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Now, count your blessings on June 4

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The largest festival of democracy concluded on Saturday that began on April 19, with 60 per cent voters turnout after the seventh round of polls on 57 seats, including Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term in the Lok Sabha. The voter turnout percentage is likely to be upgraded by the Election Commission.

As per the Election Commission's voter turnout app till 7 pm, West Bengal took back the lead with almost 70 per cent voter turnout, while Bihar continues to be at the lowest with 49.12 per cent voting turnout. Modi's constituency Varanasi recorded 54.83 per cent voting. Jharkhand recorded 68.16 per cent voting, Himachal Pradesh 66.91 per cent, Odisha 62.55 per cent, Punjab 55.58 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 55.53 per cent and Chandigarh 62.80 per cent.

Violence broke out between TMC and BJP supporters in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, and complaints of EVM glitches and rigging at some booths were lodged. Barring incidents of clashes in Odisha, voting was almost peaceful. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. In Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the counting for the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari

PTI

Assembly polls will be held on June 2. Modi also appealed to people to exercise their franchise. "Together, let's make our democracy more vibrant and participative," the Prime Minister wrote on X. "Today is the final phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. As 57 seats across 8 States and UTs go to the polls, calling upon the voters to turnout in large numbers and vote. I hope young and women

voters exercise their franchise in record numbers," he said. The counting of votes on June 4 will decide how close the BJP or NDA finishes its target of "Ab ki baar 400 paar". As the exit polls numbers trickle in, multiple pollsters are predicting a return of the Narendra Modi-led NDA Government, winning over 350 seats, with the Opposition's INDIA Bloc managing somewhere between 125 and 150. After

the exit polls result, BJP chief JP Nadda exuded confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA more than 400. After the meeting with its alliance parties, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge claimed INDIA Bloc parties will get more than 295 seats. The BJP is hoping for a historic third term for Modi. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections witnessed how Modi himself used 'Brand Modi', during the

campaign while the Opposition also chanted 'Brand Modi' to corner him. The BJP carried out a sustained campaign in southern States besides its traditional stronghold in the Hindi heartland. The INDIA Bloc also made a determined effort to garner votes to make a dent in BJP's backyard and prevent the saffron party from gaining seats in its citadel.

Not '400 paar' but NDA head, shoulders ahead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all likelihood is set to retain power for a third straight term, as several exit polls on Saturday predicted BJP-led NDA's huge win in the Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling alliance in all likelihood will open its account in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and sweep Karnataka but may see a fall in its tally in States like Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana, according to these pollsters. The Republic TV-P Marq poll claimed that the ruling alliance will win up to 359 seats and the Opposition INDIA Bloc will bag 154 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The Republic TV-Matrise poll gave 353-368 seats to the NDA and 118-133 seats to the Opposition. The Jan Ki Baat poll gave 362-392 seats to the ruling NDA and 141-161 to the Opposition alliance.

The India TV-CNX gave them 371-401 and 109-139 seats respectively, while the corresponding tally predicted by News Nation was 342-378 and 153-169.

A few other exit polls, including those from Axis My India and Today's Chanakya, were yet to forecast the full results till

EXIT POLL 2024



Source	NDA	INDIA Alliance	Others
NDTV	361	145	37
India TV	371-401	109-139	28-38
Jan Ki Baat	362-392	141-161	10-20
News Nation	342-378	153-169	21-23
Republic Bharat-Matrise	353-368	118-133	43-48
Republic TV-P MARQ	359	154	30
CNN News 18	355-370	125-140	42-52

filing of the report.

In the 2019 polls, the BJP won 303 seats, while the NDA tally was 353.

Congress had bagged 53 seats and its allies 38. The INDIA Bloc was formed by Opposition parties to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections.

After the seventh and last phase of voting ended on Saturday, Modi exuded confidence that people have voted in record numbers to re-elect the NDA Government and said the "opportunities INDIA

Alliance" failed to strike a chord with the voters who rejected their "regressive politics".

BJP president J P Nadda, however, asserted that people have voted for a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, exuding confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA over 400. The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

Kejriwal back in jail today, decision on bail on June 5

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to return to Tihar jail as the Rouse Avenue court reserved the order, observing that the application was for grant of interim bail on medical grounds and not for the extension of the interim bail granted by the Supreme Court.

During the proceedings, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday opposed an application moved by Kejriwal before a court here seeking interim bail in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja deferred the bail petition after hearing both sides. After the judge reserved the order, Kejriwal's counsel Hariharan urged the court to pass the order on Saturday itself, considering that he has to surrender on Sunday.



BLOOD SAMPLE SWITCH Mother of Porsche's minor driver arrested

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a fresh arrest in the sensational Porsche hit-and-run case, the Pune police on Saturday took into custody the mother of the minor accused who ran over two techies in an alleged inebriated state, for allegedly giving her blood sample to swap with that of the 17-year-old boy.

Confirming the arrest of the mother of the minor accused, Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said the accident investigation had revealed that the minor's blood sample was replaced with that of his mother. The sample was replaced to prove that the minor accused was not in a drunken condition at the time of mishap. With the latest development, four members from the family of the minor accused — the 17-year-old boy himself, his father Vishal Agrawal, grandfather Surendra Kumar Agarwal and now the mother — have been arrested ever since the mishap took place in the small hours of May 19.



Cong assured of 295+ seats for INDIA bloc

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday claimed that INDIA Bloc coalition will register a win over 295 plus Lok Sabha seats in the seven-phase general elections 2024 that concluded on Saturday.

Kharge, along with top leaders of the Bloc including former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, met at the residence of Congress president to discuss their strategy for the counting of votes on June 4. "INDIA Bloc will get a big majority, we have a people's survey with us," Kharge said after the Opposition meeting. He said the parties have also sought time from the Election Commission of India on Sunday for steps to be taken during counting of votes besides having conveyed their workers not to leave the counting hall till all formalities are over on June 4. Senior leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party,



Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Sanjay Singh, CPI's D Raja during the INDIA Bloc's meeting in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

CPI-M, CPI, DMK, JMM, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) held discussions, even as the last phase of polling was underway. Opposition leaders who attended the meeting included Sharad Pawar, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, Anil Desai, Sitaram

Yechury, Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwat Mann, Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, Champai Soren, Kalpana Soren, TR Baalu, Farooq Abdullah, D Raja and Mukesh Sahani. DMK was represented by party treasurer

and leader of DMK's Parliamentary Party, Thiru. T.R. Baalu. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was also present in the meeting, said INDIA Bloc is getting 295+ seats and the BJP will win around 220 seats and the

NDA Bloc will win 235 seats. "INDIA alliance will form a strong and stable Government on its own. (The PM face) will be decided on June 4...", said Kejriwal who formed an alliance with Congress elsewhere including Delhi except for Punjab where the parties fought against each other.

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav said in Uttar Pradesh, all seats of the BJP will be lost and the INDIA Bloc will win the most seats. "There was an earthquake of unemployment, price rise, GST, CBI, ED and Income Tax. All of these earthquakes will end," Yadav said after the same meeting. While former Bihar Dy CM and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav too exuded confidence of securing 295+ in the Lok Sabha polls. "INDIA (alliance) is winning. We will decide later (on PM's face)... Their (BJP's) film of '400 paar' became a flop in the first phase itself," said Tejashwi.

THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM GROUND ZERO

UTTAR PRADESH

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

An estimated 55.60 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 6 pm in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. Poll officials said the turnout figure could increase as data was being compiled. The Election Commission of India will release the final data of voting by 5 pm on Sunday.

Voting ended at 6 pm sealing the fate of 144 candidates in 13 constituencies of the state, including Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term in the Lok Sabha. As voting concluded in the Lok Sabha elections on Saturday, Uttar Pradesh will be in focus. The outcome in UP will be key to the '400 Paar' target the Bharatiya Janata Party has set for the National Democratic Alliance's return. The bypoll for the Duddhi



(ST) assembly constituency in Sonbhadra district was also held on Saturday where 54.48 per cent voter turnout was recorded. Six candidates are contesting from the Duddhi assembly seat that fell vacant after BJP MLA Ram Dular's disqualification following his conviction in a rape case. UP sends 80 members to the lower house of Parliament and the polling was spread over all seven phases of the Lok Sabha elections.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SHIMLA

A voter turnout of 66.56 per cent was recorded till 5 pm on Saturday in the four Lok Sabha constituencies of Himachal Pradesh where polling was held in the last phase of the general election, officials said here. They said the Kangra parliamentary seat recorded 64.07 per cent polling, Mandi 69.07 per cent, Hamirpur 65.90 per cent and the Shimla (SC) seat 67.50 per cent. Of the six Assembly constituencies where bypolls are being held simultaneously, Dharamshala recorded a turnout of 66.27 per cent, Lahaul and Spiti 73.72 per cent, Sujampur 63 per cent, Barsar 50 per cent, Gagret 68.28 per cent and Kulehar 71.40 per cent.

The BJP has filed a complaint against Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu with the chief electoral officer of Himachal Pradesh alleging a violation of the model code of conduct. The complaint said Sukhu wore a scarf of the National Students' Union of India - the student wing of the Congress - while voting in Nadaun which was objectionable and demanded action against the CM and the election agent. In Chamba district's Churah subdivision, residents of the Makhana-Chachul area falling under the Sanval gram panchayat and Juri under Chadra Gram Panchayat boycotted the Lok Sabha polls over road connectivity.

PUNJAB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab saw a voter turnout of 55.20 per cent till 5 pm for the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies while polling remained peaceful on Saturday, said the officials. In the lone parliamentary seat of Chandigarh, the voter turnout was at 62.80 per cent. The polling came to an end at 6 pm but the turnout figure will rise as there were several people in queues waiting for their turn to cast votes. In 2019, voter turnout in Punjab was 65.96 per cent and 70.62 per cent in the Union Territory (UT) Chandigarh. Among the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in Punjab, Bathinda recorded a turnout of 59.25, followed by Gurdaspur with 58.34 per cent, according to the Election Commission data. Among the prominent faces in the fray were BJP nominee and four-time MP Preneet Kaur, who is seeking re-election from the Patiala parliamentary constituency; and Harsimrat Badal, a three-time MP; and BJP's Parampal Kaur Sidhu, a former IAS officer, who are trying their luck from Bathinda. Former Chief Minister and Congress candidate Charanjit Singh Channi and BJP nominee Sushil Rinku were in the fray from the Jalandhar reserved seat.

ODISHA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Barring a few incidents of clashes, polling was peaceful in six Lok Sabha constituencies and 42 Assembly segments in Odisha with a voter turnout of over 62 per cent recorded till 5 pm on Saturday, an EC official said. Sixty-six candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats, while 394 nominees are contesting the Assembly segments in the fourth and last phase of simultaneous polls in the eastern State.

Key candidates in this phase include Odisha Assembly Speaker Pramila Mallik, Government Chief Whip Prashant Kumar Mudili, and State Ministers — Sudam Marndi, Ashwini Patra, Pritiranjjan Ghadai, Atanu S Nayak, Pratap Deb and T K Behera. Four sitting MPs — Pratap Sarangi from Balasore, Manju Lata Mandal from Bhadrak, Sarmistha Sethi from Jajpur and Rajashree Mallick from Jagatsinghpur — are in the fray in their respective seats. A polling official and a voter died of suspected heatstroke in the State, he said. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) NB Dhal said, "Polling was peaceful in 10,882 booths, barring a few reports of EVM glitches, which were resolved."

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ DIAMOND HARBOUR/BHANGAR/KOLKATA

Farce is a small word to express what happened at Diamond Harbour in the name of elections, said BJP and CPI(M) candidates Abhijit Das and Pratik ur Rehman contesting against Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee even as reports of rampant violence surfaced in from most of the nine constituencies that went to polls in the seventh and final phase of polling on Saturday. Rate and frequency of intermittent violence and alleged booth capture was such that by 2 pm the Election Commission of India was flooded with about 1,800 complaints with most number of them 450 each pouring in from Diamond Harbour and Dum Dum alone. The EC sources said they would consider re-polling some booths after going through the complaints. Amidst stray violence, allegations and counter



allegations, Bengal witnessed comparatively sluggish polling that stopped at 69.9 per cent at 5 pm. The EC sources however said the polling percentage could go up by a few percentage points till 6 pm as there were long queues of voters outside the polling booths in many places. Reports trickling in showed about 70.41 per cent voters had cast their votes at elite Jadavpur whereas 67.60 per cent voters had exercised their franchise at Dum Dum while 72.87 per cent people had voted at Diamond Harbour.

It rained in Bhopal, other places in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

With extreme heat, thundery activities, heat waves, hot nights and abrupt spells of rainfall there is no relief from the harsh weather conditions in the state. The day temperatures have dipped marginally but in vain as winds blowing are hot even in the nights. The intense weather conditions are nearing an unbearable stage with the state witnessing around 48 degree celsius in the season. State capital got little respite after mercury dipped near to 42 degree celsius during the day. On the eighth day of Nautapa, Saturday, there is intense heat. An elderly man died due to heat in Orchha of Niwari. At the same time, a transformer

caught fire in Morena. In Ratlam, water was sprinkled on the trees for the birds. It suddenly started raining in Shivpuri in the afternoon. In Khandwa and Khajuraho also, the weather changed after noon and it rained heavily. At the same time, after seven in the evening, a period of rain started in Bhopal, Gwalior and Sehore. The Meteorological Department had issued a heat wave alert in 16 districts including Gwalior-Datia. At the same time, it was predicted that there would be thunderstorms and drizzle in some districts. Earlier on Friday, there was the effect of severe heat and heat waves. The highest temperature was 47.1 degrees in Bijawar of Chhatarpur. At the same time, the temperature was recorded

at 47 degrees in Shivpuri and 46.7 degrees Celsius in Prithvipur of Niwari, while the mercury was more than 45 degrees in 11 cities. Khajuraho, Datia, Singrauli, Naugaon, Sidhi, Gwalior and Satna were also included in the top-10 cities of the state with the highest temperature on Friday. Khajuraho recorded 46.5 degrees, Datia 46.4 degrees, Singrauli 46.3 degrees, Nowgong 46 degrees, Sidhi 45.8 degrees, Gwalior 45.7 degrees and Satna recorded 45.2 degrees. Heat waves also hit these districts. The weather changed in Khajuraho on the eighth day of Nautapa. Clouds covered the sky amidst the scorching heat. It started raining with strong winds. The weather changed in Khandwa on Saturday after-

noon and it started raining heavily. This brought down the temperature a little. An elderly man died due to severe heat in Orchha of Niwari district. A man was found lying unconscious in the Phoolbagh premises on Saturday morning. The police reached the spot on receiving the information and took him to the hospital. The doctors declared him dead. They said that he died due to heat and heat waves. He has been identified as Man Singh Khatik (60) of Jhansi. He was living in a rented house here for a year and earning his living by begging in the temple premises. It started raining on Saturday afternoon in Shivpuri amid the scorching heat. Shivpuri remains in the top 10 hottest cities of Madhya Pradesh. On Friday, a temperature of 47

degrees was recorded here. On the eighth day of Nautapa in Raisen, winds and clouds have caused a drop in the day temperature. The temperature has dropped by two degrees compared to the past days. The temperature at 2 pm on Saturday was 41 degrees. According to the Meteorological Department, a light dust storm may occur in Morena, Sheopur Kalan, Shivpuri, Ashoknagar, Sagar, Vidisha, Raisen, Mauganj, Sidhi, Singrauli and Panna in the afternoon. At the same time, there is also a possibility of lightning. Clouds have been looming over Sagar since morning. Sunshine and shade continue amidst the clouds. The winds are hot. The temperature of Sagar was around 40 degrees at 1 pm.



Commuters move on the road amid light rain showers in Bhopal on Saturday.

Pioneer photo

Two vehicle lifters caught, 8 bikes recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Koh-e-Fiza police have arrested two vehicle lifters during vehicle checking, 8 two wheelers worth Rs 12 lakh were recovered from their possession. The accused used to open the locks of vehicles with master keys. They had committed many crimes in different police stations of Bhopal city. Police said that two suspicious persons were found on a Yamaha FZ motorcycle at Vijay Nagar intersection. On seeking information about the vehicle, they said that they did not have the documents of the said motorcycle. On checking information about the said vehicle from MP Transport, it was found that the vehicle was in the name of some other person.

Police said that two suspicious persons were found on a Yamaha FZ motorcycle at Vijay Nagar intersection

Later during interrogation, they told their names as Rakesh Singh Chauhan and Kamlesh Vishwakarma and the Yamaha FZ motorcycle with them was stolen from Indra Vihar Colony Kohefiza on April 4 this year. During investigation, the accused confessed stealing a total of 8 vehicles stolen from Kohefiza Police Station, Shahjahanabad Police Station, Chhola Mandir Police Station and Govindpura Police Station, worth about Rs. 12 lakhs

which were recovered from the above accused. The accused are being questioned in relation to other thefts. The recovered vehicles are Yamaha FZ vehicle registration number MP04-QM-6370, Rs. 175000, TVS Apache vehicle registration number MP04QU0764, Rs. 155000, Bajaj Pulsar vehicle registration number MP 04 QU 7763, Rs. 140000, TVS Radiator vehicle registration number MP04Q9120, Cost Rs. 90000, Bajaj CT-100 vehicle registration number MP04-QA-1147, Cost Rs. 80000, TVS Apache vehicle registration number MP04VC6616, Cost Rs. 160000, R-1-5 vehicle registration number MP04-ZA-6007, Rs. 200000 Enfield bike vehicle registration number MP04-ZH-7185 worth Rs. 200000.

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Suspecting wife's illicit relationship, an auto driver strangled his wife to death in the Nishatpura area and later burnt her body at Aravalia; police have recovered 14 small pieces of her body which the accused tried to dispose of. The heinous act of the accused identified as Nadeemuddin alias Munna surfaced after her wife Sania Khan went missing on May 21 from her parents house and never reported back. The accused after killing his wife, took the body in the auto and burnt it in a pit located 2 km away in Aravalia. He also tried to bury the remains. Later, the remains were cut into pieces with a knife and thrown at different places.

Man kills his wife over suspicion of illicit relationship, burns body

The accused after killing his wife, took the body in the auto and burnt it in a pit located 2 km away in Aravalia. He also tried to bury the remains. Later, the remains were cut into pieces with a knife and thrown at different places

Police have recovered 14 small pieces of the woman's skull, legs and ribs from the pit. The woman went missing on May 21. Since then, she was being searched for the last 12 days. According to the family, before killing the woman, the accused husband beat up the woman in the village and also paraded her naked, then killed her. DSP Manju Chauhan said the woman was murdered by her husband as he suspected an illicit relationship.

After this, the body was taken in an auto and burnt. An attempt was made to bury the remains. The remains found from the spot have been sent for DNA. The accused was arrested and sent to jail. The woman's Anas said that Sania's mother died 12 years ago. Father Wasim Khan lives with his second daughter Sania was raised by her grandmother. She was married to auto driver Nadeem, who lives in Parevakhedha and was married during the lockdown in the year 2020. At the time of marriage, all the necessary items were given in dowry. Despite this, Nadeem started demanding a bike just 5 days after the marriage. He used to abandon her out of the house frequently. He has beaten her many times due to suspicion of her

character. Anas said that Sania's two-month-old daughter also died two and a half months ago. Boiling water fell on her. Since then, Sania and Nadeem's relationship deteriorated further. Fed up, the sister came home. After this, Nadeem called Sania on May 21 on the pretext of meeting her. She left the house without informing anyone and went missing. We had registered her missing report in Nishatpura police station. No clue was found anywhere. Five days ago, we ourselves reached the village in search of our sister. Some people there informed that Nadeem had stripped the sister a few days ago and had beaten her. This information was given to the police. Then he was taken into custody.



People wait in a queue to get their health checked during a free health check-up camp in South-West state assembly constituency at Gujarati Bhawan in Bhopal on Saturday.

SUFODA launches its brand 'SamooH' high quality dairy products

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

On the occasion of World Milk Day, Sunder Foods and Dairy (SUFODA) has launched its brand "SamooH" from the city of lakes. Kartikey Singh Chouhan, founder and promoter of Sunder Dairy, announced during the launch event, "SamooH is a high-quality dairy product that will inspire people across the city. We also have a high-performance and efficient logistics system that reliably delivers the desired quality and quantity, entirely handled by women." "We started our dairy business in 2017 and by 2020 we started collecting milk from local farmers and launched milk and milk products. As the business grew, we focused on women empowerment throughout our



value chain. We started creating women centric village collection centres procure milk, facilitated through Women Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). We also maximized women's involvement in our manufacturing unit. < Since our primary consumers are women, we created a chain of distributors and retailers focused on

women. Today, the majority of milk processed by us comes from women FPOs and is processed by women workers. To integrate this philosophy, we created the brand 'SamooH,' which embodies our mission. 'SamooH' celebrates the role of women in every aspect of the food category, from production to consumption. Launching it on World

Milk Day is fitting." Commenting further on the launch of "SamooH," Kunal Singh Chouhan, Co-Founder of Sunder Dairy, stated, "SUFODA aims to be the largest dairy player in central India by supporting women farmers in the vicinity. Our fresh milk packs include SamooH Gold Milk, SamooH Standard Milk, SamooH Toned Milk, and SamooH Tea Special Milk, along with Dahi, Buttermilk, and Lassi in the fresh products category. Additionally, we offer products like Ghee, Shrikhand, Sweets, and Paneer. We are expanding our product range and distributor reach across Madhya Pradesh. Soon, consumers across the state will be able to enjoy the best quality milk products from 'SamooH' and advance our mission of women empowerment."

Bullian trader attacked by three miscreants, attempted to rob

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A bullian trader of Sarafa Chowk Bazar of the state capital was attacked with a sharp edged weapon near Halalpur cracker market and tried to rob his valuables he was carrying; the victim got injured in his neck. Police said at around 10 in the night on Friday 3 miscreants on a bike first attacked him with a sharp edged weapon on his neck and then went ahead. After the sudden attack, the businessman somehow managed to control himself. Then the miscreants returned again and tried to snatch his bag by attacking his hand. The businessman raised an alert and when passersby started gathering, the miscreants fled. At the time of the attack, the businessman was returning home from his shop with a bag containing 20 rings and Rs 1 lakh in cash. The businessman's friend Vinay Dadlani said an attempt was made to rob

Jitendra Valecha's bag near Halalpur cracker market in Lalghati. There were 20 rings worth Rs 4 lakh and Rs 1 lakh in cash in that bag. Due to the attack of the miscreants, a big cut was made in the bag containing the rings, due to which the rings and cash could have fallen. But, Jitendra immediately after the attack had turned the bag towards the bike's tank. This saved the rings and cash from falling. Jitendra informed his friend who informed the Kohefiza police, and quickly rushed towards the spot. Meanwhile, as soon as the miscreants left, Jitendra rode his bike to his relative's house in Bairagarh. From there he was taken to LBS hospital, where he is being treated. Kohefiza police station in-charge Brijendra Merskole said statements of the complainant have been taken. The incident took place between 10 and 11 at night. Some people had attacked. At present, investigation is being done.

Food license of hotel suspended

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The food license of '18 Calorie' restaurant located in Tulsī Nagar, Bhopal has been suspended. After the complaint, the team of food inspectors reached here for inspection. During this, cockroaches were found. At the same time, there was massive dirt in the kitchen which surprised the team. The restaurant is near Prakash Tarun Pushkar on Link Road No. 1. The complaint of cockroaches found in sprouted grains was made with the Food Safety Administration Department. After this, the registration officer of the department Devendra Kumar Dubey reached the spot on Saturday. During the inspection, a large number of cockroaches were found in the kitchen of the restaurant. At the same time, rat feces were found at many places. Irregularities were found in the restaurant. Registration officer Dubey said, there were disorders and unhygienic conditions prevailing in the restaurant. Due to this, it was decided that the operators of the restaurant have failed to follow the safety and conditions. Therefore, it has been decided to suspend the registration.

AIIMS Bhopal and BU sign MoU to enhance collaborative research

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a significant move towards fostering academic and research collaboration, AIIMS Bhopal and Barkatullah University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today. The agreement was formalized by Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, and Professor Suresh Kumar Jain, Vice Chancellor of Barkatullah University. The signing ceremony, attended by senior officials and faculty members from both institutions, marks the beginning of a strategic partnership aimed at enhancing research initiatives and exploring new academic frontiers. Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh highlighted the longstanding collaborative efforts between AIIMS Bhopal and Barkatullah University, which have spanned over the last five years. He emphasized the need to expand these efforts and give them new dimensions. "It is essential that we initiate joint educational programs, especially focusing on dual degree programs. Additionally, we should explore new possibilities through student and faculty exchange pro-

grams. There is a significant need to work in the fields of artificial intelligence, social medicine, social reforms, and mental health," said Dr. Singh. Echoing the sentiment, Professor Suresh Kumar Jain of Barkatullah University expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration's potential. He stated, "Together, we can make substantial contributions in bioinformatics and the social and cultural fields, which will greatly benefit society. By integrating various ongoing projects at AIIMS Bhopal, we can innovate and drive impactful research. Funding will not be a constraint for such joint efforts." The collaboration aims to leverage the strengths of both institutions to promote interdisciplinary research and address critical societal issues. The MoU outlines the establishment of joint educational programs, dual degree opportunities, and robust student and faculty exchange initiatives. This partnership is expected to pave the way for groundbreaking research and innovative educational programs, fostering an environment of academic excellence and social responsibility.



Haj pilgrims being given a warm send off by their relatives and family members as they board a train to leave for an annual journey to Mecca at railway station in Bhopal on Saturday.

Pioneer photo

AIIMS Bhopal ED extends birthday greetings to Governor

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh, has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Governor of Madhya Pradesh Mangubhai Patel, on the occasion of his birthday. During a special meeting held today at Raj Bhavan, Professor Singh conveyed his best wishes to Mangubhai Patel, wishing him a long and healthy life.

In his birthday message, Professor Singh highlighted the commendable efforts of the Governor in addressing and aiming to eliminate sickle cell disease in Madhya Pradesh. The Governor has been particularly focused on the early identification and treatment of this disease among the tribal populations in the state, with the goal of eradicating it entirely. Mangubhai Patel lauded the achievements of AIIMS Bhopal under the leadership of Professor

(Dr) Ajai Singh. He acknowledged the institution's growing success and its vital role in providing exceptional healthcare services to the people of Madhya Pradesh and beyond. "The strides AIIMS Bhopal is making today are commendable," said the Hon. Governor. "I am confident that in the days to come, it will continue to set new benchmarks in healthcare, benefiting not just the residents of Madhya Pradesh but also those from other states."

Chintan Shivr inculcates nuances of good governance

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The two-day Chintan Shivr ended at the Indian Institute of Management Raipur (IIM-R) on Saturday inculcating nuances of good governance to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo and his Ministers.

A government official said the first-of-its-kind event in the country covered ways to enhance the state government's vision for building a 'developed Chhattisgarh' through insightful deliberations with subject experts.

Sai and his cabinet ministers exchanged and explored ideas on good governance



and best practices with the experts, he said. Intellectual dialogues took place featuring subject matter

experts from across the nation. While addressing the needs, priorities, and possibilities of Chhattisgarh, it also

provided a platform for the government to receive important suggestions from experts.

Guidelines issued to protect workers from scorching heat



STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

The Bilaspur administration in Chhattisgarh issued guidelines on Saturday to protect workers from the scorching heat.

Despite the early expected arrival of the monsoon this year, the state is currently experiencing intense heat.

As per the India Meteorological Department data, Bilaspur recorded a maximum temperature of 45 degrees C and capital Raipur

recorded the highest temperature in the state of 45.7 degree C.

The order directs employers to reschedule the working hours of the workers.

Employers have also been told to provide extra time for rest, arrange emergency ice packs and other resources to prevent dehydration, ensure the availability of drinking water, first aid kit and ORS solutions.

Also, the working hours of Anganwadi centers have been rescheduled.

Power tariff hike, cruelty to public: Cong

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Congress leader Sushil Anand Shukla said on Saturday that the decision to hike power tariff by 8.35 percent was an act of cruelty on the people.

Speaking in Raipur, he said the common people were dissatisfied due to the financial mismanagement of the BJP government.

This will raise inflation as well since industries will have to raise their prices to compensate for the high cost of power, he said.

Chhattisgarh, a power surplus state, has become a hub of power cuts in the last five months, he said.

The government abolished the registry exemption, abolished the e-way bill, and now the price of electricity has



increased. Due to the mismanagement of the Sai government, the economic condition of the state is deteriorating, he said.

Average 8.35 percent power tariff hike in Chhattisgarh

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh State Electricity Regulatory Commission (CSERC) on Saturday announced an average hike in power tariff by 8.35 percent for all categories of consumers.

The new tariff will be effective from June 1. The CSERC did not revise the tariff last year.

CSERC Secretary SP Shukla said an average hike of 8.35 percent was applicable across all consumer categories.

Power services are managed by three state-run companies for generation, transmission and distribution in the state.

Shukla said the estimated revenue deficit of Rs 2,819 crore at the current tariff for 2024-25 was approved against Rs 4,420 crore claimed by the Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Co Ltd (CSPDCL).

The state government has decided to reimburse Rs 1,000 crore for 2024-25 to reduce the gross revenue deficit of the distribution company.

As a result, the distribution company is estimated to



have a revenue deficit of Rs 1,819 crore at the current rate for 2024-25.

The CSERC, in a statement, said the tariff has been increased by 20 paise per unit in all categories of power consumption for domestic and non-domestic consumers.

For example, for the consumption slab below 100 units per month, constituting 64 per cent of total consumers, the tariff has been increased from existing Rs 3.70 to Rs 3.90 per unit.

For agriculture pump

connections, the tariff has been increased by 25 paise per unit, and a concession of 20 per cent on energy charges will continue for non-subsidised agriculture pump connections, it said.

A rebate of 5 per cent on energy charges will remain in place for the poha and murruma mills under LV-5 and HV-5 categories, it said.

The tariff for high voltage steel industries has been increased to Rs 25 paise per unit, and the load factory rebate is revised and will not

exceed 10 per cent, the CSERC said.

To encourage an environment-friendly transport system, tariffs for electric vehicle charging units have been kept at Rs 6.92 per unit.

The discount in energy charges to hospitals, nursing homes and diagnostic centres in rural and tribal-dominated Surguja (north Chhattisgarh) and Bastar (south Chhattisgarh) areas will continue to be 5 per cent in power tariff.

A 50 per cent rebate on energy charges given on mobile tower installations after April 1, 2019, in the Naxalite-affected areas, has been reduced to 25 per cent, it said.

The rebate of 10 per cent on energy charges to industrial and business activities run by registered women self-help groups (SHGs) will continue, it said.

A 15 per cent rebate on energy charges will continue for defence establishments.

Domestic consumers in the state currently benefit from the half rebate in the electricity bill scheme launched by the previous Congress government.

BSNL to expand 4G telecom services in Naxal-hit Bijapur



STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has conducted pilot testing of 4G services in Chhattisgarh's Naxalite-hit Bijapur district and it will soon commence in the district.

BSNL sources said

Bijapur Collector Anurag Pandey powered-on the 4G signal in the mobile tower located at the BSNL Center Bijapur and interacted with the Chief General Manager of BSNL Chhattisgarh, Vijay Kumar Chhablani, through a test video call.

The service will commence formally at the earliest.

Action is being taken to equip the BSNL towers located in all the districts of Bastar with 4G facilities in a systematic manner, the sources said.

The project includes those villages of Bastar where mobile service has not been started by any telecom service provider.

A total of 1,018 such vil-

Bijapur Collector Anurag Pandey powered-on the 4G signal in the mobile tower located at the BSNL Center and interacted with the Chief General Manager of BSNL

lages have been identified and these villages will be covered with mobile services through 241 new towers.

The BSNL also demonstrated a special telecom facility through satellite for the district administration of Bijapur.

The district office and six tehsil level offices will be connected through satellite service, the sources said.

Truck driver dies due to suspected heat wave

STAFF REPORTER ■ KANKER

A truck driver died of suspected heat stroke on Saturday in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh.

As per preliminary information, Nisar Ahmed delivered bitumen in a tanker truck in Charama area from Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh after which his health began deteriorating, Kanker Superintendent of Police IK Elesela said.



He was shifted to a community health centre in

Charama where he died during treatment. Ahmed was a resident of Uttar Pradesh.

Prima facie, heat stroke seems to be the cause of the death, Kanker Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Avinash Khare said.

However, the exact cause will be ascertained after post mortem.

Chhattisgarh on Saturday experienced scorching heat. Raipur recorded the highest 45.7 degrees Celsius.

Three Maoists held in Sukma



STAFF REPORTER ■ SUKMA

Three Maoists were arrested and explosives were seized from them in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Saturday.

Madvi Joga, Muchaki Nanda and Madvi Hidma were apprehended on Saturday on the Bagdegada-Simel village route, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

Madvi Joga was the Surpanguda RPC (Revolutionary People's Council) Militia Deputy Commander while two others were lower rung cadres.

BJP confident of triumph in all 11 parliamentary seats

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh BJP chief Kiran Singh Deo claimed on Saturday that his party's victory in all 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state was inevitable.

He said this at a party meeting held at the Kushabhau Thackeray Complex in Raipur. "We will win all the seats



in Chhattisgarh and strengthen Modiji," he said.

Exit polls predict sweep for BJP in Chhattisgarh



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Most exit polls on Saturday predicted that the BJP will clinch 10 of 11 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh while some said it will be a clean sweep for the ruling party.

Polling was held in Chhattisgarh in three phases on April 19 and 26 and May 7.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा
Bank of Baroda

Regional Office, Jeevan Prakash, L.I.C. Building, Pandri, Raipur (C.G.), PH: 0771 - 4222611, 4222612
E-mail: recovery.raipur@bankofbaroda.com

POSSESSION NOTICE

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to the following borrowers / guarantors calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The under mentioned Borrower / Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantors and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 and under section 14 of the Act of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002.

S. N.	Branch Name/Ph.No.	Name of Borrower / Guarantor	Description of Property	Demand Notice Date, Amount & Symbolic / Physical Possession Date
01	Baraouda Branch Raipur 9752099521	Mr. Harish Katariya & Mrs. Riddhi Katariya	Equitable mortgage of Flat No. - C - 403, Block No. - C, Fourth Floor, Super Buildup Area : 1283 sqft, "Chaitanya Greens", Village- Saddu, P.H.No. 109/39, Ward No. - 26, Khushabhau Thakare Ward, Tahsil & Dist. - Raipur, Chhattisgarh in the name of Mrs. Riddhi Katariya W/o Mr. Harish Katariya. Boundary : East : Open, West: Corridor, North: Flat No. C - 408 South: Flat No. C - 404.	02.03.2024 Rs. 23,75,428.21 +Interest+other charges 31.05.2024 Symbolic Possession

The Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgages in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the above mentioned property and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Bank of Baroda for above mentioned amount interest and other charges thereon.
The Borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.
Date: 02.06.2024, Place: Raipur, Chhattisgarh
Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

National Highways Authority of India
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India
BSCPL Aurang Tollway Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE ON REVISED USER FEE (TOLL) RATES AT KM 123.206 CHHUHUPALI & AT KM 182.636 DHANK TOLL PLAZA APPLICABLE FROM 03.06.2024 (00:00:01 Hrs)

The public are hereby informed that pursuant to approval of revised user fee rates vide letter dated 19.03.2024 of IE and letter dated 26.03.2024 of NHAI, the user fee rates for the use of section from Km 88.000 to Km 238.335 (Orissa Border to Aurang section) of NH-6 (New NH-53) are going to be revised as under w.e.f. 03.06.2024 (00:00:01 Hrs) at Chhuhipali Toll Plaza (Chainage: 123.206 Km, near Chhuhipali Village, Mahasamund District) and at Dhank Toll Plaza (Chainage: 182.636 Km, near Dhank Village, Mahasamund District) in the state of Chhattisgarh:

- User Fee Rates for Chhuhipali Toll Plaza (From Km 88.000 to Km 167.895)

Category of Vehicle	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for Return Journey within a day	Fee for Monthly Pass valid for 50 Journeys [Ref Para 5(ii)]	Fee for Commercial vehicles registered in district
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	130	190	4255	65
LCV, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	205	310	6875	105
Bus or Truck (Two axle)	430	650	14405	215
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	470	705	15710	235
HCM or EME or MAV (4 to 6 axle)	680	1015	22585	340
Over-sized Vehicles (7 or more axles)	825	1235	27495	410

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicle resides within a distance of 20Km from the toll plaza for the year 2024-25 shall be Rs. 340/-

- The above rates are applicable for a completed length of 79.895 Km, which comprises of 65.595 Km road length and 14.300 Km of bypass costing Rs. 10 Crore or more.
- User Fee Rates for Dhank Toll Plaza (From Km 167.895 to Km 238.335)

Category of Vehicle	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for Return Journey within a day	Fee for Monthly Pass valid for 50 Journeys [Ref Para 5(ii)]	Fee for Commercial vehicles registered in district
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	175	260	5785	85
LCV, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	275	410	9125	135
Bus or Truck (Two axle)	565	845	18795	280
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	615	925	20545	310
HCM or EME or MAV (4 to 6 axle)	870	1305	29030	435
Over-sized Vehicles (7 or more axles)	1095	1640	36440	545

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicle resides within a distance of 20Km from the toll plaza for the year 2024-25 shall be Rs. 340/-

- The above rates are applicable for a completed length of 70.390 Km, which comprises of 55.900 Km road length, 13.690 Km of bypass costing Rs. 10 Crore or more and 800m Mahanadi Major Bridge having cost of Rs. 132.15 Crores.
- The following concessions are available at above Toll Plazas.
 - Return Journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles (discount 25%)
 - 50 or more single journeys in a month from date of payment for all categories of vehicles (discount 33%)
 - Pass at Rs 340/- per calendar month for non-commercial vehicle residing within 20 km from Toll Plaza.
 - Commercial Vehicle (excluding those plying under national permit) registered in the District of Toll Plaza (discount 50%)
- The list of exempted vehicles is given in the Gazette Notification dated 03 December 2010.
- The vehicle, which is loaded in excess of permissible load, shall pay 10 times the applicable fee rate and remove the excess load to make use of highway.
- As per Concession Agreement dated 25th Jan 2012, the Concession Period ends on 14th Feb 2024.
- For viewing the fee notification dated 17th February 2016 published in the Gazette, letter of IE dated 03.10.2019 certifying the completed length / commercial operation, letter of NHAI dated 26.03.2024 containing approval of revised rates and provisions in the Concession Agreement, the website <http://nhais.org> may be visited.
- Name and address are as under, for the enquiry and/or giving complaints/suggestions:

Name of representative	Concessionaire	IE	PIU of NHAI
Ravi Babu / Sheshu Prasad	BSCPL Aurang Tollway Limited	Sri Khurshid Alim	Sri Arvind Kumar
Address	M.S.V International & D.N Consultant	National Highways Authority of India	
Mobile Nos	7349784177 / 7581033101	9503001134	9599916964

BJP will win more than 370 LS seats, says Nadda



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

People have voted for a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, BJP chief J.P. Nadda said on Saturday, exuding confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA more than 400.

June 4. In a statement, Nadda thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making this "festival of democracy" a success for the BJP. "His efforts are definitely yielding results," the BJP chief said. Nadda also thanked BJP leaders, including Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, and the "crores of party workers" for their contributions during the elections. He also thanked constituents of the NDA for enthusiastically participating in the election and said with their hard work, they succeeded in con-

veying their thoughts to the people. "In this election, the voters of the country have voted for a capable India, a powerful India, a developed India, a self-reliant India and to move ahead in the economy, and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption," Nadda said. "I have full faith that the voters of India will make the BJP win more than 370 seats and the NDA win more than 400 seats under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said. Nadda thanked the people for their participating in the election.

Modi ends 45 hours long meditation in Kanyakumari

PTI ■ KANYAKUMARI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday concluded his 45-hour-long meditation at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial here and paid floral tributes to Tamil saint poet Thiruvalluvar. On conclusion of his dhyana session, Modi, clad in white, visited the 133-ft statue of Thiruvalluvar, located next to the rock memorial and placed a huge garland there marking his tribute. He arrived at the statue complex by a ferry service and later reached the shore using the service.

The Prime Minister left by a helicopter for Thiruvananthapuram and from there, he left for Delhi. On his arrival here on May 30, the PM prayed at the Bhagavathy Amman temple and later arrived at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. During his stay at the memorial, the PM did meditation and also performed 'Surya Arghya' at the time of sunrise, a ritual associated with spiritual practice. Modi was clad in saffron while he was engaged in meditation at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. The PM's visit to Kanyakumari to perform meditation evoked opposition from INDIA bloc constituents including Tamil



Nadu's ruling DMK. The opposition was to the broadcast of meditation in view of last phase of polling on June 1. In view of the PM's stay, senior DMK leader and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan on May 31 alleged that tourists were not allowed in that area which had seriously affected the local businesses and 'we have pointed out that this is not good.' Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K. Selvapanduranga on Saturday told reporters that those doing meditation do it peacefully without any hindrance

and all alone. "How can a person do Dhyana with 14 cameras in front of him? Is this meditation? This is dhyana eyeing electoral politics," the Congress leader alleged. He accused Modi of trying to sully Swami Vivekananda's reputation by acting against the spiritual leader's legacy and hence, 'condemnable.' At the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, the PM embarked on his 45-hour long meditation on the evening of May 30 and completed it on Saturday. Kanyakumari is famous for its sunrise and sunset and the memorial is located on a tiny islet near the shoreline.

Combined passing out parade of Agniveervayu trainees held at Tambaram



PTI ■ CHENNAI

A total of 1,983 Agniveervayu trainees including 234 women of other than science stream, successfully passed out from the Mechanical Training Institute (MTI) and Workshop Training Institute (WTI) here on Saturday. The grand event held at Air Force Station, Tambaram, marked the successful culmination of 22 weeks of rigorous and transformative military training at both training institutes. Air Vice Marshal Aman Kapur, Senior Officer-in-Charge Administration, Central Air Command, was the Reviewing Officer and chief guest for the impressive combined Passing Out Parade. Various activities including blindfold stripping and assembling, arms drill, physical training display, drill by Agniveervayu team, yoga, continuity drill without arms

and unarmed combat drill were held on the occasion. The Reviewing Officer congratulated all trainees passing out and felicitated the award winners who had performed exceedingly well in various fields. In his address, he urged all trainees to hone their skills further, enhance professional knowledge and develop an ecosystem to learn so that they can contribute towards aerospace safety and organisational objectives in defence of the nation, a release here said. He pointed out that the IAF has been witnessing major changes in operational philosophy and is on the path of transforming itself into a vibrant strategic force of great calibre. The officer called upon the Agniveervayu to keep themselves physically fit, and mentally agile and to uphold the core values of the Indian Air Force.

Congress questions PM's silence on Revanna arrest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With sexual-abuse accused Prajwal Revanna's arrest, the Congress on Saturday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the matter and claimed that he has "failed" to provide justice to women in the last 10 years. Suspended Janata Dal (Secular) MP Revanna, facing sexual-abuse allegations, was remanded in police custody on Friday, hours after he was arrested by a Bengaluru Police team on his return from Germany. A special court in Bengaluru remanded him in police custody till June 6. Revanna was arrested in the wee hours of Friday by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), minutes after he landed in Bengaluru past midnight from Germany. He had left the country on April 27.



Hitting out at Modi for "allowing" Revanna to flee in the first place, All India Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba said letting a "mass rapist" escape is "Modi ki Guarantee". Revanna, the member of Parliament from Karnataka's

Hassan, has been arrested by the SIT constituted by the state government, she said, adding that this was done by a women police team formed by the SIT. "We congratulate the Karnataka government," Lamba said. "Narendra Modi kept raising the 'Beti Bachao' slogan, but did

not break his silence on Prajwal Revanna," she told a press conference at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters here. Lamba said Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah wrote to Modi on the matter for help from the Centre but did not get a reply. The chief minister had to write to Modi again after 21 days, asking him to bring Revanna back to the country. "This shows how serious Modi was about the Prajwal Revanna case," Lamba said. She said the possibility of pressure being put on victims and witnesses still exists and "we urge the prime minister to break his silence and assure that there would be no tampering with evidence and justice will be ensured to our daughters". The Congress leader also cited the case of a Dalit girl being "raped" in Madhya Pradesh

and the perpetrators of the crime allegedly being Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders. "In this case, first the victim's brother, then the victim's uncle were killed. Finally, the victim also died by falling off an ambulance while bringing back her uncle's mortal remains," she said about the incidents that have taken place in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar. "In the last five months, 12,000 cases of rape and sexual harassment of women, including 1,644 girls, have come to light in Rajasthan," Lamba said, hitting out at the BJP. More than 25 tribal women and students have been raped in Sidhi in Madhya Pradesh, she claimed. "It is unfortunate that in the last 10 years, Narendra Modi has failed to provide justice to our daughters," Lamba alleged. "Break your silence as it encourages the perpetrators of such crimes," she said.

Coast Guard undertakes steel cutting ceremony on next generation patrol vessel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying self-reliance in defence manufacturing, steel cutting ceremony for the first next-generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) for Indian Coast Guard was undertaken at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai on Friday, Coast Guard said here on Saturday. The cost of the project is Rs 1,614 crores. Giving details, officials said this project aims to bolster our capabilities in coastal and offshore patrolling, safeguarding maritime zones, and enhancing operational efficiency. The NGOPVs, designed to meet the evolving challenges of maritime security, are equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and equipment. Powered by two diesel engines,



these vessels are capable of achieving a maximum continuous speed of 23 knots and covering a distance of up to 5,000 nautical miles. Furthermore, they boast integral twin-engine helicopter facilities and staging for heavy helicopters, enabling swift and effective aerial surveillance

and response capabilities. Incorporating advanced features such as multipurpose drones, AI capabilities, and wirelessly controlled remote water rescue craft, the NGOPVs provide the Indian Coast Guard with unparalleled flexibility and operational edge.

Authentic dying declaration can be sole basis for conviction without any corroboration: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An authentic dying declaration that inspires the confidence of the court can be relied upon and be the sole basis for the conviction of an accused without any corroboration, the Supreme Court has said. The top court made this observation on May 15 while upholding the conviction of an ex-army personnel for murdering his wife, a police constable, in Maharashtra's Beed district 22 years ago. It said that the court has to scru-

tinise the dying declaration carefully and ensure it is consistent, credible and devoid of tutoring. "Once a dying declaration is found to be authentic and inspiring the court's confidence, then the same can be relied upon and can be the sole basis for conviction without any corroboration. "However, before accepting such a dying declaration, the court must be satisfied that it was rendered voluntarily, is consistent and credible, and is devoid of any tutoring. Once such a conclusion is reached, a great deal

of sanctity is attached to a dying declaration and as said earlier, it can form the sole basis for conviction," a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said. In this case, the prosecution claimed that the victim was subjected to cruelty by her husband, brother-in-law and other in-laws. On the fateful day, the woman was beaten up by her husband and brother-in-law who tied her hands with a 'gamcha' (thin and coarse cotton towel) and her feet with a towel and gagged her



face. The brother-in-law then got a matchbox and a bottle of kerosene, which the husband poured on her, and then lit the matchstick. The woman got completely burnt in the incident. Her neighbours took her to the hospital, where her dying declaration was recorded based on which the Ambajogai police station in Beed district registered a case under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 498A (subjecting women to cruelty), 342 (wrongful confinement), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and

504 (intentional insult) read with section 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The trial court in 2008 had convicted the husband for committing an offence punishable under section 302 (murder) read with section 34 of the IPC 1860 and sentenced him to life imprisonment and to pay a fine of Rs 25,000. This verdict was upheld by the Bombay High Court. The husband then moved the Supreme Court, which suspended his sentence and grant-

ed him bail in 2016 noting that he had already undergone about nine years of sentence. Accepting the dying declaration of the deceased woman as a valid piece of evidence, the top court said that having viewed through the evidence carefully, it has no hesitation that the appellant is guilty of committing the offence and that the guilt has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt. The appellant is directed to surrender before the trial court within two weeks to carry out his sentence, it said.

Every State should appoint anti human trafficking nodal officer, says NHRC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concerns that despite existing laws and court judgments, human trafficking persists in the country, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Friday recommended that every State should appoint an "anti-human trafficking nodal officer" to coordinate government efforts in combating the menace. This officer should be of a rank not below a state government secretary or an inspector general of police, the NHRC stated on Friday as it also cited Supreme Court orders to reinforce its recommendations. The suggestions follows an NHRC investigation, initiated suo motu in October 2022, based on reports of girls being "sold on stamp paper" in several Rajasthan districts and trafficked to other parts of India and abroad, where they faced abuse and sexual assault. The NHRC also highlighted



the plight of women dancers trafficked from Rajasthan to Mumbai bars and forced into prostitution. The NHRC directed the chief secretary and Director General of Police (DGP) of Rajasthan to send a senior police officer to Mumbai to investigate the situation of these trafficked girls, with assistance from the Maharashtra police. The

NHRC emphasized the need for state and district committees to rehabilitate the victims according to its directives. The top rights body noted that the practice of "selling girls" persists in certain communities, particularly the Kanjar community in Rajasthan, and urged immediate and stringent action to stop it. The Commission had earlier sought

reports from Rajasthan's chief secretary and DGP and confirmed that charges had been filed against 23 accused individuals. The seven trafficked girls were rehabilitated in Ajmer's reform homes. In its recommendation, the NHRC said that states should establish District Anti-Human Trafficking Units (DAHTUs), headed by officers not below the rank of deputy superintendent of police, to monitor and prevent human trafficking. These units should include representatives from various departments and NGOs. The NHRC has issued notices to all state and Union Territory chief secretaries to report compliance within eight weeks and emphasized the need for awareness campaigns to eradicate child prostitution and the selling of minor girls. Despite existing laws and court judgments, the NHRC noted that human trafficking persists, and it cited Supreme Court orders to reinforce its recommendations.

WHO issues stark warning about alarming rate of youth addiction to e-cigarettes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a stark warning about the alarming rates of youth addiction to e-cigarettes, highlighting a troubling trend of the industry targeting young people for long-term profit. Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director said, "The fight against tobacco is particularly important for us in South-East Asia. The tobacco industry's targeting of youth is rampant across our Member States. As a result, we have a very worrying 11 million adolescents using various tobacco products in the region." She called upon the governments to adopt policies to protect them from the manipulative practices of tobacco and related industries, which includes the relentless marketing of their dangerous products through social media and streaming platforms. "The tobacco industry moves



with speed to launch new products, using every means to expand market share before regulations can catch up," the WHO Regional Director said cautioning that they continue to oppose evidence-based measures, such as increases in excise taxes, and comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotions, and sponsorships. "They even threaten legal action against governments that try to protect the

health of their citizens." Echoing similar concerns, anti-tobacco platform Mothers Against Vaping, a united front of concerned mothers combating the escalating vaping crisis among youths, organised an event "Saving the Next Generation from New-Age Addictions" recently. Kushboo Sundar, Actress and Politician, a special invitee of the BJP National Executive Committee and a member of

the National Commission for Women and Kishwar Desai, Author and Columnist, joined the cause which already has support of the sports icons and influential role models like Baichung Bhutia, Deepa Malik and Neha Dhupia among many others. Dr Bhavna Barmi, Clinical Psychologist, Founder, Happiness Studio said: "Children's mental states make them highly susceptible to early experimentation with addictive behaviours. Hence, we are witnessing a troubling surge in children being drawn to enticing electronic addictive devices like vapes and e-cigarettes. A major factor fuelling this trend is the packaging and advertising tactics employed by manufacturers of these modern devices." At the event, the organization released a 4-point agenda to counter and neutralise 5 popular alleged strategies adopted by the global tobacco industry to promote gateway devices to young children.

Hostage families urge ceasefire

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Families of Israeli hostages held by Hamas called for all parties to immediately accept a proposal detailed by US President Joe Biden to end the nearly 8-month-long war and bring their relatives home, but Israel's government said conditions for a cease-fire still must be met. Biden outlined a three-phase deal Friday proposed by Israel to Hamas, saying the militant group is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel. He urged the Israelis and Hamas to come to an agreement to release some 100 remaining hostages, along with the bodies of around 30 more, for an extended cease-fire. Cease-fire talks ground to a halt last month after a major push by the US and other mediators to secure a deal in hopes of averting a full Israeli invasion of Gaza's southern city of Rafah. Israel says the Rafah operation is vital to uprooting Hamas



A Palestinian mourner carries the body of a child killed in Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, during their funeral in Deir al Balah, Friday. AP/PTI

fighters responsible for the October 7 attack on southern Israel that triggered the war. Israel on Friday confirmed its troops were operating in central parts of the city. The ground assault has led to an exodus of around 1 million Palestinians out of the city and has thrown

UN humanitarian operations based in the area into turmoil. Following Biden's speech, hostage families said Saturday time was running out with the onus on both Israel and Hamas to accept the deal. "We want to see people coming back from Gaza alive and soon,"

Gili Roman told The Associated Press. His sister, Yarden Roman-Gat, was taken hostage and freed during a weeklong cease-fire in November, but Yarden's sister-in-law, Carmel, is still being held. "This might be the last chance to save lives. Therefore, the current state must be changed and we expect all to adhere to Biden's call for accepting the deal on the table, immediately. There is no other way towards a better situation for all. Our leadership must not disappoint us. But mostly, all eyes should be on Hamas," he said. The proposal came after what hostage families said was an aggressive meeting Thursday with Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, who told them that the government wasn't ready to sign a deal to bring all of the hostages home and that there was no plan B. Hanegbi said this week he expects the war to drag on for another seven months, in order

to destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group. Netanyahu has promised a "total victory" that would remove Hamas from power, dismantle its military structure and return the hostages, and on Saturday, the government said its conditions for ending the war had not changed. Putting a permanent cease-fire in place before the conditions are fulfilled is a "non-starter," it said. Many hostage families blame the government's lack of will to secure a deal for the deaths of many of the hostages in captivity. "We know that the government of Israel has done an awful lot to delay reaching a deal and that has cost the lives of many people who survived in captivity for weeks and weeks and months and months. Our hearts are broken by the amount of people we will receive that are no longer alive," Sharone Lipschitz told AP.

Hezbollah fighters shoot down an Israeli drone in Lebanon

Beirut (AP):

The militant Hezbollah group said it shot down an Israeli drone over southern Lebanon on Saturday, after hours Israeli drone strikes killed at least one person and wounded others. Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters struck the Hermes 900 Kochav drone, saying such aircraft have been targeting militants and civilian homes. The exchange of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border has been intensifying over the past weeks with Israel's military push Gaza's southern city of Rafah. The Israeli military said a surface-to-air missile was fired toward a drone operating in Lebanese airspace, adding that it was hit and fell in Lebanese territory. "The incident is under review," the military said. The Hermes 900 Kochav is a medium altitude and long endurance drone that can carry four anti-tank guided missiles. Earlier Saturday, an Israeli drone strike on a motorcycle near the southern Lebanese village of Khirbet Selm wounded two people, state-run National News Agency said. The agency reported another drone strike Saturday afternoon in a village near the southern city of Nabatiyeh. An Israeli airstrike on a house in the coastal village of Adloun killed one woman and wounded several others on Friday evening, the agency reported. Hezbollah began attacking Israeli military posts along the Lebanon-Israel border a day after the Israel-Hamas war broke out on Oct 7. Since then, tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the border. Over the past seven months, more than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon most of them fighters but they also include more than 70 civilians and non-combatants. In Israel, 15 soldiers and 10 civilians have been killed since October.

'War with China neither imminent nor unavoidable'

AP ■ SINGAPORE

United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a gathering of top security officials Saturday that war with China was neither imminent nor unavoidable, despite rapidly escalating tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, stressing the importance of renewed dialogue between him and his Chinese counterpart in avoiding "miscalculations and misunderstandings." Austin's comments at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore came the day after he met for more than an hour on the sidelines with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the first in-person meeting between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing. Neither side budged from their longstanding positions on Taiwan — which China claims as its own and has not ruled out using force to take — and on China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea, which has led to direct confrontations between China and other nations in the region, most notably the Philippines. While declining to detail the specifics of their conversation, Austin said the most important thing was that the two were again talking. "As long as we're talking, we're able to identify those issues that are troublesome and that we want to make sure that we have placed guardrails to ensure there are no misperceptions and no miscalculations... that can spiral out of control," he said. "You can only do that kind of thing if you are talking." Addressing the same forum on Friday night, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr bluntly outlined what could be at stake, saying that if a Filipino were killed as China confronts his country's coast guard and merchant fleet to press its claims



in the South China Sea, it would be "very, very close to what we define as an act of war and therefore we will respond accordingly." Marcos added that he assumed the Philippines' treaty partners, which include the US, "hold the same standard." In his own speech, Austin lauded how Marcos "spoke so powerfully last night about how the Philippines is standing up for its sovereign rights under international law." But when pressed later, he would not say how the US might react if a Filipino were killed in a confrontation with China, calling it hypothetical. He did say the US commitment to the Philippines as a treaty partner is "ironclad," while again stressing the importance of dialogue with China. "There are a number of things that can happen at sea or in the air, we recognize that," he said. "But our goal is to make sure that we don't allow things to spiral out of control unnecessarily." Beijing in recent years has been rapidly expanding its navy and is becoming growingly assertive in pressing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea. Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles noted that not only had Philippine ships been rammed and hit with water cannons by China, but said a Chinese warplane dropped flares above an Australian helicopter earlier in the year, and in November a Chinese navy ship injured Australian divers in Japanese waters with sonar.

It's 'hard to meet' call for talks on Russia-Ukraine war: China

Beijing (AP): China said Friday it would be "hard to meet" calls for discussions on the Russia-Ukraine war, citing problems with arrangements that appear to point to Beijing's strongly pro-Moscow stance. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that "China's hopes appear to be hard to meet at the meeting." "There is still a clear gap between the arrangements for the meeting and the demands of the Chinese side, as well as the general expectations of the international community," Mao said. Mao gave no details, but said that China has "informed parties concerned about our considerations and concerns" and would keep in touch with all parties concerned. China claims to be neutral in the conflict, but has strongly backed Russia, most recently hosting President Vladimir Putin on a state visit. In an interview with China's

official Xinhua News Agency released Wednesday, Putin hailed his ties with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, saying that "President Xi maintains a respectful, friendly, open and at the same time business-like style of communication." "Our every meeting is not just a dialogue between old friends... but also a fruitful exchange of views on the most topical issues on the bilateral and international agenda," Putin said. Putin hailed Beijing's peace plan for Ukraine that has been largely dismissed and makes no requirements for Moscow to return land it has seized, saying that "we commend China's approaches to resolving the crisis in Ukraine." Switzerland had proposed the talks for the coming days in hopes of bringing an end to the war, which was sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022, but they haven't been endorsed by Moscow.

19 hurt as Russia hits Ukraine's power grid with fresh barrage

AP ■ KYIV

Russia pummelled Ukraine's energy infrastructure with a large-scale drone and missile attack Saturday, injuring at least 19 people, local officials said. The Ukrainian military reported that it had downed 35 out of the 53 missiles launched at targets across the country overnight on June 1, as well as 46 out of 47 attack drones. Injuries were reported by officials across the country, including in Ukraine's western Lviv region and the central Dnipropetrovsk region. Twelve people, including eight children, were hospitalized after a strike close to two houses where they were sheltering in the Kharkiv region, said Governor Oleh Synyehubov. The strikes were part of a series of sustained attacks by Russia against Ukraine's power grid, which has been ongoing since March. Ukraine's largest

private energy firm, DTEK said that two of its power plants had been seriously damaged in what it said was the sixth attack on the company's plants in two and a half months. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Energy Minister, Herman Halushchenko, said in a statement on social media that energy infrastructure in the Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad and Ivano-Frankivsk regions had also been targeted. Damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure in recent weeks has forced leaders of the war-ravaged country to institute nationwide rolling blackouts. Without adequate air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs, the shortages could still worsen as need spikes in late summer and the bitter-cold winter. In response to the strikes, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated

Kyiv's need for additional air defense systems from its Western allies. "Civilians, infrastructure and energy facilities. This is what Russia is constantly at war with," he said in a post Saturday on X, formerly Twitter. "Our partners know exactly what is needed for this. Additional Patriot and other modern air defence systems for Ukraine. Accelerating and expanding the delivery of F-16s to Ukraine. Providing our warriors with all the necessary capabilities." Elsewhere, five civilians died amid Ukrainian shelling in the Russian-occupied Donetsk region, said the area's Moscow-installed leader Denis Pushilin. Another three people were injured, he said. The Russian Defence Ministry also said that it had shot down two Ukrainian drones on Saturday morning over Russia's Belgorod region. No casualties were reported.

ANC party that freed S Africa from apartheid loses its 30-year majority

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

The African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority in a historic election result Saturday that puts South Africa on a new political path for the first time since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule 30 years ago. With nearly 99% of votes counted, the once-dominant ANC had received just over 40% in the election on Wednesday, well short of the majority it had held since the famed all-race vote of 1994 that ended apartheid and brought it to power under Nelson Mandela. The final results are still to be formally declared by the independent electoral commission that ran the election. While opposition parties hailed it as a momentous breakthrough for a country struggling with deep poverty and inequality, the ANC

remained the biggest party by some way but will now need to look for a coalition partner or partners to remain in the government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. Parliament elects the South African president after national elections. The result ended the ANC's dominance three-decade dominance of South Africa's young democracy, but the way forward promises to be complicated for Africa's most advanced economy, and there's no coalition on the table yet. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, was on around 21%. The new MK Party of former President Jacob Zuma, who has turned against the ANC he once led, came third with just over 14% of the vote in the first election it has contested. Which parties the ANC might approach to co-govern with is the urgent focus now, given Parliament needs to sit and elect a president within 14 days of the final election results being officially declared. A flurry of negotiations were set to take place and they will likely be complicated. The MK Party said one of their conditions for any agreement was that Ramaphosa is removed as ANC leader and president. "We are willing to negotiate with the ANC, but not the ANC of Cyril Ramaphosa," MK Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndlela said. More than 50 parties contested the national election, but given how far off a majority the ANC appears to be, it is likely that it will have to approach one of the three main opposition parties. The MK and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters have called for parts of the economy to be nationalised. The centrist Democratic Alliance is viewed as a business-friendly party and analysts say an ANC-DA coalition would be more wel-

comed by foreign investors. Despite the uncertainty, South African opposition parties were hailing the new political picture as a much-needed change for the country of 62 million, which is Africa's most developed but also one of the most unequal in the world. South Africa has widespread poverty and extremely high levels of unemployment and the ANC has struggled to raise the standard of living for millions. The official unemployment rate is 32%, one of the highest in the world, and the poverty disproportionately affects Black people, who make up 80% of the population and have been the core of the ANC's support for years. The ANC has also been blamed - and apparently punished by voters - for a failure in basic government services that impacts millions and leaves many without water, electricity or proper housing.

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lankan Police have arrested the suspected handler of the four of its nationals who were arrested at Ahmedabad airport in India for their alleged links with the banned Islamic State (ISIS) outfit. The Criminal Investigation Department arrested Pushparaja Osman, 46, on Friday in Colombo. Sri Lanka Police recently announced a cash award of Rs. 2 million for any credible information on his whereabouts. Police had issued a wanted notice and a video of him seeking information from the public. The CID arrested him and he was believed to have made telephone contact with the four people arrested at the Ahmedabad airport, the police said. The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad arrested four Sri Lankans with links to ISIS at the airport in Ahmedabad.

Sri Lanka police arrests wanted handler of 4 ISIS suspects

North Korea launches more trash-carrying balloons to South

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea launched more trash-carrying balloons toward the South after a similar campaign earlier in the week, according to South Korea's military, in what Pyongyang calls retaliation for activists flying anti-North Korean leaflets across the border. South Korea's Defence Ministry did not immediately comment on the number of balloons it had detected or how many have landed in South Korea. The military advised people to beware of falling objects and not to touch objects suspected to be from North Korea, but report them to military or police offices instead. In Seoul, the capital, the city government sent text alerts saying that unidentified objects suspected to be flown from North Korea were being detected in skies near the city

and that the military was responding to them. The North's balloon launches added to a recent series of provocative steps, which include its failed spy satellite launch and test-firings of about 10 suspected short-range missiles this week. South Korea's military dispatched chemical rapid response and explosive clearance teams to recover the debris from some 260 North Korean balloons that were found in various parts of the country from Tuesday night to Wednesday. The military said the balloons carried various types of trash and manure but no dangerous substances like chemical, biological or radioactive materials. In a statement on Wednesday, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, confirmed that the North sent the balloons to make good on her country's recent threat to "scatter

mounds of wastepaper and filth" in South Korea in response to leafletting campaigns by South Korean activists. She hinted that balloons could become the North's standard response to leafletting moving forward, saying that the North would respond by "scattering rubbish dozens of times more than those being scattered to us." North Korea is extremely sensitive about any outside attempt to undermine Kim Jong Un's absolute control over the country's 26 million people, most of whom have little access to foreign news. In 2020, North Korea blew up an empty South Korean-built liaison office on its territory after a furious response to South Korean civilian leafletting campaigns. In 2014, North Korea fired at propaganda balloons flying toward its territory and South Korea returned fire, though there were no casualties.

Suu Kyi close ally Tin Oo, dies

AP ■ BANGKOK

Tin Oo, one of the closest associates of Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi as well as a co-founder of her National League for Democracy party, has died. He was 97. Tin Oo died Saturday morning at Yangon General Hospital, said Moh Khan, a charity worker, citing a member of his family. Charity workers in Myanmar handle funeral arrangements. Moh Khan said Tin Oo had been hospitalized at Yangon General Hospital on Wednesday due to difficulty urinating and other health problems, including weakness. His cause of death was not immediately announced. Tin Oo was respected by many of his party's members for his outspokenness and courage as he shared many of Suu Kyi's travails. In 1988, Tin Oo helped found the National League for Democracy with Suu Kyi after a failed revolt against military rule. He became vice chairman, then chairman of the new



party. But when the military cracked down the following year, he was put under house arrest, as was Suu Kyi. Similar to her, he spent 14 of the next 21 years under house arrest or in prison before he was released ahead of the 2010 general election. The party had won a 1990 election, but the results were annulled by the ruling military, which launched a crackdown on its opponents. In 2003, in one of the intermittent periods when he and Suu Kyi were at liberty before their 2010 release, they had the har-

rowing experience of being ambushed on a country road in upper Myanmar by a mob widely believed to have been assembled by an element of the military. The incident occurred as the party leaders were making a political tour and attracting large crowds of supporters. The two leaders managed an escape, though dozens in their entourage were apparently killed in the attack, details of which remain murky. Despite being the targets, Suu Kyi and Tin Oo were detained in prison and then house arrest again after the incident.

Sexist tropes and misinformation swirl online as Mexico prepares to elect its first female leader

AP ■ MEXICAN CITY

Mexican voters are poised to elect their first female president, a cause of celebration for many that has also touched off a flurry of false and misogynist online claims, blurring the lines behind fact and fiction. The two leading candidates, both women, have had to respond to demeaning attacks about their appearance, their credentials and their ability to lead the nation. The candidate considered the favourite in Sunday's contest, former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, has also faced slurs about her Jewish background as well as repeatedly debunked claims she was born in Hungary. This week, in an apparent bid to undermine her candidacy, a social media account impersonating a legitimate news outlet posted fake, AI-generated audio of Sheinbaum admitting that her campaign was failing in a key Mexican state. The wave of



election misinformation facing voters in Mexico is the latest example of how the internet, social media and AI are fuelling the spread of false, misleading or hateful content in democracies around the world, warping public discourse and potentially influencing election outcomes. "We have a general atmosphere of disinformation here in Mexico, but it's slightly different from what is happening in India, or the US," said Manuel Alejandro Guerrero, a professor

and communications researcher at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. In Mexico's case, that misinformation is the result of growing distrust of the news media, violence committed by drug cartels, and rapid increases in social media usage coupled with a lag in digital literacy. Guerrero added one more contributing factor now familiar to Americans: political leaders who willingly spread disinformation themselves.

Sheinbaum is a member of the Morena party, led by current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. She faces opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez and Jorge Álvarez Máynez of the small Citizen Movement party. Compared with election misinformation spread about male candidates, the attacks against Gálvez and Sheinbaum often take a particularly personal nature and focus on their gender, according to Maria Calderon, an attorney and researcher from Mexico who works with the Mexico Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., that studies online politics. "I was surprised by how cruel the comments could be," said Calderon, whose analysis found that attacks on female candidates like Sheinbaum and Gálvez typically focus on their appearance, or their credentials, whereas misinformation about male candidates is more often about policy proposals.

Spelling Bee finalists, mostly Indian-American children, visit WH

Washington (PTI): Bruhat Soma, the Scripps National Spelling Bee's Indian-American winner, along with the seven other finalists was invited by the White House for a visit, a lifetime experience for these young talents. Bruhat, a 12-year-old seventh-grade student from Florida, emerged victorious in the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes. He blitzed through 30 words in 90 seconds Thursday night and judges determined that he spelled 29 of them correctly — nine more than his competitor, Faizan Zaki. On Friday, the White House invited them to attend an event on the South Lawn where President Joe Biden welcomed the Kansas City Chiefs to celebrate their championship season and victory in Super Bowl LVIII.

Passenger vehicle wholesales in slow lane in May due to high base effect, elections

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Passenger vehicle wholesales in India witnessed a marginal growth in May on account of high base effect and muted demand due to general elections.

The overall passenger vehicle dispatches from companies to dealers stood at 3,50,257 lakh units last month as compared to 3,35,436 in the same month a year ago, registering a growth of 4 per cent.

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said its total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period.

The company saw year-on-year dip in sales of entry level and compact cars last month as against May 2023.

Utility vehicle sales, including that of Brezza, Grand Vitara, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, however, rose to 54,204 units last month as against 46,243 units a year earlier.

"It has been discussed that



growth this year will not be very high. It will be in single digit because of the high base effect. Secondly, there were elections and the scorching temperatures also had an impact on the overall sales in May," MSI Senior Executive Officer (Marketing & Sales) Partho Banerjee told reporters. He further said: "We are very hopeful that we will start seeing the green shoots coming with the election results coming in. I think things will turn around." Banerjee noted that the company is going to introduce a limited edition trims of its entry level cars — Alto K10, S-Presso and Celerio — in order

to rejuvenate the small car segment.

The Dream Series edition trims of the three models will be launched at a price point of Rs 4.99 lakh (ex-showroom), he said.

"Based on the feedback of our target customers we have come up with an edition in which we are mostly focusing on the utilities and convenience features," Banerjee said.

Sales of Maruti Suzuki's mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units last month from 12,236 units in May 2023.

Rival Hyundai Motor India reported a 1 per cent year-on-

year increase in domestic dispatch of vehicles to dealers last month.

The company's wholesales rose to 49,151 units in May as compared to 48,601 units in May 2023.

Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said that the sales growth this financial year is anticipated to remain in low single digit range.

"In April also the industry grew by around 1.5 per cent ... So April plus May the industry growth should be around 2-2.5 per cent over same period last year," he noted.

Tata Motors said its passenger vehicle sales, including electric vehicles, in the domestic market, were up 2 per cent at 45,984 units in the year-ago month.

Mahindra & Mahindra on the other hand reported a robust 31 per cent year-on-year increase in passenger vehicle dispatches last month at 43,218 units. It had sold 32,886 units in May 2023.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor reported a 24 per cent year-on-year increase in total wholesales in May at 25,273 units as compared to that of same month last year.

Kia India said its total wholesales increased 4 per cent year-on-year to 19,500 units in May. The automaker had dispatched 18,766 units to dealers in May 2023.

"So far in this year, we have been aggressive in introducing new competitive variants of our models, which has contributed significantly to our sales," Kia India Senior VP and Head Sales & Marketing Hardeep Singh Brar said.

With a robust network expansion strategy in place, the company shall continue to grow in the rest of the year and cross 1 million domestic sales milestone soon, he added.

MG Motor India reported a 5 per cent dip in wholesales at 4,769 units in May compared to the same month last year. The company had dispatched 5,006 units to dealers in May 2023.

Top 100 companies to verify market rumours

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The top 100 listed companies by market capitalization will have to confirm or deny any market rumour reported in the mainstream media from this Saturday.

The rule will be applicable for top 250 companies from December 1.

Under the Sebi's rule, these companies will have to 'confirm, deny, or clarify any reported event or information in the mainstream media that is not general in nature and that indicates that rumours of an impending specific material event' are circulating amongst the investing public within 24 hours from the reporting of the information.

Sebi through its newly introduced rumour verification framework has excluded the price volatility in arriving at average market price for the purpose of corporate actions in a bid to make it fair for all investors at large.

"The move would dissuade



leaking of information that would affect the valuation in the given corporation action. This initiative of Sebi would help strengthen the rumour verification framework. It would help in achieving a fair market thereby making it a preferred market for investors all over the world," Makarand M Joshi, founder, MMJC and Associates, a corporate compliance firm, said.

While calculating the price for various corporate actions such as buyback through book building, buyback through stock exchange, qualified institutional placement, preferential allotment, takeovers, effect on shares

price due to material price movement and confirmation of reported event or information can be excluded. It means that while calculating price for corporate actions the period during which material price movement was seen in the stock due to confirmed rumours would be excluded.

Market rumours pertaining to a company's business can create significant volatility in stock prices, often leading to transactions that don't reflect a company's true value. This market rumours could be related to anything, including exiting of top management, cancellation of an order and financial health.

"Sebi's framework addresses this issue by establishing a mechanism to determine the unaffected price — the price of a stock before the rumour surfaced. This price would be used for transactions unless the rumour itself caused price fluctuations in subsequent trading days," Trivesh, Chief Operating Officer of Tradejini, had said.

ATF price cut 6.5 per cent, commercial LPG by ₹69

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel or ATF price on Saturday was reduced by a steep 6.5 per cent and that of commercial LPG used by hotels and restaurants by Rs 69 per 19-kg cylinder on declining international oil prices.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was cut by Rs 6,673.87 per kilolitre, or 6.5 per cent, to Rs 94,969.01 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The reduction follows a marginal 0.7 per cent (Rs 749.25 per kl) increase on May 1.

The ATF rate in Mumbai was slashed to Rs 88,834.27 per kl from Rs 95,173.70.

Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes.



Alongside, oil firms also cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 69 to Rs 1,676 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the third straight monthly reduction in rates.

The price was on May 1 reduced by Rs 19 per cylinder and by Rs 30.5 on April 1. Rate of cooking gas used in domestic households,

however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

April 1 saw the first reduction in commercial LPG prices since January. The rate had gone up by Rs 14 per cylinder on February 1 and Rs 25.5 on March 1.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on 1st of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate.

Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut by Rs 2 per litre in mid-March. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

Mumbai city sees 12,000 property registrations in May

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Registration of properties in Mumbai municipal region increased 22 per cent during May to 12,000 units driven by strong housing demand, according to real estate consultant Knight Frank.

Citing Maharashtra government data, Knight Frank India said Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) recorded around 12,000 property registrations last month as against 9,823 units in May last year.

State exchequer garnered Rs 1,034 crore in May 2024, up 24 per cent from the same month last year.

Of the overall registered properties in May 2024, residential units constituted 80 per cent.

"The continuous year-on-year growth in property sales and registrations provides a continuum to the growth

story that propelled on the back of state government incentive and since then, despite a rise in average prices across the city, sales and registrations of properties have maintained the momentum," Shishir Bajjal, Chairman & Managing Director, Knight Frank India, said.

This reflects the appetite of the market as well as the confidence buyers have in the economic fundamentals of the country, he added.

"This positive trend is expected to persist, bolstered by strong economic growth and a favourable interest rate environment, creating an encouraging atmosphere for potential buyers," Bajjal said. In the first five months of this year, the total number of properties registered was 60,820, up 17 per cent from 52,173 units in January-May 2023.

Bata India introduces New York's footwear brand to Indian market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It was a glamorous affair at the exclusive preview of Nine West's latest collection in the Capital hosted by Bata India! This event marks a significant moment as Bata India introduces New York's renowned footwear and accessories brand, Nine West, to the Indian market.

Actor Chitrangda Singh alongside Delhi's top fashion influencers indulged in a stylishly curated evening as they adorned NINE WEST's latest styles, brought to India exclusively by Bata.

Speaking at the grand unveiling of the Nine West collection, Deepika Deepti, Head of Marketing, Bata India said, "At Bata, our aim is to bring the best of world's fashion to India for our discerning customers. Nine West, born in New York City and thriving globally, is one of the most recognisable brands in the world. With its entry in India exclusively in partnership with Bata, we are proud to continue to make truly high fashion & premium styles accessible to all."

The latest collection is inspired by empowered women who dream, lead & slay. Iconic silhouettes & dainty designs ranging from sleek metallic stilettos to famed monogram style bags, each article is crafted to complement the fashion-forward women.

The latest Nine West collection is now available exclusively at Bata.Com and your nearest Bata stores! Strengthening its portfolio of fashion footwear and accessories, Bata India had announced in November 2023 licensing and manufacturing deal with Authentic Brands Group (Authentic) for Nine West winning rights to manufacture, market and distribute Nine West footwear and accessories across India.



For close to a century, Bata India has been a symbol of trust and quality for the Indian consumers, serving 250,000 customers every day in 2022. Throughout this journey, Bata has continuously evolved to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of its customers to become the largest footwear retailer and manufacturer in the country.

Its expansive retail network consists of 2,100 stores (Company Owned, Franchise and Store in store point of sales). Augmented by thousands of Multi Brand Outlets and a robust omnichannel presence across D2C and marketplaces, Bata India sells close to 50 million pairs annually.

Bata India's mission is to make global trends and premium fashion accessible to all consumers through its extensive retail network. It is redefining the intersection of fashion and comfort through its various brands — Bata Red Label for in trend global styles, Bata Comfit for technology enabled comfort in daily wear, athleisure brand Power for fitness sneakers and apparel, NorthStar for sneakers inspired by global youth trends, fashionable range of clogs and slip-ons under Floatz, kids brand Bubblegummers that has won the trust of parents while inspiring fun, and Hush Puppies the global brand that epitomises comfort and elegance to name a few.

Special talk show held on jewellery used in Heeramandi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital decided to beat the heat by having a special talk show on jewellery of the most talked about Netflix series Heeramandi — the Diamond Bazaar.

Hosted by the National Fashion & Jewellery Initiative team of FICCI-FLO, under the leadership of Anjali Aggarwal, the event held at FICCI House was attended by the FLO president, Joyshree Das Verma, high profile FLO members and dignitaries too. Anjali Aggarwal, herself a Jewellery designer and stylist, moderated the talk show and asked the Jeweller duo, Vinay and Anshu Gupta, questions about how they were chosen to do the entire jewellery for Heeramandi by Sanjay Leela



Bhansali and how they managed this mammoth project. Their answers gave deep insights into the process of jewellery designing, planning, manufacturing and into the dynamics of Bollywood. Interestingly, Vinay Gupta hails from an old renowned Jewellery family of Delhi and his experience, research and designing expertise helped him create such a magnificent collection. Today, they go by the brand name Paramani Jewels.

Maruti Suzuki sales drop 2 per cent to 1,74,551 units in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India on Saturday reported 2 per cent year-on-year dip in total wholesales at 1,74,551 units in May 2024.

The company had dispatched a total of 1,78,083 units to its dealers in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a statement.

Total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period, it added.

Sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units from 12,236 units in May 2023. Sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S and



WagonR, also fell to 68,206 units from 71,419 units in the year-ago month.

Utility vehicles, including Brezza, Grand Vitara, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, clocked sales of 54,204 units last month as against 46,243 units earlier. Sales of vans were at 10,960

units in May 2024 as against 12,818 units a year ago, while that of light commercial vehicle Super Carry stood at 2,692 units as against 2,888 units in May 2023.

MSI said its exports last month declined to 17,367 units from 26,477 units in the same period last year.

IIFL Samasta Finance to raise up to ₹ 1,000 crore via bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IIFL Samasta Finance, a non-banking microfinance company (NBFC-MFI), plans to raise up to Rs 1,000 crore through public issue of secured bonds for the purpose of capital augmentation and business growth. The bond issue opens on June 3 and closes on June 14, IIFL Samasta Finance said in a statement.

IIFL Samasta Finance plans to issue bonds, aggregating to Rs 200 crore, with a green-shoe option to retain over-subscription of up to Rs 800 crore, it said. The IIFL Samasta bonds offer the highest coupon rate of 10.50 per cent per annum for a tenor of 60 months, it claimed.

Companies counter IAMAI's submission on Draft Digital Competition Bill

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Matrimony.com and Sharechat are among four companies that have written to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, saying they do not agree with the submissions on draft digital competition bill made by industry association IAMAI, of which they are members. IAMAI's submission, they claim, is not reflective of the entire digital startup ecosystem or its diverse membership of over 540 companies.

According to them, while only a small fraction of members have opposed the 'ex-ante' provisions introduced by the Draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB), yet the submission made by the association

"predominantly echoes this minority perspective".

Any opposition to 'ex ante' regulations and continuation of the 'ex post regime' will allow entrenched players to "continue exploiting regulatory gaps to stifle competition and innovation", they argued.

The letter sent to Corporate Affairs Secretary Manoj Govil earlier this week was signed by Murugavel Janakiraman, Founder and MD of Matrimony.Com; Vishnu Moha, Co-founder of Hoichoi; Morgan Cauvin, Head, Government Relations, India and Europe, Middle East, Africa, Match Group; and Manohar Singh Charan, Chief Financial Officer, Sharechat. "...Signatories, all members of the Internet and Mobile



Association of India (IAMAI), write to express our diverging views to IAMAI's recent submission on the Draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB) and the Report of the Committee on Digital Competition Law. We state

that IAMAI's submission is not reflective of the entire digital startup ecosystem or IAMAI's diverse membership of over 540 companies as only a minuscule percentage of these members have opposed the ex-ante provisions

introduced by the DCB, yet the submission predominantly echoes this minority perspective," the letter said.

Put simply, the 'ex-ante' provision aims to ensure that the behaviours of large digital enterprises are proactively monitored and that the CCI intervenes before instances of anti-competitive conduct transpire.

Currently, the Competition Act primarily envisages an 'ex-post' framework of intervention, wherein the CCI intervenes after the occurrence of an anti-competitive conduct.

The dissenting companies, in their letter, said they believe that opposition of 'ex ante' regulations and continuation of the 'ex post regime', will lead to status quo being

maintained and allow entrenched players to continue exploiting regulatory gaps to stifle competition and innovation.

The invocation of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' conveniently ignores the reality of market distortions and abuses that necessitate targeted regulatory interventions, they said.

"While we share similar concerns over the thresholds for designation of Systemically Significant Digital Enterprise (SSDEs), IAMAI's submission on the rest of the draft DCB seems to present obtuse concerns which go against the broader imperative of fostering fair competition across all core digital services in India, supporting the growth of

startups and protecting consumer welfare in India's digital economy," the letter said.

The thresholds for designation of an SSDE may require revision to ensure that only those entities which are sufficiently large and having substantial presence in digital markets in India are subject to the ex-ante regulations proposed in the DCB.

"This ensures that financial strength and user spread thresholds outlined in the DCB do not inadvertently encompass startups and other digital enterprises which are not true digital gatekeepers. This issue can also be effectively addressed by advocating for higher thresholds, so nascent digital services/products remain protected...By revisiting

thresholds, it can be ensured that only the largest digital gatekeepers (or 'Big Tech' companies), which have benefitted from network effects, fall within the DCB's scope," it said.

The letter exhorted the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to move forward with the draft DCB at the earliest. "We believe that any lingering apprehensions can be effectively addressed during the drafting of the regulations under the draft DCB, ensuring that the Indian digital ecosystem benefits from a clear regulatory framework that fosters fair competition and incentivises innovation among startups and smaller businesses without fear of suppression by larger dominant gatekeepers," it said.

Ronaldo in tears after his Al-Nassr lose Saudi King's Cup final on penalties

AP ■ JEDDAH

Cristiano Ronaldo left the field in tears after his Al-Nassr team lost the King's Cup final to Al-Hilal and ended a second successive season in Saudi Arabia without any major silverware on Friday. Al-Hilal won a penalty shootout 5-4 to decide a final that finished 1-1 after extra time in Jeddah. Ronaldo, who signed for Al-Nassr in December 2022, fell to the ground in despair and was consoled by teammates at King Abdullah Sports City. The loss came just four days after the end of a Saudi Pro League season in which Al-Nassr finished second, 14 points behind Al-Hilal. There was some consolation then as Ronaldo scored twice to set a new league record of 35 goals in a season. There was no such comfort this time at the end of a tempestuous encounter that saw two goals and three red cards. Aleksandar Mitrovic headed Al-Hilal ahead after seven minutes. It got worse for Al-Nassr early in the second half when goalkeeper David Ospina, formerly of Arsenal and Napoli, was sent off for handling the ball outside the area.



Al-Hilal was also reduced to 10 men after 86 minutes when Ali Al-Bulaihi was red-carded for an apparent headbutt on Sami Al-Najei. Seconds later, Ayman Yahya headed Al-Nassr level. Al-Hilal had another defender sent off in the 91st

minute after Kalidou Koulibaly, signed from Chelsea last summer, received a second yellow card. There were no goals in extra time and the final went to a shootout. Ruben Neves missed Hilal's first attempt

as did former Manchester United defender Alex Telles for Al-Nassr. Ronaldo, who earlier hit the post with a spectacular overhead kick, converted his penalty but could only watch as Bounou, a hero of Morocco's march to the

semifinals of the 2022 World Cup, saved twice, the first from Ali Al-Hassan and then from Al-Nemer. The saves gave Hilal an 11th King's Cup triumph while Ronaldo and his team will have to wait until next season.

Delhi joins Chennai and Singapore in race to host chess World Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi has joined Chennai and Singapore in the race to host the World Championship match between D. Gukesh and China's Ding Liren after the All India Chess Federation backed the national capital's bid while accusing the Tamil Nadu government of acting unilaterally by pushing the southern city's name. The International Chess Federation (FIDE) CEO Emil Sutovsky on Saturday said all three cities have submitted their bids and they "meet the criteria". Sutovsky added Chennai was the first to bid for the much-anticipated match in November-December this year, while the New Delhi bid came in last. "Three bids to host the FIDE World Championship Match-2024. Chennai, Singapore, New Delhi (in order of submission). All meet the criteria," Sutovsky wrote on 'X'. The international chess body's council will discuss the issue and announce the winner later this month. "Next week FIDE Council to discuss it -- representatives of the bidders invited to share details and take questions. Final decision in June," Sutovsky added. The Chennai bid was made by the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu while the All Indian Chess



Federation bid for New Delhi. While FIDE doesn't stop any government from bidding for the prestigious event, it is unusual for two entities from the same country to bid for the tournament. AICF president Nitin Narang told PTI that the national chess federation has bid for New Delhi as the venue for the title showdown and that a no-objection certificate (NOC) had been taken from the Indian government. He, however, said that the Tamil Nadu government had not consulted the AICF before sending its bid to FIDE. "The Tamil Nadu government never consulted the AICF or had any conversation with us about it (Chennai as venue), nor do they have the NOC (from the Government of India) for it," said Narang. "The New Delhi bid happens

to be from the AICF, with the NOC being given by the Government of India," he added. Gukesh, who hails from Chennai, had become the youngest ever challenger for the world title by winning the Candidates Tournament in Toronto in April. The basic criteria outlined by FIDE for a prospective bidder for the 2024 edition is a budget of Rs 8.5 million (Rs 71 crore approx) and a facilitation fee of USD 1.1 million (Rs 9 crore) for the global body. The duration of the tournament is 25 days and approval of regulations will be completed by July 1. The total prize money awarded by FIDE would be around USD 2.5 million (Rs 20 crore plus) after the fund was increased from the USD two million (Rs 17 crore) in 2023.

Andy Murray and Dan Evans lose in first round of doubles at French Open

AP ■ PARIS

If this does turn out to be Andy Murray's last French Open, it ended after two matches: one loss in singles and, on Friday, one loss in doubles. Murray and Dan Evans were defeated by Thiago Seyboth Wild and Sebastian Baez 7-6 (6), 7-6 (3) in the first round of doubles. Murray, a three-time Grand Slam singles champion, was eliminated in the first round of singles by Stan Wawrinka in straight sets on Sunday night. The 37-year-old Murray has said he thinks he probably will retire sometime this year. He has an artificial hip and has dealt with back issues this season. He reiterated Friday that he wants

to compete at the Paris Olympics, which will hold tennis matches at Roland Garros starting on July 27. That was why he and Evans got a wild-card invitation to compete in doubles at the French Open. Murray won singles gold medals at the 2012 Olympics in London and the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the only player to win two consecutive tennis titles at the Summer Games. "Me and Dan obviously were hoping to have a good run here. Yeah, it wasn't to be. So don't know if we'll get the opportunity (to play doubles at the Olympics). There's guys obviously ahead of us in the rankings, and we've got good doubles players in the U.K.," Murray said. "Let's see what happens."



He now will turn his attention to grass courts and preparing to play at Wimbledon, where he won singles titles in 2013 and 2016.

Murray was the first British man in 77 years to win the championship there. Play at the All England Club begins on July 1.

There is a chance, Murray said, that he could team up with his older brother, Jamie, in doubles at Wimbledon. "My brother doesn't have a partner for Wimbledon currently. We have spoken a little bit about it," Murray said. "So may do that, but not 100% sure yet." Jamie, 38, is by far the more accomplished doubles player of the two: He reached No. 1 in those rankings and won two Grand Slam trophies in doubles in 2016, as well as five major titles in mixed doubles. Jamie said Andy told him he wanted to play doubles at the French Open "because the Olympics for him are important and he wanted to show that he wanted to be in the team and also practice and prepare and not just turn up."



India thrash world champions Germany 3-0 in Pro League

PTI ■ LONDON

India exploited a rusty German defence, punching three goals as the Harmanpreet Singh-led side outclassed the world champions to make a winning start to the London leg of the FIH Pro Hockey League here on Saturday. Drag-flicker Harmanpreet (16th minute), Sukhjeet Singh (41st) and Gurjant Singh (44th) tormented an out-of-sorts young German side, which started off on a roaring note but could not sustain the momentum for long. The world No. 5 India, with 24 points from 13 outings are third, while Argentina, whom India defeated twice during the Antwerp leg of the Pro League are second with 26 points from 14 matches. Netherlands are leading the table with 26 points from 12 games. Goalkeeping stalwart PR Sreejesh stood rock solid against a relentless German attack in the first quarter, thwarting two penalty corners before Harmanpreet's penalty

corner conversion in the first minute of the second quarter turned the tables on world No. 3 side. The India skipper's low flick aimed to the left of German goalkeeper Alexander Stadler took a deflection off the first rusher Barry Antheus before sounding the board in the 16th minute. Sukhjeet then doubled the lead in the 41st minute. Picking up the ball on the wing, he gave a through pass to Abhishek and made a dash to the circle. Abhishek relayed the ball back to Sukhjeet, who unleashed an unstoppable shot past the German goalkeeper. Gurjant then lined up the third goal for India three minutes later. Sanjay played the ball to Harmanpreet Singh on the goal-line. The defender then flicked the ball back to Gurjant, who scooped it past Stadler to signal India's dominance. All along, a jittery German side tried its best to breach the Indian defence but to no avail with Sreejesh showcasing his capability in the cage.

DP Manu wins gold in javelin throw at Taiwan Open

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's DP Manu clinched the gold medal in men's javelin throw event at the Taiwan Open 2024 with a throw of 81.58m in Taipei on Saturday. The Asian Athletics Championship silver medalist registered his best throw in his last attempt. Taiwan Open is a World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze-level meet. And awards crucial ranking points. Manu started with an 78.32m throw, while his second attempt measured 76.80m. But the 24-year-old improved his efforts sending the spear to 80.59m and 81.52m in his third and fifth attempt. He could not register a valid attempt in his fourth throw but finished strong. The performance was, however, far from Manu's personal best of 84.35m. It is also less than his season-best effort of 82.06, which had come last month at the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar when he had finished



second behind Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra. Manu, who finished sixth at the World Championships last year, is yet to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the qualification mark for which is of 85.50m. Chopra and Kishore Jena have already qualified for the Olympics.

Olympic champ McLaughlin-Levrone runs 52.7 in first return to 400 hurdles in nearly two years

AP ■ ATLANTA

Olympic champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone won her first 400-meter hurdles race in nearly two years on Friday, finishing in 52.70 seconds to post the best time of 2024. The 24-year-old world-record holder came to the Edwin Moses Legends Meet hoping simply to run a time of 54.85 seconds or better, the "qualifying standard" needed to be eligible for the Paris Games this summer. McLaughlin-Levrone, who missed the 2023 world championships with a knee injury, has been racing mostly in non-hurdles races this year, leaving open the question of which events she'll participate



in at the Olympics. After her race at Morehouse College in Atlanta, she said she was pleased with her time, which was more than two seconds slower than her world record of 50.68.

"It's a progression," she said. "Shaking the rust off after two years. I'll take a 52.7. Things to work on. We haven't had much hurdles practice, so there's a lot to improve." McLaughlin-Levrone's last 400 hurdles race was Aug. 8, 2022 in Hungary. Before shutting things down due to injury last year, she won the U.S. Championship in the 400 flat in 48.74 - a time that led the world in 2023 and made her the 10th fastest woman of all time at that distance. This year, she has been running exclusively in the United States, preparing for Olympic trials in June. "I love racing and I love Europe, but in a year like this, coming off an injury last year, we just wanted to be safe," she said.

Real Madrid's European kings are so good, Ancelotti wants them to be studied

AP ■ LONDON

Whatever you call it, just don't call it luck. Real Madrid has dominated European club soccer's biggest prize like no other. Coach Carlo Ancelotti was asked on the eve of the Champions League final if he could explain it. "There is something special in this club. It is important to study this," Ancelotti said on Friday. "It is something special. For what reason I don't know. History, conditions, quality of the players, character ... It happened so many times it cannot be coincidence." Borussia Dortmund will face in Saturday's final at Wembley Stadium a club that



never seems to read the clock, that never seems to say die, and repeatedly defies the odds to pull off improbable comebacks in a competition it prizes above all others. The most recent was substitute Joselu's two-goal

cameo in the dying stages of the semifinal against Bayern Munich when the 14-time European champion was minutes away from elimination. Two years ago, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester

City were undone by some of Madrid's most memorable fightbacks. Madrid went on to win the trophy in 2022 having trailed in every round from the round of 16 through to the semifinals. "We would prefer to start (the match) winning," captain Nacho said. "We also suffer on the pitch when we are losing." Those spectacular comebacks just add to the mystique that surrounds Madrid and the Champions League. Victory against Dortmund would earn a record-extending 15th European Cup. Ancelotti, himself, can set a new benchmark with a record-extending fifth Champions League trophy as a coach.

Funds to buy new wheelchair hindering champion para shooter Mona's Paralympic preparation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite her successive gold medals at Parashooting World Cups, Mona Agarwal faces a stark reality - her triumphs have not translated into the crucial funds required to procure a wheelchair for the upcoming Paris Paralympic Games. The 37-year-old, who suffers from polio and competes in the 10m air rifle (SH1) para shooting category, struck gold at the WSPS Para World Cup in New Delhi in March to secure the country's ninth and last Paralympic quota. The mother of two then went on to grab another gold in the Para World Cup in Changwon, Korea in April, becoming one of the few



Indian shooters to secure successive top-podium finishes at the global competition. However, all her sponsorship

funds were exhausted in buying a rifle and competing "at her own cost" in the Changwon World Cup, leaving her with no resources to upgrade her wheelchair, which she believes could take her "to a different level" at the Paralympics. "I was expecting to get enrolled in the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) following my success in the Delhi Para World Cup in March. I'm hopeful it will happen but don't know the reason why it's been delayed by two months," the shooter from Jaipur told PTI. "I have written several mails to Sports Authority of India and informed them that I have to do some equipment

upgrades for the Paralympics, so I need financial support," she added. Mona has also excelled in various para sports including shot put, javelin, discus throw and even powerlifting. "The Rs 15 lakh budget I had got from my sponsor for the current year has been exhausted in buying a rifle and competing in Korea, which was on own cost. I also spent Rs 7 lakh in Korea. I need about Rs 6 lakh to buy a new wheelchair," added Mona. She is also the founder of the national para volleyball girls team and whenever time permits travels across India to motivate girls to take up sport.

IF HE HAS APPLIED, GAMBHIR WOULD BE GOOD COACH FOR INDIA: GANGULY

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Saturday said Gautam Gambhir would be a "good coach" for the national cricket team if he has applied for the job as his "hunger and passion" was evident in the recently-concluded IPL.



perceived front-runner Gambhir would be suitable for the position, Ganguly had a query of his own at first. "...Has he applied? I really don't know because first he has to apply and then only he will get the job... I think (May) 27th was the last date of application," Ganguly said.



I don't try to over-teach: Bumrah on mentoring India's young pacers

Considered a mentor for the new crop of Indian fast bowlers, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah says he never tries to "over-teach" the younger lot and steps in to help only when asked, to avoid burdening them with information.

USA FAVOURITES VS CANADA: A team full of expatriates, tournament co-hosts USA, coached by former Australian batter Stuart Law, will promise some surprises when it kicks off the T20 World Cup taking on qualifiers Canada in a battle of debutants.

USA open against Canada



USA FAVOURITES VS CANADA: A team full of expatriates, tournament co-hosts USA, coached by former Australian batter Stuart Law, will promise some surprises when it kicks off the T20 World Cup taking on qualifiers Canada in a battle of debutants.

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Explore the artistic brilliance and cultural legacy of Sonal Mansingh through the fascinating world of classical dance with **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

THE LIVING LEGEND OF SONAL MANSINGH

In the realm of Indian classical dance, few names carry as much weight and reverence as that of Sonal Mansingh. Her life's journey is not just a tale of individual accomplishment but a testament to the power of art in transcending boundaries and enriching lives.

Sonal Mansingh's relationship with dance began at an early age. Raised in a family that valued both tradition and modernity, she was exposed to various forms of art and culture from childhood. Her initial training in Bharatanatyam began under the tutelage of renowned Guru Shri Chandralekha. However, it was her encounter with the legendary Odissi guru, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, that shaped her destiny. Under his guidance, Sonal delved deep into the intricate nuances of Odissi, a classical dance form from the eastern state of Odisha, India. She mastered the art with such finesse that she became one of its foremost exponents, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally. Sonal Mansingh's journey has not been without its share of challenges. As a woman navigating the patriarchal landscape of Indian society, she faced skepticism and resistance from traditional quarters. Yet, with unwavering determination and resilience, she shattered stereotypes and carved a niche for herself in a male-dominated field. Her artistic integrity and commitment to her craft have been unwavering, even in the face of adversity. Through her performances, workshops, and lectures, she has tirelessly worked towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage, inspiring generations of artists to follow in her footsteps. As a cultural icon, Sonal Mansingh's legacy transcends boundaries of time and geography. She has not only enriched the world of dance with her unparalleled talent but has also left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of millions

SONAL MANSINGH'S JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT ITS SHARE OF CHALLENGES. AS A WOMAN NAVIGATING THE PATRIARCHAL LANDSCAPE OF INDIAN SOCIETY, SHE FACED SKEPTICISM AND RESISTANCE FROM TRADITIONAL QUARTERS. YET, WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION AND RESILIENCE, SHE SHATTERED STEREOTYPES AND CARVED A NICHE FOR HERSELF IN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD. HER ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT TO HER CRAFT HAVE BEEN UNWAVERING, EVEN IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

around the world. Her life's journey is a testament to the transformative power of art and its ability to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and celebrate the beauty of human expression. In an ever-changing world, where the allure of tradition often clashes with the forces of modernity, Sonal Mansingh stands as a beacon of a vibrant tradition, innovation, and timeless grace, reminding us of the enduring relevance of our cultural roots. As she continues to inspire and enchant audiences with her artistry, her legacy remains etched in the annals of Indian classical dance, a shining testament to the enduring power of the human spirit. Sonal Mansingh's dance themes often encompass a rich tapestry of mythological narratives, cultural traditions, and social issues. Through her performances, she weaves together stories from Indian history and legends, ancient and contemporary texts exploring the tales of gods and goddesses with intricate choreography and expressive movements. Her interpretations of classical dance are imbued with deep spiritual and philosophical elements, reflecting her profound understanding of Indian culture and traditions. Additionally, she often addresses contemporary social issues through her choreography, using dance as a medium for commentary and reflection. Whether addressing themes of gender equality, environmental consciousness, or the human experience, Mansingh infuses her performances with relevance and meaning, engaging audiences on both artistic and intellectual levels. Overall, Sonal Mansingh's dance themes transcend mere entertainment, serving as a platform for storytelling, cultural preservation,

and social advocacy. Through her artistry, she continues to captivate and inspire audiences around the world, leaving a lasting impression with each graceful movement. Sonal Mansingh, a prominent figure in the world of Indian classical dance, also had a notable involvement in politics. While she is primarily celebrated for her contributions to dance, her engagement in political discourse arose when she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, in 2018. Her nomination was a recognition of her achievements and contributions to Indian culture and arts, acknowledging the importance of promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage within the political sphere. As a member of the Rajya Sabha, Mansingh has used the platform to advocate for the arts, cultural preservation, and the promotion of Indian dance forms. She actively participated in debates and discussions concerning cultural policies, education, sociology of culture and the role of the arts in society. Mansingh's foray into politics highlighted the intersection of culture, arts, and governance in India. Her journey serves as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and supporting cultural icons within the political landscape, ensuring that the nation's rich artistic heritage continues to thrive and flourish. Sonal Mansingh, a luminary in the realm of Indian classical dance, has left an indelible mark through her illustrious career. Honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1992, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2003, she has been lauded for her exceptional contributions to the performing arts.

As the founder of the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD) in New Delhi, Mansingh established a bastion for the promotion and preservation of various classical dance forms, nurturing young talent and disseminating awareness of India's rich cultural heritage. Her mesmerizing performances have graced prestigious stages worldwide, serving as a cultural ambassador and fostering appreciation for Indian art and heritage. Appointed as a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2003, Mansingh's efforts in promoting intercultural dialogue through dance have been globally recognized. Beyond tradition, her artistic vision fearlessly explores new themes, narratives, and choreographic styles, breathing fresh life into age-old traditions and inspiring generations of artists. Sonal Mansingh's life is a tapestry of devotion to Indian classical dance, and a commitment to preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage. Born in 1944 in Bombay, she began her dance training at a young age, later becoming a trailblazer in the field. With a career spanning over six decades, Mansingh has dazzled audiences worldwide with her performances, lectures & interviews earning numerous accolades and honors along the way. Beyond her contributions to dance, Mansingh has been a cultural ambassador for India, spreading awareness of its rich artistic traditions.

“As in life, so in dance, character is essential”

SONAL MANSINGH talks about her art, life and life philosophy that went into making the person she is. She opened up to **THE PIONEER**. Excerpts

What are some memorable performances or collaborations that have shaped your artistic journey? Well, memorable performances and collaborations are different. From the very beginning in 1961, when I gave my maiden solo performance, to this day, every performance has been memorable for one reason or another. Whether it was in Venezuela or China, Mongolia or Mandi, in a big opera house of a megapolis or on a small-town stage, each one was memorable. Choosing the best among them all is rather difficult. However, the performance in Delhi after my car accident in Germany in 1975 stands out. Many dancers told me they were inspired by it, saying that at times they didn't see me but saw sparks. The performance for the Dalai Lama in McLeod Ganj in 1994 was also significant for its content, which moved him to tears. Performing in front of Mount Kailash was a once-in-a-lifetime divine experience.

Tell us something about your collaborations. Regarding collaborations, I haven't had many. My performances in Bharatnatyam, Odissi, or Chhau are



collaborations with musicians, my guide and Guru Shri Jeevan Pani Ji, researchers, gurus, yoga gurus, and anyone from whom I learned something. Life itself is a great collaboration. Learning is an effort unto itself. Things keep happening, and one must become aware of them. Life is a jigsaw puzzle from which one picks little nuggets of wisdom.

What values are essential in classical dance? As in life, so in dance, character is essential. Character building starts in mother's womb or even from previous births (poorva janma) and karma samskara. It then grows with upbringing, nurturing, travel, and learning. Due diligence is essential. Even slight lethargy or negativity can creep in if you leave the door of consciousness ajar, so one must always be aware. What must be



done should be done in a timely manner, and every detail must be worked out. Humility is important. Remember, reevaluate, reassess, and move on (manan chintan). Reading is essential, especially in times of dependence on social media: read, discuss, understand, and carve your own path.

How do you approach interpreting classical dance forms to suit contemporary audiences? I always did what I wanted to do, and this tendency was further encouraged by my Bharatnatyam guru, U.S. Krishna Rao. We are different from Western classical dancers, where brochures are distributed at the beginning, and ballerinas dance with 50 other dancers. Audience should read the brochure before the performance begins because

later there are no commentaries or announcements. That stuck with me. You cannot give a rundown of every performance you give. Every sanchari (to convey a story or series of events through body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions) must be spontaneous. If it is pre-decided, it doesn't stay spontaneous. But I leave it to each dancer, as it depends on her training, way of thinking, and approach to dance.

Tell us something about the themes and content of your choreographic works. I have always chosen themes of women empowerment, such as Devi, Draupadi, Panchkanya, river pollution (Krishna-Kaliya) atmospheric pollution, and thought pollution. I always say the three Vs-vichar (thought), vaani (speech), and vyavhaar

(behavior)-need to be cleansed from time to time to ward off negativity. Today, people are stressed, tired, and emotionally burdened. Our dances address these issues and uplift emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

What advice do you have for aspiring classical dancers regarding training and technique? Many things have changed over the years, but some things remain the same. Ekagrachitta (एकाग्रचित्त), or focus and commitment, is one such tenet all students must observe. When you go to a Guru to learn, you must be well-prepared for the next class. You must have respect for the teacher, the traditions, the place you perform, the iconography, the messages contained in the Puranas, the temples, their

architecture, and so on. **What do you have to say about the mythology of the Puranas from where you draw your themes?** I would say mythology is the wrong word. Mythology comes from 'mythos' (in Greek) which is akin to fairy tales. Our stories are not fairy tales; they are actual events that took place long ago. They have messages and inspirations that transcend time. We must honor, respect, and work according to these stories. **What are some of the challenges you've faced in your career, and how have you overcome them?** Life is a journey full of challenges, and these challenges shape who you are and how you deal with them. They help you grow, evolve, and become a

better person. I took two vows with my grandfather: I will never commercialize dance, so I give all the money from my performances to my institute, Shri Kamakhya Kalapeeth (Centre for Indian Classical Dances). I have lived in rented accommodations and will continue to do so, after my term as Member of Parliament is over.

Could you share a particularly rewarding or transformative experience you've had? There are not just one but many. If one allows oneself to be like a lotus and opens up to Sun, every moment is transformative and rewarding. One needs to open up to accept beauty with one's eyes, ears, mind, and heart-Satyam Shivam Sundaram. There is a beautiful prayer, "Asatoma Sadgamaya" (Lead me from ignorance to truth), "Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya" (Lead me from darkness to light), "Mriyorma Amritam Gamaya" (Lead me from time-bound consciousness to the timeless state of Being). May we all have that rewarding journey. Through my dance, learning, and friends, I have lived a fulfilling and rewarding life. The human avatar is very rare; let's make the most of it.



The Niazi brothers have not only preserved the traditional essence of Qawwali but have also managed to infuse it with contemporary relevance, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

KEEPERS OF QAWWALI'S

SOUL IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD



NIAZI BROTHERS ENTHRAL AT JASHN-E-QAWWALI CONCERT

Wishes & Blessings, a Delhi-based NGO committed to aiding those in need, organised the third edition of the fundraising concert, Jashn-E-Qawwali at Kamani Auditorium, Delhi. The event showcased mesmerizing performances by the internationally acclaimed Qawwali group, Niazi Brothers. Their soulful melodies captivated the audience, who swayed to power-packed performances ranging from traditional Qawwali tunes to popular Bollywood hits and original compositions by the Niazi Brothers. Standout renditions included timeless classics such as 'Kun Faya Kun,' 'Chaap Tilak,' 'Bhar De Jholi,' and 'Dama Dam Mast Qalandar'. The event attracted a wide audience, including beneficiaries of various Sahas (an upskilling programme for women), the street-to-school initiative, and the community kitchen. "We are extremely overwhelmed by the turnout and the resounding success of Jashn-E-Qawwali," said Dr Geetanjali Chopra, Founder and President of Wishes & Blessings, adding that,

"This marks the third edition of the fundraiser, with the previous two being immensely successful. The funds raised this year will directly contribute to our WB Rasoi programme, addressing the fundamental need for food among those in need. We are grateful to Niazi Brothers for their continued support and to everyone who attended and contributed for the cause."

The funds raised will support the expansion of WB Rasoi, a new initiative aimed at providing nutritious meals to individuals in need. The NGO recently launched its first WB Rasoi in NOIDA, NCR. Shahid Niazi of the Niazi Brothers shared, "It was an honour to perform for such a noble cause. When we needed help, they were there for us. This was our time to give back. We are proud to be associated with Wishes & Blessings NGO for the past three years and look forward to contributing more in the future." The triumphant culmination of Jashn-E-Qawwali underscores Wishes & Blessings' commitment to making a meaningful difference in marginalised communities and lives and exemplifies music's power in fostering social change.



Immersed in the mysticism of Sufi music, the Niazi Brothers stand as luminaries in the realm of Qawwali, weaving a tapestry of tradition and innovation. Sufi music, with its ethereal melodies and profound lyrics, transcends the boundaries of time and culture, reaching deep into the human soul. Rooted in the mystical traditions of Sufism, this genre resonates with listeners by invoking a sense of spiritual awakening and emotional connection. The timeless appeal of Sufi music lies in its ability to convey universal themes of love, devotion, and the quest for divine union, making it a poignant and enduring form of artistic expression that continues to captivate audiences across generations.

A JOURNEY THROUGH SUFI MUSIC

The Niazi Brothers, hailing from Pakistan, are renowned for their powerful and evocative performances

that capture the very essence of Qawwali. The group's roots can be traced back to the renowned Patiala Gharana, known for its distinctive style and musical prowess. Growing up in a family where music was as essential as air, the brothers were immersed in the world of Qawwali from a young age, learning the intricacies and subtleties of the genre from their forebears. Their father, Ustad Allah Rakha, was a renowned Qawwali singer who instilled in them a deep respect for the traditional forms and the spiritual messages conveyed through their music. This early education laid a strong foundation, allowing the Niazi Brothers to develop a profound understanding of both the technical and emotional aspects of Qawwali. However, the Niazi Brothers' rise to prominence was not an overnight success but a journey of relentless dedication and passion. Their performances are characterised by a deep emotional connection, powerful vocals, and a mastery of the harmonium and tabla, all of which are central to the Qawwali experience. The brothers have performed on numerous prestigious stages around the world, captivating audiences with their dynamic energy and spiritual depth. Their repertoire includes classical Qawwalis that date back centuries, as well as more contemporary pieces that reflect current social and spiritual themes. This blend of old and new has helped them reach a diverse audience,

from traditionalists who appreciate the purity of their classical renditions to younger listeners who find resonance in their modern interpretations.

THE FUTURE OF QAWWALI IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

As the world hurtles forward with technological advancements and shifting cultural landscapes, the future of Qawwali faces both challenges and opportunities. The Niazi Brothers are acutely aware of this dynamic and have been proactive in adapting to the changing times while preserving the core essence of their music. One significant avenue they have explored is the digital realm. Through social media platforms, streaming services, and online concerts, the Niazi Brothers have reached a global audience that transcends geographical boundaries. These platforms have allowed them to share their music with fans who might never have had the opportunity to experience a live Qawwali performance, thereby expanding the genre's reach and relevance. Moreover, collaborations with artists from different musical backgrounds have also played a crucial role in keeping Qawwali vibrant and relevant. By blending traditional Qawwali with contemporary music styles, the Niazi Brothers have created a unique fusion that appeals to a broader audience. This fusion not only keeps the tradition alive but also introduces its profound

spiritual and emotional depth to new listeners.

PRESERVING TRADITION WHILE EMBRACING INNOVATION

The Niazi Brothers' approach to the future of Qawwali is a delicate balance of preservation and innovation. They remain deeply committed to the traditional aspects of Qawwali, understanding that its true power lies in its authenticity and spiritual roots. At the same time, they are not afraid to experiment and incorporate new elements that resonate with today's audiences. Education and mentorship also form a significant part of their vision for the future. By teaching young musicians the art of Qawwali, the Niazi Brothers are ensuring that this ancient tradition is passed down to future generations. They conduct workshops and training sessions, sharing their knowledge and passion with aspiring Qawwals, thus creating a new generation of musicians who can carry the torch forward. The journey of the Niazi Brothers is a testament to the enduring power of Qawwali. Through their dedication, talent, and willingness to innovate, they have kept this ancient form of spiritual music alive and thriving. As the world continues to change at a rapid pace, the Niazi Brothers stand as guardians of a rich musical heritage, ensuring that the soul-stirring strains of Qawwali continue to resonate across the globe for generations to come.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

Theatre of Enchantment

Gulzar's captivating adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* took centrestage last week with director Salim Arif's masterful vision bringing this timeless comedy to life, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi was recently treated to an evening of theatrical enchantment at the prestigious Shri Ram Centre Auditorium. Amidst the city's vibrant energy, laughter and thunderous applause emerged as the renowned Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts (SRCPA) Repertory unveiled Gulzar's spellbinding adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, titled *2 BY 2*. The auditorium was transformed into a realm of lighthearted gaiety, captivating the audience with the timeless magic of a live performance. Every artist was wholeheartedly appreciated, showcasing the audience's love for exceptional work. In a world where appreciation is often fleeting, this play, masterfully directed by the renowned Mohammed Salim Arif, stood as a testament to the enduring power of art. An acclaimed visionary in the realms of film, television and theatre, Salim's directorial prowess in *2 BY 2* can only be described as a masterpiece of the highest calibre. The play is a comedic masterpiece that tickles the funny bone with its hilarious depiction of mistaken identities and coincidental mix-ups involving identical twins with identical names. Designed and directed by Salim Arif and performed by ace artists, the play is a delightful experience. The audience was particularly impressed with the fact the actors performed and delivered on a script like Gulzar's script and Arif's direction. Resemblance with the adaptation of Shakespeare's classic drama in the film *Angoor* was quite obvious but the theatrical adaptation was indeed a beautiful execution of the masterpiece.

2 BY 2, like Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, centres on two pairs of identical twins with identical names. Raj Tilak, a wealthy merchant, has identical twins named Ashok. During a journey, Raj Tilak discovers another pair of identical twins and adopts them, calling them Bahadur. An unfortunate accident separates the family, with each parent ending up with one child from each pair. One set of twins grows up married while the other remains single and mischievous. The comedy unfolds when the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur duo arrive in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside. The ensuing confusion, involving their families, a jeweller, a taxi driver, and an inspector, leads to a series of hilarious misunderstandings that has the audience in stitches. The play masterfully blends humour, acting, and a classic script to create an entertaining experience. Gulzar's script, known for its poetic and situational brilliance, adds depth and flavour to the play, enthralling the audience all along. Director Salim Arif commented, "Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* is a classic that centres on the notion of 'mistaken identity'. In Gulzar Saab's adaptation *2 BY 2*, the arrival of the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside creates a confusion that involves more than their families, to extend to a jeweller, a police inspector, and the town." The performances by the cast was exceptional, their expressions, delivery

and timing impeccable. The sets, lighting, costumes and props were meticulously crafted, adding to the play's charm. The success of *2 BY 2* is an indication to the enduring appeal of high-quality, engaging theatre. The combination of Salim Arif's direction and Gulzar Saab's writing created an unforgettable experience, proving that great work continues to receive the appreciation it deserves. *2 BY 2* is more than just a simple tale of confusion. The script, penned by the legendary Gulzar, is a masterpiece of situational comedy. Each dialogue adds a layer of humour to the chaos, keeping the audience perpetually on the edge of their seats in anticipation of what comes next. Director Salim Arif masterfully brings the script to life, ensuring the comedic timing is tight. The talented cast deserves credit for its captivating performances. From subtle inflections to dramatic gestures, every aspect of the actors' performance is a testament to their dedication to the craft. The play does not just rely on the actors. The set's design, perfect lighting, costumes and props, all contribute in transporting the audience into the world of *2 BY 2*. *2 BY 2* is indeed a celebration of theatre at its finest. As the curtains came down on the play, a thunderous applause filled the auditorium, showcasing the profound impact on the audience. The seamless blend of Gulzar's storytelling, Salim Arif's direction and the exceptional performances created an unforgettable evening of laughter and delight. With this play, the SRCPA further underlined its commitment to bringing exceptional theatre to Delhi, reminding us of power of art to unite, entertain and inspire. As one left the theatre, one was reminded of the fact that amidst life's complexities, the gift of shared joy through a live performance is an eternal treasure.

TRAILBLAZING JOURNEY THROUGH BHARATANATYAM

Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a pioneer in the field of Bharatanatyam, has ushered in a new dawn for this ancient art form with her passion and innovative spirit, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In the vibrant tapestry of classical Indian dance forms, Bharatanatyam is a captivating expression of grace, rhythm and storytelling. At the forefront of this ancient art's contemporary renaissance is Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a celebrated dancer, choreographer, and teacher from Mumbai. With a journey that began in the culturally rich city of Kolhapur, Apeksha's unwavering passion and dedication have elevated her to the ranks of the most accomplished Bharatanatyam artists of our time. Through her exceptional talent, innovative choreography and profound understanding of the art form's rich heritage, she has captivated audiences across the globe, ushering in a new era of appreciation for this timeless dance tradition. Apeksha's journey in mastering Bharatanatyam has been one of dedication, discipline and learning. She describes how her love for the dance form is rooted in its profound ability to tell stories through rhythm, expression and grace. From a young age, she was captivated by the intricate footwork, eloquent gestures and expressive use of the eyes. Her journey, guided by her gurus, has deepened her appreciation for the rich cultural heritage and intricate techniques of Bharatanatyam. One of Apeksha's notable productions, *Nayanam*, which means eyes in Sanskrit, explores the myriad emotions conveyed through the eyes. This thematic performance highlights the eyes as windows to the soul, capable of portraying joy, love, sorrow and longing. Apeksha recounts a memorable moment during her Poland Spring Tour 2024 when a girl in the audience was moved to tears by *Nayanam*, underscoring the power of dance to push barriers.

Apeksha's training in the *Nritya-Ganga* dance style, introduced by her Guru Dr Sucheta Chapekar, has significantly influenced her interpretation and performance of Bharatanatyam. This style blends tradition with innovation, enhancing her performances while staying true to the essence of the art form. She emphasises that dance is a form of visual poetry, where the essence lies in dancing to the music rather than treating it as a mathematical exercise. Reflecting on her performance at a festival in Italy in 2022, Apeksha shared how she traversed a kilometre on the road while performing Bharatanatyam, ending at the 'Gate of Peace'. She portrayed the story of *Yamuna Gatha*, addressing the pollution and pain of the Yamuna River. This contemporary theme demonstrated the relevance and power of Bharatanatyam in addressing contemporary issues

and left a lasting impact on the international audience. Apeksha also highlighted the unique aspects of the Tanjavur school of Bharatanatyam, which prioritises fluidity and musicality. She incorporates these elements into her performances, creating a harmonious and synchronised expression. Her choreography balances traditional elements with her unique artistic expression, ensuring that the soul of Bharatanatyam remains intact while infusing it with innovation. Addressing the challenges faced by classical dancers today, Apeksha emphasises the importance of finding platforms to present her art and balance multiple roles while managing family life. She credits her supportive family and dedicated team for helping her navigate these challenges. She sees Bharatanatyam evolving in the modern era by making it more accessible and relatable. She aims to showcase stories that resonate with the audiences and connect through local music and folk stories. By incorporating elements such as the poetry of saints from Maharashtra and performing Bharatanatyam based on local folk stories and Gregorian chants, she hopes to bridge cultural divides and ensure that the art form remains relevant. For young dancers aspiring to pursue Bharatanatyam professionally, Apeksha advises prioritising dedicated practice, seeking guidance from knowledgeable gurus and embracing innovation within the framework of tradition. She encourages dancers to focus on expressing emotions authentically and maintaining physical and mental

fitness. Apeksha prepares for her performances through a holistic process that begins months in advance. This involves choreography, music creation, refining movements and mental rehearsal. She emphasises the importance of being adaptable and maintaining a calm demeanour, acknowledging that uncertainties may arise on a given day. She recalls her moment of connection with her audience during a performance in Poland, where she danced to Polish folk music. The fusion of Bharatanatyam with traditional Polish music created a unique and captivating experience, highlighting the universal language of dance. She aspires to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, ensuring it remains accessible and appreciated by diverse audiences. Through innovative choreography and engaging performances, she continues to contribute to the global recognition of Bharatanatyam as a profound and timeless art form. Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi's journey through Bharatanatyam is a testament to the transformative power of dance. Her dedication, innovative spirit and profound connection to the art form have not only elevated her performances but also enriched the cultural landscape. As she continues to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, Apeksha inspires us to embrace tradition while welcoming innovation to deepen our appreciation for this timeless art form. In this, Apeksha Niranjana is truly a beacon of light, illuminating the path for future generations, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Bharatanatyam continues to captivate and inspire audiences for times to come.



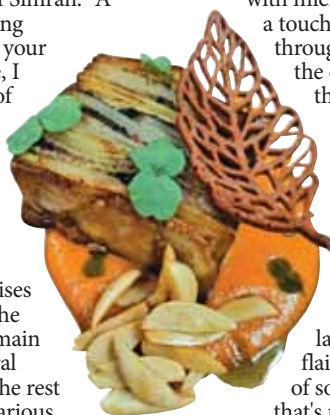
WHERE FOOD MEETS ART IN PLATING

It is not just about cooking the dish well but also plating them right is the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience, says **SHARMILA CHAND**



Sculpt, layer, paint, drizzle. Splash, a squiggle, dots, the jus, the sauce... there is an artist at work, bent, eyes fixed at his plate, in front of you at your table in the restaurant. He is undeterred till he finishes his task. Another few minutes, he finally looks up and tells you, your dish is ready. The artist is none other than the chef who has been busy meticulously plating the dish you ordered. The plate is his canvas and he is creating a visual masterpiece. It's not just about cooking the dish right but the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience. "I find the process of plating to be as crucial as the preparation of the dish itself," says Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. For him, "Plating is an art form cherished by food connoisseurs worldwide, where every element on the plate serves as a canvas for creativity and expression." Colour and Shape Chef Amandeep's preference leans towards minimalist, neutral-coloured plates that allow the vibrant hues of the dish to shine. "The shape of the plate is equally significant; I favour plates with clean lines and ample space for artistic arrangement. Each dish has its personality, and the shape of the plate can either accentuate or detract from its essence. For instance, a circular plate complements dishes with symmetrical components, while elongated plates are ideal for showcasing linear arrangements," he says. "The colour of the dish and its ingredients wield immense influence over the plating process. Take, for example, my signature dish, Tandoori Salmon with Mango Salsa. The vibrant hues of the succulent salmon and the vibrant mango salsa pop against a pristine white plate, creating a visually captivating presentation that entices the palate even before the first bite," adds Chef Amandeep. According to Chef Sandeep Kalra, Director of Culinary, Pullman Novotel, New Delhi, Aerocity, "The colour of the plate totally depends on the colour and textures of the dish. Both have to complement each other. The colour of the plate one chooses can make a big difference in how the dish looks. If you want your food to really stand out, pick a plate colour that is different from the colours of the food. White plates are a good choice for colourful dishes because they make the colours pop. On the other hand, if you want the colours

to blend well together, choose a plate colour that goes well with the food colours. Earthy tones like beige or light brown can make green vegetables look even better. Also, consider the theme of your meal. If you're going for a modern look, white or black plates are often a good choice. Dark plates can also help keep food warm longer. Ultimately, the plate colour should match the style of your meal to create a beautiful and cohesive presentation." Simran Singh Thapar, Executive Chef, The Leela Palace Bengaluru echoes the sentiment: "Play with complementary hues and remember, a pop of colour can make all the difference. Adding a variety of textures can make your dish visually interesting and enticing. Combine crunchy elements with smooth components, as I like to do in my dish 'Truffled Russet Mille Feuille with Butternut Squash Quasar -e- Pukhtan, Golden Almonds and Charcoal touille.' A crisp potato Mille Feuille is paired with a velvety smooth and rich sauce. Layering ingredients not only adds depth but also adds a sense of complexity to your presentation. I have used green microgreens to pop up the otherwise warm hues of orange and brown. An almond charcoal touille creates a visual and texture impact on my plate." "Creating a theme or a story with your plating can make your dish more memorable," adds chef Simran. "A theme can tie everything together and captivate your audience. On my plate, I have created a theme of classics from two cuisines pairing together to create magic -- Classic French and Classic Indian." Ingredient is the Key Chef Sandeep emphasises on the 'ingredient' as the key focus. "Using the main ingredient as the central focus and organising the rest of the ingredients in various forms of purees, gels, mousse or whole forms works the best. There is no specific style that I incorporate but looking at the ingredients I adapt to plating techniques and style that complements the textures and enhances the look of the dish. One favourite dish that I love to plate often is the grilled chicken breast with sweet potato mash and sautéed green beans. The dish features a perfectly grilled chicken breast placed slightly off-centre on the



Chef Simran Singh Thapar

plate. Alongside, a generous serving of creamy sweet potato mash, flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg, provides contrast. Crisp green beans are delicately piled next to the mash, adding a fresh touch. A sprinkle of finely chopped parsley garnishes the plate, adding a pop of green. Presented on a square, off-white plate, this dish is not just delicious but also visually appealing, designed to delight both the eye and the palate." Garnishing Lends visual Allure "When it comes to garnishes, I believe in the power of simplicity," tells Chef Amandeep. "Fresh herbs like cilantro and microgreens add a burst of colour and flavour without overwhelming the dish. A delicate sprinkle of sea salt or a drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate even the simplest of presentations," he says. Likewise for Chef Sandeep, it is important to give vitality to the dish with microgreens or herbs and add a touch of elegance and beauty through edible flowers. "Show off the dish and keep room for theatrics," is his mantra. Gerwin D'souza, Pastry Sous Chef, The St Regis Goa Resort feels, "Perhaps a swirl of sauce, a fine scattering of berries to enhance. At our Italian restaurant, Oliveto, we serve tiramisu in a glass to show off the varied layering. To add that extra flair, we place a spoon made of solid chocolate on it. Now that's my style of garnishing. That expression of my diners at the first look of tiramisu says it all." Chefs Are Artists Too Who says we deck up our plates just because we are going through an era of social media, ask chefs. Plating as an art satisfies the aesthetic sense of creativity within us, they say. "The artist in me likes the Free Form or keeping the plating abstract," opines Chef Anshul Dhyani, Executive Chef ITC Grand Central, adding that "Not giving a



Chef Amandeep Singh



Executive Chef Anshul Dhyani



Sandeep Kalra



Gerwin D'souza



Chef Subhankar Chitrakar

complemented by the raisins and apple puree. The dish has been plated in a free flow manner. All the ingredients are plated in a way that they all stand out and no single ingredient overshadows the other one. All the colours and textures are preserved and no ingredient loses its individuality but together bring about a complete culinary harmony." "Indeed I am an artist," says Chef Aashutosh Shende, Executive Sous Chef of Paper Moon, Taj Fort Aguada Resort Spa. "For instance in my dish Tagliolini with Pesto Sauce and Pine Nuts, I treat the white plate as my blank canvas, the green pesto sauce is my vibrant paint. The green pesto sauce offers a colour palette to create a visually stunning composition on a white plate."



Composition of the dish is the king and arrangement is the key. Swirling the pesto in an artistic flourish and strategically placing the elements for balance and contrast. I build height with rolling the pasta around a large fork and then slide it on the plate. This gives not only clean lines but also height to the dish, techniques used by both chefs and artists. I express my personality and my expressions through my plating. I am not a fan of bold or dramatic swirls and many colours on my plate; I prefer a simple bed for a wild abstract masterpiece for my Tagliolini." He has more to add: "I like to sign every dish that goes out of my kitchen and, as such, a final flourish on food plating has my signature. It could be a sprinkle of fresh herbs, in this case in particular a drizzle of balsamic reduction and a scattering of toasted pine nuts. These finishing touches showcase my creation from a meal to a work of art."

"I work in a bakery which can be at times devoid of human interaction and through my bakery items I express myself," says Chef Subhankar Chitrakar from Bakery of Taj Holiday Village Resort Spa, Goa. Citing an example of his dish, Caramel Porto, he tells, "This rich, decadent dessert - Caramel Porto - presents a fantastic opportunity every time to pique my inner artist. Considering the portion size -- if it is a single serving I prefer a small dessert plate with a rim, for four portions I choose a shallow bowl or couple glass which allows for beautiful layering. Choosing whether to keep the same colour or play a colour contrast game, I prefer a white plate to enhance the various hues of caramel. Sometimes I do use a dark plate to create a dramatic backdrop for a glistening sauce. Considering the overall mood of the diner a classic white plate offers timeless elegance and on the other hand a more colourful bowl would add a touch of casual charm. I am not afraid to add a delicate web like swirl for a touch of whimsy. Or for a bolder statement, a thicker controlled pour creates a dramatic centre piece. Go ahead and experiment with what's at hand, add a spring of fresh mint or a sprinkle of chopped nuts or a dusting cocoa powder to add pops of colour and flavour like a bold brushstroke. I am an artist and this is my soul that I bare through my Caramel Porto."

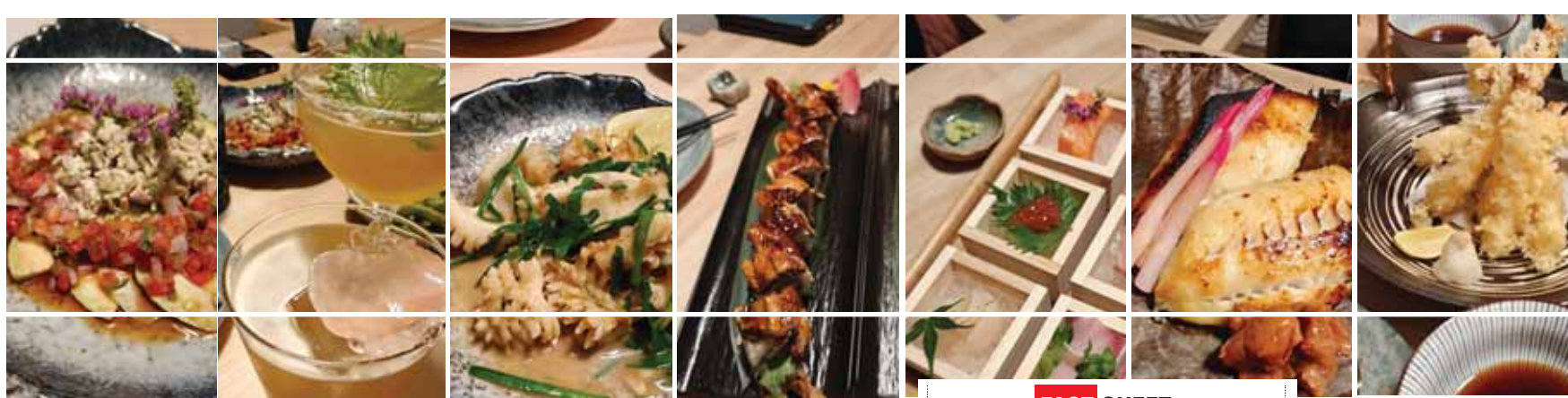
Author Intro: Sharmila Chand is an Author and Freelance Journalist who writes on Food, Travel, Lifestyle, Art and Wellness. She can be reached at chand.sharmila@gmail.com.

FOOD TRENDS

Falling in Love with Japanese cuisine

At Shin'ya, an Izakaya-inspired resto-bar at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, is drawing crowds because of the evident attention to detail and its commitment to source the best and freshest ingredients possible for a hearty Japanese meal, says **PAWAN SONI**

Japanese cuisine is winning hearts across the Indian community, and it is no surprise why. The dishes are light, nutritious, and packed with flavoUrs, thanks to ingredients like seaweed, soy, and seafood. The freshness of these ingredients is crucial, leading to high prices for premium seafood and fruits in Japan and sold in auctions. In India, particularly in the North, seafood is not as accessible due to the lack of coastline. However, logistics can ensure a steady, fresh supply. During my recent visit to Shin'ya, the new Japanese restaurant at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, I was impressed by the quality of the ingredients used. At Shin'ya, attention to detail is evident from the freshly grated wasabi to the sashimi made from yellowfin tuna, a step above the commonly used bluefin tuna. Sonale Zagade, Hyatt Regency's dynamic General Manager,



emphasised their commitment to sourcing the best ingredients, recalling her personal involvement in tasting each one before finalising. With seating for around 45 guests, this Izakaya-inspired resto-bar, with its light and minimalistic

decor, is perfect for small gatherings. On the recommendation of Shashwat Prasad, Shin'ya's mixologist, I started with a gari-infused bourbon mixed with yuzu juice and honey water. This mild drink perfectly set the tone for the

evening. The avocado carpaccio, chosen for my wife's vegetarian preference, was appreciated by both of us. The buttery avocado with caramelized onions, ponzu, and tomato salsa made a delightful start, while I enjoyed one of the lightest and crunchiest

FACT SHEET
Food: 4.5/5 | Drinks: 4.5/5 | Service: 4.5/5 | Ambience: 4.0/5 | Overall: 4.5/5
Address: Shin'ya, Hyatt Regency, NH48, Sector 83, Gurugram
Phone: 9355816517
Meal for Two: INR 4000 + Taxes
Timing: 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM (Monday to Saturday), 12 Noon to 9:00 PM (Sundays)

prawn tempuras. Coated with a bit of potato starch and accompanied by a miso daikon dip, these were among the best prawn tempuras I've ever tasted. Each dish, from the selection of sashimi to sushi, was special. Apart from the Japanese fare,

Shin'ya also offers a small mix of Korean and Asian dishes. I tried the Korean-style sautéed garlic butter squids and prawn gyoza dumplings, each dish telling a unique story. Another cocktail, the Houji tea-infused tequila with agave nectar topped with fresh shiso leaf, further demonstrated the mixologist's expertise. Both food and drinks at Shin'ya are crafted to ensure guest delight. My meal concluded with the robata-grilled miso black cod. The silky pieces of fish, with slight charred edges, contrasted beautifully with the buttery flavours and pickled plum. Shin'ya stands out for its high-quality ingredients and expertly prepared classic dishes. This restaurant is definitely one to watch in 2024.

— Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com

WHEN A CULTURE HAS FALLEN TOTALLY AWAY FROM SPIRITUAL PURSUITS INTO MATERIALISM, ONE MUST BEGIN BY DEMONSTRATING THEY ARE EACH A SOUL, NOT A MATERIAL ANIMAL
— L RON HUBBARD

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week, your focus gravitates toward finances, business, and material wealth. You possess the astuteness of a monarch, making shrewd decisions that promise advantageous outcomes. Property investments yield profitable returns, adding to your financial prosperity. Entrepreneurs, investors, and landlords witness an influx of wealth, a testament to your diligent efforts. Opportunities abound, presenting themselves unexpectedly, accompanied by enticing remuneration packages. Your preference for electronic communication stems from a bustling schedule, leaving little time for face-to-face interactions. Towards the week's end, a spiritual inclination emerges, prompting acts of devotion, charitable deeds, and assistance to the less fortunate. Exercise caution in monetary transactions during this period to safeguard your assets. Your intuitive sense serves as a guiding force, ensuring financial stability amidst dynamic circumstances.

Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Brown
Lucky day Sunday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

During the initial days of the week, your confidence radiates brightly, illuminating your endeavors with a promising glow. Projects initiated the previous week are now flourishing, guided by your dedicated efforts. Support from loved ones serves as a vital source of motivation, empowering you to excel further. Collaborative ventures are poised to yield favorable outcomes. However, exercise caution as the week progresses, as adversaries may attempt to disrupt your plans. Flexibility is essential, as unexpected changes in familial commitments may arise. Attend to pressing matters promptly, prioritizing both your health and financial affairs. A thorough medical evaluation is advised, alongside prudent financial management to avert potential monetary strains. Vigilance in monetary transactions is paramount, ensuring fiscal stability amidst potential budgetary constraints looming ahead.

Lucky number 2 | **Lucky colour** Grey
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You exhibit generosity and kindness, particularly in your expenditure towards spiritual endeavors. The inclination towards charity and donations reflects your compassionate nature. Financial considerations may arise concerning the higher education of your children, amidst other familial concerns demanding attention. This phase prompts an understanding of life's equilibrium. Implementing structured approaches and conscientious work ethics becomes crucial in fulfilling your obligations. Legal matters may find resolution in your favor, bringing relief. The week's end promises moments of joy, with anticipated positive news finally arriving. Possibilities of relocation or desired transfers, including changes in workplace dynamics, could manifest during this period. Your reputation as a diligent worker enhances within your social circles, reinforcing your industrious image.

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



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may experience a sense of sluggishness in the progression of your tasks. Despite your efforts in various projects and ventures, tangible results may seem elusive. Patience becomes paramount during this period. Embrace the analogy of a farmer diligently sowing seeds, nurturing plants, and awaiting the harvest. Rest assured, your endeavors will bear fruit in due time. Midweek, anticipate unexpected shifts. Financial inflows from diverse channels could boost your resources. Some may embark on work-related journeys, potentially leading to favorable placements. Loans or debts owed are likely to be settled promptly. Towards the week's end, a tendency towards fanciful thinking and indulgence may emerge, clouding your focus on practical goals. Loved ones may gently guide you back to a grounded perspective, steering you away from excessive materialism and towards meaningful aspirations.

Lucky number 14 | **Lucky colour** White
Lucky day Friday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, your keen intellect and analytical nature will be pivotal in navigating a significant phase. Whether it's a personal or professional matter, your wisdom will guide you to its resolution. Opportunities may arise, such as job offers or promising assignments, promising a positive shift in your trajectory. However, amid progress, you may require some form of healing or medical assistance. While initial relief is experienced, later in the week, vulnerability resurfaces, potentially stemming from emotional wounds. It's important to acknowledge and address these sensitivities, as ignoring them could exacerbate tensions, especially within familial dynamics. Taking time to rest and recharge becomes imperative, as a sound mind is intrinsically linked to a healthy body. Prioritize self-care to ensure holistic well-being amidst life's fluctuations.

Lucky number 10 | **Lucky colour** Teal
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

The week kicks off with a jubilant atmosphere, marking the successful completion of tasks, a wedding, or a celebratory promotion. Joyous moments with loved ones ensue. Midweek, you exhibit initiative and strong determination, empowering you to tackle challenges with wisdom and focus. A pilgrimage to a sacred place is indicated, offering solace and clarity amidst life's uncertainties. As the week winds down, prudent financial management becomes paramount. Feeling the pinch, you realize the importance of mindful spending. Seeking assistance from loved ones or considering loans may be necessary. It's a timely reminder to assess finances, devising a budget to navigate through this phase with prudence and foresight. The week culminates with a reminder that diligent saving today ensures financial stability tomorrow, urging you to prioritize fiscal responsibility and long-term financial planning.

Lucky number 12 | **Lucky colour** Green
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week brings a multitude of fluctuations for individuals, encompassing both highs and lows. Commencing on a joyful note, familial bonds bring immense delight, accompanied by robust health and a surge of creativity. Novel opportunities, both career-wise and financially, manifest, potentially originating from distant places. Domestic felicity graces homes with auspicious ceremonies. As the week progresses, a shift in circumstances prompts contemplation of necessary alterations in lifestyle, work routine, or dietary habits, fostering the groundwork for a brighter future. Financial scrutiny and health maintenance become imperative, with attention directed towards tax obligations, financial transactions, and healthcare concerns as the week draws to a close. Additionally, charitable endeavors may beckon, urging individuals to extend their generosity towards noble causes.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Purple
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Beware of unseen forces casting shadows upon your path. Maintain integrity and fairness to ward off negativity. Deceptive influences may threaten your peace, urging caution in all dealings. Guard against entanglements born of secrecy or temptation, as they could lead to unforeseen complications. Midweek signals a shift in perspective, prompting profound changes in your beliefs and actions. Embrace this transformation, finding newfound clarity and structure. Show concern for loved ones, particularly siblings and family friends, as their well-being weighs heavily on your mind. Children hold a pivotal role in your heart, demanding your attention and care. As the week draws to a close, embark on a journey of spiritual discovery, finding strength and resolve to confront life's trials head-on.

Lucky number 7 | **Lucky colour** Olive
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

The week commences with challenges looming ahead. Despite hurdles in your project or assignment, you may feel inclined to abandon your efforts at times. Yet, an inner resilience propels you forward, transforming you into a determined warrior ready to confront any obstacle. Eventually, triumph awaits, bringing a sense of fulfillment. Midweek heralds a wave of positivity touching various aspects of your life – from financial gains to domestic harmony and even your children's academic success. Some may secure promising job opportunities, enhancing financial stability. Fueled by creativity and enthusiasm, your week becomes dynamic, prompting thoughts of leisurely excursions. Towards the week's end, a spiritual awakening unfolds, drawing you towards communal prayers and religious contemplation, nurturing your spiritual journey.

Lucky number 19 | **Lucky colour** Magenta
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week brings a sense of gratitude and optimism, promising various blessings and positive experiences. You'll begin with deepening connections in your relationship, experiencing mutual understanding and emotional closeness. Spiritual pursuits will also be fulfilling, allowing you to focus on personal growth and enlightenment. However, as the week progresses, you may encounter moments of doubt or temptation, stirring up inner conflicts. Yet, there are subtle signs and intuitive messages guiding you towards balance and resolution. Towards the week's end, creativity will flourish, offering opportunities for both financial and emotional growth. Business ventures will pick up pace, bringing in increased income. Additionally, joy and satisfaction through familial bonds, particularly with children, are indicated. There's even potential for the joyous news of a new addition to the family or the prospect of conception.

Lucky number 4 | **Lucky colour** Maroon
Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you may find yourself deeply absorbed in personal agendas, potentially overlooking promising opportunities. Your focus could be introspective, with a tendency towards self-absorption. Despite this, you'll maintain a certain level of interaction, primarily through digital means like internet chats and phone calls. Around midweek, a surge of creativity may connect you with influential individuals who could offer assistance in financial matters. Expect stable finances and a desire to savor life's pleasures across various domains. Property transactions might feature towards the week's end. Nurturing relationships with both in-laws and parents is advisable, while children may require your attention. Some may embark on brief trips to their place of origin. Domestic discussions could prove beneficial, fostering harmony within the household.

Lucky number 13 | **Lucky colour** Black
Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Overextending your investments may lead to anxiety as desired outcomes remain elusive. Sleep eludes you amidst worry and uncertainty, especially in the initial days. However, a shift occurs for Pisces midweek, ushering in a period of divine favor and potential financial windfalls. Your innate kindness and generosity come to the fore, alongside a spirit of charity. The week favors career-oriented women, equipped to handle their myriad responsibilities with grace and strength. A maternal or sisterly presence brings auspicious influences, emphasizing the importance of familial blessings for progress. Consider reconnecting with your mother, spouse, or elder sister for their guidance and support. Travel prospects brighten, promising fulfillment and satisfaction ahead.

Lucky number 8 | **Lucky colour** Orange
Lucky day Wednesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Don't take things on face value



What are destiny prospects of my son? When is his career breakthrough due? He is already 27, and yet not settled. When he was born, many astrologers had declared in one voice that he will make it big in life and make me proud. Their observation was based on five markers: Jupiter conjunct Moon in lagna sign Leo forming Gajakeshari Yoga; the lagna lord Sun in the 11th house identified with fulfilment of desires; Destiny indicating 9th lord Mars in the 9th house itself; 10th and 3rd lord Venus in the 11th house; and Karmic Saturn in its own sign. How comes that with so many positive indicators in his chart, he has not been able to move in life? Of late, in his state of frustration, his behaviour has become erratic, sometimes difficult to bear with. Meanwhile, I got many pujas done as suggested by the pundits but in vain. As a mother, driven by hope against hope, I am making the last attempt to know if you could suggest some workable remedial measure."

too individually. They did not take note of their nakshatra modification and inter-planetary alignments. They won't visualise negative roles played by Uranus and Neptune either. They have yet not acknowledged their relevance simply because they don't find mention in our ancient texts. Perhaps not having exposure to energy principles of creation, they treat the planets as divine celestial objects believed to be defining our destiny in finite terms and that too individually. These cosmic bodies, on the contrary, are energy-balls marked with energy streams passing through a particular region. All these energies put together frame our destiny. They, thus, failed to take a synthetic view of his chart, and so could not read his personality traits with precision. True, Jupiter and Moon when conjunct form Gajakeshari Yoga. It, however, just implies having a fertile imaginative mind, which gets further augmented because Jupiter is also beautifully aligned to Uranus and Neptune. Consequently, he may come out with big ideas, apparently carrying gainful prospects. Their translation

into fruits will, however, depend on how efficiently and sincerely he works towards that end. In this respect, even Jupiter the lord of 5th house (pleasure pursuits) as well as 8th (pains and sufferings) plays a dampener. That often drives him crazy with pleasure motive, which by itself is enough to make him susceptible to become a victim of his own making.

Now his overall personality traits. Being born on 5th lunar day, he would be comfort loving, not keen to take challenges. The two luminaries, the Sun and Moon are ill-disposed off to erratic Uranus and mischievous Neptune, both posited in the 5th house. It, in the first place, implies that he lives in an ivory tower of his delusory self-beliefs and perceptions, mostly distanced from ground realities. He would not be open to look beyond for better option if any available. Second, he may not acknowledge truth on its first appearance. Rather driven by a sense of hope against hope, continue to passionately pursue his fanciful dreams perceptions till pushed to the wall. Third, he seems to be a schemer, who, applying his mischievous mind may wish to have gains without pains. Fourth, he is temperamental, who may consciously throw tantrums to force his way. On top of that, Venus identified with finance and pleasure pursuit too is opposed to Uranus and Neptune. It implies that for fulfilment of his pleasure motive, he may wish to have quick monetary gains, even if it

implies taking resort to unethical means. It also makes his character questionable. Mars placed adverse to Mercury and Saturn implies that he is restless, lacks focus, who may keep moving unthinkingly in life, and with obvious consequences. He appears to be a habitual liar. Inherently revengeful by nature, which comes into full play if ever denied what he is asking for. In the heat of moment, he won't hesitate even hurting the elders. Had these traits been identified early, timely corrective initiatives would have been possible. From the above analysis, it is clear, the root of the problem is firmly grounded in his mind. So, only such remedial measure can work as would correct the thought process by absorbing fresh educative inputs. A person can himself do that under the guidance of a Guru. It is difficult to digest that transactional puja mediated by a pundit could invade the person's mind space for necessary correction. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com