who clubbed Shangase for two sixes, looked good for more but her attempt to slog-sweep Klaas ended in the hands of Anneke Bosch. However, the arrival of skipper Harmanpreet changed the complexion of the innings as run-rate of India which was hovering around 4 till then, first soared past five and then six runs an over.

# Williamson steps down as NZ's white ball captain, declines national contract

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson decided to forego his national contract for the 2024-25 season and also stepped down from white-ball captaincy to extend his international career, following the Black Caps' shock early exit from the T20 World Cup. "Helping push the team forward across the formats is something I'm very passionate about and something I want to keep contributing towards," the 33-year-old said in a New Zealand Cricket (NZC) release on Wednesday. "However, pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer." The Black Caps have very little international cricket

scheduled during the January window and Williamson, who had stepped down from Test captaincy in December 2022, will be available to play all three formats outside that month. "Playing for New Zealand is something I treasure, and my desire to give back to the team remains undiminished," he said. "My life outside cricket has changed, however. Spending more time with my family and enjoying experiences with them at home or abroad is something that's even more important to me." The Black Caps are scheduled to compete in eight Tests, including a tour of India and then a three-match home series against England in November-December, before Christmas. There are a number of T20 leagues such as UAE's ILT20,



South Africa's SA20, Australia's BBL and Bangladesh's BPL which are set to clash in January. New Zealand's Super Smash could also be scheduled during the same time period. The leagues will be followed

by the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February-March. Players accepting the NZC central contracts must be available for both international and domestic Super Smash

competition. NZC CEO Scott Weenink said Williamson has earned the right to take some time off to pursue other goals, including family-oriented priorities. "This is a good way to help keep Kane in the international game so that he continues to play a major role for the BLACKCAPS - both now and in the years to come," said Weenink. "We have very little international cricket in New Zealand through January and outside that period he's still available for the BLACKCAPS. "NZC has a strong preference to select centrally contracted players for the BLACKCAPS, however we're happy to make an exception for our greatest ever batter - especially as he remains so committed to the team. I know it sounds a bit

counterintuitive, but I'm very encouraged," by this development." An all-format player who is considered one of the greats of modern day cricket, Williamson has been the Black Caps batting mainstay for over a decade, having played over 350 internationals. Williamson has played 100 Tests, 165 ODI caps and 93 T20I caps. He also led New Zealand in 40 Tests, 91 ODIs and 75 T20Is. New Zealand reached three finals with Williamson in the side -- the 2015 and 2019 ODI World Cups, the 2021 T20 World Cup and the inaugural World Test Championship final, which they won. Williamson led the Black Caps in three of those four tournaments. Pacer Lockie Ferguson, who has played a Test, 65 ODIs and 42 T20Is, has also indicated that he won't accept a central contract offer. He had become only the second bowler and first in T20 World Cups to bowl four maidens in a men's T20I when he returned with figures of 4-4-0-3 against Papua New Guinea.