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BEYOND A FLAWED EXAM

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MARKETS HALT RECORD
BREAKING RALLY

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HC halts Kejriwal's release

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

AAP convener and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to remain in jail for now as the Delhi High Court on Friday halted his anticipated release on bail after an urgent petition filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) just hours before he was set to leave Tihar jail.

The court said it was reserving the order for 2-3 days as it wanted to go through the entire records. The High Court is expected to pronounce its verdict by June 25, with the Delhi Chief Minister remaining in judicial custody.

Kejriwal, who was arrested on March 21 by the ED could have walked out of Tihar jail on Friday had the high court not granted the interim relief to the ED. The vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said it would take two-three days to pronounce the order on ED's stay application. The court said till it heard the probe agency's petition, which could take another 2-3 days, Kejriwal would remain in jail. The High Court has asked the Kejriwal's counsel to file the written submissions by Monday.

"In the meantime the petitioner and the respondent shall be at the liberty to file written submissions latest by Monday," court noted in the



AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

File photo

order.

Vacation judge Niyay Bindu on Thursday granted bail to Kejriwal and ordered his release subject to bail bond of ₹one lakh, saying the ED has failed to give any direct evidence linking Kejriwal to the proceeds of the crime and has also failed to show that another accused, Vijay Nair, was acting on Kejriwal's behalf.

Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal accused the ED of treating the Delhi CM as if he were the "most wanted terrorist in India." Her remarks came during a gathering in south Delhi's Bhogal, where Delhi Water

Minister Atishi commenced an indefinite hunger strike to demand more water from Haryana. AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bhavadwaj said what the ED said about the trial court judge who granted bail to Kejriwal during High Court proceedings was "shameful."

"The ED is not being able to submit any proof to the courts... the AAP has been saying this consistently — this has also been noted in the trial court order," Bhavadwaj said.

Earlier, Additional solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju presented the plea to Justices Sudhir Kumar Jain and

Ravinder Dudeja, who were overseeing the matter during the court's vacation period called the trial court's decision as "perverse", lopsided, "one-sided" and "wrong-sided" and that the findings were based on irrelevant facts. The relevant facts, he claimed, were not considered by the special judge.

The ASG said the trial court arrived on the decision based on wrong facts. "On wrong facts, wrong dates, you come to a conclusion that mala fide. But why, the reason is missing. My note not considered, not allowed to argue. The arrest was challenged. The remanding court said the arrest was correct. It was challenged before this court. The single judge said nothing wrong with the arrest," he said.

"Material facts were not considered by the trial court. There cannot be a better case for cancellation of bail than this one. There cannot be greater perversity than this," he argued. Seeking a stay on the trial court's order, he contended that the ED was not given adequate opportunity to argue its case. During the arguments, Raju said after the order was passed, when the ED lawyers urged the trial court to keep its order in abeyance for 48 hours to enable them to approach superior courts, the prayer was not considered.

Continued on Page 8

World looking at Yoga as agent of global good: Modi

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ SRINAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the number of yoga practitioners across the globe is growing every day as it is making new ways of positive change in society. Modi said the world is also looking at yoga as a powerful agent of global good.

The Prime Minister led the celebrations of the 10th International Yoga Day on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar and took part in the Yoga session.

The mega event was scheduled to be held in the open but early morning rain forced the event indoors.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs Yoga during celebration on the 10th International Day of Yoga in Srinagar

PTI

Despite the rains, Dal Lake in Srinagar provided a wonderful setting for this year's Yoga Day programme, reflecting perfect harmony

with nature. Scores of students were amongst those who joined the Prime Minister in performing various asanas

on the occasion.

They also asked him for selfies and he happily obliged.

Continued on Page 8

Congress corners Govt over NEET

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA/GUWAHATI

Congress workers on Friday held nationwide demonstration near the BJP headquarters across the State Capitals and elsewhere over the alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG 2024 examinations.

The demonstrations were led by State presidents and several top party leaders after senior leader Rahul Gandhi gave a clarion call to protest widely on the recent NEET and NET entrance paper leaks.

The grand old party along with other Opposition parties



Police personnel detain a Congress worker during a protest over the alleged irregularities in NEET-UG 2024 results in Lucknow

PTI

have decided to take on the Government right from day one of the Special session of the Parliament which begins from Monday.

Continued on Page 8

Yoga Day celebrated in Patanjali Yogpeeth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 10th International Yoga Day was celebrated at Patanjali Yogpeeth with the resolution of a healthy India and a healthy world. The solution to ideological, political, economic conflicts and challenges in the entire world is also a life of Yoga, said Swami Ramdev. He urged Indians to adopt a yogic lifestyle.

Rain relief for Delhiites battling heat



A resident covers himself with a scarf in rain on the Kartavya Path, in New Delhi, on Friday. Light rainfall on Friday brought some relief to the people in Delhi after a relentless heatwave in the region for over a month

PTI

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Several parts of Delhi on Friday received light rains, bringing relief amidst the intense heatwave in the National Capital and surrounding areas that has been grappling the city for more than a month.

Thunderstorms with light to moderate intensity rain and gusty winds with speeds of 30 to 50 kmph hit Delhi and adjoining areas of the National Capital Region after 3 pm. The city's minimum temperature settled at 28.4 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the season, the Met office said.

Many areas also witnessed waterlogging and trees falling due to the rain. According to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), a total of 13 areas witnessed waterlogging situation, including Karol Bagh, Chhattarpur, Shahdara

north, Karala, Narela, Sonia Vihar, Shahdara south, Rohini, Civil line, Hari Kunj, and Mitraon and Gaushala road in Najafgarh. Tree falling was also witnessed in various areas in the city, including Karol Bagh, East of Kailash, Mangolpuri, Rajinder Nagar, Karawal nagar, south Moti bagh, Tagore Garden extension, Gulabi Bagh and Rohini sector 11.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier predicted thunderstorms with light to moderate intensity rain and gusty winds with speeds of 30 to 50 kmph in Delhi and adjoining areas of the National Capital Region for two hours.

The maximum temperature was recorded at 40.4 degrees Celsius, two notches above the normal marking a deviation from the soaring temperatures being witnessed in Delhi.

People in Delhi can also

enjoy their weekends outdoors this time as the IMD predicted some relief from the searing heatwave as the sky is likely to remain partly cloudy on Saturday and Sunday. Many children were seen on the streets playing in the rain and enjoying their summer holidays. Although, heatwave will return in the city as the IMD predicts its return on Monday.

Maximum temperatures across different parts of the city dropped to below 40 degrees celsius bringing respite to the people who have been hit not only by heat but also with water crisis and power outage. The Pusa area recorded the lowest maximum temperature of 37.9 degrees Celsius, followed by 38 degrees at Pragati Maidan and Rajghat, 38.8 degrees at Aya nagar, 39 degrees at Lodi road, Salwan Public school and Ridge, 39.3 degrees at Palam, 39.4 degrees at Jafarpur, 39.7 degrees at Pitampura and 39.9 degrees at Najafgarh.

After days of significant deviations of maximum recorded temperatures from the normal, several areas like Jafarpur, Palam and Salwan witnessed no deviation. Moreover, Aya nagar recorded two notches below the normal maximum temperature, along with Ridge which marked a 1.9 degrees deviation from normal and Pragati Maidan and Rajghat, each of the areas recording one notch below the normal temperature.

Continued on Page 8

EC sets ball rolling for J&K, 3 States Assembly polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Friday announced that it has initiated process of updation of electoral rolls in Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, & Jammu & Kashmir.

According to THE EC, July 1, 2024 will be the qualifying date for roll updation. For the just-held Lok Sabha polls, voters' list was updated with January 1 as the qualifying date. Qualifying date helps establish number of voters on a given date in a State or in the country.

The Assembly terms of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand are going to end on November 3, November 26 and January 5, 2025 respectively while polls in Jammu & Kashmir now under President rule, must be completed by September 30 deadline set by Supreme Court.

The last time Jammu & Kashmir voted in Assembly elections was in 2014 when it was still a State and enjoyed special status under Article 370.

In 2019, Special status to the State was revoked and it was divided into two UTs — Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The UT has been awaiting Assembly elections since then.

Continued on Page 8

India raps Canada for honouring Nijjar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday was critical of the Canadian Parliament observing "one minute silence" in the memory of Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down in Surrey, British Columbia, in June last year.

"We naturally oppose any moves giving political space to extremism and advocacy of violence," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. In an unusual move, the



Canadian Parliament observed "one minute silence" two days ago in memory of Nijjar. The relations between the two

countries came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Nijjar's killing.

New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". 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.

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra last week said India's main issue with Canada

continues to be the political space that Ottawa provides to anti-India elements which advocate extremism and violence.

India has repeatedly conveyed its "deep concerns" to Canada and New Delhi expects Ottawa to take strong action against those elements, he said. Nijjar, who was declared a terrorist by India, was shot dead outside a gurdwara in British Columbia on June 18 last year. The murder is being probed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

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Survey on to identify illegal structures

Lucknow (PNS): A joint survey by the officials of the Lucknow Development Authority, Lucknow Nagar Nigam and Irrigation departments was carried out in Abrar Nagar here on Friday and would continue in other localities in and around the Akbarnagar locality for another week. This was done on the initiative of the Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob to clean these areas from unauthorised structures. LDA As per official records there are over 1,200 illegal structures at Abrar Nagar, Khurram Nagar, Rahim Nagar, Pant Nagar and Jaswant Nagar.



NOTICE

I Harish chandra Singh - 15119614Y Rank - HAV S/o Chhedilal Singh Resident - Village - Amina Ka Pura, Post - Goraju, Kaushambi, in my service record my wife's name is MALTI and date of birth is 07/09/1978 which is wrong. Whereas the correct name of my wife is MALTI DEVI and correct date of birth is 02/08/1981, which is absolutely necessary to be recorded in my service record.

NOTICE

I Harish chandra Singh - 15119614Y Rank - HAV S/o Chhedilal Singh Resident - Village - Amina Ka Pura, Post - Goraju, Kaushambi, in my service record my daughter's name is POOJA KUMARI and date of birth is 11/11/2000 which is wrong whereas my daughter's correct name is POOJA SINGH and correct date of birth is 10/08/2000, which is absolutely necessary to be recorded in my service record.

NOTICE

I, Hema Devi W/o 4201298K, Hav, Lal Singh Baghari, Unit 7 Kumaon C/o 56 APO hereby declare that in my husband's Service Record my name inadvertently mentioned as HEMA while my correct name is HEMA DEVI which may be recorded in my husband Service record.

सूचना

मेरी पुत्री सपना सिंह की इंटर की अंशतालिका में माता के नाम की जगह पर गलती से KABITA SINGH अंकित हो गया है, जबकि मेरा वास्तविक नाम KAVITA SINGH है। इसे सही कर दर्ज किया जाये। KAVITA SINGH W/o Veer Bahadur Singh, R/o-A-809, HAL New colony, Indira Nagar, Lucknow.

सूचना

मैंने अपने पुत्र तेजस राज सिंह का नाम बदलकर निहिर राज सिंह कर दिया है मंत्रिष्य मे उसे इसी नाम से जाना पहचाना जाये । वरन सिंह पुत्र श्री ननक लाल निवासी ग्राम-बारी नगला जिला बरेली ।

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 Jataria for all future purposes.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SHAMA to SHAMEEM BANO W/o ABDUL MALIK R/o 88/97 Chamanganj, Kanpur NAGAR, for all future purpose.

NOTICE

IT IS KNOWN TO ALL THAT ORIGINAL LEASE DEED SERIAL NO. 1229/1230 DT. 21/08/1979 REGARDING PLOT NO. 109 BLOCK R.N. SCHEME NO. II, RATAN LAL NAGAR, KANPUR NAGAR AREA 207.662 SQ.MTR. HAS BEEN LOST. KINDLY INFORM IF FOUND, ITS USE SHALL BE DEEMED ILLEGAL. MADAN LAL S/O UTTAM CHAND, 48/12 BLOCK-5, GOVIND NAGAR, KANPUR.

NOTICE

NOTICE
Original Agreement to sell executed by Mahant Narayana Achari Pupil of Mahant Jay Krishna Achari R/o Danti Dhawan Kund, Post & City Ayodhya, Dist Faizabad, Dist Faizabad in favor of Janardan Pandey S/o Baldev Prasad R/o Village and Post Naubasta, Pargana Mahadeva, Tehsil Tarabganj, Dist Gondia which was duly registered in the office of Sub Registrar Ayodhya (erstwhile Faizabad) dated 23-08-1985, has been lost. Any unauthorised use or claim regarding the same by any individual/institution will attract strict legal action. In case of any objection contact the undersigned.
Advocate: Bhoopendra Nath Tripathi Lucknow High Court
Address: Office No. 6, 4th Floor, Vijay Tower, Near Avadh Bus Stand, Lucknow

Make yoga a regular practice of life: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Emphasising that there was no discrimination of caste, language, country and region in the practice of yoga, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath urged people to make yoga a part of their regular practice and witness the changes which it brings in their lives. "Do not expect miracles to start with but if you carry out regular practice of yoga, you will realise at one time that whatever time you have invested in this skill was the best time for the betterment of your health," he said. The chief minister was speaking at a programme organised on the occasion of the 10th International Yoga Day at the Raj Bhawan here on Friday. Congratulating people on the occasion of the International Yoga Day, CM Yogi said, "We are fortunate that while remembering our rich legacy



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Governor Anandiben Patel practising yoga at Raj Bhawan in Lucknow on Friday

Pioneer

we get an opportunity to pay tributes to this tradition of the sages of the country. This opportunity has been given to us by Prime Minister Narendra Modi by whose efforts and whose vision nearly 175 countries in the world have joined with this tradition of India to make the country proud. There can be no better recognition of our tradition and of our ancestors than this." The chief minister stressed that if we connect with such a tradition and connect the entire humanity with it then we would be paying true tributes to our ancestors. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was himself present in Srinagar and was participating in the yoga programme being conducted there. "Everyone knows that yoga is a holistic discipline for both physical and mental well-being. Indian scriptures state that if the body is healthy then the

mind will automatically become healthy. There are different postures for different age groups which can be followed to make one healthy and if the nation gets healthy the nation automatically turns powerful," the chief minister said. Governor Anandiben Patel, while addressing the audience, said that the theme of the 10th International Yoga Day was to spread the message of yoga as a revolution. She said that a portal had been started by the Raj Bhawan for taking an online pledge for making yoga a part of one's regular routine. "This witnessed the participation of the universities from the entire state and led to a total number of 24,22,466 pledges which has become a world record," she said. She expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for putting yoga on the global platform. "The PM inspired the people at

the United Nations with the words that if we have to follow the path of human welfare then it is only through yoga that we can take it forward. Several people from all across the globe, by associating themselves with this programme, are expressing their gratitude to this tradition of the sages of the country," she said. Emphasising that the time has come for India to become a 'Vishwa Guru,' she said that this Indian tradition had spread across the world and it promoted a balanced lifestyle. "In our tradition the body has been considered to be a medium of religion and any person, whether an industrialist or an ordinary labourer, will be able to carry out his work properly only if he is healthy. But along with physical health, mental health is also important because people are facing several challenges of the mind and the body," she said.

International Yoga Day celebrated with enthusiasm in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

International Yoga Day was celebrated with enthusiasm in the city on Friday. Yoga sessions were held at educational institutes, parks, government departments, banks, private offices and private homes. The International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the Residency. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak led the programme organised by the district administration. District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar and Chief Development Officer Ajay Jain were present on the occasion. At the UPSRTC (Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation), the yoga session was led by the Managing Director Masoom Ali Sarwar. Finance Controller Deepak Kumar and senior officials of the UPSRTC were present on the occasion. Surya Command of the Indian Army celebrated 10th International Yoga Day where in all troops and families participated wholeheartedly with great vigour. The event witnessed huge footfall of participants who performed the asanas based on Common Yoga Protocol, as promulgated by the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH). As a prelude to the event, practice sessions were held for all troops, families and children at

respective locations in the Lucknow Cantonment for their physical and mental conditioning. On the 10th International Yoga Day, all troops and families of Lucknow gathered at 11 Gorkha Rifles Regimental Centre and performed the progressive asanas collectively under expert yoga instructors. After the initial brief on the essence of yoga on the health of individuals, the instructors held an hour-long practice session with demonstration of various asanas. The participants were introduced to health benefits of performing loosening practices, standing asanas, sitting asanas, prone asanas, supine postures, Kapalbhathi, Pranayam and Dhyana, with prayer chants before and after the session. The Indian Institute of Management, -Lucknow students, faculty, staff and officials participated in the International Yoga Day celebrations. Addressing the participants during the event, IIM-Lucknow Director Prof Archana Shukla, said, "Originating in India, yoga has captured global attention and devotion. Today, people worldwide practice yoga, acknowledging its profound benefits. Beyond mere exercise, yoga is a holistic lifestyle that harmonises the mind, body and intellect, promoting overall well-being and inner peace." NBRI organised a yoga session in the morning at its KN Kaul

block lawn. On the occasion, yoga experts from Lucknow demonstrated various yoga asanas. Scientists, students, staff and others of the botanical institute actively participated in the yoga session with great enthusiasm. Lucknow University and Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University organised yoga sessions at their campuses. Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Rai said that yoga was a medium to a healthy and happy life. A yoga camp was organised on the occasion of International Yoga Day at Lokbandhu Hospital. Former MLA Suresh Chand Tiwari and State Information Commissioner Swatantra Prakash Gupta participated in it as chief guests. Under the guidance of Divya Yoga Classes, this yoga camp started at 6:30 am and lasted for about an hour. Fifty people, including doctors of the hospital, participated in this camp. In their speeches, Suresh Chand Tiwari and Swatantra Prakash Gupta highlighted the importance of yoga. Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Ajay Shankar Tripathi, Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajiv Kumar Dixit, and Director Dr Suresh Chandra Kaushal were also present on the occasion. International Yoga Day was celebrated in Canara Bank's zonal office in which all the

executives, managers and officers of the bank participated enthusiastically. "When we have a healthy mind and healthy body, we will also be able to work well for the bank," said an official. On this occasion, former senior manager of the bank Sarv Mitra Bhatt, who has been an international rowing player in the past, conducted the yoga session. International Yoga Day was celebrated by the management, teaching faculty, staff and students of Maharaja Agarsen Public School's Gomti Nagar branch. The demonstration was accompanied by soothing, instrumental music creating a serene ambience. School's president Ashish Agarwal along with yoga guru Dr ON Awasthi and committee member Parmesh Mittal joined the session which further motivated our students. Different asanas and pranayama were performed by teachers and students. A yoga programme was organized in the premises of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Bhasha University, Lucknow. Addressing the programme, Vice-Chancellor of Bhasha University, Prof Narendra Bahadur Singh, called upon everyone to include yoga in their lives. On the occasion of 10th International Yoga Day, different yoga asanas were performed by the students at all branches of the St Joseph School.



Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak performing yoga at Residency in Lucknow on Friday

Pioneer

International Yoga Day was also celebrated at the CCS International Airport, CDRI, Delhi Public School and by traders. On the occasion of International Yoga Day, a yoga camp was organised in the Central Park of Samar Vihar Colony, Alambagh under the aegis of Samar Vihar Welfare Association. In this camp, apart from Alambagh, hundreds of people from other areas of the city practiced yoga, pranayama and meditation collectively. Yoga pranayama was conducted by the Lucknow

branch team of Patanjali Yogapeeth district in-charge Sarla Dubey, Yoga teacher Seema Nigam, Anita Mishra and yoga in-charge of the area Dharmendra Nigam. On this occasion, along with the elite citizens of the city, Bharatiya Janata Party's organisation general secretary Dharam Pal Singh, city president Anand Dwivedi, former member of State Women's Commission of Uttar Pradesh Namrata Pathak were present. Apart from yoga teachers, Central Park in-charge Manju Kapoor and Rajinder

Kaur were honoured for the efficient organisation of this function. The stage was conducted by famous social worker and former councilor Girish Mishra. A one-day yoga camp was organised by the Lucknow Jankalyankari Samiti in front of Shri Balaji Shakti Peeth Bhootnath in Indira Nagar, Lucknow. General secretary of the committee, former councilor Dilip Srivastava, said that as per the annual Indian Yoga Camp, this year too, Yoga Guru Dr Bhaskar Sinha told everyone the benefits of yoga.

Ram temple grappling with drainage problem

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The recently constructed Ram temple, with an investment exceeding ₹1,000 crore, is facing significant issues in its sanctum sanctorum, particularly regarding its drainage system, causing major difficulties for the temple priests. The primary concern is the lack of an outlet for water used in daily rituals. This water remains stagnant, raising alarms among the priests and temple authorities. A priest, who wished to remain anonymous, explained that the daily ritual of bathing Ram Lalla involves using water from the Saryu river and a mixture called 'Madhu Purk', which includes milk, curd, ghee and honey. This is followed by another bath with Saryu water. "Unfortunately, there is no system in place to drain out the water that accumulates on the floor after these rituals," the priest lamented. Presently, a

large plate is used to collect the water, which is then offered to plants. Any leftover water is manually mopped, a temporary measure that poses an ongoing problem for the priests. The priest pointed out that the temple's construction did not take into account the ritual of bathing of Bhagwan Ram, leading to the absence of a drainage outlet in the sanctum sanctorum. Engineers from L&T (Larsen & Toubro), the construction company, have been notified and they are working on a solution. To combat the heat, two tower air-conditioners have been installed, but they are proving insufficient. The technical limitations also hinder the installation of a more effective cooling system within the sanctum sanctorum. The intricately carved stone structure would require substantial modifications to install air-conditioning or create a drainage system,

which would damage the sanctum sanctorum's aesthetics and is technically challenging due to the interlocking construction method. "The engineers of Ram mandir are actively seeking solutions to these problems," the priest added. "The Ram Mandir Trust is tasked with the difficult job of preserving the sanctum sanctorum's beauty while addressing these technical issues. As engineers work on potential solutions, the priests and devotees are hopeful for a resolution that maintains the sanctity and integrity of this revered space," he added. The Ram mandir was consecrated on January 22 this year, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating the temple for the public. The ceremony was attended by several prominent figures from across the country. Despite the grandeur of the event, the temple's technical challenges remain a pressing concern.

UP Tourism expands facilities to attract tourists to Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

Lucknow (PNS): The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is one of the important tiger reserves of Uttar Pradesh. It is known for its biodiversity and conservation of Bengal tiger. Uttar Pradesh Tourism department has expanded tourist facilities at the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve with the aim of promoting eco-tourism. Under this, a parking area, waiting hall, waiting room and a convention hall have been built near the guest house at a cost of Rs 1.67 crore. This information was given here on Friday by the Culture and Tourism Minister Jaiver

Singh. He informed that a selfie point had also been created for the tourists, so that tourists could take memorable pictures. "The entrance of the reserve has been made grand and attractive. Reception and ticket counters have been set up for tourists. Tents have been set up to protect tourists from the sun. Bamboo cottages have been built to provide tourists with the experience of staying close to nature. Adventure sports facilities have been started to provide a thrilling experience to the tourists. Keeping the reserve complex eco-

friendly, solar lights have been installed for lighting in the complex," he said. Singh said that apart from this, Pilibhit was also known as the summer destination of Uttar Pradesh. Strengthening this initiative further, a bamboo canteen has been constructed at Chuka Beach in Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, which will give tourists a unique and enjoyable experience. "These development works will promote tourism in Pilibhit Tiger Reserve and this area will become a major attraction for local and foreign tourists," he said.

Rape victim offered ₹5000 to terminate pregnancy

Lucknow (PNS): The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that a village panchayat asked the mother of a minor girl victim of sexual assault to take a sum of Rs 5,000 from her daughter's tormentors and terminate her pregnancy, in Singhaoli Ahir area of Baghpat district. Reportedly, life threats were also given to the aggrieved family at the behest of the miscreants, if they did not adhere to their diktat. The NHRC has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, amount to a grave violation of the victim's human rights. Going by the media report, it is indeed painful to note that the village panchayat, instead of protecting the minor girl, connived in an unlawful act with the miscreants belonging to a resourceful section of society, it said.

According to an official communiqué of the NHRC released on Friday evening, notices have been issued to the chief secretary and the director general of police of Uttar Pradesh calling for a detailed report within one week. The report is expected to include the status of the FIR and action taken against the guilty along with the victim's health condition and compensation if any, provided to her by the authorities concerned. As per the media report, the family of the victim has complained to the police stating that one person from the same village had forcefully entered their house and raped the girl in December, 2023. When the family tried to complain, the life threats were given to the mother, brother and sister of the victim girl.

Unable to bear ailing wife's pain, husband hangs self

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man committed suicide as he could not control his emotions when he saw his ailing wife crying in pain at a hospital in the city on Friday. Deshraj Kushwaha of Mallawan in Hardoi district hanged himself from the railing of the toilet in the hospital premises. The hospital staff brought down the body from the noose and informed the police. Deshraj Kushwaha, a farmer, had brought his ailing wife Pooja to Lucknow and got her admitted at a hospital near Buddheshwar crossing after the doctors described her condition as serious. His family members said Pooja had pulmonary disease in which abnormal fluid collects in extravascular space of the lungs. Deshraj's brother Lalita Prasad said that Pooja used to scream in pain and this made his brother restless. "When we talked to him at night, he was normal. It never appeared that he would commit suicide," he said.

On the night of Thursday/Friday, Deshraj was found hanging from the railing above the toilet of the hospital with a gamcha tied around his neck. Lalita Prasad said that Pooja was first admitted to KGMU in Lucknow. "Deshraj loved her very much. When she did not get any relief there, Deshraj took her to Hardoi. Here also her health did not improve. Whenever she screamed in pain, Deshraj would get restless," he said. Deshraj's wife is still admitted in the hospital. He is survived by his wife and four children Sheetal, Gopal, Soumya and Shiva. In the CCTV installed in the hospital, Deshraj is seen strolling outside the hospital late at night. He is seen going towards the toilet. He made a noose of gamcha but then returned. He came back after a while and stayed there for a long time. He returned a second time as well. He came to the railing for the third time and hanged himself.

Another accused in laundry robbery case held

Another accused involved in the robbery at a laundry in Krishna Nagar area on June 14 was arrested in an encounter with the police on Friday. On the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, the police had arrested two accused during a late night encounter. "The arrested man, Awadhesh Kumar Alias Bunty, 46, a Mawaiya, is the mastermind behind the robbery and had planned had done recce before planning the robbery on the information that the victim laundry man had cash and gold chain," said DCP (South) Tej Swaroop Singh. The man also revealed that he was present on the day of robbery and had dropped his other two partners with his e-rickshaw which police recovered along with some cash. Krishna Nagar police late on Wednesday night arrested two accused who robbed a laundry June 14 in Krishna Nagar area.

IITR project to manage microplastic threats to health and environment

Lucknow (PNS): IITR, supported by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India FSSAI, launched the strategic initiatives for the Microplastics Project on Friday. IITR also organised a dynamic brainstorming meeting of the Network for Scientific Cooperation for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (NETSCOFAN) under the innovative CSIR-IITR's GAIN (Government Academia Industry Network) and CAIRES (Consultative Arrangement for Innovation in Research by Engaging Stakeholders) programmes. The session was officially inaugurated by G Kamala Vardhana Rao, CEO of FSSAI, and Dr Bhaskar Narayan, Director of CSIR-IITR. Vardhana Rao then addressed the audience on the growing concerns surrounding microplastics and ensuring the safety and sustainability of our food systems.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
NOTICE
Applications forms for allotment of hostel Shops/Vehicle Stands from session 2024-25 (Extendable upto 30.06.2029) of University Campus, Amritsar, Regional Campus, Gurdaspur and Regional Campus, Jalandhar are invited till **06.07.2024**. The details, terms & conditions and forms can be downloaded from the university website link:- <https://online.gndu.ac.in/tenders-notice.aspx>
Dean Students' Welfare
NA/12/23562/2023/34840
Dated CHD :- 6/21/2024

Rousing welcome for Rajnath



Lucknow (PNS): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Lucknow on Friday evening. On his arrival at Lucknow, he was given a rousing welcome at the airport by Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and workers and public representatives. To make the welcome memorable, a large number of workers were present at the airport with drums, flower showers, garlands and bouquets.

Rai, Congressmen held during protest against NEET rigging

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the call of the party high command, the leaders and workers of Uttar Pradesh Congress, on Friday, held a statewide demonstration against the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG 2024 and demanded a probe under the supervision of a sitting judge of the Supreme Court.

In Lucknow, the Congress protested against the rigging in NEET. Party's state president Ajay Rai was detained by the police. Under the leadership of Ajay Rai, Congress workers and leaders left the UPCC headquarters to gherao the Vidhan Sabha. However, after going a little further, the police stopped them by putting barricades. The Congressmen had a heated argument with the police. Meanwhile, party leaders including Ajay Rai started moving forward by crossing the barricade. The police forcibly stopped them and there was a lot of pushing and shoving too. After this, the police forcibly took the UPCC president and scores of party leaders and workers into custody and took them to Eco Garden only to release them later in the evening. During this time, the Congress workers demanded cancellation of the medical entrance examination in the interest of the students and resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Talking to media



persons, Rai alleged that there was a technical glitch in the examination and unfair means were used. "In the Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana, many accused of rigging the NEET have been arrested due to which the entire examination is surrounded by apprehension. The future of the youth is being played with in the BJP-ruled states. Incidents of paper leaks are happening every day," Rai alleged while demanding an inquiry under a sitting judge of the apex court besides resignation of the prime minister and the Union education minister.

Congress workers and leaders in other districts, including Kanpur Nagar, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Jhansi, Ayodhya, Moradabad, Meerut, Bareilly, also staged protests outside the offices of the district magistrates over the rigging in the NEET and demanding action in the matter. At many places, several Congressmen were also taken in custody for trying to burn the effigies of the

BJP ministers. Interestingly even the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad activists burnt the effigy of the Union education minister outside the district magistrate's office in Kanpur Nagar. There have been allegations of question paper leaks in states like Bihar and other irregularities in the prestigious exam. The allegations have led to protests in several cities and filing of petitions in several high courts as well as the Supreme Court. The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) has called for immediate action against the National Testing Agency (NTA) amid the cancellation of the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) conducted on June 18. The NEET was held on May 5 across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates took it. The results were expected to be declared on June 14 but were announced on June 4, apparently because the evaluation of the answer sheets was completed earlier.

Guest houses to be constructed in Ayodhya, Prayagraj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced plans to construct guest houses in the holy cities of Ayodhya and Prayagraj.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed the presentation regarding the construction site, layouts, facilities and decorations of these guest houses on Friday.

During a meeting with officials of the Estate department, the chief minister emphasised the need for guest houses with excellent standards of security and convenience in Ayodhya to accommodate dignitaries such as the president, the prime minister and governor, as well as other important visitors from around the world.

The pran pratishtha of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple has increased the number of distinguished visitors to the city, making secure and comfortable lodging a priority.

Similarly, the chief minister highlighted the necessity for a fully-equipped guest house in Prayagraj to host notable guests. He instructed that the construction process should start as soon as possible.

Discussing the proposed guest house in Ayodhya, the chief minister said that the land of the Tourism department on the banks of the Sarayu river in Ayodhya would be ideal.

Internal conflicts played a critical role in BJP's downfall in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the wake of the humiliating setback in the recent Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party has initiated an in-depth investigation to understand the factors behind its poor performance in Uttar Pradesh. Although the official report from the special squad of BJP officials has yet to be submitted, preliminary findings indicate that internal conflicts played a critical role in the party's downfall. The investigation reveals that in several constituencies, the battle was more intense between BJP's own Lok Sabha candidates, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and party officials than against the opposition. "This internal 'war' has

been identified as a key factor contributing to the party's failure to achieve its target of winning 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh," a senior party leader said adding: "Additionally, the BJP experienced a loss of over 8 per cent of its core vote bank, particularly among non-Yadav backward castes." The BJP, which has lost nearly half the seats it held in the 2019 elections, is experiencing considerable internal turmoil. In response, the party has mobilised its organisational machinery, forming 40 teams of office-bearers to visit each of the 80 parliamentary constituencies to assess the ground realities. These teams are tasked with identifying the specific reasons for the defeat in each area.

Sources close to the investigation reveal a prevalent "cold war" between the candidates, regional MLAs, and local party officials. Each group is pointing fingers at the others for the electoral loss. Local organisation officials cite infighting among MPs and MLAs, an anti-MP sentiment among the public, issues related to the Constitution and reservation policies, and the laxity of ground workers as primary reasons for the defeat. Another significant issue uncovered is discrepancies in the voter lists. Reports indicate that the names of a substantial number of BJP supporters were deleted from the voters' lists. Allegations were made against booth level officers (BLOs) for these irregularities, which fur-

ther hindered the party's performance. Local officials are facing criticism for their alleged role in the party's defeat. Accusations include deliberate discrepancies and negligence, which have purportedly diminished their influence among the public. In many areas, it was noted that due to the arbitrariness of the officials, the public's trust in the BJP waned, leading to their rejection at the polls. "As the BJP continues its post-mortem of the election results, the findings of these investigations are expected to lead to significant internal changes. The party's focus will likely shift to addressing the internal conflicts and restoring the trust of its core voter base to regain its standing in future elections," the leader said.

Mayawati under pressure to give big responsibility to Akash

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Before the scheduled meeting of the Bahujan Samaj Party on coming Sunday to review the party's worst performance in the recent Lok Sabha polls, party supremo Mayawati is facing pressure from senior leaders to accommodate and give some big responsibility to her nephew Akash Anand.

A senior BSP leader claimed that Akash Anand's removal from the key role sent a wrong message among the party cadre and voters and cited that the BSP candidates secured over 50,000 votes on 19 out of 26 constituencies, which is 73 per cent of the total Lok Sabha seats where was voting held till the third phase of elections.

In six of these 26 seats, the BSP candidates polled over one lakh votes. Mayawati had removed Akash Anand as the party's national coordinator on May 7, calling him immature after the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Akash's campaign events were also cancelled. The BSP leader claimed that the performance of the party deteriorated after Akash Anand was restricted from campaigning. BSP candidates secured 50,000 votes in 25 constituencies, which is 39 per cent of the 64 Lok Sabha seats where polling was held after the third phase. The party secured over one lakh votes in 11 constituencies, which is 17 per cent of 64 seats which went to polls after the third phase. Sources confirmed that in view of the increasing activism of Chandrasekhar of the Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) after becoming an MP, the party leaders will urge Behenji to make



Akash the national coordinator again so that the youth of the deprived society can be connected to the party. The sources confirmed that Mayawati can give Akash Anand an important responsibility in the party sooner or later, after the FIR registered for the controversial speech given by him in Sitapur during the elections is disposed of. The sources further said that besides demanding a comeback of Akash Anand, after a series of setbacks, the BSP cadres are now also talking in hushed tones about the need for a change in leadership. The BSP leadership has stubbornly refused to hold any brainstorming session while the party's vote share has touched rock bottom at 9.5 per cent in 2024 from 19.43 per cent in 2019. The BSP has won no seats in the Lok Sabha elections this time and is left with just one seat in the Uttar Pradesh assembly. Its status as a national party is also at risk. This was the party's worst electoral performance since its inception in 1984. Not only did the BSP draw a blank in terms of seats, an initial review showed that the party candidates were not able to secure

even the second spot in any of the 80 Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, a party insider disclosed. "The party has been steadily tumbling down after the 2012 assembly polls but Mayawati is not bothered. There has been no discussion at any level in the party and everything - from crucial decisions about alliances to ticket distribution - is decided by her, except the blame for the defeat. If the BSP has to survive, there is a need to effect a change in the leadership at the earliest so that we can regain lost ground in the 2027 assembly elections," said a former party coordinator. A former BSP MLA said that the party leadership had forced a majority of the party leaders to seek options in other parties and had expelled the remaining leaders. "Today former BSP leaders like Lalji Varma, RK Chaudhary, Ram Shiromani, Babu Singh Kushwaha have been elected as Members of Parliament from the Samajwadi Party. Who drove them away from the BSP?" he said. Meanwhile, sources said that Mayawati, along with making changes in the in-charges of major states, could also assign the responsibility of a post like the national coordinator to the

party's national vice-president Anand Kumar, father of Akash. The sources said that the day after the party's result came to zero on June 4, Mayawati took a detailed report from the party's national general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra on the reasons for the defeat and discussed it, but now a meeting of party office-bearers from across the country has been called on coming Sunday. Mayawati had already given instructions to take action against the coordinators and district level officials of those areas where the party performed worse than before. Many coordinators and district presidents have also been removed from their posts. Sources said that along with the party in-charges and office-bearers of other states, zonal, divisional coordinators and district presidents of Uttar Pradesh have also been called to Sunday's meeting. The sources revealed that in the meeting, Mayawati will make a detailed review of the reasons for the party's "very poor performance" and will also discuss the report given by the officials regarding the measures to rebuild the party. After the group meeting, the BSP chief will also hold a meeting with the office-bearers of different states. In the states where the party has performed worse than before, the in-charges will be removed. In the states like Maharashtra, Haryana, where assembly elections are going to be held in the near future, there will be extensive changes in the team so that the party performs better than before in the assembly elections. It is worth mentioning that BSP can also lose the status of a national party if its performance is poor in the assembly elections of these states.

POLICE RECRUITMENT EXAM PAPER LEAK

Make FIR against Gujarat company public: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has questioned the wisdom of the Uttar Pradesh government in giving contract for conducting the examination for the recruitment to state police to a Gujarat based company.

The state government has lodged a FIR against the company and has also blacklisted it. Akhilesh Yadav on Friday demanded that the government make public the FIR against the Gujarati firm for its involvement in the "police recruitment scam".

Akhilesh Yadav also raised questions about the police recruitment exam paper leak and its connection with the Gujarat-based company. He said that the allegations were very serious that the Gujarat company which conducts the police recruitment exam was involved in leaking the paper and only after its owner successfully fled abroad, the UP government came to know about it. The state government, just to avoid public anger, had blacklisted that company, he said.

Yadav said the UP government should show some courage and send police to Gujarat and recover damages from his property as such criminal people were guilty of ruining the future of 60 lakh youths of UP.



"Now the Bharatiya Janata Party government of UP should prove whether it is with these criminals or with the people of the state. The history and integrity and quality of every company operating in UP should be investigated," the SP president said.

He observed that when work is given to companies with tainted and shady records, the public should understand that the people of the department concerned of the UP government giving the work also have a stake in it. "This is a partnership of corruption," he added. "Not only the company related to the conduct of this examination but also every minister or officer involved should be investigated and until the investigation is completed, they should be divested of all offi-

cial duties and kept free from work and if the involvement is proved, strict punitive action should be taken by dismissing them," Akhilesh Yadav demanded.

"We demand that every external company working or willing to work in UP should be thoroughly investigated and work should be given only after the credentials of the company are verified. By not doing this, when the work goes wrong, it hurts the image of UP and also leads to wastage of the people's money," the SP chief said.

"Ultimately it is the common people who have to suffer the consequences of all this. There is also a demand that priority should be given to UP companies and work should be given to outside companies only when UP government departments, corporations, boards or local companies do not have the capacity to complete the work with quality within the time limit or they lack experience in doing such work," the SP chief said.

"The people of UP should also remember that this is the same BJP government, which till yesterday was issuing orders for recruitment on contract in the police department. Extremely condemnable! Leaking of papers of various examinations is a question mark on the integrity of the government," he added.

Moradabad to be developed into a vibrant economic hub

Master Plan 2031 for Peetal Nagri introduced

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to make every district in the state self-reliant, the Yogi Adityanath government has introduced the Master Plan 2031 for Moradabad, renowned as the 'Brass City' (Peetal Nagri). This plan aims to ensure the expansion and development of the city while also boosting the identity and export industry of brass handicrafts, which is included in the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath intends to develop Moradabad into a vibrant economic hub. There is a proposal to create a handicraft village for artisans associated with the brass industry and to construct a mega MSME park. Additionally, plans are in place to accelerate Moradabad's industrial development through industrial and logistic parks.

Recently, officials presented the Moradabad Master Plan 2031 to the chief minister. The master plan mentions

that the current population of 13,14,914 in the city is expected to reach approximately 16,66,404 by 2031. With this growth in mind, the plan aims to establish a strong economic foundation to meet future needs and enhance socio-cultural and physical infrastructure.

Additionally, the plan aims to promote sustainable and planned development while conserving the city's environment. Strengthening the traffic plan will also be emphasised, including a provision of a 60-metre-wide ring road for traffic decongestion. Furthermore, a 36-metre-wide industrial corridor will be developed to connect the SEZ (Special Economic Zone) outside the development area with the industrial area within the city. The report presented to the chief minister outlines plans for the construction of a Handicraft Village, a Mega MSME Cluster, an Industrial Logistic Park, a Knowledge City and a Medicity in Moradabad.

Additionally, the plan includes the establishment of Uttar Pradesh state university on 55 acres. For industrial needs, there are proposals for a Skill Development Centre, an auditorium and convention centre for exporters and investors, a mega township named 'Shivalik' on 1,200 hectares, an industrial and mixed-use on 130 hectares and a mod-

ern residential township on 50 hectares. Further proposals include a Sports City, an AYUSH Park, a Sugarcane Processing Cluster, a Cattle Colony, a Fish Market, and a Transport Hub. For Master Plan 2031, currently short-term projects worth ₹18,017 crore, medium-term projects worth ₹13,027 crore, and long-term projects worth ₹10,749 crore are being implemented in

Moradabad. Moradabad, known as the Brass City, showcases designs on its brass products that reflect the culture, heritage, history and diversity of the region to the world. The patterns and designs used to decorate these objects are inspired by various sources, ranging from Hindu deities to paintings of the Mughal period. Brass products from Moradabad are exported globally.

Congress leader joins RLD

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Senior Congress leader Sitendra Singh along with his supporters took the membership of Rashtriya Lok Dal in the presence of party's national spokesperson Anil Dubey in Lucknow on Friday.

While expressing faith in the leadership of RLD national president Jayant Chaudhary and the policies of Bharat Ratna Chaudhary Charan Singh, Jitendra Singh said he switched to RLD because its ideology fits finely the needs of the present time.

बड़ौदा यू.पी. बैंक Baroda U.P. Bank		Regional Office : 2A Gautam Nagar (2nd Floor) Fatehpur 212601 Mob: 9554969117, 9554969118, E-Mail: fatehpur@barodauprb.co.in	DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE Under Section 13 (2) of 2002 for Enforcement of Security Interest			
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Baroda U.P. Bank Issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 to the Borrower's/Guarantor's herein below mentioned, Consequent upon the dispatch of such Notices through Post And returned Bank undelivered from the Borrower's/Guarantor's addresses. Through this Publication they are hereby called upon to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of publication of said notice failing which the bank will take the possession of the immovable and movable property will sell it through the process in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.			
Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Date of Demand Notice/Date of NPA/Branch	Outstanding Amount	Description of the Property
1.	Borrower: Kuldeep Kumar Gupta S/O Ram Khelawan Gupta, R/o: Vill-Udharanpur, Post & Distt. Fatehpur. Guarantors: (1). Mr Anil Kumar S/O Shyam Gopal, R/o Ramganj pakka Talab Fatehpur, (2). Mrs Shanti Devi W/O Ram Khelawan, R/o 376/337, G.T. Road, Abunagar, Fatehpur, (3). Mr. Ram Khelawan S/O Mr. Shreepal Gupta, R/o 376/337, G.T. Road, Abunagar, Fatehpur Date of Demand: 07.06.2024, Date of NPA: 30.06.2017 Branch: Main Branch, Fatehpur	Rs. 29,33,392/- + Intt. + Others Charges	Land & Building Situated at House No. 376/337, Abunagar, Fatehpur in the name of Mrs Shanti Devi W/O Ram Khelawan & Mr. Ram Khelawan S/O Mr. Shreepal Gupta, Area: 27.00 Sq.m. Now 9.43 Sq.m. Bounded- North: Vikrit house door after road, South: H/O Ram Khelawan, East: H/O Ram Khelawan, West: Vikrit house door after gali after h/o Vishal Singh
2.	Borrower: Neeraj Singh S/O Rajendra Singh, Both R/o: House No. 298 R K Puram Colony Fatehpur Guarantors: (1). Mr. Kamata S/o Shivasaran, R/o 107 Badalpur Fatehpur, (2). Mr. Ranjeet Singh Yadav S/O Balram Singh, R/o Nadipur Civil Lines, Fatehpur Date of Demand: 07.06.2024, Date of NPA: 31.03.2015 Branch: Main Branch, Fatehpur	Rs. 10,18,460/- + Intt. + Others Charges	Land & Building Situated at House No. 298 R K Puram Colony Fatehpur in the name of Neeraj Singh S/O Rajendra Singh, Area: 81.00 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North: Plot of Pandey ji, South: H/O Santosh Bajpai, East: Rasta, West: H/O Udai Mali
Date: 22.06.2024		Place: Fatehpur	Authorised Officer, Baroda U.P. Bank

Yoga holistic approach to health: Sharma

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Urban Development, Urban Comprehensive Development, Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Energy and Additional Energy Sources Department and UP Government Nodal Minister Dr AK Sharma said the global phenomenon recognises the ancient Indian yoga system and its profound impact on physical, mental and spiritual well-being. “Yoga is a holistic approach to health, which integrates breathing exercises, meditation and ethical principles”, he said while speaking as the chief guest at the main event of the 10th International Yoga Day which was celebrat-



ed with great enthusiasm at Shankaracharya Chowk and Ganga exit gate of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham here on Friday. The chief guest inau-

gured the programme by lighting the lamp along with Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava, MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, Zila Panchayat Chairperson

Poonam Maurya and others. The guests were welcomed by District Magistrate in charge/CDO Himanshu Nagpal. People present on the occasion practised yoga. The welcome message was given by Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava. Yoga instructors Manish Pandey, Rita Jaiswal, Shikha Sharma conducted yoga, Dr Deepika Dave conducted the yoga protocol. The CDO proposed the vote of thanks. CEO of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Nyas, officers and employees of the Ayurveda department, principal of the Government Ayurvedic College and others were also present. The function was conducted by Ashutosh Pandey. Besides, in the programme organised at the

Gurudham temple complex located at Gurudham, former minister and MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari did yoga with the participants. Apart from this, yoga programmes were organised on a large scale mainly in tehsils, development blocks, apart from Nagar Nigan parks, Ganga ghats, Bada Lalpur Sports Stadium, Sarnath Deer Park, District Judge Compound, District Jail etc. The supporting organisations were Brahmakumari, Gayatri Parivar, Dhanvantri Karmayog, Red Cross Society, Rotary Club, Patanjali, Chaitanya Yoga, DS Group, Civil Defence, NDRE, CRPF etc. The total number of participants in Kashi Vishwanath Dham was 1,203. A total of over 6.37 lakh people participated in the Yoga week.

Functions galore on Yoga Day in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 10th International Yoga Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm in the entire district on Friday. On the occasion, yoga practice programmes were organised at various places. Enhancing strength, unity and mindfulness together embracing the power of yoga, the Army personnel did yoga at 39 Gorkha Training Centre (GTC). The paramilitary forces like CRPF, NDRE, CISF etc also performed yoga. The personnel of 95 Battalion CRPF organised yoga programme at Dhamekh Stupa (Sarnath). Yoga Guru Sushil Kumar Gupta helped CRPF personnel to do yoga. Second Command Officer Alok Kumar, Deputy Commandant Navneet Kumar, Assistant Commandant Abhishek Kumar Singh and others were present. In Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain led the BHU fraternity as he performed yoga alongside teachers, students and staff at the Malviya Bhawan premises.



Hundreds of participants performed asanas under the guidance of yoga teacher Dr Yogesh Kumar Bhatt. Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh, Dean of Students Prof Anupam Kumar Nema, Honorary Director, Malviya Bhawan, Prof Raja Ram Shukla, directors of institutes, and senior officials also joined the celebration. V-C of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) Prof Bihari Lal Sharma said yoga provides haven of peace, which enables us to face the challenges of life with peace and patience. He was presiding over the event on the day. “Adi Yogi Baba Vishwanath of Kashi, the origin of Yoga Vidya, is considered as ‘Adiyogi’ and ‘Yogguru’ all over the world. Kashi resi-

dents are fortunate to be associated with this land”, he said. Registrar Rakesh Kumar said along with yoga related courses, a week-long yoga camp concluded on the day. “This is a ‘tapobhoomi’, where students are taught Vedas and other scriptures through yoga practice”, he added. Yogi Aditya Kumar and Yogi Rajkumar Mishra trained all the participants in the use, method and utility of various yogas through practical method. In Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) organised ‘Trans Yoga Programme’ under the auspices of Transgender Cell. V-C Prof Anand Kumar Tyagi said yoga fills us with human compassion and affection and it teaches our life and society

the lesson of humanity. Through yoga, we are bound by the feeling of compassion and love and are disciplined in the right direction, he said. The yoga practice was conducted by Physical Education department teacher Dr Sunil Yadav. Prof Anurag Kumar conducted the function while Prof Vandana Sinha proposed the vote of thanks. With the theme ‘Yoga for Self and Society’, yoga programmes were organised in Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) at its major stations, training centres and diesel lobbies etc under the aegis of the Personnel department. Under the leadership of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava, branch officers and senior railway officers along with their family members performed yoga at the Officers Club located at Lahartara. On the occasion, ADRM (Infrastructure) Roshan Lal Yadav, ADRM (Operations) Rajesh Kumar Singh, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr RJ Chaudhuri and others were also present. A Yoga Abhyas Camp was also organised at Indraprastha

Community Hall located in New Loco Colony. In Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), yoga practice was conducted at various places. Under the leadership of the General Manager Abhay Bakre, an event was organised at BLW Officers’ Club. Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava and many others were present. The GM in his address said that yoga is a very important part of our life which leads to our mental and physical development. “Yoga will increase the efficiency of our officers and employees, due to which all the railway employees will unite and not only achieve the production target but also achieve new heights by manufacturing more railway engines than the target”, he added. The programme was organised by the Personnel department and conducted by Amlesh Srivastava. At Varanasi Cantt Head Post Office premises, Postmaster General Krishna Kumar Yadav appealed to people to participate in building a healthy India by adopting yoga in daily routine. The events were also organised at various health centres, and other places.

Yoga should be part of our life: Maurya



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya did yoga at the Bharat Scout and Guide College ground in Mumfordganj on the Yoga Day on Friday. About 5,000 people did yoga here. Maurya said that yoga should be a part of our life. Phulpur MP Praveen Patel, other MLAs and a large number of teachers, doctors and officers and employees of other departments participated here. It was conducted by Prabhakar Tripathi. Besides, yoga camps were organized in the entire district, including Chandrashekhar Azad Park. Yoga sessions were also organised by various organisations. District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal said that the photo of yoga and the number of participants are being uploaded on the ‘Ayush Kavach App’.

YOGA SESSION HELD: In the celebration of International Yoga Day 2024, the NSS SHU-ATS organised yoga session in the campus here on Friday. The yoga session began at 06:15 am under the guidance of yoga

trainers Dr. Santosh Kumar Yadav and Ramesh Kumar. Assistant NSS coordinator Satyam Kumar Kesari explained that yoga is not only for physical health but it has social relevance also and it is a system of life. On Yoga Day, Pranayama, Anulom Vilom, Vakrasana, Mandukasana, Vrikshasana, Ekagraasana, Tirthakasana etc. were performed. Dr Dipak Kumar Bose, Coordinator National Service Scheme (NSS) said that every member of the society should practice yoga for healthy body and mind. A total of 136 NSS volunteers, staff members, students and neighbours were participated in the programme. NSS programme officers Dr Rampal Singh, Dr Prashant Ankur Jain, Dr Satyendra Nath, Dr. Hira Bose, Dr Anisha Verma, Dr.Jyotsana Jaiswal, Dr. Abhinav Dayal, Bipin Kumar Singh and staff members Dr Amit Larkin, Dr Ajay Kumar Singh, Dr RN Shukla, Dr NK Gupta, Pradeep Masih, Navendu Upadhyaya and others were the part of the celebrations. **FOUND DEAD** A 70-year-old woman was found dead in her house in Kasari Masari area under the Dhoomanganj police station area of Prayagraj. It is believed that Kusum Lata Srivastava was killed by hitting her with a rod. The household items were also scattered. Dhoomanganj Inspector Vaibhav Singh reached on getting the information. The woman's body has been sent for post-mortem.

Yoga workshop organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

International Yoga Day was celebrated in North Central Railway (NCR) on Friday on the theme “Yoga for self and society” here. A yoga workshop was organised in the badminton hall located at Railgaon Complex, Subedarganj of NCR headquarters. The workshop was organised under the leadership of General Manager, North Central Railway, Ravindra Goyal and in the presence of President, NCR Women's Welfare Organisation (NCRWWO), Shikha Goyal. At the beginning of the programme, the chief guest, the GM and president, NCRWWO were welcomed by the Principal Chief Personnel Officer, NCR, Anurag Tripathi by presenting a plant. The GM inaugurated the yoga workshop organised on the day by lighting the lamp. The workshop was organised under the guidance of yoga instructor, Anupama Singh. As per the Common Yoga Protocol- 45-minute programme, the yoga instructor conducted the practice of prayer, walking, yoga asanas, kapalbhati, pranayama, meditation and resolution. Speaking on the occasion, the GM said through yoga we can strengthen our immunity and respiratory system. He called upon everyone to adopt yoga in their lives. At the end of the programme, the GM honoured the yoga instructor with a certificate and prize money for training in the workshop. Similarly, in all the three divisions of NCR yoga was practised by divisional railway managers, officers and employees. Yoga sessions were organised in the auditorium of DRM



Prayagraj, Tundla College, Kanpur, Mirzapur, major stations, crew lobbies, running rooms Prayagraj, Electric Training Centre, Kanpur and various places. In Jhansi division, the programme was organised under the leadership of DRM. Yoga sessions were also organised at various stations of the division. In Agra division, a yoga session was organised at the Officers' Club Agra. Similar yoga sessions were organised at various stations. The event was promoted extensively using social media tools besides through jingles and videos at stations and in trains. Meanwhile DRM Prayagraj Himanshu Badoni inaugurated the yoga practice programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp in front of the idol of Goddess Saraswati in the divisional office premises on the Yoga Day. The DRM did yoga with railway officers and explained its importance. Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM/ General) Sanjay Singh, ADRM (Operations) Ajay Kumar Rai, ADRM (Infra) Naveen Prakash etc. were present. Badoni said yoga makes our body healthy. When we do yoga regularly, energy flows in your body. He said that at present human life is becoming busier, due to which various changes are taking place in lifestyle, which is having a deep impact on their

health. Yoga has been of special importance since ancient times. The railway employees present were made to do yoga and made aware of its benefits.

CELEBRATIONS AT IFFCO

The 10th International Yoga Day was celebrated at R Krishnan Stadium, IFFCO Ghiyanagar Phulpur here on Friday. The programme started with Surya Namaskar by all the people under the guidance of yoga instructor Shailendra Kumar. Yoga instructor trained people in various yogasana and pranayam and told about its benefit like Anulom Vilom Pranayam, Bhastrika Pranayam, Kapalbhati



Pranayam, Bhramari Pranayam, Chandrabhedana Pranayam, Rudra Mudra, Vrikshasana, Mandukasana, Shashankasana, Suptavajrasana, Utkatasana, Paschimottanasana, Mayurasana, Singhasana etc. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia said everyone should make yoga a part of their daily life as it has long term benefits. GM respectively Sanjay Vaish, MD Mishra, AP Rajendran, JGMs respectively Arun Kumar, Arvendra Kumar, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, IFFCO Officers' Association General Secretary Swayam Prakash, DK Shukla and a large number of women and children participated in the programme.

Minister: 24-hour power supply govt's priority

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Energy Minister AK Sharma said providing 24-hour power supply to consumers is the priority of the government. He was reviewing the progress of Electricity department at a review meeting of PuVVNL held at Circuit House here on Friday. Sharma said the government has decided to end the roster practice to ensure 24-hour power supply in the entire state.

However, the minister praised all the officers of the Electricity department for maintaining better electricity supply than in previous years even during the last few months of extreme heat and directed that best practices should be followed for the maintenance of infrastructure so that the government's resolve to provide 24-hour electricity supply to consumers can be fulfilled. “Public representatives and local newspapers should be informed about the power disruption caused due to shutdowns taken for development works being carried out under RDSS and other schemes and the benefits after completion of the work”, he said.

MLA Saurabh Srivastava praised the Electricity department and the government in view of the improvement in electricity supply in Varanasi after the year 2014. The MLA expected that whenever a shutdown is taken for any work, the public representatives should be informed by the department so that the general public does not get the wrong message. PuVVNL Managing Director Shambhu Kumar informed that keeping in mind the increase in power load by the year 2030, the system design work is being done so that low voltage and overloading situation can be avoided and uninterrupted and quality power supply can be ensured to the consumers. “Schemes worth ₹1,300 crore have been approved for Varanasi city, under which new distribution transformers will be installed at 1,202 places and capacity enhancement of transformers will be done at 1,955 places”, he said. Sharma also reviewed the development work being done in their area, consumer complaints and power supply from each Chief Engineer Distribution. CE(D)- I



Energy Minister AK Sharma reviewing progress of PuVVNL in Varanasi on Friday.

informed that the work of capacity enhancement of 10 power transformers has been completed in his distribution area. “Capacity enhancement of distribution transformers was done at 596 places and new distribution transformers have been installed at 207 places. Works are being carried out at many places under RDSS and Business Plan 2024-25. Due to extreme heat on May 28 and 29 and June 7 and 8, there was overloading at some places, for which the power supply was kept normal by controlling the temperature of the transformers by installing coolers on the power transformers”, the CE said adding that the remaining works under RDSS and business plan are being done on priority basis so that the supply can be ensured as per the expectations of the government.

Energy Minister AK Sharma also took information about the power supply being done in Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham and directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the temple through automatic RMU under the upcoming plan. It was also directed that the system should be designed keeping in mind the maximum load on the system so that the problem of overloading does not arise in the coming years. CE(D)- II informed that complaints of consumers were received at some places due to overloading of distribution transformers. The business plan has been approved in the year 2024-25, marking the capacity enhancement of the transformers at the said places and the work will be completed soon. CE Mirzapur area informed that 2,098 works of Business Plan 2023-24 have been completed and the remaining works will be completed soon. The minister directed to construct

the necessary infrastructure to ensure uninterrupted supply in Vindhyavasani Dham area and also directed to electrify the unelectrified areas in Dudhi area of Sonbhadra. CE Prayagraj- I informed that out of 54 power sub-stations, double source supply is available at 39. “There is no problem of power supply at almost all places under the distribution area. The problem of overloading arises due to power theft in Jhansi, Kareli and Kasadi Masadi, for which efforts are being made to stop power theft by taking effective steps”, he added. CE Prayagraj- II informed that 1,828 works have been completed in his area under business plan and other schemes. “Last year, a situation of overloading had arisen in Fatehpur district due to agricultural load”, he said.

After the review, the Energy Minister directed to strengthen 1912 (Control Room) so that the problems of the consumers can be resolved quickly. “The problems of consumers should be solved by treating them well”, he said, adding that in dense areas where electricity theft is actually taking place, necessary action should be taken there and effective changes should be ensured. “Keeping in mind the rapid industrial and commercial development, strong planning of infrastructure should be done”, Sharma said. Director (Works & Administration) RK Jain, Director (Finance) Santosh Kumar Jadia, CE (Planning) Chandrajeet Kumar, CE Varanasi- I Arvind Kumar Singhal, CE-Varanasi- II Mukesh Kumar Garg, CE Mirzapur JPN Singh, CE Chief Engineer- Mirzapur, CE- I Prayagraj Pramod Kumar Singh, CE-II Prayagraj Vishwadeep Ambardar, CE Technical Shreshth Kumar Srivastava and many others were also present.

KDA gets land vacated from unauthorised possession

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) got its around 7300 sq metre land worth approximately Rs 14.60 crore vacated from unauthorised possession in villages under New Azad Nagar outpost of Sen Paschimpara police station area on Thursday. The squad bulldozed the illegal construction and got the land freed from unauthorised possession. The land under unauthorised possession belonged to arazi No.181, 600 sq metre, 166 - 4100 sq metre in Satvri village and arazi No.409 - 2600 sq metre in Sakrapur village. During the drive, local police force, enforcement squad, employees and officers of the Land Bank and team of KDA and Sadar tehsil were present on the spot. The drive was led by the OSD Land Bank (Zone 4), KDA, Ajay Kumar. Meanwhile, the squad also sealed many illegal constructions in enforcement zone 4 under Sen Paschimpara police station area on Thursday. The team sealed the illegal construction on plot No.260, Taudhakupur, Juhi, premises No.133/81 M Block, Kidwai

Nagar; No.633, Gandhigram, Chakeri, Plot No 128/1256 Y-1 Block, Kidwai Nagar; Plot No128/543/116 Block K, Kidwai Nagar; No 128/1256 Y-1 Block, Kidwai Nagar; No 622 Y-1 Block, Kidwai Nagar; No.128/543/11 Block K, Kidwai Nagar and No 130/132 E, Aitjanj, Babupurwa. The drive was led by the OSD (Enforcement Zone 4) Ajay Kumar. The team comprised assistant engineer CK Chaturvedi, junior engineer Kailash Singh, staff of enforcement department, zone 4, departmental security personnel and local police force. V-C, KDA, Madan Singh Garbhal said such drives will continue in future as well.

TRAINING: The IIT-K, a leading institute in the field of telecommunications, hosted a highly successful three-day training programme on “Design and Development of 5G/5G+ Standards and Indigenous 5G Network” for officers from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India. The programme, organised in collaboration with NTIPRIT and TEC, DoT, provided a comprehensive overview of 5G technology

and its future advancements, with a special focus on India's indigenous 5G network development.

INVITED: Prof Narendra Mohan, former director, National Sugar Institute and a renowned sugar technologist has been invited by the South African Sugar Technologists Association to deliver key note address on “Sustainability of Sugar Industry Through Diversified Revenue Streams” at the 96th congress of the Association to be held from August 13 to 15 at Durban. Prof Mohan has also been invited to visit Sugarcane Milling Research Institute at Durban. The members of South Africa Sugar Association shall also meet Prof Mohan with whom he will share initiatives taken by Indian sugar industry for improving its viability. “We look forward to hear about the Indian sugar industry's diversification and sustainability journey. It is going to be great opportunity to hear Prof Mohan who has contributed immensely for developing various value added innovative products from the by-products of the sugar industry”, said Muhammad Kadwa, President, SASTA.

NTPC Auraiya concludes GEM workshop

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

NTPC Auraiya recently concluded the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) Workshop 2024 a transformative initiative aimed at nurturing and empowering young girls from PAVs. The workshop which commenced witnessed enthusiastic participation from 40 girls representing nine government schools from PAVs of NTPC Auraiya.

The event was inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries, including NS Rao, Regional Executive Director (Northern Region), Jayadev Parida, CGM Auraiya,



Sanghmitra Parida, President of Jagriti Mahila Mandal and other senior officials like SK Balyan, AGM(O&M), Tanmoy Dutta, Head of HR etc. Their presence underscored the commitment of NTPC Auraiya towards promoting education and empowerment among young girls. During the four-week pro-

gramme the participants engaged in a holistic curriculum encompassing academic subjects, extracurricular activities and essential life skills. Special classes on self-defence and menstrual health and hygiene awareness further enriched their learning experience. The closing ceremony showcased the talent of girls which included captivating performances in dance, yoga demonstrations, self-defence displays, skits and musical presentations. An exhibition highlighting the arts and crafts created by the girls was also prominently displayed during the workshop showcasing their creativity and skills.

Girl with heart problem gets new life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The National Health Mission and the Central government have made arrangements for free treatment under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) for sick children up to 18 years of age, from poor families with congenital deformity. More than 40 diseases, including congenital heart disease, cleft lip-palate, deafness, crooked legs, neural tube defects etc have been included under RBSK. The programme is playing an important role in reducing the untimely death of such children as well as helping them lead a normal life. In this direction,

the team of RBSK under Primary Health Centre (PHC) Harhua reached Anganwadi Centre Sabhaipur in February this year for health checkup. During the checkup in the presence of Anganwadi worker Kiran Devi, a five-and-a-half year-old girl was found who had a hole in her heart which was confirmed by Nodal Medical Officer Dr Abdul Javed and then parents of girl were informed about it. Dr Javed informed the parents about RBSK. Later, he also informed CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary and Nodal Officer and ACMO Dr Sanjay Rai about the treatment. After preparing all the documents,

when the poor family received a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh, for operation and that too for free, the parents were very happy. They went to Aligarh four to five times and showed their daughter daughter to the doctor. Meanwhile, when girl's health deteriorated, she was admitted last week and a successful operation was done for the hole in her heart and now she is completely fine, getting a new life. Dr Abdul Javed, Dr Arvind Kumar, Dr Shailendra Kumar, Vinod Kumar, ANM Geeta Devi and Ranjana Kumari made commendable contribution in the RBSK Harhua team.

Initiative to empower Varanasi's MSMEs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and Shiprocket, a leading eCommerce enablement platform, will collaborate to run a capacity-building programme, tailored specifically for Varanasi's unique strengths and they will empower MSMEs in the city to conquer the global market. Focusing on the promotion of silk products and Meenakari craft, their proposed summit has invited 200-300 participants, including industry figures, government representatives and MSMEs. This joint ini-

tiative aims to empower Varanasi's MSMEs with the necessary knowledge and tools to unlock the full potential of its export prowess. Varanasi stands as a cornerstone of Uttar Pradesh's industrial landscape, housing 89,577 MSMEs. The city is known for its strong handicraft and export capabilities, particularly in silk products. These dynamic enterprises are a driving force behind India's economic growth and generating significant employment. The diverse MSME ecosystem in Varanasi spans various sectors, including Banaras brocades and sarees etc.

SC refuses to defer counselling for NEET

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to defer the counselling for the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 examination scheduled to kick off on July 6, saying it is not an "open and shut" process. The Apex Court issued notices to the National Testing Agency (NTA), the Centre and others on a petition seeking cancellation of the exam over alleged irregularities in holding it on May 5. A vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti posted the matter for hearing on July 8 along with other pending pleas alleging irregularities in conduct of the examination. The counsel appearing for the petitioners urged the bench that the counselling process may be paused for two days as the apex court is scheduled to hear all these pleas on July 8. "I am not seeking any stay of counselling. I am only praying that the counselling which is scheduled to be held



on July 6 may be paused for two days only. The reason being that the main matter is listed on July 8," the lawyer argued. The bench observed, "We have been hearing the same statement. Don't think otherwise for interrupting you. Counselling does not mean open and shut. It is a process. That process commences on July 6." When the bench asked about the duration of the first round of counselling, one of the lawyers appearing in the matter said it will last around a week. The bench, which refused to defer the

counselling process, said that counsel appearing for the NTA, the Centre and other respondents may file their response to the plea within two weeks. The bench also dealt with a separate application seeking certain directions to the NTA. The counsel appearing for the applicant raised the issue of re-test, which is to be conducted on June 23, and alleged that the NTA has withheld some material information. The bench then asked the NTA's counsel to file a response to the application and posted it for hearing on July 8. On June 13, the Centre had told the apex court that the decision to give grace marks to 1,563 NEET-UG 2024 candidates for admission to MBBS, BDS and others courses has been cancelled and they will be given an option to take a re-test on June 23. During the hearing on Friday, the applicant's counsel raised the issue of re-test and said candidates will undergo the stress of giving the examination afresh.

Indian Armed forces perform asanas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Military personnel from the three services joined in the International Yoga day celebrations across the country on Friday performing asanas in varying weather conditions. While several army jawans stretched their limbs during sessions held on a range of terrains from Kutch to Kibithu and arid Longewala to Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal, navy personnel showed their yoga skills onboard India's aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and some naval ships. In the national capital, a large number of air warriors converged at the Air Force Station to mark the International Day of Yoga. IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari led the event. "The 10th International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated across the IAF today. The CAS led the celebrations by performing Yoga with IAF personnel at Air Force Station New Delhi. The theme of this year's IDY is 'Yoga for Self and Society'. The CAS urged everyone to embrace Yoga and set forth on a path of serenity to discover the calmness when the mind, body and spirit unite," the IAF wrote in a post on X and shared photos. Navy Chief Adm Dinesh K Tripathi attended a session held at Chanakya Bagh here by the Navy. Indian Naval Warships mission deployed across the Indian Ocean Region and Western Pacific Ocean conducted Yoga session at sea and in foreign ports. IN Ships Kolkata & Tabar at Djibouti, Sunayna at Port Louis, Mauritius, Tarkash at Salalah, Oman, Kamorta at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka and



Indian Army personnel perform Yoga on the 10th International Day of Yoga, in Sikkim, on Friday

Saryu at Belawan, Indonesia -- conducted Yoga sessions in respective ports, spreading the spirit of yoga across the oceans, a Navy spokesperson said. The main celebrations of the 10th International Day of Yoga were led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who took part in an event in Srinagar, while several Union ministers participated in yoga sessions held in different parts of the national capital. Recognising its universal appeal, in December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed June 21 as the International Day of Yoga by a resolution. The day aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practising yoga. "Celebrating the timeless practice of oneness and harmony, the Indian Army celebrated 10th International Day of Yoga across the entire length and breadth of our nation. The event witnessed overwhelming participation by serving personnel, their families, children, veterans, NCC cadets, and civilian fraternity at various locations," the defence ministry said in a statement. Yoga was also performed by soldiers deployed at the freezing heights of Siachen

Glacier in Ladakh to coastal areas of Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. The occasion was also celebrated from areas of Longewala in Rajasthan and Kutch in Gujarat) to the mountainous terrain of Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh and Imphal in Manipur, it said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh joined all ranks and their families for the celebrations in the city of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande also attended it. Several personnel also performed yoga near Pangong lake in Ladakh. In Delhi, the international yoga day was commemorated at Cariappa Parade Ground at the Delhi Cantonment, where serving army personnel, defence attaches of friendly foreign countries along with their families as well as NCC cadets participated. The yoga session here was led by Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, the Vice Chief of the Army Staff. Besides India, the IDY was also observed by all Indian Army contingents deployed in United Nations Missions across the globe. The local population there participated in the celebration in overwhelming numbers, the statement said.

Besides, para athletes of the Army at Army Paralympic Node, the cadets from Army Boys or Girls Sports Company also took part in the event in the country with lot of vigor and enthusiasm, it added. The local population including students at various educational establishments including the border villages also participated in the celebrations, the ministry said. This year's IDY theme, 'Yoga for Self and Society', resonated deeply in the celebrations with all personnel reinforcing their commitment and responsibilities in serving the nation, the ministry said. From the Indian Navy's side, personnel performed various yoga asanas, including 'Surya Namaskar', on board warships INS Tarkash and INS Teg, among other ships. "The International Yoga Day #21Jun, witnesses the Sunrise Command embracing the Sun with #yoga at sea, on the beaches, and naval stations across the Eastern Seaboard #IDY2024 #yogaeverywhere," the Eastern Naval Command posted on X and also shared photos. In another statement, the defence ministry said eight lakh National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets celebrated the occasion by participating in yoga sessions organised by NCC across the country. The sessions were organised at numerous schools, colleges & iconic locations including the Sun Temple at Konark in Odisha), Red Fort in Delhi, doing Dal Lake in Srinagar, Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad, Sanchi Stupa in MP, Gateway of India in Mumbai, Nainital Lake in Uttarakhand, Jhansi Fort in Uttar Pradesh, and Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, it added.

10TH INTERNATIONAL DAY YOGA



(Top left clockwise): People perform yoga at Times Square, in New York, USA; in Tel Aviv, Israel; Tsukiji Hongwanji Temple premises in Tokyo, Japan and at the iconic Heroes' Square organised by Embassy of India, in Budapest on Friday

PTI

Yoga Day celebrated with fervour across the world

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Yoga enthusiasts world around from Israel to the UAE to the UK and the US celebrated International Day of Yoga (IDY) on Friday with the main event led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Srinagar. Reflecting a moment of global mindfulness and harmony, this year's theme, "Yoga for Self and Society," underscored its dual role in fostering individual and societal well-being. The D-Day was held at the UN headquarters, New York, organised by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in collaboration with the UN Secretariat, in the North Lawn Area of UNHQ while the Indian Embassy in New York celebrated the 10th International Day of Yoga at the iconic Times Square, In Stockholm, the Indian Embassy participated in the celebrations with well-known Indian spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. It held a special session with 800 participants and diplomats from 25 nations at Konserthuset. The Israeli Embassy in New Delhi put up a touching video of their staff doing yoga. "Namaste! This #InternationalYogaDay, our diplomats share why they LOVE #yoga. They might not be yogis yet, but they sure have fun trying!" it posted. Likewise, the Ukrainian Embassy in a post said "Team

members of the Embassy of Ukraine in India join celebrations of the 10th Anniversary of the International Day of Yoga & more than 5,000 years of ancient Yoga tradition," while Philip Green, the Australian High Commissioner in India, in a post said "Over 10 lakh Australians practice yoga, including here in New Delhi." In Japan, IYD was held at the Tsukiji Hongwanji Temple with the Indian Embassy in a post stating "RAIN OR SHINE YOGA IN JAPAN." The Indian Embassy in Kuwait also marked the IYD at the embassy, which saw enthusiastic participation by yoga trainers and enthusiasts, members of diplomatic corps, and members of the Indian community. The British High Commission in New Delhi shared X photographs of some of its members performing a few yoga asanas in the morning. "...inhale' exhale' Armed with our yoga mats, team #UKinIndia joined millions of people in India and around the world to celebrate International #YogaDay," the UK High Commission here wrote on X. The Israeli Embassy video, featuring envoy Naor Gilon and some of its staff, posted on social media, commenting, "Namaste! ... This #InternationalYogaDay, our diplomats share why they

LOVE #yoga. They might not be yogis yet, but they sure have fun trying! Tell us in the comments why YOU love yoga.#IDY2024#YogaDay#InternationalYogaDay2024#YogaDay2024#YogaForAll." Likewise, the US Embassy video featured little children trying their hands at different yoga asanas. "It's Yoga Day and our adorable little yogis are stealing hearts with their smiles and stretches! Watch as our tiny warriors strike adorable poses, from Virabhadrasana to the Bhujangasana! This #YogaDay, join us as we celebrate the flexibility, balance, and cuteness overload," the embassy posted on X. The first citizen of India, President Droupadi Murmu who performed yoga at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, said yoga is India's unique gift to humanity, and it has become far more important because of rising lifestyle-related problems. "Yoga is a way to physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Let us resolve to adopt yoga as an integral part of our day-to-day living," the president said in a post on X and shared pictures of her doing yoga. In a similar spirit, as International Yoga Day entered into its tenth year and its impact continues to resonate across India, Gujarat's Chief Minister announced plans for 51 'Yoga Studios,' recognising yoga's invaluable role during

the COVID-19 pandemic, while Kerala committed to establishing 10,000 new yoga clubs. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, joined by his two deputies Kirti Vardhan Singh and Pabitra Margherita, performed a few asanas, along with several members of the diplomatic community at an indoor facility in Delhi, while the UK High Commission and embassies of the United States and Israel were among the diplomatic missions in India that joined in the yoga day celebrations on Friday. Back home, several Union ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors participated in yoga sessions held in different parts of the national capital and their respective States. Union Home Minister Amit Shah was at his home town in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, participating at a yoga event as he said, "India has enriched the world by giving the gift of Yoga. In today's world, the remedy to every problem is Yoga. Yoga is beneficial for both health and the mind." In Uttar Pradesh, State Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath performed different asanas as they were joined by hundreds of people on the lawns of the Governor's House, while Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde appealed to citizens to make yoga an integral part of their daily lives.



Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina being welcomed by Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh upon her arrival on a two-day State visit to India in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

Bangladesh PM begins two-day visit to India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday began a two-day State visit to India with an aim to further expand the already close ties between the two countries. It is the first incoming bilateral State visit by a foreign leader after the formation of the new government in India following the Lok Sabha elections. Hasina was among seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on June 9. Modi and Hasina are scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks on Saturday during which both sides are likely to firm up a raft of agreements providing for cooperation in several sectors. Apart from holding bilateral consultations with Modi, the vis-

iting leader is scheduled to call on President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to call on Hasina this evening. The talks between the two prime ministers are expected to focus on taking the bilateral ties to new heights, said a source. The overall strategic ties between India and Bangladesh have been on an upswing in the last few years. Bangladesh is an important partner for India under its "Neighbourhood First" policy and the cooperation extends to areas of security, trade, commerce, energy, connectivity, science and technology, defence and maritime affairs among others. The achievements in the connectivity sector included the inauguration of the Maitri Setu bridge over river Feni in Tripura and the rollout of the Chilhati-Haldibari rail link.

Water available in 150 main reservoirs dips

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With scorching heat battering large swathes of India over the past few weeks, water available in the 150 main reservoirs across the country further dipped to just 21 per cent of their total live storage capacity. The Central Water Commission (CWC) has released the live storage status of 150 key reservoirs across India in its latest bulletin. These reservoirs, crucial for hydroelectric projects and water supply, have a combined live storage capacity of 178.784 billion cubic meters (BCM), which is approximately 69.35 per cent of the total live storage capacity created in the country. As of Thursday, the live storage avail-

able in these reservoirs is 37.662 BCM, which is 21 per cent of their total capacity. Overall, the live storage available across the 150 reservoirs stands at 54.310 BCM against the estimated total capacity of 257.812 BCM. This marks a significant decrease from the same period last year, when the live storage was 46.883 BCM. The current storage is also lower than the 10-year average (normal) storage of 41.446 BCM. Thus, the present storage is 80 per cent of last year's levels and 91 per cent of the normal storage for this period. For the past two weeks, the reservoirs were at 22 per cent while it was 23 per cent the week before that. Swathes of northern and eastern India remained in the grip of a punishingly

long heat wave, causing water stress in parts of the country including in the national capital. In terms of reservoir capacity, the southern region continues to be most hit. States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, with 42 reservoirs, have a total capacity of 53.334 BCM. The available storage is 8.508 BCM (16 per cent of capacity), which is lower than last year's 21 per cent and the normal storage of 20 per cent. Northern states including Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, have 10 monitored reservoirs with a total capacity of 19.663 BCM. The current live storage is 5.488 BCM (28 per cent of capacity), which is lower than last year's 39 per cent and the normal stor-

age of 31 per cent. The eastern region covering Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland, and Bihar has 23 reservoirs with a total capacity of 20.430 BCM. The available storage is 3.873 BCM (19 per cent of capacity), slightly better than last year's 18 per cent but below the normal storage of 23 per cent. In the western region, Gujarat and Maharashtra, with 49 reservoirs, have a total capacity of 37.130 BCM. The current storage is 7.608 BCM (20.49 per cent of capacity), which is less than last year's 24 per cent but better than the normal storage of 19.56 per cent. In the central region that includes Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya

Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, there are 26 reservoirs with a total capacity of 48.227 BCM. The current live storage is 12.185 BCM (25 per cent of capacity), which is less than last year's 32 per cent and the normal storage of 26 per cent. The overall storage position in the country is less than that of the corresponding period last year and is also below the normal storage for this time of year. Specifically, better-than-normal storage is observed in river basins of the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Sabarmati, Narmada, Tapi, and a few others, while significant deficiencies are noted in the Brahmani and Baitarni, Krishna, Mahanadi, Godavari, and Cauvery basins, among others.

Early management of gestational diabetes can prevent maternal, child health complications: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Early management of gestational diabetes, particularly in the first trimester, can significantly reduce complications and improve delivery outcomes, according to a new study published in The Lancet. Gestational diabetes, which affects one in seven pregnancies globally, is becoming more prevalent and complex due to rising obesity rates. Currently pregnant women are checked for diabetes post the 24th week. The researchers from an international team, including those from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi said current

practices typically delay testing and treatment until later in pregnancy, but earlier intervention could lead to better health outcomes. Worldwide about one in 14 pregnant women develop gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) which is characterised by blood sugar levels that are higher than normal but not as high as in people with a chronic blood sugar problem. The sugar levels usually normalise after delivery. "Our new Series emphasises the urgent need for a major shift in how GDM is first diagnosed and managed, not only during pregnancy but throughout the lifetime of mothers and their babies," said Series lead Prof. David Simmons of Western Sydney



University, Australia. "GDM is an increasingly complex condition, and there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to managing it. Instead, a patient's unique risk factors and metabolic profile

should be considered to help guide them through pregnancy and support them afterward to achieve the best health outcomes for women and babies everywhere." As obesity continues to

increase worldwide, along with impaired glucose tolerance and T2D rates in women of reproductive age, GDM prevalence has also increased two to threefold across multiple countries over the last 20 years. The current GDM prevalence rates range from over 7% in North America and the Caribbean region to almost 28% in the Middle East and North Africa region. "GDM is a tremendous public health challenge. Women who experience it need support from the medical community, policymakers, and society as a whole to ensure they can effectively access proper treatment, reduce the stigma associated with GDM, and improve their overall pregnancy experience," said

Series author Dr Yashdeep Gupta from the AIIMS. GDM has historically been considered a pregnancy complication involving the treatment of high blood glucose levels late in the second trimester. The WHO's current diagnostic criteria for GDM recommends testing at 24-28 weeks gestation without prior screening. However, recent evidence suggests that GDM has foundations before pregnancy and can be present in early pregnancy. Overall, 30-70 per cent of GDM can be found early using oral glucose tolerance testing and includes those at most significant risk of requiring insulin therapy and experiencing pregnancy complications.

Yoga for self and society

PM Modi celebrates International Yoga Day in Kashmir, emphasising Yoga's role in fostering peace and unity

On June 21, 2024, International Yoga Day gave new meaning to the people of Kashmir as the Prime Minister celebrated it with them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a momentous occasion by celebrating International Yoga Day in the scenic valley of Kashmir. This event was not only significant as a global celebration of yoga but also as a powerful symbol of peace, unity and cultural heritage in a region that has seen its share of strife and conflict. Kashmir, often referred to as 'Paradise on Earth' due to its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural tapestry, was chosen by PM Modi as the venue for this year's International Yoga Day celebration. The event was held at the iconic Shalimar Bagh in Srinagar. International Yoga Day, celebrated on June 21 each year, was established in 2015 following a resolution proposed by PM Modi at the United Nations General Assembly in 2014. The day aims to raise awareness about the benefits of practising yoga, a 5,000-year-old tradition that originated in India. It emphasises the integration of body, mind and spirit, promoting a balanced and harmonious lifestyle. This year's theme, yoga for self and society resonated deeply in Kashmir, a region known for its complex socio-political challenges.



By celebrating Yoga Day in Kashmir, PM Modi aimed to convey a message of reconciliation and the potential for a peaceful future. Indeed, Prime Minister Modi has always used the symbols very effectively and conveyed the message to the people, celebrating Yoga Day in Kashmir was no exception. The choice of Kashmir as the venue for this significant event is

laden with symbolism. The region, which has faced decades of conflict and unrest, witnessed an outpouring of support for the celebration, reflecting a desire for peace and normalcy. PM Modi's presence and the enthusiastic participation of residents is a step towards healing and bridging divides. This was PM Modi's first trip to the union territory since being re-elected for a third consecutive term. During this visit, PM Modi launched several significant developmental projects and participated in International Yoga Day 2024 activities. PM Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for various developmental projects valued at over Rs. 1,500 crores. The Prime Minister addressed the gathering. He underscored the importance of yoga in promoting health and unity. The Prime Minister took this occasion to send a strong message across the border that all acts of terrorism would be thwarted. Indeed, the trip did reinforce the confidence of the people as it came just weeks after the Jammu attacks. This would also be a message to the security forces also to beef up the security. PM Modi's visit underscored his commitment to the development and integration of Jammu and Kashmir. Indeed, the event was not just a display of yoga poses but a concerted effort to promote wellness and unity of the State.

PICTALK



People perform yoga in the Yamuna river on the 10th International Day of Yoga, in New Delhi

PTI

India's solar industry is a goldmine for investors

The surge in global demand for renewable energy has placed solar power at the centre stage, particularly in India

India's solar energy sector is shining brighter than ever, emerging as a goldmine for investors and entrepreneurs. The market, valued at \$38 billion in 2021, is set to grow exponentially, reaching \$238 billion by 2032, driven by an impressive 40 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR). The surge in global demand for renewable energy has placed solar power at the centre stage, particularly in India. With supportive Government policies, technological advancements and an increasing shift towards sustainability, the solar energy sector is witnessing unprecedented growth. Entrepreneurs and investors capitalise on this momentum, prioritising their goals to reap substantial benefits in the coming years.

Tech Advancements
Technological innovations are at the heart of the solar industry's success. Commercial solar panels have gotten way better at turning sunlight into electricity, cranking up the power they can produce per square foot. The switch from polycrystalline to more advanced bifacial solar panels, which can generate power from both sides, shows how



the industry is focused on squeezing out as much efficiency as possible. In recent years, PERC (Passivated Emitter and Rear Cell) technology has been predominant in India's solar panel market. However, due to efficiency limitations in mass production, there is a gradual shift towards more advanced technologies like TOPCon (Tunnel Oxide Passivated Contact) and HJT (Heterojunction Technology). **Government Policies**
The Indian Government's policies have played a crucial role in transforming the solar energy landscape. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, with substantial financial allocations (PLI-I with Rs. 4,500 crores and PLI-II with Rs. 19,500 crores), are designed to boost domestic manufacturing of solar components.

Further bolstering the "Make in India" initiative, the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) was reinstated on April 1, 2024, ensuring quality control and encouraging the use of domestically manufactured modules. Various projects by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), such as the CPSU Scheme Phase-II, PM-KUSUM Component B and the Grid-connected Rooftop Solar Programme Phase-II, mandate the use of Domestic Content Requirement (DCR) solar panels, providing subsidies to promote the adoption of solar energy.

Environmental Impact
The solar industry in India isn't just about fulfilling energy requirements - it's also helping the environment. By using more solar power and relying less on fossil fuels, the solar industry is assisting in eliminating greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change. Shifting towards renewable energy, like solar power, is super crucial for India's climate goals and ensuring a sustainable future. **Market Potential and Investment Opportunities**

India's solar energy market presents a plethora of opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs. The sector's rapid growth and the increasing acceptance of solar power for both commercial and personal uses underscore its potential. With Government support and ongoing technological advancements, the barriers to entry are diminishing, making it an attractive proposition for new ventures. Besides, technological advancements enhance efficiency and reduce costs, increasing profitability. Entrepreneurs can explore various segments within the industry. On a larger front, the global shift towards sustainability ensures a steady demand for solar energy solutions, providing businesses with a long-term growth trajectory. Moreover, India's solar industry's robust market potential, Government support and technological innovation make it a compelling opportunity for those looking to invest or start a venture in renewable energy.

(The writer is the CEO, of Gautam Solar; views are personal)



GAUTAM MOHANKA

Plans do go awry. Who could say this better than Modi Sarkar 3.0? Prime Minister Narendra Modi had planned a blitzkrieg of the first 100 days of good governance. It doesn't seem to be happening as of now. First the number of BJP members elected to Lok Sabha did not sufficiently pile up, forcing a toned-down deportment of the Government.

Worse has been the marks manipulation controversy generated around the results declared by National Testing Agency (NTA) of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to the undergraduate courses in the medical colleges across the country. The Supreme Court on June 18 told the Union Government and the NTA to ensure that even '0.001 per cent negligence' in conducting the NEET-UG 2024 exams be looked into with all seriousness considering the immense labour that the candidates have put in for preparing the nationwide examination. Thankfully, we have a mature leader like Dharmendra Pradhan as Union Education Minister, who is expected to steer through the crisis and not a Smriti Irani or a Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank camping at the Shastri Bhawan, the seat of the Ministry of Education. Pradhan has so far shown the patience and perseverance in handling this gargantuan-like crisis.

The mess around NEET is much deeper than just the alleged malpractice in the conduct of the examination and the manipulation of marks. It's a question of the very high financial and emotional stakes involved, given the limited number of the seats available in the medical colleges. Over 15 lakh students appear for the NEET annually to fight over about 83,000 seats available. Less than half of these seats are available in the Government-run colleges. More than half of the seats in these colleges are allotted under various quotas. Thus, many deserving candidates are unable to secure admission to Government colleges. The fees in the private medical colleges in India are unbelievably

expensive, often touching Rs one crore for the entire course. For middle-class families, these costs are untenable, prompting them to look for more affordable options abroad. Thus the medical college market in countries like China, Ukraine, Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Here the cost of education at the best is less than half of what the private medical colleges charge. No wonder if there is COVID happening in China, war happening in central Asia or hooliganism in Kyrgyzstan, miserable State of the Indian students makes news. The problems of these students don't end here. Even on the successful completion of the course, an uncertain future awaits them. The medical degrees obtained from foreign universities must be recognised by the National Medical Commission of India (NMC). Even if the college is recognised, the medical graduates need to clear the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE) conducted by NMC to practice in India. The pass rate for FMGE is relatively low. This shortage of seats explains the repeated noise of corruption around the medical entrance tests for several years



THE SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL SEATS IN INDIA, COUPLED WITH HIGH FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL STAKES, FUELS CORRUPTION IN ENTRANCE EXAMS AND DRIVES STUDENTS TO SEEK MORE AFFORDABLE EDUCATION OPTIONS ABROAD

now. The most prominent among the many fallouts of this situation are higher prices, long wait times and increased competition for the limited available resources. When shortage occurs, an environment is created where individuals or stakeholders may be willing to pay bribes to secure access to the limited resources. Today, in the NEET eco-system, there aren't just the students and testing agencies who are participating. It can be safely said that the financial stakes at this examination is much higher for the horde of coaching centres and admission counsellors than the students themselves. Then there are the people who manipulate the system to make entrance into an Indian college 'convenient' lest the candidate ends up selling family silver for an admission in a private college in India or go through the rigmarole of enrolling in a foreign medical college and face an uncertain future. The expected role of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in the current crisis would be to provide an immediate relief to the injury and pain caused to the lakhs of students by the NTA, which con-

ducted NEET 2024. The larger relief would only come by investment in the health infrastructure sector. Increasing the number of medical seats in Government and private colleges, in the higher numbers in the former category, would lessen the need for students to seek education abroad or the manipulators having a field day. This requires substantial investment in medical infrastructure and faculty. This would not come by the mere initiative of either Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan or the newly-appointed Health Minister JP Nadda. There has to be a Government vision and more importantly the political will to break the cartel of the private medical colleges. The management of these colleges maintains a Octopus-like stranglehold over the medical education system through its various arms like the coaching centres and the counsellors. The 'costly' admission process is the first step towards the crass commercialisation of the medical sector in this country. About it on some other day. (The writer is author and president, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WILDLIFE FIRES IN UTTARAKHAND

Madam — Apropos the news story "Forest fires are a grim environmental reality," published on June 21, this is my response. The recent wildlife fires in Uttarakhand highlight a pressing environmental and societal issue. These fires are not just a natural calamity but a reflection of human irresponsibility and systemic failures. Environmental pollution, an unrestrained culture among youth and weak law enforcement have contributed to these destructive events. Global warming, largely driven by hydrocarbon fuel use, has exacerbated the situation, similar to patterns seen in Australia and the USA. Local industries and vehicular pollution have significantly warmed the atmosphere, making the naturally fire-prone Chir Pine forests even more vulnerable. Additionally, reckless behaviour, such as setting fires for social media fame and illegal activities like unauthorised construction and tree felling, further fuel these disasters. The media often needs to delve more deeply into such incidents' root causes and preventive measures. A more profound understanding, perhaps through the lens of Vedic Physics, could offer comprehensive solutions by integrating ancient wisdom with modern scientific approaches.

Kundan | Delhi

ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESS

Madam — Apropos the news story "Benefits of integrating offline and online channels," published on June 21, this is my response. The management of offline and online channels often operates in silos, with little intersection in their strategies. This separation ignores the fundamental fact that consumers are people whose decision-making spans both realms. Consumers today engage with brands through multiple touchpoints—retail stores, social media, online reviews and influencer videos—making integrated channel management essential. The AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Decision, Action) highlights the need for a coherent strategy across channels, as purchases

UGC to revamp higher education



Apropos the news story "UGC set to revolutionise higher education in India," published on June 21, this is my response. The University Grants Commission's decision to allow biannual admissions in higher education institutions is a significant move. It aims to increase student intake and introduce new programs in emerging areas, aligning Indian education with global standards. This policy mirrors the successful biannual admissions in Open and

Distance Learning and Online modes, which saw nearly half a million additional enrollments. While this decision offers flexibility and opportunities for students, especially those aspiring to study abroad, it raises concerns about infrastructure and faculty requirements. Educational experts worry about maintaining quality amid increased quantity. However, the global model of continuous education and skill upgrading, seen in countries like Germany, highlights the potential benefits. In India, there is a need to change the mindset towards vocational training and practical experience. Successful examples, like IIT graduate Mr Khatri, show that determination and expertise can lead to significant achievements. For the biannual admission system to succeed, policymakers must focus on engaging students and providing practical, hands-on learning experiences.

Bittu Jaat | Jind

can occur either offline or online. Structural issues and managerial specialisations contribute to the disjointed approach, but evolving consumer behaviour demands integration. While offline channels have a long-standing command-and-control structure, online channels are rapidly gaining significance. Companies must adopt integrated thinking to enhance customer experience and ensure sustainable success.

Mitali | Noida

WOMEN AND UNPAID WORK

Madam — Apropos the news story "The Unseen Burden of Women's Unpaid Labour," published on June 21, this is my response. The early 60s saw Canadian writer Alice Munro dismissed as a mere "housewife who finds time to write short stories." Munro's eventual Nobel Prize in 2013 underscored the absurdity of this condescension. Economist Claudia Goldin's research reveals that women's careers are often constrained by societal expectations that idealise their roles as unpaid caregivers. This has tangible impacts: women global-

ly spend 76.2 per cent of their time on unpaid care work, three times more than men. In regions like the Pacific and Asia, men contribute the least. The burden of unpaid care work keeps 606 million working-age women out of the labour market, compared to just 41 million men. This disparity is reflected in economic metrics; for example, women's unpaid work could be worth up to 40 per cent of GDP in some countries. Additionally, the "motherhood penalty" persists, reducing women's career prospects and earnings. Conversely, men often receive a wage bonus upon becoming fathers. To bridge this gap, significant investments in childcare and care industries are crucial. Research shows that such investments could create millions of jobs and significantly boost women's employment rates. Meeting these needs is essential to achieving gender equality and fulfilling global commitments to women's economic justice.

Jitu Majumdar | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN


THE ART OF ANGER MANAGEMENT

Anger or an outburst is an emotion which invariably leads to antipathetic results




RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago lived a sagacious teacher who adopted unusual techniques as part of his pedagogy while imparting knowledge to his students. One day he provided his students with an empty jar and a bagful of pebbles. He directed them to fill the jar with as many pebbles as they could. The students fretted as they struggled to insert the pebbles in the jar, but eventually managed to insert them. Subsequently, the teacher gave them a bag of sand and guided them to pour it into the jar. The sand filled in all the gaps between the rocks. Eventually, the teacher gave them a pitcher of water and asked the students to pour it into the jar which filled in all the remaining gaps. It was then pronounced that the jar represented our lives and the pebbles, sand and water typified what we live with. The teacher went on to State, “If we fill our lives with anger (represented by the pebbles), there will not be any room for anything else. But if we focus on the important things (represented by the sand and water), we could discover a State of happiness and balance.” Among the students lived a boy who was disposed with a foul temper. He would get angry at every little issue. One day, the sagacious teacher gave him a bag of nails and told him, “Every time you get vexed, hammer a nail into that front wall.” And thus began the activity. On the first day, the boy hammered 50 nails. The following day, he hammered 40. Each time he went up to the wall, he repented being piqued. It was quite a challenge to hammer a nail into the bricks of the wall! Slowly, the stripling discovered that controlling his rage was easier than hammering countless nails into the wall. The strapping youth had already become a laughing stock of his batchmates performing this wasteful exercise. Over a period, the number of nails hammered began to diminish much to the amazement of the student and his friends.



Eventually, came a day when he was not cross and became joyous about the fact. The perspicacious teacher assigned the student yet another task, “If you do not get provoked the entire day, remove one nail from the wall.” After many days, eyebrows were raised as all the nails were extricated from the wall. Finally, the teacher took the student near the wall and asked him what he saw. The student replied that he could view holes in the wall. “These holes are like the scars that one leave’s on individuals when a person gets exasperated. No matter how many times you apologise, the scar does not vanish.” “Thus, I suggest you to do two things; realise that words once uttered linger on. Your irascibility hurts others and leaves a dampener on all.” He continued, “Each time you feel outraged, ‘hammer a nail’ in the wall. The simplest thing you can do is to carry a pocket diary and draw a line each time you get annoyed. At night, count the number of lines drawn for that day. If you make this a habit, each time you would become waspish, you would be reminded to note it down.” “Once you follow this regimen, your awareness and memory muscle about the damage you were inflicting among the people with whom you interact would increase.” The student had learned his lesson, through this ingenious teaching imparted by his teacher. *(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)*

India faces a severe groundwater crisis




KOTA SRIRAJ

The groundwater clock is ticking towards day zero. India needs a combination of strategy and investment to safeguard and revitalise the same



According to the India Water Portal, India uses 25 per cent of all groundwater extracted globally, ahead of the USA and China. Nearly 70 per cent of the water supply in Indian agriculture today is groundwater. For a resource that is under such heavy use, India still lacks a contingency plan when it comes to dealing with groundwater depletion and over-exploitation. Predictably, the writing on the wall is becoming increasingly clear. On June 19th, 2024 the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) dropped the shocking news that Delhi has already extracted 99 per cent of its available groundwater. The latest CGWB report revealed a decline in both annual recharge and available groundwater for extraction in the city. According to the CGWB’s findings, Delhi’s net annual groundwater recharge in 2023 was measured at 0.38 billion cubic meters (bcm), with only 0.34 bcm available for extraction. Shockingly, nearly all accessible groundwater has already been extracted, totalling 99.1 per cent. The concerning aspect here is the increased rate of extraction despite reduced groundwater recharge. These trying conditions come at a time when Delhi is already reeling under the worst heatwave in the last 120 years which has claimed 192 lives so far. Sadly the issue of water distressed cities is becoming a worrying trend across India. Bangalore hit rock bottom earlier this year with over 500 million litres of water deficit daily with over 7000 borewells running dry. Coupled with abnormally harsh summers the water scarcity conditions can not only take a toll on human lives but also bring the urban economy to a grinding halt. This trend of drying up groundwater may, unfortunately, become the norm for



INDIA’S WATER RESOURCES FACE A BLEAK FUTURE; THE GOVERNMENT MUST ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH A NATIONWIDE WATER BODY CENSUS, RAINWATER HARVESTING AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES


most cities in India unless urgent remedial measures are taken. But sadly, most of the action taken is at best knee-jerk and impulsive with neither long-term strategy nor investment attached to it. Consecutive Governments, both at the State and central levels have always dealt with groundwater-related issues on a passive basis instead of a proactive basis. As a result every year the nature of the problem not only becomes complex but also more difficult to solve. The future of India’s water resources looks bleak and the Government must deploy a plethora of measures to ensure that the future generations have enough of this precious resource. As a first step, the central Government must conduct a nationwide satellite-assisted natural water body census along with the measurable extent of the water body. This will not only quantify the number of water bodies but will also capture any encroachment of the same. Additionally, steps have to be taken to rejuvenate and revive these water bodies. This can be done by removing the vegetation and setting up artificial groundwater recharge points such as percolation wells. Apart from this, the roping in of local municipal authorities, especially the anti-encroachment departments can help remove unauthorised occupation from the water body area. The central Government in association with State Government authorities can work on measures

such as metered borewells to monitor and regulate groundwater extraction. The concept of metered borewells is not new. The State of West Bengal has metered borewells for a while now and as a result, the State has been experiencing better levels of ground water. The same can be replicated across India, especially in Karnataka which is witnessing over-exploitation of groundwater. Yet another measure that needs sincere application is rain-water harvesting(RWH). Even though a much-talked-about concept, RWH has seen minimal implementation in India. Bangalore is an apt example of the abysmal application of RWH. According to Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) data, only 1.8 lakh out of the 19 lakh eligible properties in Bengaluru have installed rain-water harvesting systems. Experts have opined that the city harvests only 10 per cent of the rainwater while the rest 90 per cent drains away wasted. Conditions such as these point towards the unfortunate reality of hyped concepts that receive very little implementation. The Government must try and understand the latent potential of RWH and ensure that not only residential but commercial properties across India implement RWH and the same must be enforceable by law. However conventional remedial measures may still not be able to rein in the runaway groundwater scarcity problem. Since the scale of the problem has risen, the Government must explore investments in innovative technologies to bolster the efforts to revive and boost the groundwater table in India. Efficient farming technologies that rely less on water for instance can make a huge difference. Investments in precision agri-technology for the usage of groundwater for irrigation are an ideal solution for providing optimal water usage. This saves water compared to traditional flooding methods which increases output while conserving resources and reducing water wastage. Similarly, App-driven water meters that automatically regulate extraction and smart groundwater pressure sensors that maintain critical and minimum water levels can all help alleviate the burdens weighing on groundwater. With water scarcity spreading region-wise across India and with a rapidly increasing water use the structural imbalance between water supply and demand continues to widen. Therefore it is time that the Governments in association corporate under corporate social responsibility schemes (CSR) must increase capital expenditure on smart technologies that can actively provide solutions to water scarcity and water quality issues besides improving sustainability of water resources. The groundwater clock is ticking towards day zero. India needs a combination of strategy and investment to safeguard and revitalise the same. *(The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)*

Generative AI revolutionises smart wearable technology

By leveraging AI for coaching and healthcare, wearables are setting new standards in user experience and functionality

A decade ago, wearable technology was just taking early strides. Today, generative AI — a subset of artificial intelligence — is making its presence felt across diverse domains such as fashion, health, entertainment and more. With smart wearables gaining greater popularity worldwide, the fusing of fashion and innovative technology is permitting smart devices to function as icons of personal styling, connecting every element of users’ lives. As these aspects play out, generative AI is steadily showcasing several novel dimensions of personalisation and functionality. **Personalised Insights** The rising popularity of AI-enabled wearables is partly because of their ability to offer



C P KHANDELWAL

personalised insights and recommendations based on the user’s data. Through sensors embedded in the wearables, data is analysed to provide real-time advice and feedback that helps users improve performance, maximise productivity and prevent injuries. In an era where most people want to stay fighting fit, generative AI goes beyond merely counting the steps taken and monitoring their heart rate. By employing AI algorithms, advanced fitness trackers analyse the user’s data to provide personalised insights and coaching. A dynamic, bespoke approach is adopted in managing the user’s health and well-being as the smart device adapts to each person’s preferences, goals and individual fitness levels. For instance, an AI-driven coaching algorithm, Zepp Coach, offers customised guidance so its users can train and recover more effectively. A user simply needs to enter his or her physical characteristics, exercise experience level and preferred number of training days each week into the app. The app then builds a personalised training regime for every user. As the days progress, the Zepp Coach app monitors



each person’s fitness level, fatigue threshold and current training status. Based on this data, it recommends a reduction (or increase) in training intensity. **Wearables in Healthcare** Besides personal training, generative AI-linked wearables are deployed in healthcare with a similar model of leveraging user data to provide personalised counsel and insights. For example, the WHOOP Coach app uses a generative AI feature to offer extremely personalised, precise advice and suggestions by using GPT-4 - the most advanced generative AI system of OpenAI. Thereby, WHOOP can discover patterns and connections in the data of users and then offer instant, conversational, customised responses to their

healthcare practitioners can employ preventive measures. Propelled by the power of predictive analytics, smart wearables are driving a steady shift from a purely reactive to a proactive healthcare model. Taking these capabilities one level higher, generative AI is empowering wearables with the capability to sense and react to the emotions of users. These emotion-sensing algorithms can analyse facial expressions, monitor heart rate variability and check other physiological cues to assess the emotional State of users. **Immersive Reality** Then there is smart clothing with adaptive features that respond to environmental circumstances and user preferences. Such smart clothing offers temperature-regulating textiles and dynamically adjustable apparel tightness for maximum comfort, especially when users engage in physical activities. Or consider language translation earbuds that offer contextual understanding. Backed by generative AI, these language translation earbuds go way beyond mere word-for-word translations. Through advanced contextual understanding, these earbuds can comprehend the idioms, cultural references and nuances of a specific language. By eliminating language barriers, this smart innovation facilitates seamless and efficient cross-cultural communication. Another exciting wearables category is immersive AR (augmented reality) glasses. Generative AI has allowed these glasses to take a giant leap forward by delivering immersive experiences for users, seamlessly blending the virtual realm with real-world surroundings. This is not all. Generative AI has even revolutionised navigation-aiding wearables for visually impaired people. Through AI algorithms, smart navigation devices can interpret the environmental data to offer real-time details about any obstacles, the surroundings or necessary directions. With these wearables, visually challenged users can enjoy enhanced mobility and a certain level of independence that is not possible otherwise. *(The writer is CEO of PR Innovations, brand custodian of Amazfit India, views are personal)*

Yoga the cure for varied ailments impacting world, says Ramdev

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The International Yoga Day was celebrated at Patanjali under the guidance of Swami Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna on Friday. Ramdev said that serious ailments can be treated using Yoga and Yoga-based integrated treatment systems. Stating that a Yoga-based life is the solution to many problems being faced across the world, he said this system based on traditional knowledge rooted in Sanatan Dharm is capable of reversing even serious ailments related to the liver, kidney, lungs, hearts and other health issues. “Yoga is a part of our daily life and a solution to all problems we face in our lives. A Yoga-based life is the solution to all the ideological, political and economic strife being experienced across the world. A person practising Yoga undergoes mental and ideo-



logical change which makes him a part of the solution instead of being the problem,” Ramdev said. Addressing the gathering, Balkrishna said that Yoga is the best blessing from India to the

world. “The number of people suffering from varied ailments is rising by the day across the world and Yoga has the solution to this. Our scientist Rishis pursuing the Sanatan Vedic tradition linked us to Yoga but

Yoga is not limited to a community or sect. It is above all distinctions like caste, religion and political differences. Yoga is a scientific technique meant for the welfare of all,” Balkrishna said.

Death toll in Kallakurichi liquor tragedy mounts to 51

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

As death toll in Kallakurichi liquor tragedy mounted to 51 by Friday, the Opposition AIADMK demanded the resignation of Chief Minister M K Stalin for the DMK government's callousness towards illicit liquor brewing in the State. When the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly met on Friday, Leader of the Opposition Edappadi Palaniswamy wanted an urgent discussion on the sub-

ject and adjournment of the question hour and other business scheduled for the day. Making a suo motu statement in the House Palaniswamy wanted the resignation of the Chief Minister for the failure of the government in tackling the illicit liquor business. “Bootlegging has flourished in the State during the two years of the DMK regime and it is said that the illegal business is being carried out with the full blessings of the party,” alleged Palaniswamy. He was not allowed to complete his speech by the Speaker who

ordered the eviction of the AIADMK members who had come to the House wearing black shirts as a mark of respect to the deceased tipplers. Meanwhile the death toll reached 49 by Friday noon with 12 more persons who had been admitted to various hospitals breathing their last. According to police officials, 115 persons are undergoing treatment after consuming the hooch and the condition of nearly 20 persons continue to be critical. People in Karunapuram vil-

lage in Kallakurichi district where the incident occurred told The Pioneer that an axis of police-bootleggers-DMK politicians are behind the production and sale of spurious liquor. “The MLAs of Rishivandhyam and Sankarapuram are the patrons of this illegal activity. Those who dare to complain are silenced once and for ever by their henchmen,” they said. Not satisfied with the government move to transfer the investigation of the liquor tragedy to the CB-CID of Tamil Nadu Police, the

Halt release of three criminal laws: Didi to Modi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At a time when the publishers are working overtime to bring out their respective first editions of the three new criminal laws, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop for the time being the promulgation of the new legislations --- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNA), 2023, The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023, and The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 --- that are set to be implemented from July 1 --- and begin a “fresh deliberation and scrutiny” of these laws on the floor of Parliament. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNA), 2023, The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023 and The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) are to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Indian Evidence Act and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Writing with a “grave concern regarding the impending - implementation of three crucial laws,” Banerjee reminded the Prime Minister how when the new set of legislations were passed in December last year about 100 MPs had been suspended and how no debate had taken place on their passage. In a quite strongly worded letter the Chief Minister wrote, “If you kindly recall, on the 20th of December last year... That day, almost one hundred members of the Lok Sabha had been suspended and a total 146 MPs of the both Houses were thrown out of the Parliament. The Bills were passed in an authoritarian manner in that dark hour of democracy. Matter deserves review now.” More so on “ethical and practical reasons,” she asserted. “Ethically, I believe that it would be in the fitness of things to place these significant legislative changes before the newly elected Parliament for fresh deliber-

ation and scrutiny. Given the wide-ranging reservations expressed in the public domain regarding the hurriedly passed new laws, fresh Parliamentary review of these attempts would demonstrate a commitment to democratic principles and foster greater transparency and accountability in the legislative process,” Banerjee who had for the past several days been in touch with a number of other Chief Ministers and senior leaders of other parties nationwide wrote. “This approach would afford the newly elected people's representatives the opportunity to thoroughly examine the proposed reforms, address concerns raised by various stakeholders, and ensure that the laws reflect the collective will and aspirations of the citizenry. Banerjee wrote reminding how she had “argued that the outgoing Lok Sabha should not pass the new Bills with such far-reaching significance in undue hurry.”

Citing “pragmatic assessment of the challenges and preparatory work required for a smooth transition, particularly concerning the training of law enforcement personnel and judicial officers” Banerjee said such exercise required meticulous groundwork beforehand to ensure effective enforcement of the new laws. Citing as well the fact that law and order was a State subject Banerjee said referring to a June 16 conference on the issue held in Kolkata by the Ministry of Law and Justice such a practice was “highly objectionable” as the said conference “should have been organized by the State Government.” The Trinamool Congress had earlier alleged that the new laws were almost same as the old laws and amendments here and there could have sufficed. However the Government in pursuit of “domineering attitude” had messed up with the sections by interchanging their places but keeping their contents intact.

International Day of Yoga celebrated all over NF Railway

PNS ■ MALIGAON

International Day of Yoga (IDY-2024) was celebrated on 21st June, 2024 throughout N.F. Railway as a global celebration of well-being. Yoga practice sessions were organised at headquarters, all divisions and workshops to spread awareness among the masses about the importance of Yoga and its effects upon human health. The International Yoga Day 2024 theme is “Yoga for Self and Society.” This subject emphasises the double benefits of yoga practice: enhancing personal well-being and improving society at large. The theme

recognises that inner serenity and self-care are the cornerstones of a happy and healthy existence. Notably, the 2024 International Yoga Day will be the 10th anniversary of the event. In NFR Headquarters, the International Day of Yoga programme was held at the Railway Indoor Stadium, Maligaon with the theme “Yoga for Self and Society.” Shri Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager, N.F. Railway along with other senior officials was present on the occasion where railway officers and staff participated wholeheartedly to perform “Asanas”.

Rain relief for Delhiites...

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With a spike in heatstroke cases in Delhi and surrounding areas, the current heatwave has taken its toll on everyone. Authorities have been on high alert, with hospitals ordered to establish special departments to manage such cases. Police, however, have not confirmed if they died of heat-related causes. Delhi's relative humidity was 70 per cent at 8.30 am and 72 per cent at 5:30 pm. The IMD on Thursday said that heatwave conditions have abated from Delhi under the influence of western disturbance and lower-level easterlies from Bay of Bengal.

Congress corners Govt over NEET

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The medical entrance examination, National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or NEET-UG, was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on May 5 with around 24 lakh candidates taking part. The results were announced on June 4. The University Grant Commission (UGC) National Eligibility Test (NET) was cancelled two days ago after inputs from the national anti-cyber-crime agency that the exam had been compromised. There have been allegations of question paper leaks in states such as Bihar and other irregularities in the exam. The allegations have led to protests in several cities and the filing of petitions in several high courts as well as the Supreme Court. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha on Friday said a request will be made to CM Nitish Kumar to recommend a CBI probe into the suspected links of the arrested prime suspect in the NEET “paper leak” with officials associated with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav. There are reports suggesting that the accused was also associated with RJD supremo Lalu Prasad when he was in judicial custody in Ranchi, the Deputy Chief

Minister had alleged. The EOU of Bihar Police had last month arrested 13 people as part of its investigation into the alleged paper leak in NEET-UG 2024. The arrested accused included examinees, their parents and alleged mastermind Sikander Prasad Yadvendu. Protesting in Bhopal, senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh said corruption plagues every appointment in the BJP-led regime. Congress alleged the National Testing Agency (NTA) chief Pradeep Kumar Joshi cancelled UGC-NET but he lied at every step in the case of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) where the future of lakhs of students is in danger, Singh alleged. Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati too demanded strict action against the main accused in the NEET-UG question paper leak. Like other states and cities, Nagaland Congress leaders and workers too staged a demonstration over the alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG and NET 2024 examination. Co-Chairman of the Public Grievance Department of Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee, Meshenlo Kath wondered how long the Modi government at the Centre will continue to fool

the people of the country. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also launched a scathing attack on the government over exam paper leaks, saying the issue has become a national problem under the BJP rule which has “ruined the future” of crores of youth. “In the last five years, papers of 43 recruitment exams have been leaked in the country. Paper leak has become a national problem of our country under BJP rule which has ruined the future of crores of youth so far. India is the youngest country in the world. We have the largest youth population. Instead of making these youth skilled and capable, the BJP government is making them weak,” she alleged. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday had attacked the Centre over the alleged irregularities in NEET and exam paper leaks issue, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi has “psychologically collapsed” post-elections and will now struggle to run the government. He had also said the main reason for paper leaks was that educational institutions had been captured by the BJP and its parent organisation RSS. He asserted that paper leaks will not stop unless that is reversed.

EC sets ball rolling for J&K, 3 States Assembly polls

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The stakes are high for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the upcoming assembly polls in these four states, which is considered as a litmus test for his popularity after the Lok Sabha polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also said on Thursday that assembly elections would be held soon in Jammu and Kashmir and plans are underway to restore statehood to the Union Territory in the near future. In his first visit to the valley after becoming the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term, Modi emphasised the importance of enabling the people of Jammu and Kashmir to elect their representatives for the assembly. “Witnessing the huge participation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, the Commission has also directed for the updation of electoral rolls in the UT with July 1, 2024 as the qualifying date,” the poll authority said. In a statement, issued on Friday, the EC said that after

the successful completion of the Lok Sabha elections, it has initiated preparations for Assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand along with the process to update electoral rolls in these states with July 1, 2024 as the qualifying date. The publication of the final electoral roll will be done by August 20 in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the poll panel. In an indication that assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are imminent, the Election Commission had on June 7 said it has decided to accept applications seeking allotment of ‘common symbols’ from registered unrecognised parties in the Union Territory with immediate effect. An official had explained that under Para 10 B of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order, 1968, any registered unrecognised political party can apply for a ‘common symbol’ six months prior to the end of the term of a House. But since no assembly is functional in Jammu and Kashmir, the EC has issued a press statement

inviting applications for symbols. While recognised national and state parties have their ‘reserved symbols’, registered unrecognised parties have to apply for one to field candidates. When free symbols are allocated to unrecognised parties, the returning officer allocates the remaining unclaimed symbols to Independents “on the spot”. Jammu and Kashmir recorded the highest voter turnout in a Lok Sabha poll in last 35 years, with the Kashmir Valley witnessing a “massive” 30 points jump in poll participation compared to 2019. The combined voter turnout at the polling stations for the entire Union Territory with five Lok Sabha seats was 58.46 per cent. The three seats in the Valley - Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri - recorded turnout of 38.49 per cent, 59.1 per cent and 54.84 per cent, respectively, which has been the highest in last three decades. The other two seats in the UT - Udhampur and Jammu - recorded 68.27 per cent and 72.22 per cent voter turnout, respectively.

HC halts Kejriwal's release

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“I was not allowed to argue fully. I was not given proper time of 2-3 days to file written submissions. This is not done. On merits, I have an excellent case. The trial court said finished off in half an hour as it wanted to deliver the judgment. It did not give us full opportunity to argue the case,” he contended, adding, “I am making the allegations with full seriousness.” Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) says an opportunity must be granted to the public prosecutor to present his case but that opportunity was not granted to me, he contended. He said the trial court did not even look at his reply on the ground that it was bulky and claimed that the trial court came to a conclusion that there was malafide on ED's part after considering wrong facts and wrong dates. Raju contended that the trial court has given findings which are contrary to those of the high

court while upholding Kejriwal's arrest. “If irrelevant facts are considered, that itself is a reason for cancellation of bail. There is evidence that Kejriwal demanded Rs 100 crore but it was not considered by trial court,” he argued. The application for stay was vehemently opposed by senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Vikram Chaudhary, representing Kejriwal. They said Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution does not exist for the ED for which the liberty of a person figured low in priority. Singhvi said the ED argued for 3 hours and 45 minutes before the trial judge. The trial court in its order also questioned the ED's silence on Kejriwal's assertion that he was arrested in the money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam without having been named in the CBI FIR or the ECIR registered by the anti-money laundering agency. Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) is ED's version of an FIR.

World looking at Yoga as agent of global good: Modi

From Page 1
Addressing a gathering of yoga practitioners the Prime Minister said the expansion of yoga over the past ten years has changed perceptions associated with yoga. He conveyed his best wishes on the International Day of Yoga to all citizens and those practicing yoga in different parts of the world. Talking about the theme of this year's Yoga Day - ‘Yoga for Self and Society’, PM Modi said that the world is looking at yoga as a powerful agent of global good and it enables us to live in the present without the baggage of the past. PM Modi emphasised, “Yoga helps us

realize that our welfare is related to the welfare of the world around us. When we are peaceful within, we can also make a positive impact on the world.” The Prime Minister said, “Yoga is now emerging beyond limited boundaries. The world is witnessing the rise of a new yoga economy”. “In Bharat, a new trend of yoga tourism is being observed from Rishikesh and Kashi to Kerala. Tourists from all over the world are coming to Bharat because they want to learn authentic yoga”. “Yoga retreats and yoga resorts are being established. Dedicated facilities for yoga are being

created at airports and hotels. The market is seeing designer apparel and equipment for yoga. People are now hiring personal yoga trainers for their fitness. Companies are also starting yoga and mindfulness programs as part of employee wellness initiatives. All these have created new opportunities and employment for the youth”. Modi said yoga has the potential to transform the economy of Jammu and Kashmir by attracting more tourists. “I have been seeing since yesterday that yoga is becoming popular with the

people of Srinagar and (rest of) Jammu and Kashmir. It is a big thing that 50,000 to 60,000 people are associated with yoga. This will attract more tourists here,” he said. He said yoga could help the union territory attract more tourists, which in turn would provide new livelihood opportunities to locals. The Prime Minister cited a competition in Egypt where yoga was used to promote tourism. “I recently saw a video from Egypt. They organised a competition and awarded the best yoga photographs and videos from iconic tourist places in the country. In the pictures and videos, I

saw girls from Egypt standing in front of the iconic Pyramids doing yoga, it was so attractive. Modi said, “The number of yoga followers is growing continuously. Wherever I go, there is hardly any (international) leader who does not talk to me about the benefits of yoga. In many countries, yoga is becoming a part of the daily lives of people,” Modi said, citing the examples of Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia and Germany. In his address, the prime minister referred to 101-year-old Frenchwoman Charlotte Chopin who was awarded a Padma Shri for

her services in popularising yoga in her country. The prime minister described yoga as not just knowledge but also a science. He also expressed happiness that more than 100 institutes in India and 10 major foreign institutes have been recognized by the Yoga Certification Board formed by the Ministry of Ayush. The prime minister said yoga provides solutions to several problems. “In this era of information revolution, there is a flood of information sources and it is a challenge for the human mind to focus on one subject. “A solution for this is also in yoga as it helps the

mind to focus. That is why from army to sports, yoga has been included in their routine,” he said. The Prime Minister said astronauts and people working on space projects are trained in yoga as it increases “productivity as well as tolerance”. Welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the hosting of International Yoga Day celebrations in Srinagar has put Jammu and Kashmir on the global map. “I am grateful to the PM for allowing J&K to lead the International Yoga Day celebrations. This historic event has put Jammu Kashmir on the global map”,

Lt Governor Sinha said. Yoga plays the most significant role in enhancing the physical, psychological, and emotional aspects of well-being, he said. The Lt Governor said that the Prime Minister has taken Yoga to the world and today this invaluable gift from our ancient tradition is being practiced across the globe. “Yoga is a holistic approach towards happiness. It is the first step towards a healthy life. It unites Body and Mind as Saint Patanjali had said that Body and Mind are one. Yoga brings consciousness and through consciousness, pure joy is born”, he added.

Armenia recognises Palestinian state

AP ■ YEREVAN,

Armenia said it would recognise a Palestinian state on Friday, prompting Israel to summon its ambassador for what the Foreign Ministry described as a “severe reprimand.” Dozens of countries have recognised a Palestinian state, though none of the major Western powers has done so. Palestinians believe the recognitions confer international legitimacy on their struggle, especially as Israel’s war against Hamas, now in its ninth month, faces growing international criticism over the campaign of systematic destruction in Gaza and huge cost in civilian lives. Also Friday, the head of a major hospital in north Gaza said his staff have seen some 250 children suffering from malnutrition, with numbers rising daily due to acute food shortages. Palestinians face widespread hunger as the war has largely cut off the flow of food, medi-

cine and basic goods to Gaza, which is now totally dependent on aid. Meanwhile, Israel’s pledge to guard a new aid route into southern Gaza has fallen flat, as the UN and international aid organisations say a breakdown in law and order has made that route unusable. The Israeli military said that two soldiers were killed in combat in central Gaza, while three were severely injured. Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 37,100 people, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Israel launched the war after Hamas’ October 7 attack, in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250. Currently:— The fate of the latest cease-fire proposal hinges on Netanyahu and Hamas’ leader in Gaza. — Israel’s pledge

to guard an aid route into Gaza falls flat as lawlessness blocks distribution. — A rare public rift appears between Israel’s political and military leadership over how the war in Gaza is being conducted. — The leader of Lebanon’s Hezbollah militant group warns archenemy Israel against wider war. Qatari foreign minister says ceasefire negotiations are making progress to some extent’ Madrid: Qatar’s foreign minister says some progress has been made in negotiations over a Gaza cease-fire deal but gaps remain between Israel and Hamas. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, whose country is a mediator alongside the US and Egypt, said Friday “there has been progress to some extent in the situation.” Mediators have held “successive meetings” with the Hamas leadership in an effort to bridge the gaps, he said during a visit to Spain.

“There cannot be one party to the conflict adopting the vision of the other party,” he said. The solution “must be based on compromises between the two parties.” Two Israeli soldiers killed in central Gaza Jerusalem: Israel’s army said Friday that two Israeli soldiers were killed in combat in central Gaza. No information was given about the circumstances about the deaths of the two, both of whom were men in their 20s. Three other soldiers were severely injured, the army said. The news comes as public anger grows in Israel over the trajectory of the eight month conflict and exemptions from military service for young ultra-Orthodox men. Last week, an explosion in southern Gaza killed eight Israeli soldiers. In January, 21 Israeli troops were killed in a single attack by Palestinian militants in Gaza. Since the October 7 Hamas attack that triggered the war, more than

660 Israeli troops have been killed, about half in the Israeli ground operation in Gaza, according to the latest figures from the military. Over 37,000 Palestinians in the enclave have been killed by Israeli fire over that same period, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures. Gaza hospital chief says hundreds of children are suffering from malnutrition. Deir Al-Balah, Jun 21: The head of one of the largest hospitals in north Gaza says his staff has recently registered some 250 children suffering from malnutrition and the numbers are raising daily due to acute food shortages. Dr. Husam Abu Safya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, urged the international community to pressure Israel to allow an increased flow of food and other products into the Gaza Strip, warning that conditions are dire in the coastal territory.

Court upholds Canada’s no-fly list for Sikh extremists

PTI ■ OTTAWA

A Canadian court has thrown out a bid by two Sikh extremists to get off the country’s no-fly list, saying there are “reasonable grounds” to suspect they will threaten transportation security or travel by air to commit a terrorism offence. The Federal Court of Appeal in its ruling this week dismissed an appeal by Bhagat Singh Brar and Parvkar Singh Dulai after they lost a constitutional challenge of their no-fly designations under Canada’s Secure Air Travel Act, The Canadian Press news agency reported from Vancouver on Thursday. The two were not allowed to board planes in Vancouver in 2018. The ruling says the act empowers the public safety minister to ban people from flying if there are “reasonable grounds to suspect they will threaten transportation security or travel by air to commit a

terrorism offence.” “At some point, the appellants tried to fly. They could not,” the ruling says. “They were on the list and the minister had directed that they not fly.” The appellate panel found that based on confidential security information, the minister “had reasonable grounds to suspect that the appellants would travel by air to commit a terrorism offence.” In 2019, Brar and Dulai went to the Federal Court of Canada to have their names struck from the list. But Justice Simon Noel ruled against them both in 2022. The limits imposed on Dulai, he ruled, “were the result of evidence-based suspicions that he could fly abroad in order to plot a terrorist attack.” “The Government of Canada must enact laws that protect national security and intelligence activities in a way that respects rights and freedoms and encourages the international community to do the

same,” Noel ruled. In their appeal, both Brar and Dulai argued the impairment of their rights as a result of being placed on the list was not “minimal” and therefore unjustified. However, the appellate court ruled the legislation was justified and that confidential portions of the court process were procedurally fair. The Secure Air Travel Act deals with “national security, international relations and global co-operation to prevent terrorism” and is “not directed to past events that are tangible, certain and known,” the appellate court found. “Rather, it is forward-looking, designed to act preventatively, proactively and pre-emptively to deal with perhaps imprecise but nevertheless very real risks of harm to property, public safety and human life,” the ruling says. “Several of its features show careful tailoring to minimize the impairment of rights and freedoms.”

2 killed when police clash with locals in Mexico

PTI ■ SAN ANTONIO

Two people were killed Thursday when locals protesting alleged water contamination by a pork processing plant clashed with police in the Mexican gulf coast state of Veracruz. Residents of the community of San Antonio Limon had been blocking a road demanding government action against the operation, which they said was responsible for polluting the aquifer and using too much water. State security forces arrived Thursday in the community, also known as Totolco, and protesters said police began beating them and opened fire. Brothers Alberto and Jorge Cortina Vázquez, aged 22 and 27 respectively, were killed, according to the Veracruz state prosecutor’s office, which opened an investigation. A third brother, Carlos

Cortina Vázquez, said his brothers were not even at the roadblock. “They were just passing by and when they (the police) started to fire everyone ran,” he said. “That’s when they started shooting at them like they were animals. Residents said they tried to hide in their homes but some 400 police who arrived chased them. Some showed shell casings they said came from security forces’ guns. In a statement, the Veracruz state prosecutor’s office said it had undertaken “an exhaustive investigation to clarify the unfortunate events in Totolco.” The Veracruz state interior agency, which is responsible for security, said in a statement that the protesters had been holding two state police officers and had threatened to kill them. They said the protesters had not been open to dialogue.

Sunak angry over election date betting accusations

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said that anyone involved in using inside information to bet on the date of Britain’s July 4 national election should be expelled from his Conservative Party. Sunak said on the BBC on Thursday that he was “incredibly angry, incredibly angry” to learn of allegations that Conservative politicians betted on the election date, and that they “should face the full force of the law” if they were found to have broken the law. “It’s right that they are being investigated properly by the relevant law enforcement authorities,” he said. “If anyone is found to have broken the rules, not only should they face the full consequences of the law, I will make sure that they are booted out of the Conservative Party.” Two weeks ahead of the general election, it was an uncomfortable experience for Sunak,



whose Conservative Party is trailing the main opposition Labour Party — by 20 points by many polls — ahead of the vote. Earlier, asked about reports that the UK’s Gambling Commission was investigating a second Conservative candidate for placing a bet on the timing of the election, housing minister Michael Gove told the BBC that if people used inside information to bet, it would be “deeply wrong.” “What I can’t do is sort of get

too much into the detail of the case while an investigation is going on,” Gove said. “But I can talk about the broad principle and you’re absolutely right, it’s reprehensible.” Sunak announced on May 22 that parliamentary elections would be held on July 4. The date had been a closely guarded secret and many, even those in Sunak’s governing Conservative Party, were taken by surprise as a vote had been expected in the fall. Under the United Kingdom’s electoral laws, the prime minister has the power to call the date within five years of the previous election. Many members of Sunak’s party have said that he called it too soon, as he had until January 2025 to call the balloting. British media, including the PA news agency and the BBC, reported on Thursday that Tory candidate Laura Saunders, who is married to the Conservative Party’s director of campaigning, Tony Lee, is facing a commission inves-

tigation into alleged betting offences. Saunders’ attorney, Nama Zarroug, of Astraia Linskills, said she would be co-operating with the commission investigation and that she had nothing further to add. “It is inappropriate to conduct any investigation of this kind via the media, and doing so risks jeopardising the work of the Gambling Commission and the integrity of its investigation,” the statement said. “The publication of the BBC’s story is premature and is a clear infringement of Ms Saunders’ privacy rights. She is considering legal action against the BBC and any other publishers who infringe her privacy rights,” it added. The Conservative Party said Britain’s Gambling Commission contacted it over a “small number of individuals” in connection with the investigation. The party declined to immediately comment on the fresh allegation pending the

commission investigation. But it said in a statement that Lee took a leave of absence from the party on Wednesday. The broadening scandal came after reports Wednesday that one of Sunak’s police bodyguards was arrested over alleged bets on the date of Britain’s national election made before it was announced. The constable in the Royalty and Specialist Protection Command was arrested Monday on suspicion of misconduct in public office, the Metropolitan Police force said. Last week, Sunak aide Craig Williams, who is running to be reelected to Parliament, acknowledged he was being investigated by the Gambling Commission for placing a 100 pound (USD 128) bet on a July election before the date had been announced. Betting is popular in the UK, with bookies offering odds on everything from sports to elections. Cheating by acting on inside information is a criminal offence.

Sudan’s vice-pres expresses concern over peace talks

Juba (AP): South Sudan’s vice president has said that peace talks in neighbouring Kenya have failed to acknowledge the country’s peace agreement established in 2018, alleging a new draft agreement is aimed at replacing the original peace deal. Riek Machar in a protest letter to the talks’ mediator on Thursday said the draft established alternative institutions to replace or run in parallel with those established by the previous peace agreement. He added that the current peace talks should complement and not obliterate the original deal. The former rebel leader signed an agreement with President Salva Kiir in 2018 that ended a five-year civil war that killed about 4,00,000 people. Machar and Kiir were on opposite sides in the war and Machar was appointed vice president after the 2018 deal.

Biden, Trump taking different approaches to prepare for next week’s debate

AP ■ NEW YORK

President Joe Biden begins an intense period of private preparations Friday at Camp David for what may be the most consequential presidential debate in decades. The 81-year-old Democrat’s team is aware that he cannot afford an underwhelming performance when he faces Republican rival Donald Trump for 90 minutes on live television Thursday night. Biden’s team is expecting aggressive attacks on his physical and mental strength, his record on the economy and immigration and even his family. Trump, 78 and ever confident, will stay on the campaign trail before going to his Florida estate next week for two days of private meetings as part of an informal prep process. The former president’s allies are pushing him to stay focused on his governing plans, but they’re expecting him to be tested by pointed questions about his unrelenting focus on election fraud, his role in the erosion of abortion rights and his unprecedented legal baggage.

Thursday’s debate on CNN will be full of firsts, with the potential to reshape the presidential race. Never before in the modern era have two presumptive nominees met on the debate stage so early in the general election season. Never before have two White House contenders faced off at such advanced ages, with widespread questions about their readiness. And never before has a general election debate participant been saddled with a felony conviction. The debate-stage meeting comes just two weeks before Trump is scheduled to be sentenced on 34 felony counts in his New York hush money trial. “You can argue this will be the most important debate, at least in my lifetime,” said Democratic strategist Jim Messina, 54, who managed former President Barack Obama’s 2012 campaign. (The ground rules for Thursday’s debate, the first of two scheduled meetings, are unusual. The candidates agreed to meet at a CNN studio in Atlanta with no audience. Each candidate’s microphone will be muted, except when it’s his turn to speak. No props or prewritten notes will be

allowed onstage. The candidates will be given only a pen, a pad of paper and a bottle of water. There will be no opening statements. A coin flip determined that Biden would stand at the podium to the viewer’s right, while Trump would deliver the final closing statement. The next debate won’t be until September. Any stumbles Thursday will be hard to erase or replace quickly. Biden arrived at Camp David on Thursday night and is expected to hunker down with senior campaign aides until next Thursday’s debate. While traveling to the mountainside retreat, he gave a thumbs up to reporters when asked how debate prep was going. The president’s aides have been reluctant to share details about his specific preparations, run by former chief of staff Ron Klain. But he they have signaled that he is preparing to be aggressive and would not shy away from using the term “convicted felon” to describe his opponent onstage. One adviser not authorized to speak publicly about debate strategy noted that Biden has been increasingly punchier in recent

remarks about Trump and plans to carry that theme through to the debate. That’s still while trying to project himself as “the wise and steady leader” in contrast to Trump, the adviser said. Among some political operatives, there is the sense that Biden may have the most to lose given his struggle to generate momentum amid signs of weakness within his political coalition. Trump and his allies have set an extraordinarily low bar, however, by suggesting for months that Biden is contending with serious physical limitations that make it difficult for him to stand for 90 minutes or even string together two sentences. “It’s like the mirror test. Put a mirror under Biden’s nose, and if it fogs it up, he wins, right? That’s about what the threshold is for Biden,” Republican strategist and Trump ally David Urban said with a laugh. “Can Biden demonstrate that he’s mentally nimble? That’s the big question.” Yet Trump himself sought to shift expectations in a Thursday interview with the “The All-In Podcast” in which he veered sharply away from his typical Biden taunts.

NZ’s gun laws being revised by ex-gun lobbyist

AP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand’s government will overhaul the tighter gun laws introduced after a deadly mass shooting by a white supremacist five years ago, because they put excessive burdens on gun owners who feel vilified by law enforcement and the public, the lawmaker leading the changes said. “What’s happened is a massive change with massive penalties and targets on people who didn’t do anything wrong,” Associate Justice Minister Nicole McKee — a lobbyist for gun owners before she entered Parliament in 2020 — told The Associated Press in an interview this week. Every part of the law will be scrutinised, including the restrictions that bar all but a few hundred New Zealanders from firing banned semiautomatic weapons, she said. McKee’s pledge of a wide-ranging review — following an earlier announcement that she would ease rules for gun clubs — was applauded by groups representing the country’s 250,000 license holders and decried by survivors of the

2019 terrorist attack at two Christchurch mosques where an Australian man opened fire on Muslim worshippers, killing 51 people. It makes me scared for our futures,” Temel Atacogucu — who was shot nine times in the attack and fears an erosion of the assault weapon ban — told the AP. “What have the past five years been for? How are they going to prevent this from happening again?” New Zealand drew global admiration when its then-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said six days after the massacre that her government would outlaw all semiautomatic weapons. The change was approved by 119 lawmakers with only one opposed, and sweeping reforms followed: bolstered licensing requirements, more rules for gun clubs, and the creation of a firearms registry. The changes introduced “onerous regulatory compliance,” said McKee, whose political party, Act, campaigned for New Zealand’s 2023 election on a platform for reversing many of them. Now in government as

part of a center-right coalition, McKee pledged to update the law before the next election in 2026. Her bloc has enough lawmakers to easily pass any reforms in the face of any resistance from the parliamentary opposition. “The changes we made off the back of March 15 took military-style semi-automatic weapons off the street and made our communities safer,” said Ginny Andersen, a lawmaker for Labour — the largest opposition party, previously led by Ardern. “Making those guns more accessible will take New Zealand backwards.” McKee’s consultation was a “box ticking exercise, with a select group and a very short time for responses,” Andersen said in her emailed statement. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, whose party is in government with McKee’s, did not answer AP’s requests for comment. McKee said she would consult with the public before deciding specific measures and that her personal views would not direct the overhaul. Critics rejected that. “She was elected as a gun lob-

byst, that was her role,” said Chris Cahill, president of the Police Association, a group representing most New Zealand officers. “She’s got a loyalty to the gun lobby groups.” The review was “without a doubt, a backdoor into giving people access to semiautomatic assault rifles again,” Cahill said. At the time of the ban, McKee denounced it as “knee-jerk.” As a minister she is more guarded, but told the AP that New Zealand had not been entirely rid of such weapons; several hundred people have permits to use them for pest control in rural areas, while others can own but not fire them. “If we extend the access, what are the possible controls around the use of the extension? And would society be happy with what those controls mean?” McKee said she would ask during the review. “It’s about how do we find the balance with protecting people but not going over the top with a regulatory regime,” she said. Any concerns raised by opponents should be “realistic,” McKee added.

Enthusiasts worldwide mark 10th Yoga International Day

AP ■ NEW YORK/ TEL AVIV

Thousands of yoga enthusiasts from across the world rolled out their yoga mats as they joined day-long sessions of the ancient Indian practice to commemorate the 10th International Day of Yoga on Friday. Recognising its universal appeal, in December 2014, the UN proclaimed June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. The draft UN General Assembly resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states.



and rolled out their yoga mats in the heart of the popular New York City destination. Yoga instructor and breath meditation teacher Richa Dhakne, who has over two decades of experience as a volunteer and faculty member with the Art of Living Foundation, led the yoga and meditation session hosted by the Consulate General of India

in New York. Several other yoga teachers and experts led various meditation, exercises and breathing sessions throughout the day at Times Square, as thousands participated in the day-long activities. In Washington, hundreds of yoga enthusiasts came together to observe the day at an event that was addressed by India’s

Deputy Ambassador to the US Sripriya Ranganathan. At the picturesque Wharf, overlooking the Potomac River, the International Yoga Day event on Wednesday began with prayers and Indian classical dance performances. The yoga session highlighted the spirit of oneness and harmony inspired by the ancient Indian practice. Over three hundred people from across Israel rolled out yoga mats and performed asanas as they participated in International Yoga Day celebrations at the Peres Centre for Peace and Innovation in Tel Aviv. First Lady Michal Herzog was the chief guest at the main International Yoga Day event on Thursday. A series of events were held across the country. The event was organised by the Embassy of India in Israel in association with the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Israel. At the event, Herzog spoke

about the deep friendship between India and Israel. Singapore’s Minister of State for Health Rahayu Mahzam joined more than 200 yoga enthusiasts and the Indian High Commissioner Dr Shilpak Ambule in celebrating the 10th International Yoga Day here on a rain-washed cool morning. The minister emphasised in her keynote speech the importance of yoga in fostering a healthy and balanced lifestyle. “India has certainly played a leading role in promoting the benefits of yoga to the world. The flexible and adaptable nature of yoga also makes it inclusive for people of different ages, genders, and physical abilities. I am glad to see participants from all walks of life in today’s event,” she said. The event is celebrated by the High Commission of India in Singapore in partnership with Gardens by the Bay at Waterfront Plaza, a sprawling green complex popular among tourists and local joggers.

The Embassy of India in Nepal on Thursday organised yoga demonstrations at three iconic landmarks of Pokhara, the tourism capital of the country. “What better way to spread the message of #YogaForSelfAndSociety than to assimilate Yoga, Nature and Spirituality! @IndiaInNepal organised yoga demonstrations at 3 iconic landmarks of #Pokhara, the tourism capital of Nepal,” the mission tweeted. The mission also organised a Yoga demonstration at Lumbini. The chief minister of Lumbini, various provincial leaders and more than 900 people participated in the yoga demonstration, it said. “Hon’ble CM of Lumbini, Jokh Bahadur Mahara, thanked for organising the event at the sacred birthplace of Lord Buddha and for strengthening bilateral ties,” it said. India’s Ambassador to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava underlined that the birthplace of Lord

Buddha is an ideal place for the timeless practice of Yoga for health and longevity. India’s embassy in Sri Lanka also organised several yoga sessions, including in Jaffna and Kandy ahead of the day. The Indian Embassy in Beijing on Thursday organised a yoga class at Beijing Morning Star School led by the Embassy’s Cultural Teacher (Yoga) Lokesh Sharma. More than 45 students participated in the class and practised various yoga poses to improve body flexibility and enhance concentration. In Rome, Ambassador Vani Rao spoke about “Yoga for Self and Society” at the event organised by the Italian Hindu Union. The High Commission of India in the Maldives organised an event that witnessed the participation of Maldivian and Indian Yoga enthusiasts. The Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia celebrated the day at Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Olympic Complex, Riyadh.

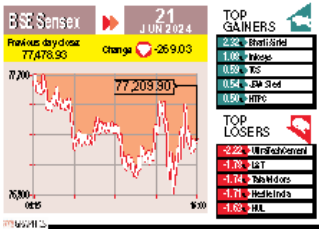
Washington Post editor decides not to take job after backlash

New York (AP): Newly-named Washington Post editor Robert Winnett has decided not to take the job and remain in England amid leadership turmoil at the news organisation. The Post’s CEO and publisher, Will Lewis, announced Winnett’s decision to withdraw in a note to staff on Thursday morning. He will stay as deputy editor of the Telegraph in London. Several published reports had raised questions about Winnett’s involvement in articles where a source was paid and information gathered through deceptive means — practices more commonplace in England but frowned upon by journalists in US. As part of a reorganisation that has backfired, Lewis had named Winnett, a former colleague, to take over the Post’s core newsroom functions after the November election.

Markets halt record-breaking rally

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Halting their record-breaking rally, equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure on Friday as investors pared exposure to oil & gas, capital goods and FMCG stocks amid a bearish trend in global markets. However, recent foreign capital inflows and buying in index majors Bharti Airtel, Infosys and TCS helped indices restrict the losses, traders said. Snapping its six-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 269.03 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 77,209.90. During the day, it tanked 676.93 points or 0.87 per cent to 76,802. The Nifty rose 100.1 points to hit a record intraday peak of 23,667.10 earlier in the day. However, it failed to maintain the momentum and slipped 65.90 points or 0.28 per cent to end at 23,501.10.



On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 217.13 points or 0.28 per cent, while the Nifty went up by 35.5 points or 0.15 per cent. "The domestic market witnessed minor profit-taking amid concerns over the slow progress of monsoon, resulting in underperformance in the FMCG sector. The global markets were subdued as weak guidance from Accenture led to profit booking in US tech stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Among the Sensex companies, UltraTech Cement, Larsen &

Toubro, Tata Motors, Nestle, Tata Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra and State Bank of India were the biggest laggards. In contrast, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro and NTPC were among the biggest gainers. "Nifty ended lower in a highly volatile session on Friday; however it rose for three weeks in a row to record its highest weekly close even as it fell on Friday. Asian shares were mostly lower Friday after a retreat on Wall Street," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.26 per cent, while smallcap climbed 0.06 per cent. Among sectoral indices, Oil & Gas went lower by 1.28 per cent, FMCG (1.08 per cent),

capital goods (0.96 per cent), commodities (0.92 per cent), realty (0.75 per cent) and auto (0.71 per cent). On the other hand, IT, telecommunication, metal, power, tech and services were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were quoting in the red. US markets ended on a mixed note on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 415.30 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.16 per cent to USD 85.57 a barrel. Rallying for the sixth straight session on Thursday, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 141.34 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 77,478.93. The Nifty rose 51 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at its fresh closing high of 23,567.

Gold surges ₹800; silver rallies ₹1,400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices surged Rs 800 to Rs 73,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a rally in precious metal rates in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams. Extending gains for the fourth straight day, silver prices also rallied by Rs 1,400 to Rs 93,700 per kg. It had ended at Rs 92,300 per kg on Thursday. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 73,350 per 10 grams, up by Rs 800 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

Rural India bright star for FMCG sales, says Kantar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Rural India remains a "bright star" for the growth of fast-moving consumer goods sales and the region is expected to maintain better pace of expansion than urban areas in the second quarter of 2024, a report said on Friday. According to a report from data, insights and consulting firm Kantar, rural India will maintain 'better growth levels' racing ahead of the urban markets for FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) companies in the second quarter (April-June) of 2024. Terming the rural market as a "bright star", the report said it had a "resurgence" in 2024. While urban is likely to remain under stress, the rural may consolidate its position in second quarter of the year, it said. This growth in the rural areas is helped by region-centric measures by the government in the interim budget earlier this year, which provided stability. Moreover, populist measures are expected by some states which are going to face elections this year, said Kantar FMCG pulse report for Q2.

"We should also bear in mind that more states are heading for polls in the coming months and the second half should only see a rise in populist measures for the rural market. After COVID-19, the rural market was in distress and faced degrowth in the past successive quarters. "However, the start to 2024 from a rural perspective has been brilliant, with rural growth overtaking urban's; and the rural worm is looking upward," it said. About the urban market, the

report said, it did not see growth for three straight quarters, and is contending with a huge Q2 2023 base. "Therefore, Urban is likely to remain under stress, while Rural may consolidate its position in Q2," it said, adding that falling Urban curve coupled with a strong base is likely to constrict the numbers for the next quarters. According to Kantar Worldpanel Managing Director — South Asia K Ramakrishnan, for the most part of 2023, Urban has maintained strong growth numbers. "Rapid growth is unsustainable for a long term, and necessarily Urban is hitting brakes now. This has also coincided with typically Urban-centric categories such as noodles and salty snacks slowing down in growth within Urban, after continuously galloping since the pandemic," he said. The rural market may also get a boost from the rabi crop, the report said, though it was unclear about its status. "Central India, where the bulk of the rural populous resides, received excess rainfall in the

RAI's Budget wishlist: Lower taxes for individuals, benefits on land rates, electricity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Friday called for lower taxes for individuals to generate demand and spur consumption besides seeking low-cost finance, subsidies and benefits on land rates and necessities such as electricity for retailers ahead of Union Budget FY25. Retailing in India accounts for about 10 per cent of the country's GDP and the sector is second only to agriculture in terms of the number of people

directly employed, RAI said in its pre-Budget memorandum highlighting areas that need attention in order to make the industry stronger. "To ensure the growth of the sector, the Union Budget for FY25 should focus on generating demand and spurring consumption by offering benefits or concessions in the form of lower taxes," RAI said. It will boost the overall consumer sentiment and benefit the retail sector, it said adding, consumption equals to development and the "tax

benefits and relief to individual taxpayers will increase the monthly disposable income and support consumption". Further, the budget should outline supportive policies, simplified regulations, skill development and simple goods and services tax (GST) norms to aid the development of the retail industry, RAI said. Asking for low-cost finance to retailers, the industry body said, "There is a need to provide lower interest rate to the retailers through the special announcement in the

Budget to assure easier financing for the retail businesses." It also asked the government to consider the food and beverages retail sector as an essential service and said "subsidies and benefits should be given on land rates and other necessities such as electricity". RAI also said there is a need to expedite the formulation and implementation of 'National Retail Policy' to enable ease of doing business and "such a step would provide a substantial boost to the retail sector".

Stating that benefits to retail and wholesale trade MSMEs are restricted to priority sector lending only, RAI also recommended that retail and wholesale traders should be eligible for all benefits available to other MSMEs. Further, the retailers' body asked the Centre to encourage and incentivise states to adopt 'The Model Shops and Establishment (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Services) Act 2016 that enables states to choose to keep shops and other such establishments through the year.

Zepto raises USD 665 million; valuation nearly triples to USD 3.6 billion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Quick commerce company Zepto on Friday said it has raised USD 665 million (about Rs 5,560 crore) in the latest funding round that valued the firm at USD 3.6 billion, almost triple than its worth a year back. The massive fundraise comes less than a year after the Mumbai-based startup raised USD 235 million at a valuation of USD 1.4 billion. The funding round saw participation from new investors like Avenir, Lightspeed, and Avra, alongside existing investors Glade Brook, Nexus, and StepStone, Goodwater, and Lachy Groom. "We've gone from 0 to 1 billion-plus in sales, or GMV, in 29 months, that is faster than any other internet company before us... Even on a base of over a billion dollars at this point, we are growing 100 per cent-plus year on year. And that



for us is one of the big drivers of this fundraise," Zepto co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha told PTI. Attributing the growth to the performance of the quick commerce firm, the young entrepreneur said, "This is largely because of the input excellence we've built across the supply chain. "Whether it is sourcing excellence, mother hub efficiency, line haul utilisation, or our last mile, the innovation that we've done, or forecasting, we're in this place where even as we've been able to grow, we've been able to drive efficiency to get the business

to pretty much close to full operating cash flow positive today." He said the overall business is close to operating at break-even cash flow. Nearly 75 per cent of the company's stores are fully EBITDA positive as of May 2024, he said. "Over the next 12-18 months, although it might fluctuate, but we'll still be pretty close to operating cash flow positive, and the idea is to keep in that direction, get the business to a place where we can list next 9-12 months," he said. Zepto co-founder and CTO Kaivalya Vohra said the firm plans to hire top talent across engineering, product, growth, finance, operations, and category management. "If you are looking for a high growth, high meritocracy and high intensity culture where you can convert hard work and ambition into disproportionate career growth, Zepto is the place for you," he said.

POWERGRID team honoured



PNS ■ GURUGRAM

POWERGRID's Team Corporate Communications has been featured in India's 30 Top Corporate Communications Teams for the fourth time by Reputation Today. The team led by Anshuman Tandon, CGM Corporate Communications, along with Shri Ravi Kumar, DGM (Corp. Comm.) and Shri Akshat Chopra, Asst. Manager (Corp. Comm.) received the award at an event held in Bengaluru. POWERGRID is the only PSU to feature in this prestigious list. POWERGRID has jumped 5 places from its last ranking. To arrive at the list of Top Corporate Communication Teams, a jury independently evaluated the Top 30 teams scoring each one of them on set parameters like team responsibilities, and more.

More than 50 per cent Indian households downing soft drinks; to increase with intensifying heat: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The average Indian household's consumption of bottled soft drinks has increased in the last two years, breaching annual penetration of 50 per cent in FY24, a report said. According to the latest Kantar FMCG pulse report, this trend is expected to rise further with intensifying summer. It said the average household has expanded its consumption of bottled soft drinks by 250 ml in the last two years. Moreover, fabric softeners, still considered to be a premium laundry item, have now reached one in every four households in the country, the report said. Besides, washing liquids, another premium laundry product introduced by leading FMCG majors, breached the 100,000-tonne mark in FY24. All these trends are "record breakers", the report noted. The bottled soft drink category had a "massive 41 per cent household growth in MAT (moving annual total) March 2023" and



continued to add more households and expanded 19 per cent in MAT March 2024. "With the intensifying summer, the category is likely to continue its growth this year too," it said. On the consumption, the report said now consumers shop FMCG products 156 times a year, or every 56 hours from online or offline channels. However, it also added that the average basket value has gone down as shoppers are no longer buying more packs as they were purchasing

earlier. "The frequency and the pack trends indicate that shoppers are no longer reducing their pack sizes, but holding on to the ones they are buying. In other words, we are very likely at the juncture where we see shoppers buying slightly bigger packs from now on," it said. Now discretionary premium-end categories like washing liquids and indulgent products such as bottled soft drinks have performed exceedingly well. Still, groceries are the biggest household expense, accounting for over 24 per cent of all quarterly expenses in a household, it added. The report also highlighted that though inflation might have slowed to acceptable levels, its effects are not lost on the consumer. "The worst of inflation is behind us, however, there are pockets of the market that are still under some stress...The shopper is looking at the future with great optimism, even those who are under stress, and this optimism has been the flag bearer of the Indian consum

Sun Pharma inks pact with Takeda to introduce gastrointestinal drug



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries on Friday said it has inked a licensing pact with Takeda Pharmaceutical Company to commercialise a novel gastrointestinal drug in India. The company has entered into a non-exclusive patent licensing agreement with Takeda to commercialise Vonoprazan tablets in strengths of 10 and 20 mg in India, the Mumbai-based drug major said in a statement. Vonoprazan is a novel, orally active potassium competitive acid blocker (PCAB), used to treat reflux esophagitis and other acid peptic disorders. "Sun Pharma is a leader in gastroenterology and we are excited to introduce Vonoprazan in India under non-exclusive patent license from Takeda," Sun Pharma CEO — India Business Kirti Ganorkar said. The partnership demonstrates the company's commitment to gastrointestinal health by providing patients and healthcare practitioners with a novel treatment option to manage reflux esophagitis and other acid peptic disorders, he added. Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is common in India. In November 2023, Vonoprazan was approved by the US FDA for healing and maintenance of all grades of Erosive esophagitis and providing relief from heartburn associated with Erosive esophagitis, and in combination with amoxicillin and clarithromycin or amoxicillin alone for the treatment of Helicobacter pylori (H. Pylori) infection in adults. Vonoprazan was discovered and developed by Takeda. The drug is approved in India for treatment of adults with reflux esophagitis and other acid peptic disorders. Shares of Sun Pharma were trading 0.69 per cent up at Rs 1,480.55 apiece on the BSE.

African, Asian tea producers flag concerns over global demand-supply mismatch

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Associations of tea producers in Asia and Africa have flagged concerns over the global mismatch of demand and supply and called for an early restoration of equilibrium, according to a statement issued by a planters' body on Friday. In a meeting of the stakeholders of the global tea industry, recently held in Dubai, the associations also addressed the issue of quality and long-term sustainability of the sector. Indian Tea Association (ITA) chairman Hemant Bangur said that the global tea industry is facing a demand-supply mismatch as production continues to outpace demand. Representatives of ITA, East African Trade Association (EATTA), independent tea producers' body of Kenya, and tea associations of Malawi, Bangladesh and Uganda attended the meeting. They voiced concern over



stagnating consumption demand in Europe and Asia, the ITA said in a statement. Bangur said, "Africa with its growing population and rising income has the potential to become one of

the largest markets for black tea." According to the ITA statement, EATTA chairman Arthur Sewe said the tea sector in East Africa is currently facing a decline in

quality and issues related to climate change, which require concerted efforts by all the stakeholders. During the meeting, they deliberated on the impact of climate change, price stagnation, increasing input costs and challenges relating to fair price discovery, it said. Malawi Tea Association chairman Sangwani Hara was quoted as saying that climate change is a big problem and must be addressed to sustain the level of tea productivity. The industry is also facing a crisis in exports and falling value of the produce thereby threatening the livelihoods of millions, the ITA statement said. The stakeholders also felt that the economic recession and geopolitical challenges due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the traditional bulk tea export markets had affected shipments. The Russian Federation is one of the largest importers of tea, particularly from India.

Hindustan Zinc, AEsir Technologies join hands for development of next-gen zinc batteries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hindustan Zinc Ltd on Friday said it has partnered with US-based AEsir Technologies, Inc for development of next-generation zinc batteries. The company has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with AEsir Technologies, Inc., a company that specialises in next-generation zinc battery technologies, to be the preferred supplier of zinc, a key raw material, Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) said in a statement. The MoU is in line with the company's efforts towards exploring emerging applications of zinc in the clean energy transition, it said, adding that zinc batteries are revolutionising energy storage due to their corrosion resistance, cost-effectiveness, recyclability, stability and environmental friendliness. "This partnership with AEsir Technologies is yet another step in our ongoing developmental work in the emerging clean technology



space. "By providing high-quality zinc for cutting-edge energy storage, we are opening sophisticated new avenues for environmentally friendly solutions for a greener tomorrow," HZL Chief Executive Officer Arun Misra said. AEsir Technologies CEO and Co-Founder, Randy Moore said energy storage is at the forefront of every major innovation in the energy transition space and "zinc batteries are the best story around energy storage". "...This collaboration with Hindustan Zinc provides us with critical raw material for the development of next-gen

nickel-zinc batteries," Moore added. AEsir's Nickel Zinc (NiZn) batteries have proven dependable and successful in the high-end defence sector, including aerospace and marine, renewable energy and critical infrastructure for data centres and 5G telecom, the statement said. Zinc-based batteries have emerged as a compelling alternative to other modern energy storage solutions, delivering higher power at lower costs with minimal maintenance and longer life spans of up to 20 years. This makes them ideal for large-scale energy storage in industrial settings, it added.

AIFF Futsal Club Championship to kick off in Gujarat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The third edition of the AIFF Futsal Club Championship is set to kick off at the Swarnim Gujarat Sports University in the Vadodara district of Gujarat on Saturday. The tournament will be streamed live on the Indian Football YouTube Channel. Nineteen teams will battle for 16 days to make it to the final and lift the trophy on July 7. They have been divided into four groups - Group A, B and C with five teams each, and Group D with four teams. The top two teams in each group will qualify for the quarter-finals. The first two editions of the AIFF Futsal Club Championship were held in Delhi, marking this as the first time the tournament will be played outside the capital.

For hosts Gujarat, Baroda Football Academy will hope to do better than their group stage exit in the inaugural edition in 2021-22. They are placed in Group C alongside Speed Force FC (Telangana), who narrowly missed out on the semi-finals last year. The other three teams making their AIFF Futsal Club Championship debut -- MUM - Millat FC (Maharashtra), Corbett FC (Uttarakhand) and Nyenshen FC (Nagaland). The latter will be the third different team to represent Nagaland in three years after Telongjem FC and Aphuyemi FC, while Maharashtra and



Uttarakhand will be represented for the first time. Among the clubs with previous national experience in the group are Manipur's Classic Football Academy (2021-22) and Odisha's Sports Odisha (2022-23). Group B comprises defending champions Minerva Academy FC, who won last year's edition. Standing in the way of the Punjab side's title defence in the group stage are Electric Veng Futsal Club (Mizoram), Bangalore Arrows FC (Karnataka), Satvir FC (Haryana) and Goal Hunterz FC (Delhi). The rematch of last season's semi-final between Minerva Academy and Electric Veng, which the former triumphed 13-8 in a high-scoring thriller, is one of the most anticipated fixtures of the group stage. Bangalore Arrows will be making their debut, while

Satvir FC will become the first team to represent Haryana in the tournament. Goal Hunterz, who exited in the group stage last year, will hope to go one step better. Group D, the fourth and final group, consists of four teams, including Delhi FC, the champions of the inaugural edition. They failed to defend their title last year after losing to Mohammedan Sporting 6-7 in the semi-finals. The other three teams in the group will make their first appearance at the AIFF Futsal Club Championship - Casa Barwani Soccer Club (Madhya Pradesh), Golazo FC (Himachal Pradesh) and JCT Football Academy (Punjab). The group stage will last from June 22 to July 1. The quarter-finals will be played on July 3, followed by the semi-finals on July 5 and the final on July 7.

Euro 2024

England fails to convince in 1-1 draw with Denmark

AP ■ FRANKFURT

Where England stands after two European Championship games is the envy of most teams. Just not good enough yet to have title ambitions. A 1-1 draw Thursday with Denmark - a semifinalist last time, don't forget - means England is unbeaten and all-but certain to advance to the round of 16. It also was a slack, mistake-filled display that left coach Gareth Southgate angrily gesturing at his players for gifting a slew of scoring chances late in the game. "The team didn't function today, that is my responsibility," said Southgate, who heard jeers from fans behind the England goal in a ragged second half. Harry Kane gave England another fast start at Euro 2024, scoring it the 18th minute, but the captain was substituted off in the second half as the team faded. Denmark leveled in the 34th when



Morten Hjulmand fired in a powerful low shot from long distance, after Kane gave away the ball in defense. Eight years with Southgate has earned England sustained tournament success. The Three Lions reached the final of Euro 2020 - after beating Denmark in the last four - and a semifinal and a quarterfinal at the

past two World Cups. "We're in the environment of winning on the biggest stage," the coach acknowledged, adding "you have to accept what (criticism) comes our way." England has never won back-to-back games to begin a Euros and a pattern of second-game syndrome has

repeated at three straight tournaments. Opening wins in the past three years have been following by tepid 0-0 draws with Scotland and the United States, now a 1-1 with the Danes who deserved more. "I can't say we are disappointed but it's a shame," Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand said. "There is a result we could have gotten." Still, England started Euro 2024 by beating Serbia 1-0 and now sits top of Group C with four points. That tally always has been enough to advance in the 24-team Euros format where four third-place teams from the six groups go forward to the round of 16. England can finish in any position from first to third in the Group C standings after playing unbeaten Slovenia next Tuesday. Slovenia drew 1-1 with Serbia earlier Thursday, four days after getting the same result against Denmark. Serbia meets Denmark in their final games also on Tuesday evening.



Alcaraz loses in Queen's second round ahead of Wimbledon title defense

AP ■ LONDON

Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz's buildup took a hit when he lost in the second round of Queen's Club. Alcaraz, the defending Queen's champion and top seed, lost to Jack Draper 7-6 (3), 6-3. For Draper, the British No. 1, it was the biggest win of his career. He was impressively composed in front of his home crowd. Queen's was Alcaraz's only grass-court preparation last year en route to winning Wimbledon for the first time. But this time the Spaniard will have only two grass matches under his belt following his French Open victory. Wimbledon starts in 11 days. Draper ended Alcaraz's eight-match win streak while extending his own to seven after winning his first ATP title last week in Stuttgart. Draper didn't drop serve against Alcaraz. They were finally separated in the first set in the tiebreak, where Draper shot to 4-0 then 6-1. Alcaraz netted a return to concede the set. Alcaraz suffered the only break in the sixth game of the second set, after Draper's backhand return serve down the line. Draper saved a break point to hold for 5-2, then Alcaraz saved three match points to hold. Draper served out and threw his arms in the air. "I knew I had to come out here and play really well, and luckily I did that," he said on court. He faces fifth-seeded Tommy Paul in the quarterfinals. Also Thursday, Lorenzo Musetti eliminated Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 and will face 29-year-old British wild card Billy Harris in the quarterfinals.



Spain beats Italy 1-0 and advances to knockout round

AP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN (GERMANY)

Spain advanced to the round of 16 at Euro 2024 after a 1-0 win against defending champion Italy on Thursday. A 55th-minute own goal by Italy's Riccardo Calafiori handed victory to Spain in the first clash of international heavyweights at this European Championship. Three-time winner Spain totally dominated the Group B game at the Veltins Arena in Gelsenkirchen, with 16-year-old winger Lamine Yamal further enhancing his reputation as one of soccer's most exciting young stars with an outstanding performance. Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept the score down with a string of fine saves until inadvertently pushing the ball into the legs of Calafiori, who couldn't prevent it from ricocheting into his own goal. England drew 1-1 with Denmark in Group C after Harry Kane scored and then made a mistake that led to the Danes' leveller. Kane struck a record-extending 64th goal for his country to fire England ahead in Frankfurt. But his loose pass then allowed Morten Hjulmand to equalise from long range. In the other Group C game, Luka Jovic scored in stoppage time to salvage a 1-1 for Serbia against Slovenia. England leads the group on four points and is likely to advance to the round of 16.

Georgia, the Czech Republic desperate to get off mark

AP ■ HAMBURG

Georgia and the Czech Republic are desperately seeking a win as they meet in their second game of Euro 2024 in Hamburg. Kickoff is at 3 pm local time (1300 GMT) on Saturday. Turkey and Portugal are the other two teams in Group F and play later Saturday. Here's what to know about the match: Georgia and the Czech Republic were praised for fighting hard in their opening games but didn't get any points as Turkey beat Georgia 3-1 and Portugal beat the Czechs 2-1 on a stoppage-time goal from Francisco Conceicao. A win for either team would boost their chances of qualifying for the knockout rounds. The losing team wouldn't be eliminated for sure just yet because of the rule that some third-place teams can qualify. A draw would leave Georgia needing an upset win over Portugal in its last game, and the Czech team needing the same against Turkey.



Georgian fans were involved in a brawl in the stadium ahead of the Turkey game. Georgia midfielder Otar Kiteishvili has been on an individual training program separate from the rest of the squad. He was an unused substitute in the loss to Turkey. The Czech Republic has not reported any injury concerns since its first game. Czech striker Patrik Schick is set to play his 40th game for his country and his next goal will be his 20th. Five of his international goals to date came at the last European Championship.

Ronaldo back in action as Portugal, Turkey look for second straight win

AP ■ DORTMUND

Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal play Turkey in their second group game at the European Championship. Both countries opened Group F play with a win, with Portugal beating the Czech Republic 2-1 and Turkey defeating Georgia 3-1. Kickoff is at 6 pm local (1600 GMT) in Dortmund. Here's what to know about the match: The 39-year-old Ronaldo lost his place in the Portugal team at the World Cup in 2022 but he looks to be as guaranteed a starter as ever under Roberto Martinez, who took over as coach after the tournament in Qatar. Ronaldo is captain and played the full game against the Czechs, though didn't score. Portugal encountered a Czech Republic team which sat back and defended in numbers in Leipzig. Turkey is unlikely to do that, given its strength in attack, so expect Ronaldo and company to have more space going forward. Arda Guler is the one to watch for Turkey. The 19-year-old attacking midfielder from Real Madrid scored one of the goals of the tournament against Georgia - a long-range



screamer into the top corner - to take Ronaldo's record as the youngest debut scorer at a European Championship. Turkey is playing a second straight game at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion. Its fans turned the stadium into a sea of red against Georgia and look sure to outnumber the Portuguese support on Saturday. Portugal or Turkey will guarantee a first-place finish in the group with a win in Dortmund and if Georgia-Czech Republic is a draw in Hamburg earlier Saturday. Portugal's entire 26-man squad has been in training so Martinez again has some tough decisions to make, given the strength in depth of the group. Joao Palhinha is pushing for a return as the anchorman in midfield. Irfan Can Kahveci missed the win over Georgia because of injury and has yet to return to full training with Turkey. Ronaldo will look to add to his record 14 goals in European Championships. That is five more than his nearest rival - Michel Platini, whose nine goals all came in the same tournament (1984). It will also be Ronaldo's record-extending 27th appearance at the Euros.

Verstappen aims for another F1 win in Barcelona

AP ■ MONTEMELO (SPAIN)

Max Verstappen will be out to quash any hopes that his Red Bull could be beatable at the Spanish Grand Prix this weekend, where the three-time world champion enjoyed his breakout as a teenager and has won for the past two years. The race just north of Barcelona kicks off a run of three grand prix in as many weeks and five in six weeks. Given that tight schedule, teams will have less time to tweak their cars. So, the upgrades they bring to Spain could be key to determining who has the edge as the summer heats up. Verstappen has won six of the nine races this season and recorded his 60th career win in Montreal two weeks ago. Overall, the 26-year-old Dutchman has won 50 of the last 75 events and holds a 56-point over Ferrari's Charles



Leclerc going into Sunday's race. While some races have practically been over once Verstappen sped off the starting line, there have been signs that his chasers could at least make this season a bit more interesting. Both Mercedes and McLaren

led the pace during stretches of the Canadian GP before Verstappen steered clear. And, two of the last four races have gone to other drivers: McLaren's Lando Norris won in Miami after Verstappen clipped a chicane and had to pit, while Leclerc won in his home race in Monaco.

Spain, however, usually lets the flat-out fastest cars dominate. Twenty-four of 33 races here have been won by pole sitters, and no driver has won from starting further back than fifth. It is also well known to drivers because pre-season testing used to be held here.

The 4.6-kilometre Barcelona-Catalunya Circuit was made even fitter for speed last year when a chicane that was unpopular among drivers was replaced by two fast turns head of the main straightaway. "I think it's always very tricky, in a way of course exciting," Verstappen said about the state of the competition before practice started for the race on Friday. "This is normally a track that is a bit more straightforward. People have a bit more information about a track like this, it's been on the calendar for a while. Of course, from our side, we are hoping to have a good weekend here." Verstappen has fond memories of a track where he showed the stuff of a future champion by winning the 2016 Spanish GP on his Red Bull debut. That made him F1's youngest race winner at age 18. He also scored wins

here in the last two seasons. Norris lamented not having taken his chance to get a second win in Canada. Now, he hopes McLaren can match the Red Bulls for pure speed. "The whole season we've been strong, at every race," Norris continued. "If we can get the car performing like it has done in the past on high-speed circuits, then I'll be confident that we can. We should be able to fight." For Mercedes' George Russell, who finished third in Montreal, a good result here should translate into better things to come. "I think this is going to be a real test and if we can be fast this weekend, that bodes really well for the season," Russell said. Ferrari is looking to bounce back from a frustrating weekend in Canada when both Leclerc and Carlos Sainz struggled in qualifying and neither could finish the race.

Wimbledon champion Vondrousova retires

BERLIN, JUN 21 (AP)

Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova retired from her match in Berlin because of an apparent leg injury less than two weeks before play begins at the All England Club. Vondrousova was leading 5-3 in her second-round match against Anna Kalinskaya at the grass-court Ladies Open when she slipped behind the baseline and clutched her right leg. The 24-year-old Czech player got up holding her right hip area and returned after a medical timeout with the upper part of her leg heavily strapped. She played two more games, losing both, and then stopped. First-round play begins at Wimbledon on July 1. Also Thursday, top-seeded Coco Gauff beat Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-6 (6), 6-2,



and second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka defeated Daria Kasatkina 6-1, 6-4. Elena Rybakina reached the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 7-5 victory over Veronika Kudermetova. Ons Jabeur shook off a slow start to beat Linda Noskova 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-4.

PRESSURE BUILDING ON TOP-ORDER AS INDIA TAKE ON BANGLADESH

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

The ever-present tension of their over a decade-long big-stage rivalry would make for an engrossing sub-plot when an undefeated India takes on a faltering Bangladesh, both teams desperately hoping for their batting stars to strike form in the Super Eights clash of the T20 World Cup here on Saturday. The overall head-to-head record is overwhelmingly in India's favour but Bangladesh have been known to be plucky and Rohit Sharma and his men would be wary of that. The two South Asian neighbours have also been locked in some off-field drama in the past with Bangladesh often expressing its misgivings with India's financial might in the sport. At the ongoing World Cup though, there is no doubt that India are as mighty a cricketing power to be a serious title contender. The Men in Blue produced a professional performance against Afghanistan in their opening Super Eights match. With only a travel day separating their remaining two games, they would be hoping that the players, who have not performed as per expectations so far, deliver the goods. Top of that list would be the opening pair of Virat Kohli and

Rohit Sharma, both of whom have got starts but have not been able to turn them into defining knocks. They have made a conscious effort to force the pace but have ended with minimal returns. Another under-pressure team member is left-hander Shivam Dube, who was picked in the World Cup squad to hammer sixes in the middle and death overs. However, the IPL form that helped him seal a World Cup berth has deserted him and he is yet to come to the party. The southpaw did make an unbeaten 31 against the USA in a group league game but it was Suryakumar Yadav's effort that made the difference ultimately. Another failure might force the team management to consider Sanju Samson in the middle order. The biggest positive in the batting department in the Afghanistan game was Hardik Pandya's cameo. The all-rounder is known for his brutal hitting and that was on display on Thursday. On the bowling front, India are expected to retain the combination having given the first opportunity of the tournament to crafty left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav. The wickets in the Caribbean have provided enough help for the spinners, prompting India to play three at the Kensington Oval.



The combination is likely to continue here with Kuldeep retaining his place at the expense of Mohammed Siraj. "Playing three left-arm spinners, I feel there is an advantage. There are three left-arm spinners out of which we have two finger spinners and one wrist spinner," said Axar Patel after the Afghanistan game. "The combination of the three of us is very good. We have a good team. We communicate well. Like whoever comes to bowl first, we communicate what is working and what is

not. I think that is very important when you bowl as a unit," he added. India's sole aim in the Caribbean is to win the trophy and a solid performance against Bangladesh will be another step forward in that context. A tougher battle awaits against Australia on June 24. Bangladesh, who have struggled with their batting throughout the tournament, find themselves in a must win situation after the loss to Australia. The lack of power-hitters is

hurting them and there is no quick fix to that problem. The under-performance of opener Litton Das and Tanzid Khan has also compounded Bangladesh's woes. "It's very important for the top-order to get runs like we did today, that's a big boost,

hopefully the bowlers will continue their form. Looking for a good show against India in our next match," Bangladesh captain Najmul Shanto said after the loss to Australia here on Friday. Both Shanto (41) and Towhid Hridoy (40) did well but the rest of the line-up was not quite up to it. They will need to find a way to tackle Bumrah, who has been sensational thus far, taking eight wickets at an unparalleled economy rate of 3.46 runs per over. The pacers, led by Mustafizur Rahman, have done alright but leg-spinner Rishad Hossain needs more support in the spin department.

SQUADS:
Bangladesh: Tanzid Hasan, Litton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto (captain), Shakib Al Hasan, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mustafizur Rahman, Jaker Ali, Tanvir Islam, Shoriful Islam, Soumya Sarkar.
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.

SA stun England, remain unbeaten so far

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

Quinton de Kock made a coruscating fifty and bowlers responded bravely to the challenge of defending a sub-par total as South Africa thwarted a late England surge to eke out a tight seven-run win in their Group 2 Super Eight match in the T20 World Cup, here on Friday. England had done well to keep South Africa to 163/6 in spite of De Kock's 38-ball 65, but lost their way despite a spirited fightback from Harry Brook (53) and Liam Livingstone (33). They eventually finished at 156 for six. South Africa's perfection in executing their plans of taking the pace off the ball corresponded with England's refusal to show intent as the defending champions did not find a single boundary between

the fifth and the 12th over. Brook and Livingstone did extremely well to stage a fightback to bring England back into the game but South Africa held their nerves, despite making plenty of errors, to keep their winning run in this World Cup intact. England were still significantly far from target needing 46 runs to win from the final four overs but Otneil Baartman, who had been measly throughout the group stage, sent down plenty of full-tosses as 21 runs were knocked off in the 17th over. But Kagiso Rabada (2/32) stamped his class as he had Livingstone (33 off 17b, 3x4s, 2x6s) caught at deep backward square leg in the 18th over. Marco Jansen then allowed only seven runs in the penultimate over to leave England needing 14 runs off the final over, in which



Anrich Nortje (1/35) did well to remove Brooks and seal Proteas' win. Brook and Livingstone came together in the 11th over with England needing 103 to win from 58 balls. They added 78 from 42 but it was not enough as England paid a heavy price for being meek in the beginning. Reeza Hendricks deserved all credits for pulling a catch out of thin air, putting a stunning effort at extra cover while diving to his left after Phil Salt (11) hit one hard against Rabada in the second over. With Salt was dismissed early, England were neither quick off the blocks nor did they change

approach to counter South African tactics. Jonny Bairstow (17) failed to make the most of a lifeline given to him when Heinrich Klaasen dropped a regulation catch running in from backward square leg off Rabada in the third over. However, with South African bowlers keeping it tight another chance came their way when Keshav Maharaj lured Bairstow to slash one wide of the off-stump and the batter obliged by hitting in the air. Nortje grabbed the chance. The wily Maharaj then foxed England skipper Jos Buttler by taking the pace off a delivery which he hit straight to deep midwicket, where Klaasen did not make any mistake. Moeen Ali (9) was bounced out by Baartman with Maharaj taking the catch as England

skidded to 61 for four around the halfway mark. Earlier, South Africa squandered a blistering start by Quinton de Kock (65) as England managed to keep the Proteas to a low total. With De Kock (68, 4x4, 4x6) going hammer and tongs to take the scoring rate to nearly 10 an over for most of their first half, England fought back hard with regular wickets courtesy excellent fielding which remained the highlight of their effort. Apart from De Kock's fireworks, David Miller's late resistance, 43 off 28 balls (4x4, 2x6), saved SA the blushes. From 86 for no loss at one stage, South Africa had slipped to 113 for four by the 15th over, losing the momentum. Amid the steady fall of wickets at one end, Miller held his ground and his late charge helped South Africa go past the 150-mark.



India to tour South Africa for 4-match T20I series in November

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

India will tour South Africa for a short four-match T20I series in November this year, CSA and the BCCI announced in a joint statement on Friday. As per the itinerary released by Cricket South Africa (CSA), the series will begin on November 8 at the Hollywoodbets Kingsmead Stadium in Durban, followed by matches in Gqeberha on November 10, Centurion on December 13 and Johannesburg on November 15. "I would like to thank the BCCI for their continued support to South Africa's cricket, and world cricket in general," CSA chairperson Lawson Naidoo said in the statement. "Any tour by the Indian cricket team to our shores is filled with amazing camaraderie and exciting cricket, and I know our fans will be eagerly awaiting this series which will showcase the exceptional talent from both teams," he added. BCCI secretary Jay Shah added: "India and South Africa have always shared a deep and strong bond, one that both nations take great pride in. The Indian Cricket Team has consistently received immense appreciation and love from South African fans, and this sentiment is equally strong among Indian fans towards the South African side. "I am confident that the upcoming series will once again highlight the on-field cricketing excellence and deliver enthralling, high-intensity contests." India's short tour has been accommodated between their home Test series against New Zealand and their tour of Australia for the Border-Gavaskar series.

Cummins takes first hat-trick at T20 World Cup 2024

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Australia pacer Pat Cummins grabbed the first hat-trick of the ongoing T20 World Cup during the team's Super Eights match against Bangladesh here. The 31-year-old removed experienced campaigner Mahmudullah and Mahedi Hasan off the last two deliveries of the 18th over and then returned to dismiss Towhid Hridoy with the first ball of the last over to claim the seventh hat-trick in T20I World Cups. "I didn't know I was on a hat-trick. I did the previous over, I saw it come up on the screen and by the time my next over came around I totally forgot about it," Cummins said at the post-match press conference. "So, I think Stoinis ran in from the deep, was cheering and I was like, oh yeah, forgot about that. So, yeah, nice one," he added.



It was also the first hat-trick of Cummins' career for Australia. "I had a few (hat-tricks) in juniors but never for Australia. I think I got one in grade cricket, maybe fourth grade. And I think I got one in second 11 when I was 17. "And I think the hat-trick ball was similar. It was the first ball of the last day when it was Joe Burns. "And I went to bowl a slower ball and he ducked underneath it and it hit the ball on the full. So yeah, not too dissimilar to today's," he recalled. The fast bowler, who has been enjoying a purple patch in international cricket over the past year, finished with figures of 3/29, as Australia defeated Bangladesh by 28 runs via the Duckworth Lewis method at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. "(Ashton) Agar and (Nathan) Ellis on the bench have T20 hat-

tricks so good to join that club," Cummins, who was adjudged the player of the match said. "Pretty awesome to tick that off. Boys are welcoming me in the club. Good club to be part of," he added. The country's Test and ODI captain thus joined Brett Lee, the only other Australian to take a T20 World Cup hat-trick, which also came against Bangladesh. Lee was the first to claim a hat-trick in the marquee event way back in 2007 and the Australian remained the only one to achieve the feat until the 2021 edition when Ireland pacer Curtis Campher (2021), Sri Lankan spinner Wanindu Hasaranga (2021) and South African quick Kagisa Rabada joined the elusive list. Other bowlers to claim a hat-trick in the T20 World Cup include UAE's Karthik Meiyappan (2022) and Joshua Little (2022) of Ireland.

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

West Indies cannot afford another misstep as they take on a tenacious USA outfit in the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup here, seeking to renew their quest for an unprecedented third title. After remaining unbeaten in the group stage, the West Indies slumped to an eight-wicket loss to defending champions England in their opening Super Eight fixture, paying the price for playing out as many as 51 dot balls and failing to rotate strike. The heavy defeat to England has not only pushed Ravman Powell and his men to the bottom of the group but they now have -1.343 net run rate and need to win big to keep their hopes of lifting the title at home alive. USA, on the other hand, haven't

West Indies face crunch USA clash

won any game since their victory against Pakistan earlier this month. But they gave a good account of themselves against India and almost shocked South Africa, falling just 18 runs short of the Proteas' 194/4 against a high-quality bowling attack. The co hosts of the tournament have shown that they are not here just to make up numbers and are not to be taken lightly. They have played an aggressive brand of cricket so far and in likelihood will continue to do so in the coming matches. "Of course, I would say we're playing good cricket and the team is gelling well together and at the end of the day we know that we're going to be the

underdogs for all teams that we played against in the Super 8s. "So, we're just here to play good cricket and if we go in, we win - if we lose, we lose," USA batter Steven Taylor said at the pre-match press conference. However, their weakness is their inexperienced bowling attack that sometimes lacks discipline, and the West Indies, who are blessed with big hitters like Nicholas Pooran, Andre Russell, Powell, will like to capitalise on that. "We did lack discipline in the bowling at times. Once we play good cricket we can beat any team in the world. But we need to be a lot more disciplined," vice-captain Aaron Jones had said



after the game against South Africa. Even though they have their backs against the walls, West Indies coach Darren Sammy asserted their "spirits are not dampened". "In a tournament, there's a game where the opposition will get the better of you. But that doesn't mean you're out of it. Now, in order to win, we've got to win all our matches. And that's what we'll focus on," Sammy said. Brandon King, who suffered a side strain and was forced to retire hurt against England, remains a doubtful starter for the hosts. If he doesn't recover, Shimron Hetmyer could take King's place in the playing XI.

USA have been without skipper Monank Patel since their game against Pakistan. **TEAMS (FROM):**
West Indies Squad: Rovman Powell (c), Brandon King, Johnson Charles, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sherfane Rutherford, Andre Russell, Romario Shepherd, Roston Chase, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Obed McCoy, Shamir Joseph, Shimron Hetmyer and Shai Hope.
USA: Monank Patel (c), Aaron Jones, Andries Gous, Corey Anderson, Ali Khan, Harmeet Singh, Jessy Singh, Milind Kumar, Nisarg Patel, Nitish Kumar, Noshthus Kenjige, Saurabh Nethralvakar, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Steven Taylor, Shayan Jahangir, Reserve Players: Gajanan Singh, Juanoy Drysdale, Yasir Mohammad.

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