

OPINION 6

ZERO-WATER DAY IS  
HIGH IN BENGALURU

WORLD 8

BIDEN, TRUMP WIN LOUISIANA  
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

MONEY 10

FPIS INFUSE OVER ₹38,000  
CRORE IN EQUITIES IN MARCH

NEW DELHI, MONDAY MARCH 25, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

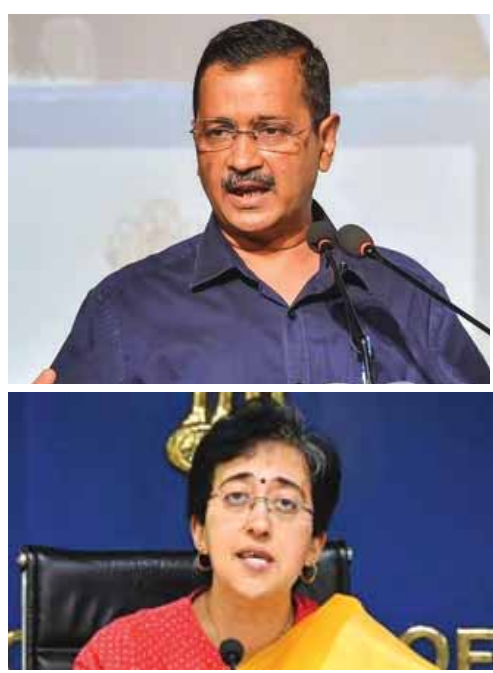


RCB EYE BETTER  
OUTING FROM  
BOWLERS  
12 SPORTS

# Defiant Kejriwal to Work from Jail

RAJESH KUMAR ■  
NEW DELHI

A row has erupted amid the debate on whether AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal can continue to work as Chief Minister from prison as the national Capital ruling party claimed that Kejriwal has issued his first order to the Government, instructing Water Minister Atishi to solve water and sewer related problems in some areas of the city, while being in Enforcement Directorate custody. While the BJP remarked that the situation has played a biggest mockery on the citizens as how can a person holding a Constitutional post "run" a Government being in a custody as an accused in multi crore liquor-gate scam. "I have come to know that a few areas of Delhi have been facing problems related to water and sewerage, that is why I am worried because I am in jail and because of that people of Delhi should not face any problem. Summer is also coming...where there is a shortage of water, deploy water tankers in sufficient quantity and give orders to the Chief Secretary and officers so that the public does not face any trouble. Immediate and appropriate solution should be taken to address the public's problem," Kejriwal said in a note to Atishi.



According to jail manual, an inmate can only hold two meetings in a week, which would make it difficult for Kejriwal to carry out his responsibilities as Chief Minister. The only measure that could facilitate Kejriwal's governance from within the confinement was if he was put under house arrest. The Lieutenant Governor has the power to convert any building into a prison, and if Kejriwal can convince him to put him under house arrest - it would

help him be a part of the Delhi Government's day-to-day functioning. The Enforcement Directorate has taken cognisance of Delhi minister Atishi's statement that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal sent her directions from the agency's custody to initiate the public welfare works related to water and sewerage, official sources said on Sunday. Sources the ED will conduct an investigation to ascertain if these directions from the arrested chief

minister were in line with the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court's order issued to the ED and Kejriwal during his custody period. AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi praised Kejriwal for issuing directions pertaining to the Delhi Government's water department while being in ED custody. Later addressing a press conference, Atishi said the directions, received late on Saturday, brought tears to her eyes with Kejriwal showing concern for the people of Delhi despite his own plight. "Arvind Kejriwal ji has sent me a letter and a direction. On reading it, I was in tears. I kept thinking who is this man, who is in prison, but is still thinking about Delhi residents' water and sewerage problems. Only Arvind Kejriwal can do this because he considers himself a family member of Delhi's two crore people," she said. "Who thinks like this even in a situation? Even from jail, he is a person who is thinking about the people of Delhi," she said. The Chief Minister also directed for deploying enough water tankers in areas where there is scarcity to strengthen supply ahead of the approaching summer months, Atishi said. Taking a dig at Kejriwal and Atishi, Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari hit out at Kejriwal, calling his instruction from ED custody to the Water Minister scripted and his arrest a cause of celebration for the people of the city. "In ED's custody there is a culprit and taking his reference today a script has been written that water and sewer-related facilities in Delhi are disorganised."

## INDIA Bloc set to rally for Delhi CM

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■  
NEW DELHI

Demonstrating the strength and unity of the Opposition, INDIA alliance parties—Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the left parties—have announced to hold a "maha rally" at Delhi Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal to "safeguard the country's interests and democracy". "We will hold a 'maha rally' at Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against what is happening in the country. The top leadership of the INDIA bloc will participate in the event," Delhi Minister and AAP's Delhi convenor Gopal Rai during a press conference on Sunday said. The Minister asserted that India's democracy is in danger following the arrest of Kejriwal in the alleged excise policy-linked money-laundering case by Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday night from his official residence. "Democracy and the



Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc leaders  
Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

country are in danger. All the INDIA bloc parties will hold this 'maha rally' to safeguard the country's interests and democracy," Rai added. The Congress' Delhi unit chief Arvinder Singh Lovely alleged that Opposition parties are not being given a level playing field and highlighted the freezing of his party's accounts and the arrest of the Delhi CM as events which show hampering democracy and stifling Opposition during elections time. Calling the rally as a call to safeguard the country's

democracy, Lovely added, "The March 31 'maha rally' will not only be a political one but a call to save the country's democracy and raise voices against the BJP-led Centre." The Opposition leaders from the INDIA bloc have also met Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar regarding the issue ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024. The delegation comprised leaders from the Congress, the TMC, the CPM, the Aam Aadmi Party, DMK, NCP, SP and Samajwadi Party.

Continued on Page 2



Former IAF chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, former MP Varaprasad Rao join BJP in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur  
Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

## Fresh soldiers join the BJP electoral army

Party Announces 5th list: Naveen Jindal, Former IAF Chief RKS Bhadauria, Kangana, Arun Govil

RAJESH KUMAR ■  
NEW DELHI

Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, Actor Arun Govil who played Ram in popular TV serial Ramayan, former judge of Calcutta High Court, Justice Abhijit Ganguly, and Industrial Navin Jindal (who resigned from the Congress today) are figured in the BJP's fifth list of candidates for seats in 16 States for the Lok Sabha elections, released on Sunday. BJP sitting MPs Varun Gandhi, Union Ministers General VK Singh (Retd), Anant Kumar Hegde and Ashwini Chowbey are among those who have been dropped for the Lok Sabha polls. There has been no announcement on embattled MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the former chief of the Wrestling Federation of India. Industrialist and former Congress MP Naveen Jindal, who joined the BJP today, has been fielded from the Kurukshetra seat in Haryana. Jindal who quit the Congress and joined the BJP on Sunday, represented Kurukshetra constituency in Lok Sabha between 2004-14 as a Congress MP, said he wants to contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's agenda of "Viksit Bharat". Jindal further stated that the dream of having a Ram temple in Ayodhya has also been realised. Actor Arun Govil, who played Ram in popular TV serial Ramayan, has been



command's decision on contesting Lok Sabha polls. I feel honoured and elated to officially join the party. I look forward to be a worthy karyakarta and a reliable public servant," Kangana Ranaut posted on X. In 2022, Ranaut said she has a keen interest in politics but has no plans to enter it professionally. The news of Ranaut taking the political plunge comes months after she hinted at entering electoral politics when she offered prayers at Gujarat's Dwarkadhish temple in November 2023. As part of the fifth list, a total of 111 candidates have been fielded for seats in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim, Odisha, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh. The party gave Lok Sabha ticket to former judge of Calcutta High Court, Justice Abhijit Ganguly, from Tamluk. He is the first retired judge to join electoral politics, moving away from the way the judiciary has so far distanced itself. Arjun Singh and Tapas Roy, who recently rejoined the BJP from the TMC, will contest the Barrackpore and Kolkata North seats respectively. Senior leader K Surendran will contest against Rahul Gandhi from Kerala's Wayanad.

Former Congress MP Naveen Jindal joins BJP on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We are yet to finalise the seats and others have started extensive campaigning. The only hopes of INDIA bloc of doing good were from Bihar and Maharashtra— has hit a roadblock in the seat sharing dialogue between all the stakeholders of the Opposition alliance INDIA bloc. Congress is reluctant to "accept" the "diktat" of RJD offers of merely six/seven seats in the 40 Parliamentary constituencies of Bihar. "This is perennial problem in Congress which is not ready to accept its diminishing size. Nitish Kumar (JDU leader and Bihar CM), Mamata Banerjee (TMC supreme and West Bengal CM) exited from the INDIA bloc all due to Congress big brother attitude. Had the alliance worked it would have been in a position to hold the juggernaut of

## Further fissures in Opposition alliance against BJP

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We are yet to finalise the seats and others have started extensive campaigning. The only hopes of INDIA bloc of doing good were from Bihar and Maharashtra— has hit a roadblock in the seat sharing dialogue between all the stakeholders of the Opposition alliance INDIA bloc. Congress is reluctant to "accept" the "diktat" of RJD offers of merely six/seven seats in the 40 Parliamentary constituencies of Bihar. "This is perennial problem in Congress which is not ready to accept its diminishing size. Nitish Kumar (JDU leader and Bihar CM), Mamata Banerjee (TMC supreme and West Bengal CM) exited from the INDIA bloc all due to Congress big brother attitude. Had the alliance worked it would have been in a position to hold the juggernaut of

Former Bihar Congress president Anil Sharma and former party MP Nikhil Kumar also taken on the RJD chief over the "unilateral seat-sharing decision" for first-phase seats and he also objected to incumbent BPC chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh's decision to invite Lalu to the state Congress's office in Patna. Another decision of the RJD that is said to have rubbed the Congress the wrong way is to allocate Begusarai to the CPI. CPI general secretary D Raja who recently met Lalu and Tejaswini Yadav has announced Awadhesh Rai's candidature from the seat. Similarly in Maharashtra too, the INDIA bloc which held a massive show of strength in Mumbai last week where all its alliance top leaders — Rahul Gandhi, Sharad Pawar, Tejaswini Yadav, Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti— were present.



File Photo: PTI

electoral politics, has already announced its candidates for 19 constituencies, Congress candidates were in the fray from nine. The rest of the seats went to the RLS of Uppendra Kushwaha, the Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) of Mukesh Sahani, and the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) of Jitan Ram Manjhi. Both Kushwaha and Manjhi are now part of NDA.

Continued on Page 2

## Dogs conjure up images while following verbal commands

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Known to respond to command words such as "sit", dogs have now been found to conjure up mental representations when they hear known words referring to objects such as a ball, according to a new research that analysed their brain activity. The researchers said it did not matter how many object words a dog understood —known words activated mental representations anyway. This suggested that the ability is generally present in dogs and not just in some exceptional canines knowing the names of many objects, they said. "Your dog understands more than he or she shows signs of," said Lilla Magyari from Hungary's Eötvös Loránd University and co-first author of the study published in the "Current Biology" journal. "Dogs are not merely learning a specific behaviour to certain words but they might actually understand the meaning of some individual words as humans do," Magyari said. The finding that dogs may have



brain's electrical activity was measured. The brain activity recordings showed differences in patterns when the dogs were shown matching objects against those when shown non-matching ones, the researchers said and added that this was evidence of dogs understanding words. They also found a greater difference in the brain activity patterns for words that the dogs knew better. While the team also thought that dogs' ability to understand words depended on them having a large vocabulary of object words, the results showed otherwise. "Because typical dogs learn instruction words rather than object names, and there are only a handful of dogs with a large vocabulary of object words, we expected that dogs' capacity for referential understanding of object words will be linked to the number of object words they know; but it wasn't," said Magyari. The researchers now want to know if this ability to understand words through mental representations is specific to dogs or is present in other mammals as well.

the pioneer

WISHES ITS READERS

HAPPY Holi

The offices of The Pioneer will remain closed on March 25. The next edition will be available to the readers on March 27











www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Black & White

### The Congress seeks SC-monitored probe for transparency in the Electoral Bonds issue

The controversy around the now-scrapped Electoral Bonds just refuses to die down. A day after the political funding data was made public, activists demanded an independent Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe all aspects of the scheme. The Congress has already upped the ante; the debate has been reignited as the party presses for a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the alleged malpractices surrounding these financial instruments. Accusations of “pre-paid, post-paid and post-raid bribes” have intensified the clamour for transparency and accountability in the electoral financing system. Electoral Bonds, introduced in 2018 ostensibly to promote transparency in political funding, allow individuals and corporations to donate money anonymously to political parties. Targeted at curbing the use of black money in elections, these bonds have faced criticism since inception, primarily over their potential to facilitate unaccounted donations and influence peddling. Despite ensuring transparency, they are said to be tools for bribing one political party or the other. The Congress alleges that the bonds have become conduits for illegal transactions, facilitating the flow of unaccounted funds to political parties. The use of terms like “pre-paid, post-paid and post-raid bribes” reflects the suspicion that these bonds have been exploited not only to fund political campaigns but also to influence policy decisions through backdoor dealings. The call for a Supreme Court-monitored investigation underscores the lack of faith in the existing mechanisms for oversight and regulation of electoral finances. Somewhere, the Congress has apprehensions that the party in power may be able to influence the



probe. The Congress, along with other Opposition groups, contends that any inquiry conducted under the Government’s auspices would lack impartiality and could be subject to manipulation. The absence of disclosure requirements regarding the identity of donors compounds concerns about accountability and opens the door to potential misuse of funds. Furthermore, recent raids conducted by law enforcement agencies on premises linked to certain political entities have brought to light a web of dubious financial transactions allegedly involving electoral bonds. The controversy underscores broader concerns about the influence of money in politics and the need for robust mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in electoral financing. While proponents argue that such instruments are essential for sustaining political parties and facilitating democratic processes, critics contend that the lack of transparency compromises the integrity of the electoral system. The Supreme Court’s intervention in this matter could prove pivotal in restoring public trust in the electoral process. The judiciary can help ensure that the electoral process remains free from undue influence and corruption. Only through a thorough and impartial investigation can the truth be unearthed, and measures be implemented to safeguard the democratic principles upon which the nation’s governance rests.

### PICTALK



Women perform rituals in preparation of 'Holika Dahar' on the eve of Holi festival, in Patna

# Zero-water day is nigh in Bengaluru



KOTA SRIRAJ

### India stands on the precipice of a dire situation as its water reservoirs dwindle and cities like Bengaluru face a looming Day Zero scenario

The World Water Day (WWD) 2024 coordinated by UN-Water was observed on 22 March. The WWD event every year aims at inspiring action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of WWD is to enable the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 which stands for enabling access to clean water and sanitation for all by 2030. This year’s WWD’s theme “Water for Peace” focuses on the critical role of water in ensuring stability and prosperity of the world. Water is a precious resource that covers 70% of our planet, but only 3% of the world’s water is usable fresh water, and even two-thirds of that is in the form of frozen glaciers and therefore unavailable for use. India is witnessing a rather grim WWD eve this year. According to the latest Central Water Commission (CWC) report, more than half of India’s 150 major water reservoirs are having less than 40% inventory. Patchy rainfall due to El Niño has caused nearly 60% of the country to experience inadequate rainfall coupled with this the spiralling demand for water due to increasing population has meant rampant and reckless exploitation of available water resources.

These conditions aided by the upcoming summer months are paving the way for a never before water crisis India has ever seen. This possible squeeze on drinking water may also adversely impact power availability this summer. Water is the most precious and yet most taken-for-granted resource in the world. Currently, some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. At the present consumption rate, this situation will only get worse. India currently has 18 per cent of the world’s population, but only 4 per cent of its water resources, making it among the most water-stressed nations in the world. As India finds itself amid an unfolding water crisis, the stress is becoming more visible with each passing year. The extreme water shortages in Bangalore for instance is an unfortunate exam-



ple of how on the eve of WWD the garden city has turned into a drought city. The situation is so dire that families only have access to 20 litres of water per day as 6900 borewells out of 13900 total borewells in the city have dried up. Now even drilling up to 2000 feet is not yielding any water. The worst water crisis in the last 40 years has driven up water tanker prices, encouraged black marketing and ignited water conflicts across the once-beautiful city. For a city that is on the brink of Day Zero, the WWD’s theme of “Water for Peace” holds ironic significance for Bengaluru as the city surely needs both water as well as peace now. Day Zero for water has been the most feared consequence of adverse anthropogenic intervention into the environment. The Cape Town water crisis during 2017-2018 is a well-documented example of a city’s touch-and-go with Day Zero wherein the citizens were rationed a fixed number of litres of water per day. The cause of the crisis was severe drought brought on by climate change and a growing exploitation of groundwater. The Bengaluru water crisis must wake up India to the real threat of looming Day Zero for water in its major cities. Already Hyderabad municipal authorities too have sounded alarms over the dwindling groundwater table.



THE SCARCITY OF WATER CAN BRING A CITY’S OR STATE’S ECONOMY TO ITS KNEES. RIDING ON THE PRESENT WATER CRISIS, BENGALURU IS EXPECTED TO WITNESS AN EXODUS OF IT PROFESSIONALS TO NEARBY CITIES THAT HAVE PLENTIFUL WATER SUPPLY

The scarcity of water can bring a city or state’s economy to its knees. Riding on the present water crisis, Bengaluru is expected to witness an exodus of IT professionals to nearby cities that have plentiful water supply. This will not only negatively impact the IT industry but will also stunt the growth of the real estate market, trade and industry. The government must launch special programmes to pull back water-stressed cities in India from the edge of drought. To ensure this the city’s municipal authority must bring borewells under a licensing system and those borewells operating without proper permissions must be sealed. Water meters must be installed for borewells as well to monitor the drawing of water and to rationalise the same. The government must also regulate the drilling companies and make it mandatory for the drillers to obtain permission before the procedure. The city’s concrete landscape also plays a major role in water scarcity. The manifold increase in paved surfaces causes a heat island effect resulting in peaking temperatures, but more importantly, prevents rainwater from percolating into the soil. This causes insufficient water recharges to the underground aquifers and groundwater table. As a result of this, the borewells begin to dry up.

Bengaluru for instance has 90% of its surfaces paved, this is alarming as it means that the rainfall that the city receives is never properly absorbed. The authorities across India must frame rules regarding paved surfaces. The city’s water bodies are its lifelines. In the case of Bangalore for instance the slow death of its lakes over the past decades should have served as a prediction for the impending Day Zero for water. But sadly, the signs were ignored even as the land-grabbing mafia encroached on lake beds and suffocated the critical water bodies. To prevent the abandonment of the city by its people, the government must reclaim its water bodies clear the encroachment and pump water into these lakes as they have played a pivotal role in recharging the city’s underground aquifers forever. Bangalore is probably the first city in India that is on the brink of Day Zero. The government must pull out all stops to rescue the city. The long pending fresh water piped supply project from the Cauvery River has been stuck due to various political and bureaucratic reasons. The metamorphoses of water-scarce conditions to water-absent conditions can be disastrous for our nation. (The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### OPACITY IN ELECTORAL BONDS

Madam — Apropos news article “EC uploads complete electoral bond data,” published on March 22, this is my response. The secrecy surrounding the Electoral Bond Scheme, which was notified in January 2018, is now gone with the complete disclosure of the details about the Electoral Bonds. The “Electoral Bond” was a bearer banking instrument with no name of the buyer or payee. Through the Finance Act of 2017 certain provisions in India’s election law, the Companies Act, and the Income-tax law were amended to keep the Scheme completely opaque. The alphanumeric numbers in the bonds were not to be visible to the naked eye. The Supreme Court ordered that the State Bank of India, the sole designated bank to issue bonds, publish all the details through the Election Commission. The bank furnished the particulars without identifying alphanumeric numbers. The scenes in the court to stop the numbers from being published showed how panicked and desperate the Centre and the industry were. The built-in opacity of the scheme, the desperate attempts to maintain secrecy, the erratic conduct of the SBI, the panicked response of the industry and the ferocity of the government’s opposition to disclosure gave the impression that something was rotten in the state of Denmark. Analysts believe that the Electoral Bond Scheme served as a conduit for the free flow of illicit money, enabling the investigative agencies to engage in motivated actions for extortion, alter the course of court cases, quid-pro-quo award of contracts and supply standard drugs.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

### RECOGNISING ETHICAL DUTY

Madam — Is charity a moral obligation? We have a volunteer obligation to occasionally assist others which implies that we frequently have various options for aiding others. Charity is not a duty

## Best article in national interest

This is in response to Kumar Chellappan’s story on the Agenda cover titled ‘CAA Passport to Freedom’ dated 24 March 2024. I write this to profusely thank you for publishing such a bold and forthright article by Mr Kumar Chellappan ‘Passport to Freedom.’

In the national interest, this is the best article I have seen. The same thing is happening in Uttarakhand and it may become another JK soon. I have been raising these issues here. Please convey my thank you to the writer for a wonderful piece of work. Thanks for such an article.

V K Bahuguna | Noida



but a moral obligation to help until personal sacrifice equates to recipients’ disparity. The decision to do charity is our powerful choice that reflects our commitment to building a better India for everyone. Moral obligation is a sense of responsibility to do what is right. Uniqueness moulds your personality to stand out in the crowd, like doing charity for needy ones, giving donations to poor children for their education, and many more good deeds. The euphoria you feel and the high regard you get are inexplicable. Charity should be a moral duty, not a casual choice.

Jagrati Gehlot | Ujjain

### ROW OVER SANGITA KALANIDHI

Madam — Apropos news article “Carnatic singers outraged over honour to Krishna,” published on March 22, this is my response. The row over the selection of vocalist T M Krishna for this year’s Sangita Kalanidhi by the Music Academy, Chennai, is needless. The honour for Mr Krishna must be seen solely from the perspective of his musi-

cal skills, his strict adherence to tradition, and for using Carnatic music as a tool for social reform. The allegations made by a set of musicians like, Mr. Krishna have “vilified the Carnatic music fraternity” cannot be a chief reason to oppose the selection. The Ramon Magsaysay award winner, in his efforts to obliterate caste elitism in the existing Carnatic music system, has been taking it outside the hallowed portals of Chennai city’s prestigious Sabhas and creating more inclusive egalitarian space, where people of all communities, irrespective of caste and creed, come together and listen and enjoy his music. Where were these complainants and what were they doing when the prestigious Kalakshethra Bharathanatyam Foundation was mired in controversy last year, involving allegations of sexual abuse and discrimination?

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Life’s palette: Colours to illuminate existence

### In a world where words often fall short, colours emerge as an untapped avenue for communication, evoking emotions and thoughts



HARISH BARTHWAL

Communicate one must, to share or just to unburden oneself. Else one may cease to stay alive and kicking. Yet communication, with known modalities of gestures and words has never been an issue. It is so because both of these have limitations. The less explored is the application of colours to convey thoughts, feelings and emotions that come in myriad shades and hues. Colours speak when gestures and words betray, something Nature does with masterly finesse. In the countryside, I recently chanced to witness intriguing yellow flowers with red patches towards the centre and dark violet bands along the periphery. A miraculously impressive colour pattern mesmerising the eyes. “Colour! What a deep and mysterious language, the language of dreams,” said Paul Gauguin. Human beings are not destined to lead a drab life engrossed with ratiocinations, value judgements or analytics of what goes around or will, with heads down but to live with ease, spontaneity, relishing each moment. With colour, you stand out and

shine. Be colourful. The world needs your prismatic soul, said the media person Amy Leigh Mercee. So, Nature created colours; all in nature is in colours for a purpose. It is colours that imbue our otherwise drab routine with vibrancy and optimism. “Colours are the smiles of Nature,” said Leigh Hunt. Let the scientists and philosophers argue whether colour is a physical entity defined by the visual effect of light refracting and reflecting due to varied frequency & wavelengths of diverse colours, or just an individual perception, anything in colour makes better sense. Colours also help keep our body, mind and spirits in healthy mode so that we can live fully. “The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most,” said John Ruskin. The 5000-odd years old abstract art tradition of Rangoli of South Indian origin, still popular, is the art of saying it with colours. Among believers of any description,

colours are widely used apropos to religious or other occasions. Rangoli is also integral to the inaugural ceremonies of scientific, engineering, and cultural meets; followers of different sects have distinctively coloured dress codes. The outsiders of main entrances are often, if not daily, decorated with Rangoli of various hues made of powdered rice, flower petals, leaves, sand, sugar etc. Coloured designs of Rangoli and other figures represent an array of diverse human sentiments and ratiocinations. The circles of Rangoli symbolise eternity, the dots and small lines depict the hurdles creeping into our lives unawares. The ambience around Rangoli is believed to be charged with energy, ushering in positive vibes, and good luck, and keeping the negative, evil spirits at bay. A look at the rainbow in the sky, the Nature’s exquisite colour pattern, made the bard’s heart leap up. Most in our strife-torn world direly await a healing touch. If you



could become a rainbow in someone’s cloud, as suggested by Maya Angelou, it would be a great, very meaningful life indeed. Artists and thinkers often compare the world with a canvas, and life with a box of crayons makes great sense. “With color one obtains an energy that seems to stem from witchcraft” said Henri Matisse, the leading proponent of modern art. Each of us is an energy pack of enormous possibilities that we rarely understand. In keeping with our destination, and optimally using discretion, we can give a shiny, dull or any colour to our life; it is one’s individual choice. This Holi, ignore for a while the propriety of playing with colours with or without song & dance. And immerse in spontaneous expression of verve, drinking life to the lees, because all moments of life are not for analysis nor a mathematical puzzle to be resolved. Like a Kolavari song just to be enjoyed, no matter if you don’t understand it! (The writer is a blogger and writes on social, spiritual and health issues. Views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

### THE ESSENCE OF WORKPLACE CULTURE

It involves intricate interaction of values, behaviours and organisational dynamics



SAKSHI SETHI

The majority of the population spends a significant portion of their life at work which highlights the fact that our workplace environment is critical to us. Culture is the way an individual interacts with others that results in work processes. We don't always see culture except for the physical surroundings. The work culture ethic rests upon delayed gratification, hyper-competitiveness and the perpetual need to outperform what machines can do. An organisation's culture includes the life experiences of its employees and is influenced by the organisational executives and those involved in the decision-making process. In layman's terms, workplace culture or workplace environment is a process because of how people learn. Employees learn to perform behaviours through a system of rewards or consequences, so it forms the work culture. Creating a positive workplace environment requires attention to the physical, social, and cultural factors that influence employee experiences and satisfaction. By prioritising employee well-being and fostering a supportive and inclusive culture, organisations can create a workplace environment where employees thrive and contribute to the success of the business. Recognition and reward systems can impact employee morale and motivation to a large extent. Recognising employees for their contributions and providing opportunities for advancement and development contributes to a positive workplace environment and if it becomes a standard and repeated behaviour by the managers, then it becomes a part of the culture.



Today, organisations supporting work-life balance provide employees with flexibility and resources to manage their personal and professional lives. This may include flexible working hours, remote work options and policies that encourage employees to take time off when needed. Factors such as lighting, temperature, noise levels, ergonomic furniture, and providing employees with up-to-date technology and the right tools for their tasks impact not only employee comfort but also increase the productivity and morale of the organisation. A positive work culture fosters employee engagement, where employees are emotionally committed to their work. Above all the most crucial role is the behaviour and actions of leaders and managers that influence the workplace environment at large.

Effective leadership that communicates openly, provides feedback and supports employee development can create a positive and empowering work environment while on the contrary, negative work culture can manifest in various ways, leading to dissatisfaction, stress and decreased productivity among employees. When leaders exhibit toxic behaviours such as micromanagement, favouritism or lack of transparency, it creates a culture of fear and distrust among employees. When there is a lack of communication or when the information is not shared transparently, rumours and gossip spread, further eroding trust. This leads to employees feeling undervalued, unappreciated or unsupported resulting in resignation or the term which is nowadays widely in use 'Quiet Quitting'. Studies have found that engaged employees are often proven to be more productive, creative and motivated to contribute to the success of the company which shows that the workplace environment encompasses the physical, social and psychological aspects of the work setting that influence employee experience and well-being. It includes everything from the layout and design of the office space to the relationships between colleagues and the organisational culture.

Remember, a good salary motivates you once a month, but a good work culture does the same every single day. The values, norms and practices that define the organisational culture shape the workplace environment. A culture that values transparency, trust, and respect fosters employee engagement and satisfaction.

*(The writer is an educator; views are personal)*

# Debunking claims of fiscal discrimination



UTTAM GUPTA

Opposition-ruled States, especially southern States, have raised concerns about discriminatory treatment in the current system of fiscal resource sharing between the Centre and the States



Various Opposition-ruled States especially from south India have complained of 'discrimination' and 'unfair' treatment under the present scheme of sharing financial resources between the Union Government and the States.

Article 270 of the Constitution provides for the sharing of net tax proceeds collected by the Union government with the States. The taxes that are shared include corporation tax, personal income tax, Central GST (Goods and Services Tax) of CGST, the Centre's share of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST), CED on petroleum products excluding the cess and surcharge levied by the Centre etc. All these taxes put together constitute the 'divisible pool'.

This division is based on the recommendation of the Finance Commission (FC) which is constituted every five years as per the terms of Article 280. At a broader level, the State's concern has to do with their spending around 60 per cent of the total expenditure (Centre and States put together) even as the share of their tax revenue in total tax revenue is about 40 per cent. For instance, during FY 2022-23, out of total spending of around Rs 100,00,000 crore, the States' expenditure was Rs 60,00,000 crore, and the remaining Rs 40,00,000 crore was by the Centre. As for the tax collection, out of total proceeds (Centre plus States) of about Rs 50,50,000 crore, the states collected around Rs 20,00,000 crore while the Centre garnered Rs 30,50,000 crore. This doesn't give the full picture. To get it, we need to add to their tax revenue, the amount of transfer by the Centre from the latter's tax collection as per the FC formula.

The share of States from the 'divisible pool' currently stands at 41 per cent as per the recommendation of the 15th FC. During FY 2022-23, this was Rs 950,000 crore which means tax revenue with the states was Rs 29,50,000 crore and the net amount remaining with the Centre - after transfer to states - was Rs 21,00,000 crore. With this adjustment, the States' share in overall tax revenue works out to 58.5 per cent which is more or less close to their share



THIS DIVISION IS BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION, WHICH IS CONSTITUTED EVERY FIVE YEARS AS PER THE TERMS OF ARTICLE 280

in total expenditure at 60 per cent. The second concern relates to the cess and surcharge collected by the Centre which doesn't form part of the 'divisible pool' and hence is not shared with the States. During 2017-18 and 2022-23, there has been a 133 per cent rise in the collection of the major cesses and surcharges. In the FY 2022-23, these accounted for a quarter of the total taxes collected by the Centre. The States argue that because of their exclusion, they are getting only 32 per cent of the total tax receipts of the Centre as against 41 per cent recommended by the 15th FC. This shouldn't be viewed in isolation.

These cesses include a Cess like the GST Compensation Cess (GST - CC). The collections from GST - CC are used for the repayment of loans taken to compensate States for the shortfall in tax collection due to GST implementation for the period 2017-22. Flowing back to the coffers of the States in its entirety already, it makes no sense to include these collections in the divisible pool.

An important Cess collected by the Centre is the Road and Infrastructure Cess (RaIC) levied on petroleum products such as petrol and diesel. As is evident from the nomenclature, the collections from this Cess are meant fundamentally for building infrastructure projects mostly national highways, expressways etc. These can't be made a part of the divisible pool as by sharing with the States thereby reducing the funds available with the Centre, the very objective behind levying the RaIC will be defeated.

Considering that the cesses and surcharges are levied for a well-defined purpose, including the proceeds from their imposition in the 'divisible pool' and then, to argue that the transfer to the states works out to 32 per cent which is lower than the

devolution percentage recommended by the FC (read: 41 per cent) is untenable. The fact of the matter is that states are getting their legitimate share in full out of the tax collection by the Centre as per the FC award.

Apart from the Centre bolstering States' tax revenue as per the FC devolution formula, it is also helping them on the expenditure side by pumping a sizeable share in the centrally sponsored schemes (CSSs) being implemented by states where its contribution can range from 50 per cent to a high of 90 per cent depending on the Scheme. Besides, the Union government is also helping them by making available 50-year interest-free loans for financing capital expenditure. For the current FY, the loan amount is Rs 130,000 crore.

A third concern voiced by the southern States in particular, has to do with what they describe as outright discrimination they face in the distribution of the devolved funds among the States (also known in FC jargon as 'horizontal devolution'). They contend that industrially developed States (all southern States fall in this category) receive much less than a rupee for every rupee they contribute to the Centre's tax kitty as against States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. For instance, Karnataka gets back only 46 paise for every rupee it contributes while Uttar Pradesh gets Rs 1.79 against each rupee contributed by it.

The argument is specious. It sounds like a high-income earner who contributes more to the government's coffers (that is the way it should be under a progressive tax regime) expecting proportionate benefits from the latter. The proposition suffers from an inherent contradiction. Likewise, a rich state like Karnataka which contributes a rupee as tax should not expect a rupee in return. Successive Finance Commissions

have followed this dictum while framing its recommendations.

The criteria used by the 15th FC for determining the share of states in the divisible pool gives weights to various parameters as under 45 per cent for the income distance; 15 per cent for the population; 15 per cent for the area; 10 per cent for forest and ecology; 12.5 per cent for demographic performance and 2.5 per cent for tax effort. 'Income distance' is the distance of a State's income from the State with the highest per capita income. States with lower per capita income hence, not having the capacity to generate their resources are given a higher share to promote equitable and balanced development. Accordingly, while, 'income distance' gets the maximum weight of 45 per cent, population and area get a significant 15 per cent each as these factors put a heavy demand on resources.

Even as the formula seeks to protect the disadvantaged states, it also gives incentives to states better placed (in terms of per capita income and low population) by giving weight to efforts for controlling their population and improving tax collection efficiency. A 15 per cent weight for these efforts is a good balancing act. Such States also get what is termed as post-devolution revenue deficit (PDRD) grants. These are meant to meet the gap in the Revenue Accounts of the States post-devolution. The eligibility and quantum of grants to concerned states are decided by the FC based on the gap between the assessed revenue and expenditure of the State. The 15th FC had recommended PDRD grants amounting to about Rs 300,000 crore over the five years ending FY 2025-26. To conclude, there is no merit in the argument that the States are treated unfairly in fiscal transfers.

*(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)*

# The golden hour: Timely response in medical emergencies

Awareness of the golden hour, a brief window of time during which a life can be saved, is crucial

In emergency medical care, time is of the essence. Among the critical concepts that underscore this urgency is the "Golden Hour." This term refers to the crucial sixty-minute window immediately following a traumatic injury or medical emergency during which prompt medical intervention can significantly improve a patient's chances of survival and recovery.

The importance of the Golden Hour lies in its acknowledgement of the delicate balance between life and death, where timely medical attention can tip the scales in favour of life. During this period, the body's physiological responses to trauma are at their most



SARIKA JHA

critical stage. Without timely intervention, cascading complications may ensue, leading to irreversible damage or even death. One of the primary reasons why the Golden Hour holds such significance is the rapid progression of trauma-induced pathophysiological changes within the body. Prompt medical care during this critical period can help mitigate these responses, stabilise the patient, and prevent further deterioration.

Moreover, the Golden Hour emphasises the importance of swift and efficient emergency response systems. Access to timely medical care, including rapid transportation to appropriate healthcare facilities, is paramount. Whether it involves dispatching ambulances equipped with life-saving equipment or giving CPR, every minute counts in maximising the chances of a positive outcome. Furthermore, the concept of the Golden Hour underscores the significance of preparedness and training among healthcare professionals and first responders. From paramedics providing initial on-site care to emer-

gency room physicians orchestrating complex treatment strategies, proficiency in trauma management is indispensable. Training programmes focused on rapid assessment, triage, and intervention empower healthcare providers to make critical decisions swiftly and effectively, optimising patient outcomes within the Golden Hour.

Saving lives during the Golden Hour is not solely dependent on medical expertise but also on community awareness and proactive engagement. Education campaigns emphasising the importance of early recognition of emergencies, prompt activation of emergency medical services, and basic life support interventions



empower individuals to become active participants in the chain of survival. Awareness is the key amongst the people and that makes all the difference, feels Dr Devi Shetty, Founder of Narayana Health. "It is the first four to six hours in case of heart attack and just one hour in brain stroke that the

patient can be recovered after that no one can do anything about it. Unfortunately, unlike in heart attack where patient experiences acute pain, brain stroke is silent but is the second largest source of deaths in the country," he adds.

Indeed, brain stroke is the second leading cause of death worldwide, after heart attacks. In 2020, one in six deaths from cardiovascular disease (CVD) was due to stroke. Globally, 15 million people suffer a stroke every year, with 5 million dying and 5 million becoming permanently disabled. In this crucial hour, attendants' awareness can go a long way in saving lives. From giving CPR to going to the right hospital which is

stroke-ready is crucial, if you go to a hospital that is not equipped to handle such an emergency, they will consume the golden hour figuring out what the problem is," says Dr Shetty. Unfortunately, the right information and awareness about medical emergencies are still lacking. "insider," a new docu-drama series based on real-life events fills that void, to offer viewers an unfiltered look into medical emergencies, shedding light on the critical moments that occur within the confines of the Emergency Room. By harnessing the power of technology and fostering greater awareness within our communities, we can ensure that every individual receives the critical care they need

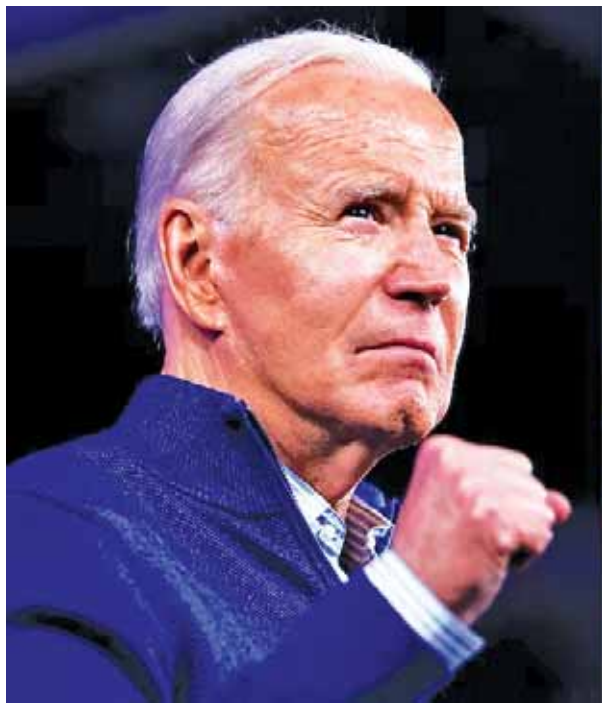
when it matters most. The Golden Hour epitomises the essence of timely intervention in emergency medical care. It serves as a poignant reminder of the profound impact that swift and efficient medical attention can have on saving lives and minimising the long-term consequences of traumatic injuries and critical medical conditions. Embracing the principles of the Golden Hour requires a collective commitment from healthcare professionals, emergency responders, policymakers, and communities at large to ensure that no precious moment is wasted when every second counts in the fight for life.

*(The author is a freelance writer, views are personal)*

# Biden, Trump win Louisiana presidential primary

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump won Louisiana's primary on Saturday, collecting more delegates after they already clinched their party nominations. Biden also appeared in Missouri's Democratic primary, with results not expected to be reported until next week. None of the races were in suspense. Biden and Trump have already beaten their major competitors. But the primary races are still closely watched by insiders for turnout and signs of protest voters. For Biden, some liberals are registering their anger with Israel's war against Hamas following the militant group's October 7 attack. More than 30,000 people, two-thirds of them women and children, have been reported killed by



Gaza authorities since Israel launched its offensive. A protest movement launched by Arab American communities in Michigan has spread to several other states. Trump is his party's dominant figure and has locked up a third straight Republican nomination. But he faces dissent from people worried about the immense legal jeopardy he faces or critical of his White House term, which ended shortly after the January 6 insurrection mounted by his supporters and fuelled by his false theories of election fraud. Saturday's primary was the Missouri Democratic Party's first party-run presidential contest since a new law took effect in August 2022. Louisiana's primaries, meanwhile, come almost four years after the state was the first to postpone its primaries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Israeli airstrike in northeastern Lebanon wounds 3

AP ■ BEIRUT

An Israeli airstrike deep in northeastern Lebanon early Sunday wounded at least three people, a local official said. The airstrike near the city of Baalbek, a stronghold of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group, was the latest to hit the area in recent weeks. The strike occurred a few minutes after midnight and wounded three people according to Baalbek's mayor, Bachir Khodr, who posted the news on X. It was not immediately clear what was struck. The strike came hours after Hezbollah said it used two drones carrying explosives to attack an Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system in the northern Israeli town of Kfar Blum.

The Israeli military said warplanes attacked a workshop used by Hezbollah for military activities. It added that after the strike some 50 rockets were fired from Lebanon toward Israel, saying some were shot down and others fell in open areas. A pair of Israeli airstrikes March 12 near Baalbek killed at least two people and wounded 20, marking a continuing escalation between Israel and Hezbollah over the war Israel is fighting with Hamas militants in Gaza. Since the Israel-Hamas war began October 7, Hezbollah has been carrying out attacks on Israel's military posts along the border. Israel has since staged dozens of airstrikes, mostly along the border. But since late February the Baalbek area has been attacked at least three times.



## Frozen in time: Kamala tours bloodstained building

AP ■ PARKLAND

US Vice President Kamala Harris toured on Saturday the bloodstained classroom building where the 2018 Parkland high school massacre happened, then announced a program to assist states that have laws allowing police to temporarily seize guns from people judges have found to be dangerous. Harris saw bullet-pocked walls and floors still covered in dried blood and broken glass left behind from the February 14, 2018, attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that killed 14 students and three staff members and wounded 17. The halls and classrooms inside the three-story structure remain strewn with shoes left behind by fleeing students and wilted Valentine's Day flowers and balloons. Textbooks, laptop computers, snacks and papers remain on desks. She was told about each victim who died. "Frozen in time," Harris said repeatedly about what she saw. She was accompanied on the tour by victims' family members, some of them pushing for more spending on school safety and others for stronger gun laws. Harris, who leads the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, said there are lessons to be learned from Parkland, both for stopping school shootings before they happen and mitigating them with measures such as making sure

classroom doors don't lock from the outside as they did at Stoneman Douglas. She pointed out that shootings are a leading cause of death for children and teenagers. "We must be willing to have the courage to say that on every level, whether you talk about changing laws or changing practices and protocols, that we must do better," Harris said. At Stoneman Douglas, former student Nikolas Cruz, then 19, fired about 140 shots from his AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle during his six-minute attack, moving methodically from the first floor, through the second and onto the third. He pleaded guilty in 2021. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2022 after his jury couldn't unanimously agree he deserved a death sentence, angering the victims' families. The building was preserved so his jury could tour it. It has loomed over the 3,600-student school from behind a temporary fence since the school reopened two weeks after the shooting. It is scheduled to be demolished this summer. No replacement plan has been announced. Following Harris' tour, she announced a USD 750 million grant program to provide technical assistance and training to Florida and the other 20 states that have similar "red flag laws." Florida's law allows police officers, with a judge's permission, to temporarily seize guns belonging to anyone shown to be a danger

to others or themselves. The statute has been used more than 12,000 times since it was enacted six years ago in response to the Parkland shooting. Harris also called on both Congress and states without red flag laws to adopt them. The Biden administration has called for a national red flag law. Cruz had a long history of troubling and bizarre behaviour before the shooting, including animal torture. In the weeks before the shooting, he had been reported to local law enforcement and the FBI by people fearing he was planning a mass shooting, but no action was taken. He legally purchased 10 guns in the 17 months between his 18th birthday and the massacre. "Red flag laws are simply designed to give communities a vehicle through which they can share ... information about the concern of potential danger or the crying out for help," Harris said. Senator Rick Scott, a Republican who signed Florida's red flag law as governor, issued a statement Saturday calling the Biden administration's proposed national red flag law "radical," saying it would be modeled on California's statute and strip gun owners of their rights. California's law is broader than Florida's as it allows family members, employers and others to initiate the process, but the removal also has to be approved by a judge.

## Nepal celebrates Holi

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Holi, the festival of colours, was celebrated on Sunday in Kathmandu and other hilly districts across Nepal amidst tight security. However, in Terai, the southern plains of the country, the festival will be celebrated on Monday. President Ramchandra Paudel, in his message on the occasion, expressed confidence that Holi would

"promote mutual harmony in the society and further strengthen national unity". Expressing his good wishes for happiness, peace and prosperity to all Nepalese at home and abroad, President Paudel described Holi as the celebration of "victory of justice over injustice and victory of virtue over evil". Nepal Police intensified security in and around Kathmandu Valley to avoid any untoward incident.

Around 5,000 police personnel were mobilised in the Valley to maintain law and order. Police also used drones to monitor the security situation in sensitive areas. The force also started checking vehicles at around 100 places to monitor possible traffic rule violations during the festival. The local administration has warned of action if anyone sprays colours or throws water over people without consent.

## Russia mourns concert hall attack

AP ■ MOSCOW

Family and friends of those still missing after an attack that killed over 130 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall waited for news of their loved ones as Russia observed a day of national mourning on Sunday. Events at cultural institutions were cancelled, flags were lowered, and TV entertainment and ads were suspended, according to state news agency RIA Novosti. A steady stream of people brought flowers to a makeshift memorial near the burnt-out concert hall. The attack, which has been claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group, is the deadliest on Russian soil in years. As rescuers continue to search the damaged building, some families still don't know if members who went to the event targeted by gunmen on Friday are alive. Igor Pogadaev was desperately seeking any details of his wife's whereabouts after she went to the concert and stopped responding to his messages. He hasn't seen a message from Yana Pogadaeva since she sent her husband two photos from the Crocus City Hall music venue. After Igor saw the reports of gunmen opening fire on concertgoers, he rushed to the site but couldn't find her in the numerous ambulances or among the hundreds of people who had made their way out of the venue. "I went around, searched, I asked everyone, I showed photographs. No one saw anything, no one could say anything," Pogadaev told The Associated Press in a video message. He watched flames bursting out of the building as he made frantic calls to a hotline for relatives of the victims but received no information. As the death toll mounted on Saturday, Igor scoured hospitals in Moscow and the Moscow region,



looking for information on newly admitted patients. But his wife wasn't among the 154 reportedly injured, nor on the list of 50 victims authorities have already identified, he said. Refusing to believe that his wife could be one of the 133 people who died in the attack, Pogadaev still hasn't gone home. "I couldn't be alone anymore, it's very difficult, so I drove to my friend's," he said. "Now at least I'll be with someone." The Moscow Region's Emergency Situations Ministry posted a video Sunday showing equipment dismantling the damaged music venue to give rescuers access. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be trying to tie Ukraine to the attack, something his government firmly denies. Russian authorities arrested four suspected attackers on Saturday, Putin said in a nighttime address to the

nation, among 11 people detained suspicion of involvement in the attack. He claimed they were captured while fleeing to Ukraine. Though no court hearing has been officially announced, there was a heavy police presence around Moscow's Basmanny District Court on Sunday. Police tried to drive journalists away from the court. Putin called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspects as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border. Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid. Kyiv strongly denied any involvement,

and the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility. The Islamic State group released highly graphic footage from the attack on Saturday, appearing to show one of the gunmen opening fire on people lying on the ground. Putin did not mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's fight in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year. U.S. Intelligence officials said they had confirmed the IS affiliate's claim. "ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement. The U.S. Shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Watson said.

## In Uganda, bamboo has Government backing

AP ■ ALONG RIVER RWIZI

Along a stretch of bush by a muddy river, labourers dug and slashed in search of bamboo plants buried under dense grass. Here and there a few plants had sprouted tall, but most of the bamboo seedlings planted more than a year ago never grew. Now, environment protection officers seeking to restore a 3-kilometer (1.8-mile) stretch of the river's degraded banks were aiming to plant new bamboo seedlings, clear room for last year's survivors to grow and look after them better than they did the first time. A successful bamboo forest by the river Rwizi - the most important in a large part of western Uganda that includes the major city of Mbarara - would create a buffer zone against sand miners, subsistence farmers and others whose activities have long

threatened the river. The National Environment Management Authority estimates that the Rwizi has lost 60 per cent of its water catchment area over the decades, and in some areas this winding river runs as narrow as a stream. "Once bamboo is established, it is almost like a net," said Jeconius Musingwire, an environment officer who was the project's technical advisor. "The roots trap everything, including the surface runoff, and stabilize the weaknesses of the banks." This East African country is seeing growing interest in bamboo, a perennial plant cultivated in many parts of the world. It can be burned for fuel in rural communities, taking pressure off dwindling forest reserves of eucalyptus and other natural resources. It's a hardy plant that can grow almost anywhere. And

businesses can turn it into products ranging from furniture to toothpicks. Some of the bamboo species grown in Uganda are imported from Asia, but many - like one whose shoots are smoked and then boiled to make a popular traditional meal in eastern Uganda - grow wild. The Ugandan government has set a 10-year policy that calls for planting 300,000 hectares (about 1,100 square miles) of bamboo, most of it on private land, by 2029 as part of wider reforestation efforts. That's an ambitious target. The Uganda Bamboo Association, the largest such group with 340 members, has planted only 500 hectares. Even with growing interest in bamboo farming, authorities will have to encourage more farmers in rural parts of Uganda to plant vast tracts of land with bamboo.



But signs are promising. Not far from the scene where labourers were tending bamboo plants sits a large commercial farm that includes

seven acres of bamboo. The plants at Kitara Farm were well-tended, and a stockpile of 10,000 bamboo poles sat waiting to be sold.

Caretaker Joseph Katumba said the property has become something of a demonstration farm for people who want to learn more about bamboo. He

recalled that when they first began planting bamboo in 2017, some people asked why they were "wasting land" by planting bamboo when it grows wild in the bush. Katumba said that's changed, with skeptics now interested in planting bamboo "because they have studied it and they love it." Unlike eucalyptus - a tall flowering plant widely planted here for its timber - "there is no bamboo season. The more you look after it well, weeding around it, the more and more years you will earn from bamboo." Bamboo grows faster than eucalyptus and regenerates like a weed. It also can thrive in poor soil. Kitara Farm stopped planting new eucalyptus lots while its bamboo acreage continues to expand, he said. "We have so many eucalyptus forests. But we realized that once you cut the eucalyptus

trees, eventually they get finished, and once they are finished there is no more money," he said. "But with bamboo, we investigated and found out that when you plant it ... the grandkids and their grandkids and their grandkids will earn from bamboo." A single bamboo pole brings a little less than a dollar, so farmers need to grow a lot to earn enough. Bamboo promoters are urging them to see a bamboo plantation as the same kind of cash crop as coffee or tea estates. Banks are offering bamboo "plantation capital" to clients, loans that promise ownership of substantial acres of bamboo. "Each person should actually plant bamboo, and a lot of it," said Taga Nuwagaba, a bamboo farmer and businessman who owns a bamboo furniture factory near the Ugandan capital of Kampala.



# Princess of Wales and King Charles: One in two people develop cancer during their lives

THE CONVERSATION ■ EAST ANGLIA (UK)

The Princess of Wales released a moving video message on March 22 to address speculation about her health. In it, the future queen disclosed that she'd been diagnosed with cancer following tests conducted after she underwent major abdominal surgery at a clinic in London in January. Catherine explained that she was undergoing "preventative chemotherapy" — but emphasised that her surgery had been successful, and that she was "well" and "getting stronger every day". The message was the second announcement of a royal family cancer diagnosis in recent weeks. On February 5, Buckingham Palace published a statement that King Charles III had been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer, unrelated to the treatment he had been receiving for an enlarged prostate. The statement said that he had begun "regular treatments". The king postponed all public-facing duties during his treatment, but reportedly continued with his "constitutional role as head of state, including completing paperwork and holding private meetings".

Cancer is the leading cause of death worldwide. One in two people will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime - so the condition will affect almost every family. However, many cancers can be cured if, as appears to be the case with the king, the condition is detected early and treated effectively.

**What is cancer?**  
Our bodies are made up of more than 100 billion cells, and cancer typically starts with changes in a small group of cells - or even a single one. We have different cell types depending upon where in the body they are and the function that the cell has. The size, amount and function of each of these cells is normally tightly regulated by genes — groups of codes held within our DNA — that instruct cells how to grow and divide. However, changes (mutations) to DNA can alter the way cells grow and multiply - often forming a lump, or solid tumour. Cancers can also develop in blood cells, such as white blood cell cancer which is known as leukaemia. This type of cancer does not form solid tumours; instead, the cancer builds up in the blood or sometimes the marrow in



the core of bones, where blood cells are produced. In all, there are more than 200 types of cancer, but all start with mutations in the DNA contained within each and every cell. **How is cancer treated?** Treatment options for cancer depend on a variety of factors, including where your cancer is, how large it is, and whether it has spread to other parts of the body. The main treatments for cancer include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. Chemotherapy uses drugs to target and kill cells that are rapidly dividing in our bodies. This approach is effective at targeting fast-growing cells in various cancers - but also has negative side effects. It also targets healthy cells that rapidly divide, such as hair and the cells lining our digestive system. This can lead to commonly reported side-effects such as hair loss, nausea and diarrhoea. Research has found that in order for a

normal cell to turn into a cancerous cell, anywhere from one to ten different mutations are normally required. **What you should do** Particular changes in your body or warning symptoms could indicate the presence of cancer. These include, but are not limited to: 

- Unexplained weight loss;
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest;
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits;
- Persistent cough or coughing up blood;
- Difficulty swallowing;
- Persistent pain;
- Noticing lumps, such as in a breast or testicle.

The symptoms may not necessarily be the result of cancer. But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease. Early detection and treatment can significantly improve outcomes for many types of cancer.

ventatively — as in the case of the princess — and therapeutically.

Preventative chemotherapy, also known as adjuvant chemotherapy, is given after surgery or other primary treatments to eliminate any remaining cancer cells in the body. It aims to reduce the risk of the cancer returning (known as recurrence). Therapeutic chemotherapy is used as a treatment option for cancer that has spread or is well established, such as advanced-stage cancers. Surgery involves the physical removal of cancerous tissues as well as nearby lymph nodes - small glands which act as filters in your body that cancers can spread through — to eliminate the tumour. Surgery is often used to remove localised cancers that haven't spread throughout the body. Radiotherapy uses high-energy radiation beams that are able to target specific areas where tumour cells are located to destroy or shrink the tumour. Radiotherapy can be applied externally or internally. Chemotherapy, surgery, and radiotherapy are often combined in cancer treatment to improve outcomes for patients. Thanks to developments in cancer research over the last 50 years, survival rates have improved greatly — although the rate of improvement has slowed recently. Cancer survival depends on various factors such as age — people under 40 have a greater chance of survival — overall health and fitness, as well as family history.

**What you should do** Particular changes in your body or warning symptoms could indicate the presence of cancer. These include, but are not limited to: 

- Unexplained weight loss;
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest;
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits;
- Persistent cough or coughing up blood;
- Difficulty swallowing;
- Persistent pain;
- Noticing lumps, such as in a breast or testicle.

The symptoms may not necessarily be the result of cancer. But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease. Early detection and treatment can significantly improve outcomes for many types of cancer.

**What you should do** Particular changes in your body or warning symptoms could indicate the presence of cancer. These include, but are not limited to: 

- Unexplained weight loss;
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest;
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits;
- Persistent cough or coughing up blood;
- Difficulty swallowing;
- Persistent pain;
- Noticing lumps, such as in a breast or testicle.

The symptoms may not necessarily be the result of cancer. But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease. Early detection and treatment can significantly improve outcomes for many types of cancer.



# 300 abducted kids in Nigeria freed

AP ■ ABUJA

Nearly 300 kidnapped Nigerian schoolchildren have been released, local officials said on Sunday, more than two weeks after the children were seized from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna and marched into the forests. At least 1,400 students have been kidnapped from Nigerian schools since 2014, when Boko Haram militants kidnapped hundreds of schoolgirls from Borno state's Chibok village in 2014. In recent years, abductions have been concentrated in the country's northwestern and central regions, where dozens of armed groups often target villagers and travellers for ransom. Kaduna state Gov. Uba Sani did not give details of the release of the 287 students abducted from their school in the remote town of Kuriga on

March 7, at least 100 of them aged 12 or younger. In a statement, he thanked Nigerian President Bola Tinubu "particularly ensuring that the abducted school children are released unharmed." Tinubu had vowed to rescue the children "without paying a dime" as ransom. But ransoms are commonly paid for kidnappings, often arranged by families, and it is rare for officials in Nigeria to admit to the payments. No group has claimed responsibility for the Kaduna kidnapping, which locals have blamed on bandit groups known for mass killings and kidnappings for ransom in the conflict-battered northern region, most of them former herders in conflict with settled communities. At least two people with extensive knowledge of the security crisis in Nigeria's northwest told The Associated

Press that the identity of the abductors is known. Murtala Ahmed Rufai, a professor of peace and conflict studies at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, and Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, a cleric who has negotiated with the bandits, said they are hiding in the region's vast and ungoverned forests. Arrests are rare in Nigeria's mass kidnappings, as victims are usually released only after desperate families pay ransoms or through deals with government and security officials. The Kaduna governor thanked Nigerian security forces and officials for the release of the students. "I spent sleepless nights with the National Security Adviser, Mal. Nuhu Ribadu ... Fine-tuning strategies and coordinating the operations of the security agencies, which eventually resulted in this successful outcome," he said.

# Greek authorities seize 3.75 million capsules of contraband nerve pain drug



AP ■ ATHENS

Greek authorities said Saturday they seized more than three tons of the prescription nerve pain drug pregabalin and impounded a yacht registered in the United Kingdom. The operation took place Thursday night at the port of Lavrio, 70 kilometers (43 miles) southeast of Athens, the coast guard said. On the yacht, the coast guard found 3.75 million capsules of Nervigesic, a brand name used by Indian pharmaceuticals firm HAB Pharma for pregabalin. The capsules were packaged in 500 cardboard boxes weighing nearly 3.15 tons, the statement said. Pregabalin is used to treat nerve pain caused by a variety of conditions, such as diabetes and shingles, and also to treat a type of seizure called partial seizure because it has its origin at a single location in the brain. The raid was ordered based on information from Greece's "National Intelligence Agency about the activity of networks of Egyptian nationals in Greek territory," the statement said. The yacht and its contents remain at the Lavrio port while local authorities conduct an investigation, the coast guard said.



# Senegal to elect its next president after months of unrest

AP ■ DAKAR

Senegalese are heading to the polls Sunday to vote in a tightly contested presidential race marred by months of unrest that threatened democracy in one of West Africa's most stable nations. The election will take place after much uncertainty following President Macky Sall's unsuccessful effort to delay the February 25 vote until the end of the year — and then announcing a surprise amnesty for political prisoners. Two leading opposition figures were released from prison last week to jubilant celebrations. Sunday's election is set to be Senegal's fourth democratic transfer of power since it gained independence from France in 1960. It is also the first vote without an incumbent on the ballot since term limits were introduced and there is no clear frontrunner among the 19 candidates, including one

woman. "This is poised to be the most competitive election since the introduction of multiparty politics," Tochi Eni-Kalu, Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, told The Associated Press. Analysts say no candidate is expected to win more than 50 per cent of the vote, which means a runoff between leading candidates is widely expected. These include Amadou Ba, a former prime minister, and Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is backed by popular opposition figure Ousmane Sonko. Sonko, who came third in the previous election, was barred from running in January because of a prior conviction for defamation. He has faced a slew of legal troubles in recent years that supporters say are part of a government effort to derail his candidacy. Other potential frontrunners are Khalifa Sall, a former mayor of Dakar unrelated to the president, and Idrissa Seck,

a former prime minister from the early 2000s who was the runner up in the 2019 presidential race. Two candidates dropped out this week to back Faye's candidacy, a sign of the start of coalition-building that could determine the outcome of the race, according to analysts. At the forefront of concerns for many Senegalese voters is the economy, which has been squeezed by high food and energy prices partly driven by the war in Ukraine. Unemployment among the nation's youth is widespread, driving thousands to risk their lives on dangerous journeys in search of jobs in the West. "Jobs are really, truly the priority. Everyone can see that unemployment is taking over," said Oumy Sarr, a political activist. "The second priority is the high cost of living in Senegal today. What is to be done to improve people's living conditions? Inflation is rising, everyone is tired.

# Russia launches another massive missile attack on Ukraine

PTI ■ KYIV

Russia launched its third massive missile attack on Ukraine in the past four days, and the second to target the capital of Kyiv, with Poland's military saying that one of the missiles launched at western Ukraine briefly entered its airspace Sunday. The head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhiy Popko, said Russia used cruise missiles launched from Tu-95MS strategic bombers. An air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours as rockets entered Kyiv in groups from the north. He said the attacks were launched from the Engels district in the Saratov region of Russia. According to preliminary data, there were no casualties or damage in the capital, he said. The operation command of Poland, a member of NATO, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4:23 am (0323GMT) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine. The object entered near the Polish town of Oserdów and stayed there for 39 seconds, the statement said. It added that military radar systems observed the missile the entire time and all necessary procedures were launched to ensure the safety of Polish airspace. Poland's Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told reporters in a televised news conference that the



Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland. He said the missile penetrated Polish airspace about 1,000-2,000 meters (0.6 miles to 1.2 miles). The Polish foreign ministry said it would "demand explanations from the Russian Federation in connection with another violation of the country's

airspace." "Above all, we call on the Russian Federation to stop the terrorist air attacks on the inhabitants and territory of Ukraine, end the war, and address the country's internal problems," the statement read. Since Russia invaded Ukraine, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace. In 2022, two Poles were killed in a missile blast.

Western officials blamed those deaths on a Ukrainian air defence missile that went astray but also accused Russia of culpability because it started the war and the Ukrainian missiles were launched in self-defence. Meanwhile, one person was killed and four wounded in a Ukrainian missile attack on Sevastopol on the Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula Saturday night, city governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said.

# Young Indian professional dies in car accident in Pennsylvania

PTI ■ NEW YORK

In a tragic incident, a 24-year-old Indian professional was killed in a car accident in the US state of Pennsylvania. Arshia Joshi lost her life in a tragic car accident in Pennsylvania on March 21, the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X on Saturday, expressing deep condolences to her family. Joshi had completed her graduation last year. The Consulate said it is in touch with Joshi's family and local community leaders. "Extending all possible assistance to

transport her mortal remains to India at the earliest," it said, without divulging more details about the deceased. Volunteer-based nonprofit organisation TEAM Aid is assisting in sending Joshi's mortal remains to Delhi to her family. TEAM Aid's primary focus has been to help members of the Indian community who are either travelling or living abroad and face dire situations such as accidents, suicides, homicides or sudden death of loved ones. It has been working to provide assistance and help repatriate the

mortal remains to India of people who have tragically lost their lives while in the US. "Amidst a series of tragic incidents, our hearts are heavy with grief," TEAM Aid founder Mohan Nannapaneni told PTI. In the past week alone, TEAM Aid has sent the remains of five individuals to India and organised three local funerals, he said. Nannapaneni and his team are currently assisting several more families in sending the mortal remains of their loved ones who died in the US and Canada to India. These include two truck drivers



who tragically lost their lives in an accident in New Mexico. Their remains are being sent to Punjab. A young truck driver passed away suddenly in New Mexico and his remains are being sent to Amritsar, Nannapaneni said. In Seattle, Washington, a promising 25-year-old Indian student was found dead in his apartment and his remains are being sent to Bangalore. Mourning the loss of a "talented 38-year-old restaurant chef" in San Jose, California, Nannapaneni said his remains are being sent to Kolkata. In a devastating hit-and-run

incident, a 50-year-old man in Palacios, Texas was killed. His remains will be sent to Ahmedabad for the last rites. In another tragic incident, a 27-year-old recent graduate was found dead in his apartment in Vancouver, Canada. "We will send him home to Kerala," Nannapaneni said. TEAM Aid did not disclose the names and identities of the deceased to respect their privacy. Nannapaneni said his team is in the process of initiating "educational and preventative" programmes soon to offer guidance and support

to Indian immigrants here, including students and workers, aimed at ensuring their safety and security. "Every day brings news of more loss, alongside numerous other challenges spanning health, immigration, social issues, and beyond," he said. Earlier this week, former CEO of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi released a video message, advising Indian students in the US to be "watchful" and respect local laws and urging them to not engage in drugs or excessive drinking to ensure their safety and security.

# FPIs infuse over ₹38,000 crore in equities in March

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FPIs have shown a significant resurgence in their investment activity within the Indian equity markets this month, injecting over Rs 38,000 crore, mainly driven by favourable shifts in the global economic scenario and strong domestic macroeconomic outlook. The investment came following a modest investment of Rs 1,539 crore in February and a massive outflow of Rs 25,743 crore in January, data with the depositories snowed. With this, foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs) investment has turned positive to the tune of Rs 13,893 crore in equities so far in 2024 and Rs 55,480 crore in the

debt market. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director at Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, highlighted that FPIs have become significant buyers in March. The improved global economic conditions and positive Indian macroeconomic scenario have driven FPIs to invest in high growth-oriented markets like India. Additionally, the recent market correction has provided a buying opportunity. Further, the influx of FPIs can be attributed to robust GDP growth and expectations of a potential shift in the RBI's policy, possibly leading to rate cuts of 25-50 basis points in the latter half of fiscal 2025, experts believe.



However, last week, FPIs turned net sellers, although marginally, to the tune of USD 314 million. This could be largely attributed to FPIs adopting a cautious approach. Apart from equities, FPIs have injected a massive Rs 13,223 crore into the debt market this month (till March 22). This came in the backdrop of Bloomberg announcing India's bonds inclusion in its Emerging Market (EM) Local Currency Government Index and related indices from January 31 next year. Moreover, FPIs have been investing in the debt markets for the past few months. They invested Rs 22,419 crore in February and Rs 19,836 crore in

January. "The fundamental reason for this sustained FPI flows into debt is the inclusion of Indian bonds in the JP Morgan EM Bond Fund and Bloomberg Bond Index, which is expected to bring investment of around USD 25 billion. This investment will begin only by June 2024, and therefore, FPIs are doing some front running in view of this potential investment," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. Further, FPI inflows into debt are likely to continue going forward. However, a sharp surge in debt flows is unlikely since the US bond yields have also risen in recent days, he added.



## RBI to conduct special audit of IIFL Finance, JM Financial Products

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IIFL Finance Ltd and JM Financial Products Ltd (JMFP) will undergo a special audit to further probe their regulatory breaches, as the Reserve Bank has initiated the process for the appointment of auditors. The Reserve Bank has floated two separate tenders for the appointment of auditors for special audits of these two non-banking finance companies. Audit firms empanelled by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for forensic audit can participate in the tendering process, and the last date for submission of bids is April 8, as per the tender document published by the Reserve Bank of India.

The selected firms will be awarded work on April 12, 2024, as per the bid documents. Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank put a curb on these two entities for non-compliance of regulatory guidelines. The central bank barred IIFL Finance from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans after certain material supervisory concerns were observed in its gold loan portfolio. The RBI had said an inspection of the company was carried out by it with reference to IIFL's financial position as of March 31, 2023. "Certain material supervisory concerns were observed in the gold loan portfolio of the company, including serious deviations in assaying and certifying purity and net weight of the gold at the time of sanction of loans and at the time of auction upon default," the RBI had said in a statement. These practices, apart from being regulatory violations, also significantly and adversely impact the interest of the customers, the central bank added.

## India poised to be premier destination for commercial arbitration, says SC judge

PTI ■ PANAJI

The quickest and easiest resolution to disputes is through arbitration and mediation, Supreme Court judge Hima Kohli said. India stands as a reservoir of untapped potential, poised to ascend as a premier destination for commercial arbitration and mediation on the international level, the apex court judge said. Speaking as the chief guest at the Conference on Ease To Justice Through Arbitration and Mediation in Commercial Disputes organised by the Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) at Vagator in North Goa on Saturday, she said India is at the forefront of business and global transactions and disputes were bound to arise. "The quickest and easiest resolution would be through alternate dispute resolutions like arbitration and mediation. The enforcement of the ADR award is imperative to keep the economy buoyant," she asserted. The ICA has been propagating the cause of ADR, particularly arbitration and mediation, for a long time and holding such conferences is a way forward, the SC judge said. "Court litigation has to be the primary focus, but if the alternatives are developed



well, it will take the burden off the court. It ensures decision-making and brings a closure between the disputing parties. Nothing can be better than that," she added. "In today's world, thanks to globalisation, everything is moving at a fast pace. This has led to increased commercial transactions, with businesses spanning across cultural and geographical boundaries. At the same time, this has thrown up a variety of legal challenges," she said. International trade and investments have grown phenomenally, making dispute resolution more complex, she said, adding these disputes can affect not only the parties involved but also the global community. "To address these challenges, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has emerged as a powerful tool for 'businesses'," Justice Kohli said.

## Miners urge Centre not to impose export duty on low grade iron ore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Miners' body FIMI has urged the government not to impose any export duty on low-grade iron ore, stating that any such move would cause a significant loss of state revenues and employment and also affect foreign exchange earnings. In a representation to the government, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) said the mining sector was adversely impacted when in May 2022 the export duty was imposed on low-grade iron ore fines and pellets. The government, however, withdrew the tax in November same year. A major share of the mining

sector's contribution to the country's GDP is accounted for by iron ore among the non-coal minerals. Iron ore mining also significantly contributes towards creating jobs with employment of about 5 lakh persons --45,000 direct and 4,50,000 indirect, it said. More than 90 per cent of the country's overall iron ore shipments go to China. "We request that any proposal for banning, restricting exports of iron ore and pellets may kindly not be considered and the status quo of nil export duty on these products be maintained," the miners' body said. With the opening of new mines and expansion of existing mines the iron ore production capacity is likely to rise to 330 million tonnes



in FY'25. But if there is a ban on exports of iron ore or a duty is imposed on its exports, in such a scenario the production will drop

to 225 million tonnes, it said. In the mining of iron ore, lumps are generated to the tune of only 25-30 per cent and the balance of iron ore is in the form of fines. "The fines below 58 per cent Fe are required to be kept in the mining lease area only as these cannot be utilised by the steel industry specially secondary steel sector," it said. The non-removal of low grade iron ore from the mines restrict the production of lumps also and becomes an environmental hazard besides limiting scientific mining. Thus accumulation of iron ore fines in the mines also leads to the restricted availability of lumps in the market which in turn adversely impacts the steel industry, it said.

## India has incredibly affordable airfares: Akasa Air CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has "incredibly affordable" airfares and the country's aviation market has the kind of growth potential where Akasa Air as well as other carriers can do well, according to the nearly two-year-old airline's chief Vinay Dube. As Akasa Air prepares to take the international skies on March 28 with the first overseas flight from Mumbai to Doha, Dube also asserted that the airline is not about "marketing gimmicks". Akasa Air is aiming to be among the

world's top 30 airlines by 2030 and will go public in future. "We think we have a great financial future. Listing is in our future... But you never say never. We hope to list some day," he told PTI in an interview this week. While acknowledging that aviation competition has always been intense, he said that as long as the focus is on fundamentals, there is enough room not just for Akasa Air to thrive in the future but for others as well. "Thanks to the growth that we are going to see in India, it is not that Akasa will do well

only if someone else does badly, no, Akasa can do well and others can do well, that is the kind of growth that India has to offer," the airline's Founder and CEO said. The carrier, which started flying in August 2022, has a fleet of 24 planes and a domestic market share of 4.5 per cent. To a query about air ticket prices, Dube said the country has some of the cheapest airfares. India, which is one of the world's fastest-growing civil aviation markets, is also seen in some quarters as price



sensitive, especially with rising number of air travellers, including first-time fliers. There have been concerns, mainly during

festive seasons, that air ticket prices are high. "I see fares to be some of the cheapest in the world as I saw them three months ago, six months ago... I think Indian airfares when you compare them to parts of Europe, East Asia, North America, you compare to any decent-sized aviation economy in the world, India has some of the most affordable airfares by a long margin, not just by Rs 10 or 100... Indian airfares are incredibly affordable," Dube said. Travel portal Cleartrip's outgoing CEO Ayyappan

Rajagopal said airfares are expected to go up, both on international and domestic segments, as there is high demand and more people are making bookings in advance. "In the premium segment, the (price) sensitivity is not so high. There is a second set of consumers, they are a lot more bothered about pricing and they might even take three hops to reach a destination," he told PTI. Meanwhile, Akasa Air's Dube said there is no shortage of pilots at the airline and that there won't be any flight disruptions.

## Tech Mahindra to merge two US based subsidiaries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT services and consulting company Tech Mahindra said it plans to merge its two wholly-owned subsidiaries, BORN Group and Tech Mahindra (Americas), to synergise business operations,

optimise operational cost, and reduce compliance risks. The merger is subject to regulatory approvals in the country of incorporation. According to a regulatory filing, the appointed date of the plan of merger is April 1, 2024. "A Plan of Merger of BORN Group, Inc., a wholly-owned



step-down subsidiary of the Company with its parent company viz. Tech Mahindra (Americas) Inc., a wholly-owned material subsidiary of the Company, has been approved by the respective companies on Friday, 22nd March 2024," the company said. While BORN specializes in

providing Brand strategy, visual design, brand identity exploration, and more for digital products, mobile apps, and physical products in the US, TMA provides computer consulting, programming support services and IT Management & Consulting Services. Tech Mahindra (Americas)

(TMA) is a wholly owned material subsidiary of the company. BORN is a wholly owned subsidiary of TMA and a step-down wholly owned subsidiary of the company. According to the filing, the turnover of BORN and TMA for the financial year ended 31st March 2023 is USD

55.08 million and USD 1,201.37 million respectively. "The business of both entities BORN and TMA are complimentary hence consolidation of entities will result in synergy of business operations, optimize operational cost and reduce the compliance risk," the company said.

It added that there will be no cash consideration or issue of new shares involved under the Plan of Merger. The investment of TMA in BORN will get cancelled on the merger becoming effective. The shareholding pattern of the company will remain unchanged.

## Auto players line up array of new EV models in coming years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian auto industry is gearing up to roll out an array of electric vehicle models over the next few years amid a renewed push by the government to encourage environment-friendly mobility solutions with the unveiling of a new policy. Mass market players like Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors are lining up new models to cater to the demand across segments. Mahindra & Mahindra CEO Automotive Sector Nalinikanth Gollagunta told PTI that starting January 2025, the company will be rolling out five new battery electric vehicles in the coming years. "These electric SUVs will be built on Mahindra's innovative INGLO platform and aim to cater to a variety of consumers through their diverse range. The launch of these SUVs is part of Mahindra's broader strategy to lead in the electric vehicle sector, and we expect



20-30 per cent of our portfolio to be electric by 2027," he noted. Maruti Suzuki India Executive Officer (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti said the auto major is making serious investments in EVs. "We will start production of a high-spec EV designed-fresh as an EV with 550 km range in FY24-25 and will have about six EV models in the next 7-8 years," he noted. Bharti, however, noted that in

order to cut carbon and oil imports, the country will require many more technologies like hybrid-electric, CNG, Bio-CNG, Ethanol flex fuel etc. "We are committed to work on all such technologies also," he added. Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said the automaker was among the first OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to introduce a fully long-range electric SUV

KONA in India in 2019. Last year, the company launched the IONIQ 5, its premium electric SUV. Garg noted that as per multiple industry estimates, EVs are projected to contribute around 20 per cent of India's automotive market by 2030. "With the Indian government's steadfast focus on electric vehicles and the supportive policy framework, we are confident that EVs will soon become mainstream, driving a

sustainable automotive future for India," he added. The company plans to invest around Rs 26,000 crore over 10 years in Tamil Nadu. This investment will also include setting up a battery assembly plant in the state. A Tata Motors spokesperson said that the company aims to have 10 EVs by 2026. The company plans to introduce four more EV models this year, including Curvv EV and Harrier EV. Luxury carmakers are also gearing up to enhance their EV lineup in the country. "We are invested in the market, having an aggressive product strategy with more than 12 new products planned for debut in 2024, of which three will be new BEVs," a Mercedes-Benz India spokesperson said. This well-defined roadmap will help the automaker deepen its BEV footprint, offering customers the best of luxury and technology, he added. "Mercedes-Benz remains strategically focused and

tactically flexible, as we believe customer preferences and market conditions will determine the pace of BEV transition," the spokesperson stated. Audi India expects 50 per cent of its sales in India to come from electric vehicles by 2030. The automaker, which sells four electric models in the country, plans to expand the product range to achieve its ambitious sales target. Earlier this month, the government approved an electric-vehicle policy, under which duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like US-based Tesla. Mahindra & Mahindra's Gollagunta stated that the policy reinforces the Make in India momentum, with requirements of bank guarantees, minimum investment commitment, and local value addition.

## VW eyes growth in smaller cities in India

PTI ■ JAIPUR

German carmaker Volkswagen is seeking to cash in on the increasing demand for its premium performance-oriented offerings in metro and tier II and III cities as it looks to grow sales by 15 per cent in India this year, according to a senior company official. Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, which sold around 44,000 units in 2023, sells premium performance-oriented variants of its models SUV Taigun and sedan Virtus with a 1.5-litre petrol engine under the 'GT' trim. It has now brought a 1-litre petrol engine in the GT lineup to increase affordability. "Earlier, there was no sub-segment of a performance SUV or a performance sedan... So, when we introduced the GT on the Taigun and Virtus that basically created that space, which now everybody's

coming into," Volkswagen Passenger Cars India Brand Director Ashish Gupta told PTI. Bullish on the growth of the sub-segment, he said it has been fuelled by how the customer preferences are evolving over a period of time with the top-of-the-line features, safety and performance topping their demand list and are willing to pay for it. "They're not willing to compromise. So, definitely, this is a space which will continue to grow," Gupta asserted. Earlier, the GT was available only in a 1.5-litre petrol engine option, and around 35-40 per cent of sales were from the GT on both Taigun and Virtus, he added. The growth of GT sales is not limited only in the metros and cities, he said, adding that "if I look at the GTs even in the Tier II and tier III towns, almost 20 to 25 per cent of my sales are the GTs".

# SOLITARY THYROID NODULES & CANCER

In this concluding part, ARCHANA JYOTI learns from the team at AIIMS Delhi's Surgical disciplines Department led by Dr. SUNIL CHUMBER, that while most thyroid nodules are benign and do not require immediate intervention, thorough evaluation is crucial to rule out malignancy. Close collaboration among patients, endocrinologists, radiologists, and surgeons is essential in managing thyroid nodules.

**DOES STN CAUSE CANCER?**

By Dr Catherine Halam & Dr Ankita Singh

The risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule can vary depending on several factors, including the patient's age, gender, family history, and the characteristics of the nodule itself. Generally, the risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule is estimated to be around 5-15%. However, it's important to note that the majority of thyroid nodules are benign (non-cancerous).

Several features of a thyroid nodule may increase the suspicion of cancer, including: **Size:** Larger nodules tend to have a higher risk of cancer, although small nodules can also be malignant.

**Age:** Younger patients with thyroid nodules may have a higher risk of cancer.

**Gender:** Women tend to have a higher prevalence of thyroid nodules and thyroid cancer compared to men. However men with STN have a higher risk of malignancy.

**Family history:** A family history of thyroid cancer or certain genetic syndromes can increase the risk.

**Radiological characteristics:** Certain features seen on ultrasound, such as microcalcifications, irregular margins, increased vascularity, and taller-than-wide shape, may suggest a higher risk of malignancy.

Further there can be 'Isolated thyroid nodule' which is single swelling in the thyroid gland and the rest of the thyroid gland is normal or a 'dominant thyroid nodule' which is a single nodule that is felt prominently, while rest of the gland is also involved. It can be solid or cystic and have different risk of cancer based on gender: Isolate solid nodule in males- 48% (highest risk), Isolate solid nodule in females- 12%, Isolate cystic nodule in males- 24%, Isolate cystic nodule in females- 6%, Dominant solid nodule in male- 24%, Dominant solid



**DR SUNIL CHUMBER**  
Professor and HoD



**DR CATHERINE HALAM**  
Senior Resident



**DR ANKITA SINGH**  
Assistant Professor



**DR AMOL SOOD**  
Junior Resident



**DR PIYUSH RANJAN**  
Additional Professor



**DR RIJUTA APHALE**  
SR-Breast and Endocrine Surgery



**DR SAKSHI DHOLPURIA**  
Junior Resident



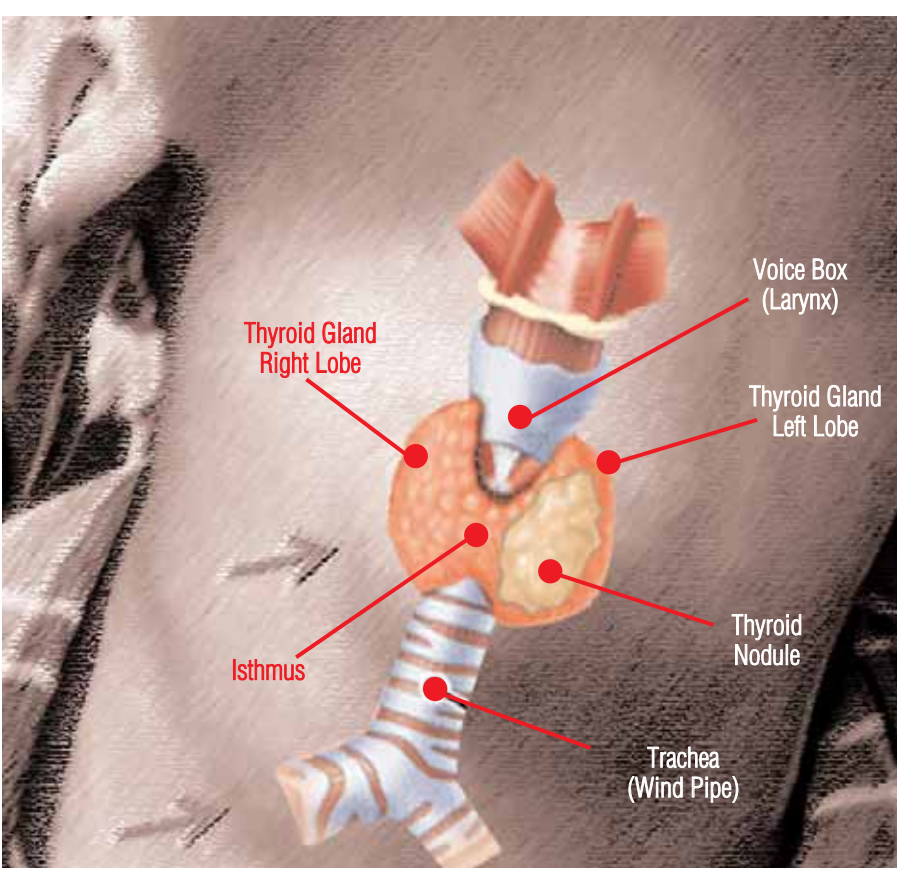
**DR AJAY MOHAN**  
Senior Resident

nodule in females- 6%, Dominant cystic nodule in males- 12% and Dominant cystic nodule female- 4% (lowest risk). Ultimately, the risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule should be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account various clinical and diagnostic factors. If there is concern about cancer, further evaluation and management, including biopsy and possibly surgery, may be recommended by a healthcare provider.

**INDICATIONS OF OPERATION**

By Dr. Piyush Ranjan & Dr. Amol Sood

Surgery may be indicated in a benign (non-cancerous) thyroid nodule if it is causing problems like difficulty in breathing or difficulty in swallowing. Surgical removal of the nodule may also be preferred by some patients if it is cosmetically disfiguring. Nodules that are suspicious for cancer or cancerous should be removed surgically. Depending on the features of the nodule, the surgeon decides whether to proceed with the removal of only half of the thyroid gland containing the nodule or to remove the complete thyroid gland and also whether removal of the lymph nodes in the neck is required or not. Nodules for which there is uncertainty whether they are benign or cancerous need further evaluation, in the form of either a repeat FNAB test a



few weeks after the initial FNAB test, or molecular testing. A repeat FNAB test can be helpful as it may upgrade or downgrade the diagnosis of the nodule to either benign or cancerous, which can then be accordingly managed. If, however, the repeat FNAB test also classifies the nodule as indeterminate, surgery is the next step. Typically, in this surgery, the surgeon removes half of the thyroid gland containing the suspicious nodule and sends the removed part for examination under a microscope by a pathologist. No further treatment is required if the microscopic examination reveals no cancer. However, further surgery to remove the other half of the thyroid gland may be needed if cancer is seen on microscopic examination of the removed half of the thyroid gland. Molecular testing looks at the genetic pattern of the thyroid nodule and classifies it as low-risk or high-risk for cancer. The use of molecular testing can help avoid surgery in low-

risk indeterminate thyroid nodules, which can be kept under observation by routine ultrasound scans. However, the cost of these molecular tests can be prohibitive to many patients, who may then opt for surgical treatment.

**OPERATIONS**

By Dr. Rijuta Aphale & Dr. Piyush Ranjan

Type of operation depends on the factors like nodule size, and whether they are benign or cancerous. Common operations for the high-risk and cancerous solitary thyroid nodules include hemi-thyroidectomy and total thyroidectomy (i.e. partial or total removal of the thyroid gland).

Thyroid lobectomy includes removal of one lobe of the thyroid gland. It is suitable for nodules confined to a single lobe. It may also be done on suspicion of cancer if the nodule is small. Isthmusectomy- Removal of the part of the thyroid gland that is a bridge between the two thyroid lobes. It may be done if the nodule is located in the isthmus.

Total thyroidectomy- Complete removal of the thyroid gland. Usually, this operation is done for larger nodules, nodules on both lobes of the thyroid, or thyroid cancer. Additional removal of the neck lymph nodes is done along with a thyroidectomy for cancer in selected patients.

As many important structures like nerves, vessels and parathyroid glands are close to the thyroid gland, these operations are subject to various complications. There may be temporary or permanent voice changes due to injury to the recurrent laryngeal nerve. Damage to parathyroid glands may cause temporary or permanent changes in calcium levels. Bleeding and infection may occur but are rare. Patients may develop hypothyroidism and may require lifelong thyroid hormone supplementation.

**MANAGEMENT WITHOUT OPERATION**

By Dr. Sakshi Dholpuria & Dr. Ajay Mohan

Fortunately, the majority of thyroid nodules are non-cancerous and surgery may not always be the first or only option. Non-surgical approaches, such as close monitoring, hormonal therapy, radioactive iodine, ethanol ablation, and fine-needle aspiration, offer alternative solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of the nodule. It's crucial to consult with a doctor to determine the most suitable approach based on individual circumstances. Regular follow-ups and communication with your doctor are essential for monitoring the nodule and ensuring the chosen non-surgical management plan remains effective.

**Monitoring and Observation** : If a thyroid nodule is small, asymptomatic and benign on FNAC, your healthcare provider may recommend a "watch-and-wait" approach. Regular monitoring through physical exams and imaging tests, such as ultrasound, can help track any changes in the nodule over time.

**Thyroid Hormone Replacement Therapy:** Intake of medication (levothyroxine) to maintain normal hormone level is required when the STN is associated with hypothyroidism. This may help shrink certain types of nodules.

**Radioactive Iodine Therapy:** This treatment involves taking a radioactive form of iodine, which is absorbed by the thyroid cells, reducing the size of the nodule in case of overactive nodules that produce excessive thyroid hormones. Ethanol Ablation is a minimally invasive procedure that involves injecting ethanol (alcohol) directly into the thyroid nodule using ultrasound guidance. This treatment is often considered for cystic nodules, causing the fluid-filled portion to shrink. Aspiration (Fine-Needle Aspiration) is more of a diagnostic procedure, but in some cases, it can also help drain cystic nodules with the help of a thin needle. (Concluded)

# Healthy Holi: Enjoy the Festival Safely

On the Holi Day, prioritizing health amid vibrant celebrations is crucial. Doctors stress protective measures like skin and eye care, hydration, food and water safety, respiratory health, and adherence to COVID-19 precautions. The HEALTH PIONEER reports

**HOLI & DESSERTS**

Our fondness for Holi and the festivities makes it tough to resist a Gujiya, Laddoo or a Kaju Katli. And don't we often find the festive season as an excuse to have one or more of these amazing sugary treats? That's where the dilemma is, since you are already aware that sugar isn't right for your body and health and yet you still want to have it.

Sugar is fine for you in small amounts but too much indulgence can affect your body and increase your risk of several serious medical conditions like - Increases your risk of Heart Disease - Consuming too much sugar can increase your blood pressure causing hypertension and arterial complications like atherosclerosis, a disease characterized by fatty, artery-clogging deposits and stroke. Increases your risk of Type 2 Diabetes - Diabetes is the leading cause of mortality and reduced life expectancy. Prolonged high-sugar consumption drives resistance to insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas that regulates blood sugar levels. Insulin resistance causes blood sugar levels to rise and strongly increases your risk of diabetes.

**Affects your Skin** - Binge-eating on the sugary treats can cause Acne, blemishes and pigmentation. **Weight Gain** - Eating large amounts of sugar can contribute to weight gain and increased body fat. Obesity is often caused by excessive sugar consumption. **Enhances Cellular Aging** - Telomeres are structures found at the end of chromosomes, which are molecules that hold part or all of your genetic information. Consuming high amounts of



**DR SFURTI MANN**  
Head of Department and Senior Consultant Internal Medicine & Diabetology Sanar International Hospitals

sugar has been shown to accelerate telomere shortening, which increases cellular aging. **Can lead to Fatty Liver** - A high intake of fructose has been consistently linked to an increased risk of Fatty Liver. Large amounts of added sugar in the form of fructose overload your liver, leading to Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD), a condition characterized by excessive fat build-up in the liver. **Impacts Dental Health** - Eating too much sugar can cause cavities. Bacteria in your mouth feed on sugar and release acid by-products, which causes tooth demineralization leading to cavities. The best way to limit your sugar intake this Holi is to prepare your own healthy sweets at home. We should not let our guard down even when we are consuming sweets made from artificial sweeteners or if it's sugar free. We can use whole fruits as sweeteners as they are a much healthier option. We have to be restrictive to a greater extent in order to avoid sugars and be mindful about consuming sweets on this and all the other festive seasons.



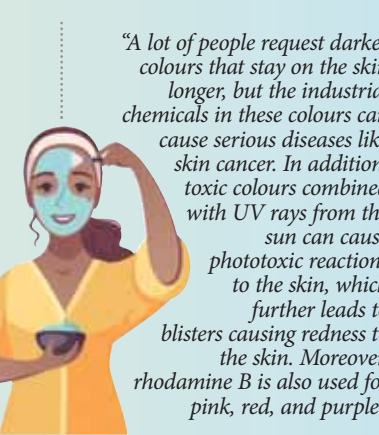
**HOLI & EYE CARE**

To prevent any colour entering your eyes, use protective gears like sunglasses. For small children, you can advise them to wear goggles so that the colour does not enter the eyes. Avoid using synthetic colours. Play with eco-friendly or organic or natural colours. In case any colour enters the eye, use clean water to clean it with splashing. But do not rub the eyes neither use any home remedies like milk or honey or oil into your eyes as these can aggravate the problem. Also do not use any random drops or eye



**DR PAYAL GUPTA**  
Associate Consultant-Ophthalmology Fortis Hospital Greater Noida

drops. These days, industry chemicals is being used extensively in colour formulation such as motor oil, diesel, mica, and alkalis that can enter into eyes. Avoid playing in such groups. We would advise you to immediately consult nearest doctor or Ophthalmologist. If you wear contact lens then remove them before going out to play holi. Use glasses in such instances because contact lenses can trap the colours and damage your eyes.



**DR MANISH SHARMA**  
Sr Medical Oncologist, Positron Superspeciality and Cancer Hospital, Rohtak

"A lot of people request darker colours that stay on the skin longer, but the industrial chemicals in these colours can cause serious diseases like skin cancer. In addition, toxic colours combined with UV rays from the sun can cause phototoxic reactions to the skin, which further leads to blisters causing redness to the skin. Moreover, rhodamine B is also used for pink, red, and purple."

**HOLI & PREGNANT WOMEN**

In addition to colours, Holi is connected with bhang. However, a bhang overdose for pregnant women might result in major health issues. Bhang consumption can impact the fetus, neurological system, and brain in addition to raising blood pressure and heart rate. It is essential that pregnant women avoid playing Holi at all; instead, they should stay indoors or, if they must go outside, do so in the company of reliable elders. Additionally, as we know, modern Holi colours are composed of chemicals. Certain hues can potentially cause cancer. Thus, nursing moms should use the same prudence as expectant mothers.



**DR SHOBHA GUPTA**  
Medical Director, Gynecologist and IVF Specialist, Mother's Lap IVF Centre, Delhi

When a pregnant woman uses these colours in an area where lead is present, it may cause an abortion or miscarriage as well as an underweight or premature birth. The reproductive and nervous systems may also be impacted. Have a glass of lemon detox water first thing in the morning, then eat something clean and healthful.

**TIPS FOR HAIR & SKIN PROTECTION**

- Apply a generous dose of high levels of SPF and Vitamin E before heading outside on the day of Holi. These works as a shield to block UV radiation.
- Before you begin playing, make sure your hair is well oiled. Olive and coconut oils are good choices for shielding your hair from strong colouring.
- Use oil on your nails, ear lobes, and behind your ears as well, as these are areas where the colour tends to settle more easily.
- After playing Holi, especially if you used chemical colours, stay out of the scorching sun while the colours are still on your body or face. As a result, the colours are more vibrant and challenging to remove. If you are outside, choose a shaded spot to sit.
- Make greater use of colours that are easily removed.
- Remember to apply



**DR JATIN MITTAL**  
Cosmetologist & Co-founder, Abhivrit Aesthetics

waterproof sunscreen with at least SPF 30 or higher before spending a day in the sun. Dress mostly in coverings for your body and avoid bulky, difficult-to-dry materials like denim. Use a bandana or thick scarf to cover your head. Avoid wearing lenses when playing outside. Although the colours of Holi are irritating, lenses tend to absorb the colour, making the situation worse. Put on spectacles and make sure you clean them occasionally.

**HOW TO REMOVE COLOURS**

- After washing, hair needs to be deeply conditioned in order to remove colour. Ensure that your hair is tidy. After two to three days, use a hair mask to repair the damage.
- Wash your face and hair after experimenting with colour. Use a cleanser rather than roughly rubbing the skin with soaps to wipe the face of gullal. Apply a tonne of moisturiser after this, paying special attention to products designed for sensitive skin.
- Refrain from using your fingernails to remove colour since they will leave ugly stains. To remove the colours, gently scrub the face and body with granulated sugar.
- The week after, refrain from bleaching, shaving, waxing, and getting a facial or clean-up. Allow your body and skin some time to heal from the injury.
- To remove stains, stay away from using kerosene, petrol and spirits as they will cause your skin to become dry.
- Use a solution of sea salt, glycerine, and a few drops of fragrance oil to rejuvenate your skin. This mixture has antibacterial and antifungal properties and can also remove artificial colouring.





# RCB EYE BETTER OUTING FROM BOWLERS

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL 2024 campaign is just one-match old but it has already exposed their biggest chink — brittleness in bowling, and they need better returns from bowlers against a confident Punjab Kings at an unforgiving M Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Monday. During their six-wicket defeat against Chennai Super Kings, the pacers were guilty of blindly following a short-pitch ball strategy while the spinners just did not have enough resources to exploit a gradually slowing-down Chepauk pitch. The three RCB spinners — Mayank Dagar, Karn Sharma and Glenn Maxwell — bowled five overs between them and managed middling figures of 37 for one without actually troubling the batters. In contrast, the two CSK spinners — Ravindra Jadeja and Maheesh Theekshana — bowled a combined eight overs for figures of 57 for four when the deck was much easier to bat. So, the Royal Challengers' spinners will have to brace for a tougher task here as the 22-

yard trampoline with short fences and a quick outfield is not a friendly associate of theirs. These numbers will make that point clear. This venue holds the record of teams scoring more than 200 runs in an innings on most occasions — 27 times, and the average first innings score in the IPL here is 172. But those grim stats also put the onus on the RCB pace bowlers against Punjab. Mohammed Siraj, Alzarri Joseph, in particular, and Yash Dayal zealously used the quota of two bouncers per over against Chennai but in doing so they sacrificed their control over line and length. It reflected in their run-giving rate too — Siraj (9.5), Joseph (10.3), Dayal (9.3). Cameron Green, the fourth pacer, took pace off his deliveries and employed the cutters that fetched him two wickets but they were interspersed with loose deliveries as the Aussie conceded nine runs an over. However, following a single-channel strategy will be suicidal at Chinnaswamy and they will have to find a way to use their copious amount of skills more judiciously.



But there is another rather unnoticed glitch. As it often happens, the RCB total of 173 for six against the Super Kings is a bit of misinformative. It came after a top-order collapse that saw RCB reeling at 78 for five. It required the industry and innovation of Dinesh Karthik and Anuj Rawat for them to go past the 170-run mark. But banking on lower-order is not an everyday workable approach, as seniors such as Virat Kohli, skipper Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell will have to get those big runs. Of course, a more fruitful outing by Rajat Patidar, who had a torrid time in the recent Test series against England, too will be highly welcome as runs from him offer a cushion for batters ahead of him. It is imperative too as Punjab is a capable side as they showed while producing a clinical effort against a more fancied Delhi Capitals on Saturday. They have their own turmoil too such as lack of runs from Jonny Bairstow, whose Indian marathon encompasses last year's World Cup, the five-match Test series and now the IPL, and waywardness of left-arm seamer Sam Curran.

But the win over DC might have temporarily erased all those worries.

**SQUAD:**

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Faf du Plessis (captain), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan.

**Punjab Kings:** Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Matthew Short, Prabhsimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajann, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.

# Russell a phenomenal ball striker, says Phil

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Andre Russell's six-hitting carnage at the death that propelled Kolkata Knight Riders to a match-winning total did not come as a surprise to teammate Phil Salt, who described the star allrounder as the "best in the world on his day." Russell muscled his way to a 25-ball 64 studded with seven sixes and three fours to power KKR to 208 for 7. The hosts then returned to limit Sunrisers Hyderabad to 204 for 7 and record a four-run win in a thrilling IPL clash here on Saturday. Making debut for KKR, Salt, who had played alongside Russell in Manchester Originals in The Hundred, was excited to see another special from the West Indian. "I've played with Dre (Russell) in the Hundred. He's a phenomenal ball

striker. The best in the world on his day," Salt said after their win on Saturday. "So, to see him do what he did, obviously is incredible. Love watching it, but, you know, it's no surprise to me. I don't think it's a surprise to anybody on the ground. When he's on, he's incredible." Four of the top-five KKR batters got out for single digit scores managing just 18 runs in between them, but Salt held firm atop the order and found a fine ally in No 6 Ramandeep Singh (35 off 17). The duo put together 54 runs that came off just 29 balls. "Yeah, you know, what I said to the previous two batters is we'll take it to the 8th over, and if another wicket falls, we'll take it to the 10th. I said the same to Ramandeep. I said we'll take it to the 12th and we'll reassess



partnerships. And for him to come out on debut (for KKR) and do that is very impressive." Heinrich Klaasen threatened to spoil KKR's party with a counter-attacking fifty as IPL's most expensive player Mitchell Starc was hit for four sixes in his last over that yielded 26 runs for SRH. Needing 12 to defend in the last over, the inexperienced Rana delivered. "You try not to ride the wave when you're out there. The game seesawed all the way through their batting innings," Salt said. "We had a few chances we didn't take in the field, and it looked like, at one point, getting towards that final over was going to hurt us. "But Harshit held his nerves unbelievably well in the final over and I think we defended what was a pretty good score."



# Rohit hopes new faces in MI make a mark in IPL right from beginning

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma hoped the new faces roped in by his side for this edition of the IPL are able to make a mark from the outset as the franchise aims for a record sixth title under new skipper Hardik Pandya. Five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians have picked some exciting prospects, including South Africa pacer Gerald Coetzee, uncapped U-19 World Cup star Kwena Maphaka, England's Luke Wood, Sri Lanka's Nuwan Thushara, West Indies' Romario Shephard and Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi. Among the Indians, Shreyas Gopal has also been roped in. Maphaka joined the Mumbai camp last week after Sri Lanka pacer Dilshan Madushanka was ruled out, while Wood replaced injured Australian bowler Jason Behrendorff. "A lot of players that we got

from the auction, a lot of new faces, young players who have done well in domestic cricket as well as international cricket... Quite looking forward to that, hopefully they can make a mark right from the beginning," Rohit said in a video posted by Mumbai Indians. Rohit, who joined the camp on Monday, has had a customised training programme, which included simulated net sessions along with mobility, strength and conditioning drills. "For me, preparations have always been the key and that gives me a lot of confidence going into any game," he said. "There are a lot of things that I do before a game and I think I have done everything now... Just a few things here and there which is left and which I will do now and I will be ready for the game," Rohit said. Rohit is coming off a Test series against England, which India won 4-1.

# Just a matter of time before Pant regains form: Sidhu

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Former India opener Navjot Sidhu is confident wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant's return to form is just a "matter of time" following his nearly 15-month-long absence from professional cricket after a horrific car crash. Pant is back leading his Indian Premier League side Delhi Capitals after missing the action last season due to his recovery and rehabilitation. Though Pant did not have the comeback he would have wished for in DC's match against Punjab Kings here on Saturday, being dismissed for 18 by Harshal Patel, he was quick between the wickets, took a catch behind the stumps and also effected a stumping. "(He is) leading Delhi Capitals and running between the wickets and playing good cricket. Just a matter of time he will regain his form. But,

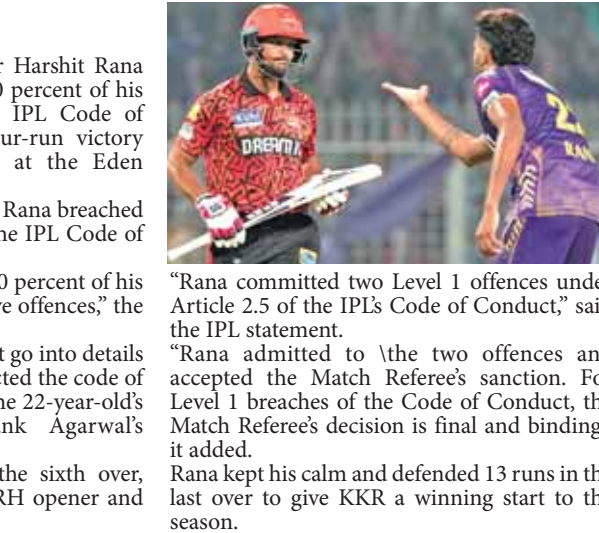


importantly, Indian cricket has got its fine gem back, and we should be thankful to God on his return to the field," said Sidhu on Star Sports on 'Cricked Live' programme. Sidhu added that when he first saw the images of the crash, he wondered how anyone could survive a mishap like that. "When this accident had happened, I saw the picture of the vehicle. Everything got burned, and there was no vehicle at the scene. How anyone can survive that sort of horrifying accident? "Post that, we were in assumption that whether the operations will succeed or not, but all went well for him. And in the process of physiotherapy when the removal of plaster happens your body doesn't move at all which is a very painful experience for anyone... From that condition, he is out now," added Sidhu, following DC's four-wicket loss to PBKS in their opening game.

# Rana fined 60 per cent of match fee for IPL code of conduct violation

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana has been fined a total of 60 percent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's four-run victory against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens. According to an IPL statement, Rana breached the rules under Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct on Saturday. "He was fined 10 percent and 50 percent of his match fees for the two respective offences," the statement said. While the IPL statement did not go into details about the incident, which attracted the code of conduct violation, it could be the 22-year-old's celebration following Mayank Agarwal's wicket. After dismissing Agarwal in the sixth over, Rana walked in front of the SRH opener and blew him a flying kiss.



"Rana committed two Level 1 offences under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct," said the IPL statement. "Rana admitted to the two offences and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," it added. Rana kept his calm and defended 13 runs in the last over to give KKR a winning start to the season.

# Rawat eyes long term role as RCB wicket keeper batter



Rawat said in a press-conference ahead of RCB's match against Punjab Kings on Monday. The Delhi cricketer, who kept wickets for RCB in the last couple of matches during the IPL 2023, said his confidence level has improved. "Last season also, I kept wickets in a few games and it gave me more confidence and as this season goes on, I am looking forward to contributing more as a wicketkeeper batsman," said Rawat. Rawat said the Royal Challengers will be looking to win all their upcoming home fixtures after losing the first match against CSK. Apart from Punjab, the Royal Challengers will take on Kolkata Knight Riders on March 29 and Lucknow Super Giants on April 2 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. "We are following the same process as the last match (against CSK). We are looking forward to our home games and hoping to win all of them," he added.