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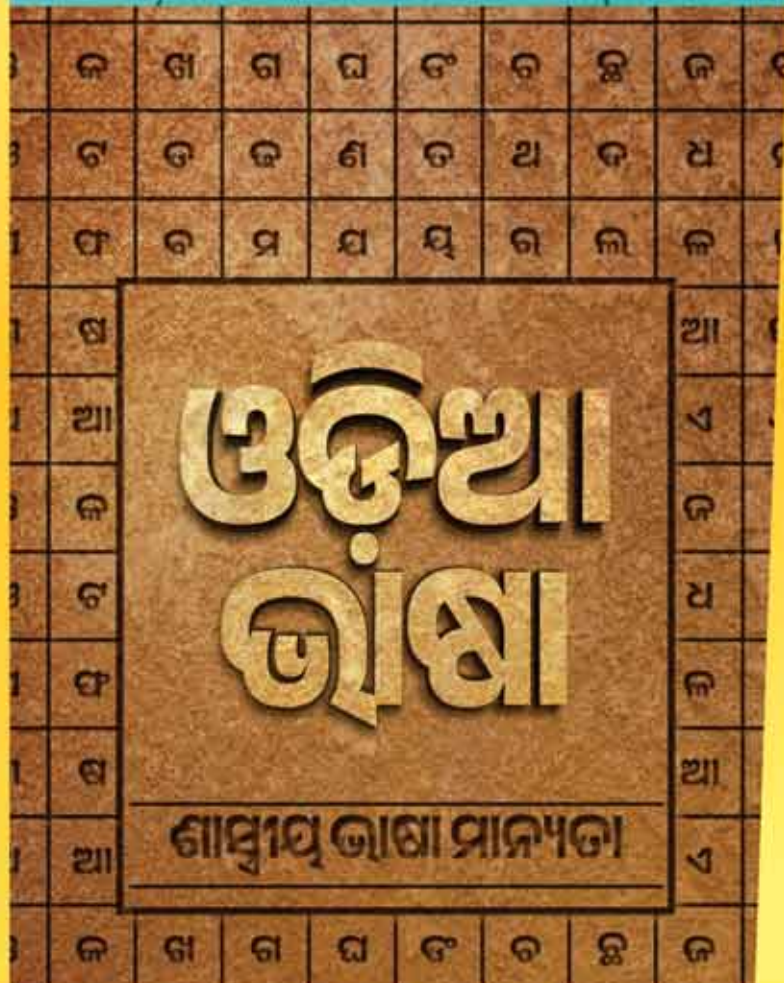
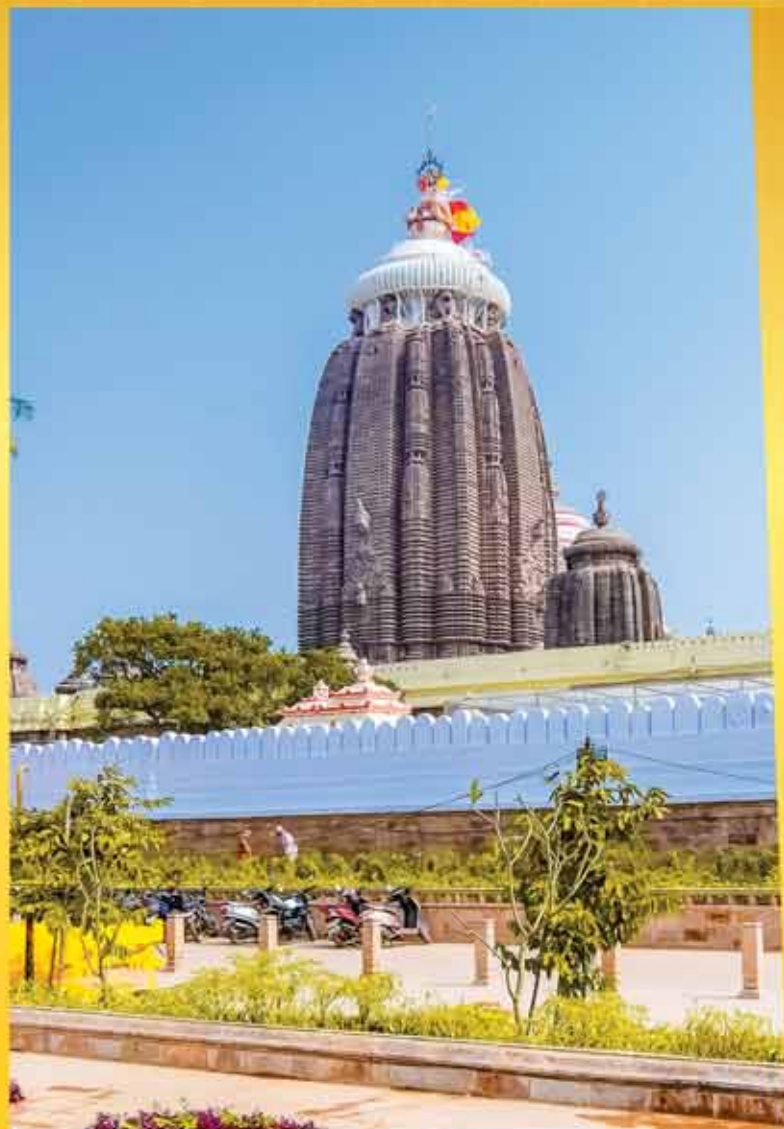
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Nation's strength resides in its ability to leverage its heritage: MoS Defence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt on Tuesday said here the strength of a country resides not only in its military might but also in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and leverage its cultural heritage as a source of power.

in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen into a contemporary military domain with a focus on making the force "future-ready". The project is a collaboration of the Indian Army and Delhi-based think-tank United Service Institution of India (USI).

evolving and it is necessary for our armed forces to be adaptive and innovative in their thinking." In his address, the minister also praised the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which was part of the tagline used by India during its year-long presidency of the G20.



the government of India has started a significant journey towards promoting indigenisation initiatives in various areas. "Today, we are nearly atmanirbhar, we are progressing to become fully self-reliant in future. And, Project Udbhav is going to play an important role in this," the minister said.

fully understand the priceless wisdom of our ancient past and implement it contextually in shaping modern ambitions and policies," he said. The event was also attended by Army Chief General Manoj Pande and other senior officials of the force.

and moral thoughts in a war". Bhatt also said India's history is an amalgamation of different thoughts and accomplishments which is a source of inspiration not only for Indians but also for people around the world.

VP Dhankhar to represent India at Raisi's funeral

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

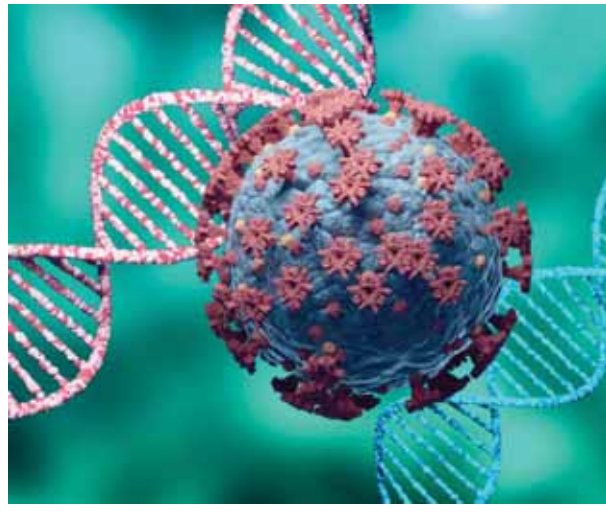
Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar is likely to represent India at the funeral of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash, sources said on Tuesday. They said Dhankhar is likely to leave for Iran on Wednesday.

with Iran in this time of sorrow." Prime Minister Modi said "Deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise of Dr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Modi said on X. "His contribution to strengthening India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of Iran. India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow," the prime minister said.

Surge in new COVID 19 variants: No reason to panic, says Health Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Amidst surge in sub-lineages of COVID-19 — 290 cases of KP.2 and 34 cases of KP.1 in India—the Union Health Ministry here has clarified that they are all sub-variants of JN.1, with no associated increase in hospitalisation or severe cases. It also stressed that mutations are expected in viruses like SARS-CoV-2. "So there is no reason for concern or panic. The mutations will keep happening at a rapid pace and this is the natural behaviour of viruses like SARS-CoV2," said a senior official from the Ministry.



Data compiled by the INSACOG showed that 34 cases of KP.1 have been found across seven states and UTs with 23 cases registered from West Bengal. The other states are Goa (1), Gujarat (2), Haryana (1), Maharashtra (4) Rajasthan (2) and Uttarakhand (1). As many as 290 cases of KP.2 have been registered with Maharashtra reporting the highest number at 148, according to the data.

Rajasthan (21), Uttar Pradesh (8), Uttarakhand (16) and West Bengal (36). Globally, the predominant COVID-19 variants are still JN.1 and its sub-lineages, including KP.1 and KP.2. KP.1 and KP.2 belong to a group of COVID-19 variants scientists have nicknamed 'FLiRT', after the technical names of their mutations.

Rajnath slams Rahul at rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BOKARO (JHARKHAND)/NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday attacked Rahul Gandhi, questioning whether a leader who has been "praised by the enemy" be allowed to form the Government. Singh, while addressing an election rally in Jharkhand's Bokaro, was referring to former Pakistan Minister Fawad Hussain Chaudhry's praise for the Congress leader.



ishment of 'Ram Rajya' in India. Singh said that under the Congress rule, banks ran into losses but under the BJP government, all banks recorded huge profits. He also attacked the Congress, stating that the grand old party was promising reservations on the basis of religion, which is not permissible under the Constitution.

patronage it was not possible. He appealed to the people to show the "exit door" to the ruling coalition in the state. "The CM who mysteriously went missing for 24 hours, which is unprecedented in India's history, is languishing in jail," he said, while referring to Hemant Soren. Singh said although INDIA bloc accuses BJP of misusing ED and CBI against opposition but these agencies could seize only Rs 32 lakh under the previous Congress regime, whereas under Modi government, they seized Rs 1 lakh crore besides property worth Rs 22,000 crore.

Need to create joint culture of three services, says CDS Chauhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Tuesday called upon the three services to create a joint culture as they move towards forming Joint Operational Structures to fight modern day war. Speaking here on 'Jointmanship : The Way Ahead' as part of 22nd Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture organised at United Service Institution (USI), the CDS termed developing Joint Culture in Armed Forces as Jointness 2.0, which is the way forward.



the CDS underscored that there was a need to create a fourth culture in the services. "Joint Culture though different from Service specific Culture, needs to respect the uniqueness of each service. We must be able to distill the best of each service, and incorporate the Highest Common Factor, rather than settle for the Least Common Denominator," said the Chief of Defence Staff. He mentioned various initiatives of symbology that were being processed towards fostering the Joint Culture, including Tri-Services participation in national events.

Sustain (RTS) and other administrative functions, and will allow greater focus of the operational commander to matters of security," he said. The CDS said the Theatre Commands will not be an end state but the beginning of the next set of reforms. He said, Integrated Theatre Commands will lead to many reforms like Single to Multi Domain operations, fusing space and cyber space into traditional domains, digitisation of battlefield information and visualisation, net centric to data centric among others. Stressing that the reforms in Indian defence eco-system are necessary, the CDS said, nation states across the globe are facing a new set of challenges, and current flux in world order is forcing nations to review their security strategies. The rapid and unbridled march of technology is transforming the way future wars will be fought, he added.

Modi, Congress pay tributes to Rajiv on death anniversary



Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi pay tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary at Veer Bhumi, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday paid tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary. India's Prime Minister between 1984 and

1989, Rajiv was assassinated by LTTE cadres at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu in 1991 during an election campaign. "On his death anniversary, my tributes to our former PM Shri Rajiv Gandhi ji," Modi said in a post on X. The Congress leaders also paid tributes to Rajiv.

Baggage delivery time improves at major airports in last four months in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The baggage delivery time at Delhi, Mumbai and four other major airports has improved significantly in the last four months, with more than 90 per cent of the passengers getting their baggage arriving within 30 minutes of an aircraft landing. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also advised all domestic and international airlines operating at other airports to improve baggage delivery timings. "From 62.2 per cent of passengers getting on-time baggage delivery in January, the number increased to more than 90 per cent from March 2024 onwards...The percentages of bags arriving within 30 mins has reached a high of 92.5 per cent in May 2024," the Ministry said. In January, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) started an exercise to boost the baggage delivery system of the domestic airlines at the country's six major airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

The exercise under the aegis of the civil aviation ministry was started after it was noticed that baggage was getting delivered late after the landing of a plane. As per the global standards prescribed by IATA (International Air Transport Association) and the provision under the OMDA (Operation, Management and Development Agreement) with airports, baggage should be delivered to passengers within 30 minutes of the arrival of the aircraft. In a release on Tuesday, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that when the exercise was started on January 14, only 62.2 per cent of the passengers were getting their baggage within IATA-prescribed timelines.

Disturbed sleep, hallucinations warning signs of onset of lupus: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Mental health and neurological symptoms such as disturbed dream sleep, hallucinations or depression and loss of balance may act as a warning signal for the onset of autoimmune disease such as lupus, also known as Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), according to an international research team. Lupus is an autoimmune inflammatory disease known for its effect on many organs, including the brain. The team led by researchers at the University of Cambridge and King's College London in the UK, maintained that such symptoms can act as an early warning sign that an individual is approaching a "flare," where their disease worsens for a period. For the study, they surveyed 676 people living with lupus and 400 clinicians, as well as carried out detailed interviews with 69 people living



with systemic autoimmune rheumatic diseases (including lupus) and 50 clinicians. The results, published in the journal eClinicalMedicine, showed that disrupted dream sleep was the most common symptom experienced by three in five patients. Of these, a third went on to develop lupus disease a year

later. Less than one in four patients reported hallucinations, seen in 85 per cent of people with lupus. Further, three in five lupus patients and one in three with other rheumatology-related conditions also reported increasingly disrupted dreaming sleep - usually vivid and distressing nightmares -

just before their hallucinations. The patients reported that the nightmares were often vivid and distressing, involving being attacked, trapped, crushed, or falling. Melanie Sloan from Cambridge University called on doctors to speak to their patients about these types of symptoms and write down each patient's progression. "Patients often know which symptoms are a bad sign that their disease is about to flare, but both patients and doctors can be reluctant to discuss mental health and neurological symptoms, particularly if they don't realise that these can be a part of autoimmune diseases," said Melanie, the lead author from the varsity's Department of Public Health and Primary Care. Dr Rudrarpan Chatterjee and Dr Amita Aggarwal, both from Department of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow in

a separate review published in ScienceDirectlate last year noted that while the lupus is treatable, most patients in India bear healthcare costs as out of pocket expenses. "While this has been recently addressed by a new policy (Ayushman Bharat scheme) that offers low-cost insurance at the national level to everyone within the social security scheme of the Indian Government, a lot of rheumatological conditions at present do not have coverage under this scheme." The review titled, 'Challenges in the diagnosis and management of SLE in India,' further attributed the lack of financial aid to the rare nature of these diseases and a lack of awareness even in policy making circles. "Though SLE has recently been included in this scheme, the benefits are available only once the diagnosis is made and only for inpatient care." Researchers estimate that over 1 million cases of Lupus are diagnosed in India every year.

NIA files chargesheet against pro Khalistani Arshdeep, three others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed charge sheet against Canada-based pro-Khalistani terrorist Arshdeep Singh and three of his aides for being part of a conspiracy to unleash terror attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, the agency Tuesday said. The action marks a big leap in NIA's efforts to destroy sleeper cells operated by Singh alias Arsh Dala to unleash terrorist attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, it said. "Canada-based Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dala and his Indian agents Harjeet Singh alias Harry Maur, Ravinder Singh alias Rajvinder Singh alias Harry Rajpura, and Rajeev Kumar alias Sheela have been charge sheeted before the NIA (Special Court, New Delhi (on Monday)," said the statement issued by the anti-terror agency.



The three aides were running a major terror-gangster syndicate in India on the directions of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) terrorist Dala. Accused Maur and Rajpura were operating as sleeper cells and were being harboured by Rajeev Kumar, and the trio had planned to carry out a series of terror attacks on Dala's directions and with funds received from him, the NIA said. While Maur and Rajpura were the gang's shooters and had the mandate of executing targeted killings, Rajeev Kumar alias

Sheela was receiving funding from Arsh Dala for harbouring Harry Maur and Harry Rajpura, the statement said. NIA investigations have further revealed that Kumar was also providing logistics support and arranging weapons for the other two on the instructions of Dala. The probe agency had arrested Maur and Rajpura on November 23, 2023 and Kumar on January 12, 2024. "Investigations are continuing to destroy the entire terrorist-gangster syndicate," the NIA added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Iran at crossroads

Ebrahim Raisi leaves behind a rich legacy and an uncertain future for his country

Iran is grappling with an unprecedented political crisis as both President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were tragically found dead in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances. The sudden loss of these key figures has plunged Iran into uncertainty, creating a significant leadership void and fuelling various speculations and conspiracy theories. Raisi, known for his hardline stance and involvement in controversial actions, leaves behind a complex legacy. His death, alongside Amir-Abdollahian, not only creates a leadership void but also raises questions about the trajectory of Iranian politics and foreign relations. The circumstances surrounding the helicopter crash, which occurred in heavy fog near the Azerbaijan border, have fuelled speculation. Given Raisi's past, including his involvement in mass executions in 1988 and some contentious actions such as uranium enrichment and missile attacks on Israel, the possibility of foul play cannot be easily dismissed. Conspiracy theories abound, ranging from internal power struggles to foreign interference.



President Raisi had numerous domestic adversaries, from moderates marginalised by his policies to conservatives critical of his presidency. Israel, a long-standing rival of Iran, also enters the conjecture. Recent escalations, including the assassination of an Iranian General by Israel and subsequent missile exchanges, add fuel to speculations of Israeli involvement. Mossad has conducted such operations, but assassinating a head of state is a risky move even by Israel's standards. Both Israel and US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer have denied involvement.

The big question is Raisi's succession and Iran's trajectory going forward. Md Mokhber has been appointed the Acting President, while Ali Bagheri Kani, who was Deputy Foreign Minister, has been elevated in the Ministry. The election date has been set for June 28. Raisi was a hardliner cleric but by no means a saint. During the summer of 1988, Raisi was a key member of the "Death Commission" responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners, primarily members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) and other leftist groups. A prominent figure in Iran's power structure, Raisi was poised for further advancement until his horrifying death. While his demise creates speculation about the successor to Supreme Leader 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it's unlikely to significantly alter Iran's political trajectory. The conservative-dominated system will prioritise continuity and stability, albeit amidst internal jockeying for influence. Raisi's successor faces a daunting agenda amid economic turmoil and societal discontent, with the spectre of continued international sanctions looming large. With internal dissent simmering and external pressures mounting, the succession process becomes pivotal. The coming days will decide if any discernible change takes place or if the old order continues where moderates and leftists have no role to play.

PICTALK



A man feeds a parrot's chick that fell off a tree, in Guwahati

Delhi's Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, has overcome numerous obstacles in the past decade. Yet, his unwavering resilience has been a beacon of inspiration. He and his party are currently facing the biggest crisis in the liquor policy case.

Despite the challenges, Kejriwal's political journey is a testament to his indomitable spirit. From a brief 49-day tenure and losing all seven seats in Delhi in 2014, he orchestrated a remarkable comeback, securing 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls.

The arrest of Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case last month, which involves allegations of corruption and misuse of power, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of the Aam Aadmi Party. Will this be the end of the party's road, or can they weather this storm and continue their political journey?

The Apex court's decision to grant bail to Kejriwal, allowing him to campaign for his party in the ongoing elections, is a beacon of hope for Kejriwal's supporters. This positive development paves the way for Kejriwal's success, especially if he garners public sympathy.

Kejriwal presents himself as the underdog, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged persecution and his colleagues' imprisonment. Kejriwal and his party have been trying to show the public how he was mistreated in prison and how he was denied insulin and his diabetes medication.

Kejriwal's arrest is the biggest crisis for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its founding in November 2012. The party has faced numerous challenges, including internal conflicts, allegations of corruption and the need to maintain its image as a party for the common man. Over the years, many of Kejriwal's associates from the India Against Corruption (IAC) days have been dumped and he remains a despit. Kejriwal has introduced a personality cult centred around him. The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power has been quite dramatic.

Can AAP survive its ultimate resilience test?

As Kejriwal presents himself as an underdog fighting against perceived persecution, this election will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of both his career and the AAP



KALYANI SHANKAR



It originated from the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2012. The party came into power within months, but Kejriwal's resignation within 48 hours was unsurprising. However, he returned in 2015 and 2019, winning the Delhi Assembly polls with a significant majority. These events have sparked curiosity about the party's political trajectory and Kejriwal's resilience. Kejriwal has always been ambitious. He positioned himself as a prime ministerial candidate and even ran against Modi in Benares in 2014 but lost. This bold move significantly boosted Kejriwal's and his party's profile.

In the recently formed INDIA coalition, a significant political alliance that aims to challenge the dominance of the BJP, the AAP stands out as the only party other than Congress to rule more than one State. This alliance could pave the way for his party's expansion beyond Delhi and Punjab.

However, currently, AAP will have a significant political impact in only 20 constituencies. Kejriwal's national influ-

“ THE AAM AADMI PARTY IS NOT JUST A POLITICAL ENTITY. IT IS POISED TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY CONGRESS AND TARGET POLITICALLY BIPOLAR STATES LIKE HIMACHAL PRADESH, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT ”

ence depends on his party's performance.

The AAP currently holds one seat in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Upper House. The party has expanded its influence to other States and was granted national party status in April 2023.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power in Indian politics is fascinating. Unlike the BJP or the Left parties, it has no solid ideological stance. It has not relied on regional or socialist backgrounds like the AIADMK, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Biju Janata Dal, or Rashtriya Janata Dal. Instead, it has gained power by championing development and the freebie culture.

The AAP is now contesting elections in Delhi with the Congress party, while Punjab is contesting 13 seats independently. These alliances offer a promising outlook for Kejriwal's political journey.

The Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political entity. It is poised to fill the void left by Congress and target politically bipolar States like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Modi has promised a "Modi ki guarantee," while Kejriwal

has outlined a ten-point agenda. This agenda includes "freeing" Indian land from Chinese occupation if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc forms the Government at the Centre, attaining Statehood for Delhi, ensuring a 24/7 power supply and providing free education. These promises reflect Kejriwal's focus on national issues. The Delhi liquor policy case has become inconvenient for the AAP and convenient for the BJP, as elections are underway. It raises questions like, is it the end of the road? Can the second rung of ladders like Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Run the party, or will Kejriwal, with his usual luck, return? Kejriwal is optimistic and hopes that luck will be on his side. This positive outlook has served him well so far.

His popularity will rise if his party secures a respectable number of seats in the current Lok Sabha polls. Only the voters can decide and their decision will shape the future of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party in Indian politics.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Secularism over politics



Proposed the news article, "Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections", published on May 20, this is my response. It is a pity that religion rather than economic issues take the stage in the election campaign for the ruling party at the Centre in our secular country. Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal lord used to favour his religion over other religions. History witnessed that such a practice spelt disaster on every occasion. The people felt the need for a complete separa-

tion of religion from politics. This gave birth to secularism. All modern progressive nations have embraced secularism after learning how painful it would be to deviate from its path.

Mixing religion and politics destroys accountability, enables corruption and favours one religion over others, undermining democracy. Politicians should be elected based on policy, not religion and churches should focus on spirituality, not politics. It divides the citizens and damages the unity and integrity of the country. It does not allow the policymakers to follow the progressive ideals of equality and fraternity. Rather, it attracts negative things such as discrimination, marginalisation, conflict and unrest. Some of our neighbouring countries have experienced the danger of not walking in the path of secularism. India must follow secularism and let religion be a personal matter between God and a person.

Sujit De | Kolkata

as well as responsibility in them like never before.

An extended lifespan increases susceptibility to non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and hypertension. As life expectancy in India is projected to rise, addressing behavioural and metabolic risks is crucial for healthy aging over the next two decades. Health outcomes can be significantly improved by efficiently addressing the risk factors. Furthermore, a safe environment and adequate vaccination can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

HAPPINESS IS A SKILL

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Connecting the Mind and Body," by Ravi Valluri, published on May 20, this is my response. Happiness is a skill that human beings must teach themselves. A lot of people spend so much time ruminating about the past or thinking about the future that they forget to enjoy the most beautiful gift they have received from God—the present moment. Our society is structured in a way that keeps reminding us of our

failures in the past and makes us anxious about our future. We need to consciously make efforts to silence our minds by incorporating daily practices into our daily routines. Spending time in nature is one of the best-known ways to reconnect with your inner self. Meditating for 20 - 30 minutes daily can also provide you with a treasure trove of peace. Journaling can help you manage your emotions and teach you to focus on the present moment. Expressing gratitude to loved ones for being a part of your lives also goes a long way in nurturing the relationships you have with people that eventually become a source of joy for you. Exercising daily is also a good way to take care of your health. Staying away from social media and all the unrealistic expectations it imposes on you is imperative. All these practices when done every day can help you augment your happiness levels and enjoy life to the fullest.

Charvi Kathuria | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The rise of online internships for students

Students are opting for online internships to gain practical experience, develop crucial skills and prepare themselves for the evolving job market



AARUL MALVIYA

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, students are increasingly recognising the importance of proactive engagement in shaping their future careers. Embracing the adage of "building a door" to their professional aspirations, school students are turning to online internships as a means to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities and prepare themselves for the dynamic job market that awaits them upon graduation.



Online internships have witnessed a surge in relevance in recent years, offering school students an array of benefits that extend beyond traditional in-person placements.

Online internships provide students with a flexible work environment tailored to accommodate their schedules. This flexibility allows them to optimise productivity according to their peak hours of concentration while balancing other commitments such as classes or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the absence of commute time associated with virtual internships fur-

ther enhances students' ability to dedicate time to their roles. **Skill Development** : Engaging in tasks aligned with their field of interest, interns acquire practical experience and hone essential competencies crucial for professional success. By demonstrating initiative and self-reliance in completing assigned projects remotely, interns showcase their readiness to thrive in diverse work environments. These experiences not only deepen their expertise but also bolster their resumes, setting them apart in competitive job markets. **Access to Talent Beyond Geographical Boundaries**: Online internships offer employers access to a diverse pool of talent unrestricted by geographical boundaries. This expanded reach enriches organisations with diverse perspectives, skills and cultur-

al insights, fostering innovation and collaboration within teams. Additionally, it prepares companies for the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce by developing remote work capabilities.

Exploration of Career Paths: Online internships serve as a platform for students to explore different career paths and gain insight into various industries. This exploration phase allows students to clarify their interests, identify strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career goals.

Networking Opportunities: Despite being remote, online internships provide students with networking opportunities that can be instrumental in their career development. Interacting with professionals within their chosen industry, connecting with fellow interns and building relationships with mentors and supervisors can lead to mentorship opportunities, job referrals and valuable insights into industry trends.

Innovative Learning Experiences: Through interactive projects, virtual meet-

ings and online training sessions, online internships offer innovative learning experiences that complement traditional classroom education. These immersive experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering critical thinking.

Cultural Exposure: Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds exposes students to different perspectives, communication styles and work cultures, enriching their understanding of the global economy's interconnectedness.

Engaging in online internships significantly boosts students' resumes and bolsters their prospects for future employment. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of their initiative, adaptability and capacity to thrive in dynamic work environments, positioning them as desirable candidates poised for success in their chosen career paths. Thus, online internships not only enrich students' skill sets but also empower them to navigate the complexities of the modern job market. (The author is the Founder, Zamit; views are personal)

MALIWAL CASE

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "An Intricate Puzzle," published on May 20. Wherein the Pioneer has truly asserted that the incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. The cases booked under IPC Sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 354D (stalking), filing the FIR under sections 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or intent to insult) against Bibhav Kumar aide Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the attack on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal reflect seriousness.

Picking up Bibhav Kumar from the official residence of the Chief Minister and seizing CCTV, DVR, mobile etc. can prove helpful in revealing the secrets of the crime. But it seems that as part of a conspiracy, Bibhav Kumar was hiding at Chief Minister Kejriwal's house and was engaged in destroying the evidence. Delhi Police should make every effort to collect crime data by using the latest digital technology and present concrete evidence before the court. So that the perpetrators of this serious crime can be punished as per the rule of the law.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

RISING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Madam — An individual's life span is dictated by a myriad of factors. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, global life expectancy is expected to increase by 4.9 years in men and 4.2 years in women by the year 2050. From 73.6 in 2022, there may be a jump to 78.1 in 2050. This trend will tend to be more exemplified in nations with a history of very low life expectancy. It is no secret that nowadays people are more cautious about their health. While diseases and disorders have taught them lessons, mortality and morbidity around them have disciplined their lives. Past pandemics, in particular COVID-19, have instilled a sense of fear



FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUALITY CAN HELP US AVOID DEAD ENDS

Through spiritual purity, we can rise above limitations and obstacles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all end in death, i.e. our material bodies must die at some time in future, but we should avoid a dead end also, i.e. that leads to something not so good. We, souls, will go on in new bodies, but the problem is in what bodies and where. Are we going to a place where there is perpetual unrest? There are many areas in the world, which are in perpetual turmoil. Place of birth is one problem. Then, in what bodies are we born? Even in human bodies, there can be many handicaps like deformities, genetic defects and surely not-so-good looks, personality, level of intelligence, etc. There is a world of difference between ourselves and our material bodies. We, souls, are journeying eternally in various bodies, but our bodies have limited lifespans only. This thought should be uppermost in our minds. We should try to make sure that we make progress and avoid our end in a worse situation, condition, form or State.

Let us see how we can ensure it. We, souls, are parts of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) What does this mean? That we are very special, being parts of God. Imagine being the son of a very rich and cultured person. God is infinitely superior than any parent can be. God will always be favourable to us if we take His shelter because we have free will. In the case of parents, we receive shelter automatically, but in the case of God, it is a matter of choice. It shouldn't be too difficult to make this choice, but it is. Why? Taking shelter requires some basics. We must give up our egos; we need to do spiritual practices to qualify for God's attention. There is another big problem. Our lives are almost entirely controlled by our fate, which is what we have accumulated in our previous life/lives. One may question this premise. Yes, there is free will and liberty to do what we desire, feel or decide. But all these are controlled by our natures, which again are parts of our fate. What is the evidence? A person given to get angry readily continues to do so throughout his life, unless God intervenes on his or her behalf. And God wouldn't unless we take His shelter. Where does it leave us? In not a pleasant place. Life will go on almost automatically with not much improvement.



Are we doomed? We are not. God is very kind; He has left an opening for us; we just have to get started. We must have a desire. God has arranged to preach everywhere. If we bother to go and listen, we will be convinced. And the start is very simple. We just need to become better in whatever we do, not just in our work. In spiritual parlance, we must try to increase the mode of goodness in ourselves. Our whole being is made up of three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are in different percentages, with the mode of passion being predominant in most of us. It is no wonder that we are quite passionate about what we think, do, etc. Now we should try to be good in everything. For example, if we are habituated to eating foods, which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, horse, etc. (17.9), we should choose tasty, not dry, not having too much liquid foods. (17.8) Similar improvements are required in what we speak, see, hear, etc. As purity increases, we will begin to get attracted to God and spiritual acts.

The next big decision is to control our egos. This is the biggest hindrance in taking shelter from God. Arjuna had a similar problem. His ego would not allow him to accept God's instructions. Lord Krishna had to warn him, "If you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer, you will perish." (18.58) Is this not the fate of almost all of us? Who can change fate? God can and only He can in a substantial way. There is no one to share one's tough times. The solution again suggests itself. Love God and you will be able to love others as well. You won't always look for faults in others. This attitude change will help in becoming friends with family members. The conclusion is: that God is the solution if we wish to avoid the dead ends of our lives. Will we take God's shelter?

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Raisi's tragic demise clouds Iran's future



SANTOSH MATHEW

The enigmatic President of Iran breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the country he governed



In the heart of the Middle East, where history and geopolitics are deeply intertwined, a towering figure met a tragic end, sending shockwaves across the globe. Ibrahim Raisi, the enigmatic President of Iran, breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the region he governed. Raisi's rise to power was nothing short of remarkable. Born in 1960, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of Iran's most influential figures. His journey began in the hallowed halls of Tehran's judiciary, where he earned a reputation for his unwavering commitment to Islamic principles and his uncompromising stance against corruption. Raisi truly made his mark on the political stage. In June 2021, he ascended to the presidency, promising to usher in a new era of prosperity and stability for his beloved nation. His tenure was marked by bold foreign policies and ambitious domestic reforms, as he sought to solidify Iran's position as a regional powerhouse. At the heart of Raisi's vision was Iran's role as a champion of Shia Islam, a beacon of resistance against oppression and injustice. Under his leadership, Iran forged alliances with like-minded nations, offering support to movements and groups fighting for their rights across the Middle East.

However, amidst the triumphs and accolades, tragedy struck with devastating force. On a fateful day, as Raisi embarked on a routine journey to Azerbaijan, fate intervened. His helicopter plummeted from the sky, claiming his life and those of several others onboard. The crash sent shockwaves rippling through Iran and beyond, leaving a nation in mourning and the world reeling from the loss of a visionary leader.

As the dust settled and the wreckage was cleared, the full extent of Raisi's legacy came into focus. His death left a void in Iran's political landscape, one that would be difficult to fill. But beyond the borders of his homeland, Raisi's impact was felt far and wide. In the halls of power in Moscow and Ankara, Raisi was revered



RAISI WIELDED IMMENSE INFLUENCE, SHAPING IRAN'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WITH A FIRM HAND. HIS PRESIDENCY WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT STRENGTHENING IRAN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCING RELIANCE ON FOREIGN POWERS

as a stalwart ally, a steadfast defender of Iran's interests on the global stage. Russia and Turkey had lent their support to the rescue efforts, a testament to the enduring bonds forged between nations in times of crisis. Meanwhile, in distant New Delhi, Raisi's passing was met with a mixture of sorrow and reflection. India had enjoyed a burgeoning partnership with Iran under his leadership, particularly through collaborative efforts at the Chabahar Port. His absence would be keenly felt in the corridors of diplomacy, where his influence had helped shape the course of history. But perhaps most intriguing were the whispers of conspiracy surrounding Raisi's untimely demise. Some speculated that external forces were at play, seeking to destabilise Iran and undermine its leadership. Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, was mentioned in hushed tones, its shadowy hand suspected of orchestrating the tragedy. As the world mourned the loss of Ibrahim Raisi, it also grappled with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. His death cast a pall of uncertainty over Iran's future, raising questions about the country's leadership and its place on the global stage. But amidst the darkness, there remained a glimmer of hope, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. For in the legacy of Ibrahim Raisi, there lay the seeds of inspiration, a reminder that even in the face of tragedy, the indomitable spirit of humanity endures, ready to rise again, stronger and more determined than ever before. Raisi's sudden demise not only revealed the depth of his ultra-conservative beliefs but also showcased his unwavering commitment to populism, positioning him as a champion of the people

and the right-hand man of Ayatollah Khamenei. As the Ayatollah's trusted confidant, Raisi wielded immense influence, shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies with a firm hand. His presidency was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Iran's economic independence and reducing reliance on foreign powers. He focused on bolstering the country's industrial base, improving infrastructure and promoting technological innovation. On the international front, Raisi pursued a policy of strategic partnerships, particularly with Russia and China. These alliances were seen as a counterbalance to Western influence and as a means of securing economic and military support. Raisi's administration also prioritised the expansion of Iran's influence in regional conflicts, providing support to allied groups in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. His efforts to position Iran as a regional leader were often viewed through the lens of resistance against Western hegemony. Despite his achievements, Raisi's tenure was not without controversy. His hardline stance on social and political issues drew criticism from both domestic and international observers. Human rights organisations frequently condemned his administration for its treatment of political dissidents and minority groups. The suppression of protests and the enforcement of strict social codes were seen as hallmarks of his governance. Raisi's death left a nation at a crossroads. The mourning period was marked by both grief and reflection, as Iranians contemplated the future of their country without the man who had steered it through turbulent times. The

question of succession loomed large, with potential candidates vying for the position of leadership. The uncertainty surrounding Iran's political future was palpable, with analysts speculating on the potential shifts in policy and power dynamics. In the international arena, Raisi's passing was met with a range of reactions. Allies expressed their condolences and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining strong ties with Iran. In contrast, adversaries viewed his death as an opportunity to reassess their strategies towards the country. The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, already fraught with complexity, faced the prospect of further upheaval. Despite the challenges, there was a sense of resilience among the Iranian populace. The nation's history of overcoming adversity served as a reminder of its enduring strength. Raisi's legacy, with its blend of conservatism, populism and strategic acumen, would continue to influence the country's trajectory. His vision of an Iran that stands firm against external pressures and champions the cause of Shia Islam would remain a guiding principle for future leaders. As the world continued to navigate the aftermath of Raisi's death, one thing was clear: his impact on Iran and the broader Middle East would be felt for years to come. The region, shaped by his policies and leadership, would continue to evolve, reflecting the enduring legacy of a man whose life and career were as multifaceted as the history of the land he loved. In the end, Ibrahim Raisi's story was a testament to the complexities of leadership in a region where past and present are forever intertwined.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

Rajasthan healthcare challenges despite Government efforts

The Government's health programmes fail to sufficiently support rural women and girls affected by anaemia, a significant public health concern

In Rajasthan, the healthcare system is facing significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Despite numerous Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and quality, the benefits of these programmes are not reaching their intended targets.

This issue is especially pronounced among women and adolescent girls suffering from anaemia. While the State Government has enacted the Right to Health Act and conducts monthly campaigns to combat anaemia, these efforts have yet to bring about substantial improvements in the health sector across rural Rajasthan. An example of this can be seen in the village of Manoharpura located just four kilometres



NASEEM BANO

from the heritage city of Udaipur. This village falls under the Badgaon Panchayat and has a population of around one thousand. Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, the village has a low level of education, which impacts the awareness of its residents. Despite its proximity to the district headquarters, Manoharpura lags significantly in the health sector. Many families in the village lack even basic identification documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare services.

The reason for not having documents is that most children in the village were born at home rather than in hospitals, resulting in the absence of birth certificates and Aadhar cards. For young girls



and women, the State Government has launched the 'I Am Shakti Udaan Yojana'. This scheme aims to empower economically weaker women and girls and the goal is to include about 2.8

million women and adolescents in this benefit by 2024. As part of this scheme, menstruating girls and women aged 11 to 45 receive sanitary pads. However, most adolescent girls and women miss

out on this benefit. Due to both a lack of awareness and poverty, many girls still use dirty clothes during menstruation instead of buying pads. Additionally, about half of the adolescent girls and women in the village suffer from anaemia, despite the State Government's monthly Shakti Diwas events aimed at eradicating anaemia in Rajasthan. It is important to note that various activities are organised under this campaign to reduce anaemia rates among children, women and adolescents. 'Shakti Diwas' events are held at Anganwadi centres, Government schools, health and wellness centres, sub-health centres, primary health centres, CHCs, dispensaries and sub-district and district hospitals. These

events include anaemia screenings, haemoglobin tests and treatment, distribution of iron tablets and activities to raise awareness and promote behaviour change regarding anaemia. On 'Shakti Diwas', targeted activities are conducted for children aged 6 months to 59 months, out-of-school children aged 5 to 9 years, adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and married women aged 20 to 24 years. Efforts are also made to combat anaemia in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. However, this issue extends beyond Manoharpura village to the entire Udaipur district, where ineffective implementation has affected district rankings. During the health department's monthly review

meeting last November, the CEO Kirti Rathore expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. She emphasised the urgent need to ensure that benefits reach all children, adolescents and women and to strictly enforce measures to make the district anaemia-free. These shortcomings reveal that Manoharpura residents are still not receiving full healthcare benefits and the village has not met its health targets. Addressing this requires both administrative action and increased community awareness, involving as many families as possible.

(The writer is a social worker from Grameen Awam Samajik Vikas Sansthan, Ajmer; views are personal. Charkha Features)

British man dies, passengers hurt in Singapore airlines turbulence

An elderly British man died and more than two dozen passengers were injured when a Singapore Airlines flight from London was struck by severe turbulence and plunged 6,000 feet in the span of some a few minutes Tuesday over the Indian Ocean.

The passengers. Videos posted on the LINE messaging platform by Suvarnabhumi Airport showed a line of ambulances streaming to the scene.

port the lightly injured and non-injured passengers to the city-state's Changi airport. He said that plane was expected to arrive in Bangkok at 9:45 pm.

hour later. The sharp descent in turbulence happened as the flight was over the Andaman Sea, near Myanmar. The aircraft sent a "squawk code" of 7700 at that time, an international emergency signal.

Amnesty chief criticises military trial of civilians in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

Military courts in Pakistan should not try more than 100 people for their alleged role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed former premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 last year.

Pak court rejects petition to disqualify Imran over election nomination allegations

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court on Tuesday rejected a petition seeking jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's disqualification in a case in which he allegedly provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the general elections held in 2018.

Tyrian — in his nomination papers which were filed for contesting the 2018 general elections, the Geo News reported. Khan's PTI party won the 2018 general elections and the former cricketer-turned-politician served as the prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022.

Callamard said Amnesty was quite alarmed by the shrinking space for freedom of expression in the country. Calling the ban "disproportionate, unnecessary and against international law", Callamard said it was particularly bad for individuals unable to access Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).

Germany's foreign minister visits Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Germany's foreign minister Annalena Baerbock renewed Berlin's calls for partners to send more air defense systems, as Russia pounds Ukraine with missiles, glide bombs and rockets.



Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock speaks to Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko during official visit to a thermal power plant which was destroyed by a Russian rocket attack in Ukraine, Tuesday.

and disrupt its defense industry. Baerbock, accompanied by Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko, toured a thermal power plant in central Ukraine that was heavily damaged on April 11.

scoping up rubble several weeks after it was hit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the Kremlin's forces are still focusing their efforts on the eastern Donetsk province and northeastern Kharkiv region, where explosive-laden Russian glide bombs are wreaking destruction on mil-

itary and civilian areas. "This brings us back again and again to the need for air defense — for additional defense systems that could significantly mitigate the difficulties for our warriors and the threat to our cities and communities," Zelenskyy said late Monday on social media.

Kharkiv slowed on Monday, though fighting continued. Russian troops are also conducting reconnaissance and sabotage raids in Ukraine's northern Sumy and Chernihiv regions, shelling border settlements and laying more minefields, according to Dmytro Lykhovii, Ukraine's general staff spokesman.

4.4 magnitude quake hits Italy, prisoners evacuated

AP ■ MILAN

A women's prison near Naples was evacuated as a precaution Tuesday following a 4.4 magnitude quake with an epicentre at an active volcano west of the southern Italian port city that forced hundreds of residents to sleep in tents or cars.



check the structure for damage. A dozen apartment buildings also were evacuated for structural checks, displacing about 40 families, RAI state TV reported.

volcanically active. The surface has been pushed up 1.3 metres since 2006, which is higher than prior to the last major event in 1984, but De Natale emphasised it was impossible to predict when an eruption or stronger quake might occur.

Vatican makes fresh overture to China, reaffirms that Catholic Church is no threat to sovereignty

AP ■ MOSCOW

The Vatican made another big overture to China on Tuesday, reaffirming it poses no threat to Beijing's sovereignty and admitting that Catholic Western missionaries had made "errors" in past centuries in their zeal to convert the Chinese faithful.



as the keynote speaker. It was also significant given the controversy over Shen's 2023 appointment. Pope Francis in July was forced to recognize China's unilateral appointment of Shen as bishop of Shanghai.

video message in which he made no mention of recent troubles but instead pointed to the 1924 meeting in Shanghai as a turning point for Vatican-China relations.

forget the erroneous approaches that had prevailed in previous times," Francis said. "The participants of the first Chinese Council looked to the future. And their future is our present."

Trump campaign calls 'The Apprentice' 'blatantly false,' director offers to screen it for him

AP ■ CANNES

Donald Trump's reelection campaign called "The Apprentice," a film about the former US president in the 1980s, "pure fiction" and vowed legal action following its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival.



defence attorney who was chief counsel to Joseph McCarthy's 1950s Senate investigations of suspected communists.

Cannes, Abbasi told reporters: "Everybody talks about him suing a lot of people — they don't talk about his success rate though, you know?"

also struck a less combative tone as he discussed the film at its festival press conference. He offered to screen "The Apprentice" for Trump and talk it over.

Seoul summit opens with Google, Meta pledging safe AI development

AP ■ SEOUL

The world's leading artificial intelligence companies pledged at the start of a mini summit on AI to develop the technology safely, including pulling the plug if they can't rein in the most extreme risks.

The two-day meeting — co-hosted by the South Korean and UK governments — also comes as major tech companies like Meta, OpenAI and Google roll out the latest versions of their AI models.

erable," AI companies will have to hit the kill switch and stop developing or deploying their models and systems if they can't mitigate the risks.

a virtual conference. The online summit will be followed by an in-person meeting of digital ministers, experts and others on Wednesday, according to organisers.

Monday. Wang said participants will subsequently "discuss not only the risks posed by AI but also its positive aspects and how it can contribute to humanity in a balanced manner."

send a representative to Wednesday's in-person meeting, the South Korean presidential office said.

No more cute snaps of Mount Fuji!

Tokyo (AP): Sorry, the screen is now up — no more snapping cute photos of Mount Fuji from a popular sidewalk spot in the Japanese town of Fujikawaguchiko.

were unhappy — visitors would block the narrow sidewalk, take photos on the busy road or walk into neighbors' properties in pursuit of their shot, officials said.

