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RAJASTHAN AIM TO SNAP
LOSING STREAK

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RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
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AIDE NABBED, KEJRIWAL THROWS THE GAUNTLET



SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI
Minutes before his anticipatory bail was rejected, the Delhi Police on Saturday arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's controversial aide Bibhav Kumar in connection with the alleged assault on AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Saturday. Kumar was picked up from the Chief Minister's official residence by the police and brought to the Civil Lines Police Station. Maliwal has yet not reacted to the news of Kumar's arrest. The Tis Hazari court disposed of Kumar's anticipatory bail plea, terming it as "infructuous". Additional Sessions Judge Sushil Anuj Tyagi noted that Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Kumar Srivastava appeared through videoconferencing around 4.45 pm and informed the court that Kumar has already been arrested in the case.

"On a court query, the additional public prosecutor for the State submitted that the applicant was arrested at about 4:15 pm," the judge said. **In a direct challenge to the Prime Minister, AAP convener and Kejriwal on Saturday dared him to arrest all top AAP leaders who will be marching en masse to the BJP headquarters on Sunday noon instead of picking them up one by one. Kejriwal, however, asserted that his party could not be crushed by sending its leaders to jail.** Kumar is accused of assaulting Maliwal on May 13 at the residence of Kejriwal, who is also the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Advocate Karan Sharma representing Kumar said, "We've not received any information from the police yet. We've sent them an email that we will cooperate in the investigation." Kumar on Saturday told the Tis Hazari court that he was "getting

quashed in the battle of political giants." "On May 17, I (Bibhav) sent an email stating that I will join the investigation. I don't know why this is happening to me," lawyer Hariharan, appearing on behalf of Kumar, told the court. He also said Kumar could not be arrested without being served with a notice under section 41A of the CrPc. His lawyer said he was just seeking interim relief as the apprehension of arrest was real. "I'm not at flight risk. I'm not running anywhere," Kumar's lawyer Hariharan said while reading the application. "I'm just seeking protection right now...as the apprehension of arrest is very real," he added. The AAP shared an email sent by Kumar which stated, "It has come to knowledge of the undersigned through the media that a case FIR number 277/2024 has been registered at PS Civil Lines in which the undersigned has been named as an accused. Though the undersigned has not been served with any notice in the case till now, the undersigned categorically submits that he is willing to cooperate and join the investigation as and when called upon to do so by the investigating officer." "It may be emphasised here that the undersigned has also made a complaint bringing to light the true facts of the alleged incident that happened on 13.05.2024 vide emails dated 17.05.2024 to police," it said. On Friday night, Kumar had also mailed a complaint to the police against Maliwal for "illegal/unauthorised entry into and creating a security breach by trespassing at the Chief Minister's residence; for creating a ruckus and interfering with public servants in discharge of duty".

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Wreckage of a bus after it caught fire that left at least nine dead and fifteen others injured, near Tauru in Haryana's Nuh district, in the early hours of Saturday PTI

Five women among nine killed in Nuh as running bus catches fire

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH
At least nine people, including five women, were burnt alive and 15 injured in a fire incident near Tauru in Haryana's Nuh district in the early hours of Saturday. The bus was carrying around 60 people, all residents of Punjab's Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana, who were returning from the pilgrim towns of Mathura and Vrindavan. All of them are relatives, police said. Police reported that the incident occurred around 2 am on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained and a probe is underway, a police official said. A local resident said after noticing the fire, some people chased the bus on a motorcycle and asked the driver to stop. The locals also informed the police and the fire department. President Droupadi Murmu condoled the loss of lives in the fire and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. "The news of the death of many passengers in the tragic incident of a bus catching fire in Haryana's Nuh district is extremely sad. I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of all those injured," Murmu said in a social media post. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has expressed grief over the loss of lives and assured the best possible treatment for those injured.

Honouring Heritage Driving Development

THIS IS MODI'S GUARANTEE

Your vote ensured construction of the magnificent Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya

This time, with your vote, will develop other religious places on the lines of Kashi Corridor

Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar

Press the lotus button Make BJP win

FLANKS COVERED FOR THE BIG FIGHT



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party candidates JP Aggarwal, Udit Raj and Kanhaiya Kumar during a rally for Lok Sabha elections, in New Delhi, on Saturday PTI



Prime Minister and senior BJP leader Narendra Modi with party candidate at a rally for Lok Sabha elections. Twenty-five foreign diplomats from 13 countries, including the UK, Australia, Russia, Nepal, Bhutan, and Indonesia, attended today's jansabha of Modi as observers of Indian democracy Ranjini Dimri/Pioneer

Star-studded lineup for tomorrow's vote

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

From santustikaran (ensuring to satisfaction) to tustikaran (appeasement), to tustikaran to send Ram Lalla to tent again and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's retirement age to scrapping of Citizenship Amendment Act, these issues dominated during campaigning for the fifth phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha to be held on May 20. The political fate of Rahul Gandhi, Smriti Irani, Chirag Paswan, Piyush Goyal, Rajnath Singh, Omar Abdullah, Ujjwal Nikam, Karan Bhushan Singh, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Rohini Acharya, will be decided in the fifth phase in 49 constituencies spread across eight States and Union Territories. The voting will begin at 7 am on Monday and conclude at 6 pm. This phase will witness voter participation from 14 seats in Uttar Pradesh, 13 in Maharashtra, seven in West Bengal, five in Bihar, five in Odisha, three in Jharkhand, and one each in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Political rhetoric continued during the fifth phase campaigning by both the BJP and the Congress. During the campaign, Modi raised the issue of CAA, Muslim appeasement, Marxists economics and attacked the Congress, accusing it of indulging in "shameful" politics and plotting to send "Ram Lala to tent" again. Modi said he has resolved to free India from the biggest model of corruption, appeasement and dynastic politics. Addressing a public rally in Uttar Pradesh's Lalgaon ahead of Phase 5 of the Lok Sabha elections, Modi asked, "Koi maai ka laal paida hua hai jo CAA ko khatam kar sakta hai? ("Has anyone been born from a mother who can repeal

LOK SABHA ELECTION PHASE V SEATS		
2024 LS voting concludes for States marked in red on May 20		
STATES	NO. OF SEATS	CONSTITUENCY
Bihar	5	Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Hajipur (SC)
Jammu & Kashmir	1	Baramulla
LADAKH	1	Ladakh
MAHARASHTRA	13	Dhule, Dindori, Nashik, Kalyan, Palghar, Bhiwandi, Thane, Mumbai North, Mumbai North-West, Mumbai North-East, Mumbai North-Central, Mumbai South-Central, Mumbai South
Odisha	5	Bargarh, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Aska
Uttar Pradesh	13	Mohanlalganj (SC), Lucknow, Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur, Banda, Kaushambi (SC), Barabanki (SC), Faizabad, Kaiserganj, Gonda
West Bengal	7	Bangaon, Barrackpore, Howrah, Uluberia, Srerampore, Hooghly, Arambagh
Jharkhand	3	Chatra, Koderma, Hazaribagh

Bullet to ballot, Bundelkhand turns a new leaf

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI

The political landscape of Bundelkhand has long been intertwined with the shadow world of dacoits, where election outcomes were once dictated by those lurking in the ravines. What began as a symbiotic relationship between politicians and bandits evolved into a political dynasty, with dacoit families entrenched in the corridors of power. While some locals believe dacoits still exist, their threat has greatly reduced. Ram Niranjani, 49, recalls a brutal attack on his home one dark night in August 2012 by the Babli Kol gang in Doda Mafi, a village in Chitrakoot, resulting in the deaths of six family members. However, since Kol was killed in a police encounter in 2019, Niranjani says peace has been restored, and for the first time, his entire family feels



Representational image

safe enough to vote. "The worst is perhaps over, and this is the first Lok Sabha poll without the menace of dacoits. We will vote for law and order, an issue that, along with employment, affects the poor the most," he said. The dacoits and politicians had a deeply intertwined relationship. Six out of seven districts in Bundelkhand, including Jhansi, Jalaun, Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, and Chitrakoot, were dacoit-infested. Figures like Dadua, Nirbhay Singh Gurjar, and Thokia rose to prominence, wielding significant influence over electoral outcomes. Initially, politicians would seek bandit support to secure election victories. However, as time passed, dacoit progenies entered politics themselves. Dadua, infamous in Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Banda,

and parts of Madhya Pradesh, established a political legacy. Despite his death in a 2007 encounter, his son Veer Singh became an MLA from Chitrakoot, and his brother Bal Kumar Patel won the MP seat from Mirzapur. Even Dadua's nephew, Ram Prasad, secured the Patti assembly seat in Pratapgarh. Similarly, Ambika Patel alias Thokia's family ventured into politics. Thokia's aunt Sarita was elected uncontested as the head of Karvi block in Banda in 2005, while another aunt, Savita, secured a spot in the District Panchayat without opposition. In 2007, Thokia's mother, Pipariya Devi, contested the Naraini Assembly seat in Banda under the Rashtriya Lok Dal banner, rallying support in Thokia's name. Nirbhay Singh Gurjar wielded considerable influence over the politics of Garautha in Jhansi, as well as Jalaun and Bhoganipur, ensuring victories for his favored candidates. Another notable figure was Phoolan Devi from Gorha village in Jalaun district. Following the infamous Behmai incident in 1981, she gained national attention. In 1996, two years after her release from prison, the Samajwadi Party gave her a Lok Sabha ticket. Phoolan triumphed in her first electoral contest, becoming an MP from Mirzapur, though she was later assassinated. "There might be some smaller bandits still hiding somewhere, but due to proactive policing, not many would muster the courage," said Prahlad Vishwakarma, a local carpenter. As Bundelkhand bids farewell to the era of dacoit-dominated politics, a new chapter unfolds, marking a transition from the ravines to the legislative chambers. On the ground, the focus has shifted from dacoits to pressing issues like unemployment and stray cattle.

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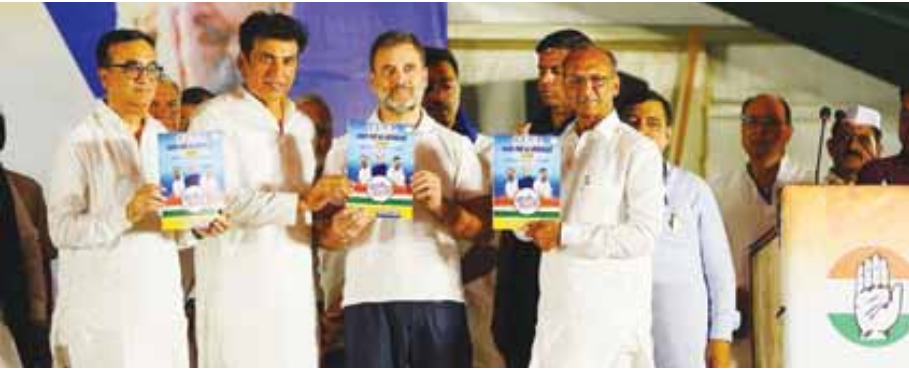
the CAA?" Jo bhi taakat ikathi karni hai karlo, mai bhi maidan me hun, tum bhi maidan me ho...aap CAA nahi mita paoge (gather all the strength you want, I am here, you are also here. You won't be able to repeal CAA)," Modi challenged INDIA Bloc leaders. On the other hand, the Congress and other Opposition parties claimed that if the BJP wins 400 seats, they change the Constitution while AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal raised the issue of Modi's retirement age saying Amit Shah will be next Prime Minister in an apparent move to create confusion among the BJP's voters. The Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh will be one of the most watched seats in the fifth phase of voting, due to the uncertainty over who the Congress will field from the constituency against sitting MP and Union Minister Smriti Irani. The Amethi constituency, formed in 1967 during the delimitation of parliamentary seats, encompasses five Assembly segments: Tiloi, Salon, Jagdishpur, Gauriganj, and Amethi. The Congress party has announced Kishori Lal Sharma as its candidate against the sitting Member of Parliament (MP) and current Union Minister for Minority Affairs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Smriti Irani. Sharma has played a significant role in Congress since 1983 and is instrumental in Sonia's victory in the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in 1999.

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Modi did nothing for small businessmen, claims Rahul

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that Narendra Modi led Central Government and his party BJP has only increased extortions and unemployment across the country.



ing that I'll vote for AAP and Arvind Kejriwal will vote for Congress in these elections," he said.

few favoured businessmen and how he "misused" electoral bonds. "PM Modi is giving non-stop interviews to his favourite journalists but he will not have a debate with me because he knows he cannot answer my questions," he said.

Enforcement Directorate. "They got me interrogated by ED for 55 hours till they got tired... They snatched my house, I told them I don't want your house as the entire country is my home," he said.

Lone, Omar conclude high pitched poll campaign

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Peoples Conference Chairman Sajad Lone Saturday concluded his electrifying poll campaign by sending out a loud and clear message to the electorate to send a public representative to the Indian Parliament who can fulfill their aspirations and not remain silent.



will not find any data on how many times these elected parliamentarians raised your issues on the floor of the Parliament and resolved them.



ry, Lone claimed every time New Delhi and Kashmir came face to face you were never seen standing with the Kashmiris. You always supported New Delhi. You remember Kashmir only when you are out of power.

what the aim of the (home minister's) visit was because the BJP has not fielded candidates here. First, there was a rumor that he had come for a security review meeting but no meeting took place," Abdullah told reporters in the Magam area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

₹9,000 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs seized in first four LS phases, announces EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



With three phases of polling still left, the Election Commission (EC) on Saturday said it had seized nearly Rs.9,000 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and other freebies in the two months since the Lok Sabha elections were announced.

which was carrying 14 crew members, all Pakistani on Indian waters, 180 nautical miles off the coast of Porbandar, Gujarat. The joint team of Gujarat ATS and Narcotics Control Bureau (Operations), New Delhi recovered 78 boxes of contraband suspected to be Heroin weighing roughly 86 Kgs worth nearly Rs. 602 Crore in the international market.

Modi changed country's political culture in ten years, says Nadda

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi changed the political culture of the country from politics of divide and rule to that of report card in the past ten years with the mantra of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas and sabka prayas,' BJP president J P Nadda said on Saturday.

is roaming with the Constitution written by B R Ambedkar, which clearly states no reservation in the name of religion but the Congress party in Andhra Pradesh tried four times to give reservation on the basis of religion and similar attempts are being made in Karnataka," he added.

Under the leadership of PM Modi, today India is second in the sale of medicine and third largest exporter of toys and the mobile phones are also made in India, he said.

Campaigning ends for five LS seats, 35 Assembly segments in Odisha

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The high-decibel campaigning ended on Saturday for five Lok Sabha seats and 35 assembly constituencies in Odisha, which will go to polls on May 20.

contesting from Aska, Kandhamal, Bolangir, Bargarh and Sundergarh Lok Sabha seats, while 265 are in the fray for 35 assembly constituencies. Altogether 79.62 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise on May 20.

During the campaigning, PM Modi launched a scathing attack on the chief minister, accusing him of destroying the Odia 'Asmita' (pride). Patnaik termed the campaign speeches by BJP leaders as "derogatory and abusive".

Star-studded lineup...

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The Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) has named Nanhe Singh Chauhan as their candidate for Amethi. The party hopes that Chauhan will be able to garner the OBC Nonia community votes, which is a significant segment in the constituency. Amethi has historically been a bastion of the Congress party, as it has lost this seat only thrice, in 1977, 1998, and recently in 2019.

From Page 1

replacing incumbent Member of Parliament Jamyang Tsering Namgyal. The Congress has put forth Tsering Namgyal as its contender. Adding a twist to the electoral dynamics, the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) has fielded Haji Haneefa Jan, the Kargil district president of the National Conference (NC).

From Page 1

adjacent to Patna, is one of the State's 40 parliamentary seats and comprises six Assembly segments. Hajipur has been the political bastion of the late Ram Vilas Paswan, who hails from this region.

Bullet to ballot, Bundelkhand...

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"There is widespread inflation and joblessness. People continue to migrate out," said Raja Bhiaya, a convener of NGO Vidya Dham Samiti. "People applied for Government jobs but paper leaks have dashed their hopes."

A joint force identified and intercepted a suspected Pakistani fishing boat, 'Alraza'

The Hajipur Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar,

after the May 3 deadline.

AIDE NABBED, KEJRIWAL...

From Page 1

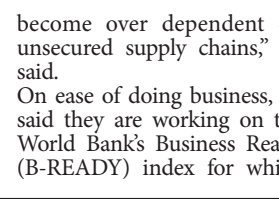
Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma said, "Kumar got arrested from his house. So the CM was giving shelter to alleged criminals."

FDI norms in certain sectors likely to be eased under new Government: DPIIT Secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India has recently relaxed foreign direct investment norms in the space sector and there is a possibility of further FDI liberalisation in certain other areas when the new government will come to power, a top official said on Saturday.
Secretary in Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that in the last few years, India has liberalised FDI policy in many segments.
India has one of the most liberal foreign direct investment (FDI) policies in the world and in fact more liberal than many Southeast Asian countries that the country is often compared with, he said.
Recently FDI norms were eased in the space sector and "it is quite possible that under a new government, we can attempt some further

liberalisation of any pockets that are left and where some liberalisation is possible," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit.
The Lok Sabha elections are underway in the country and the counting is scheduled for June 4.
The government has eased FDI norms in the space sector by allowing 100 per cent overseas investment in making components for satellites, as part of efforts to attract overseas players and private companies into the segment.
FDI in India declined 13 per cent to USD 32.03 billion in April-December 2023, dragged down by lower infusion in computer hardware and software, telecom, auto, and pharma sectors, according to the government data.
Talking about the success of the production linked incentive schemes (PLI), the secretary said so far Rs 1.13 lakh crore of investments have come in and the beneficiary

companies have recorded over Rs 9 lakh crore of sales, exports of Rs 3.45 lakh crore and created jobs for over 8 lakh people.
The scheme was announced in 2021 for 14 sectors, including telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.
Singh said some people criticize the scheme stating that it has not led to increase in domestic value addition but they should know that it takes time.
People have raised issues with regard to India attracting players in the semi-conductor segment stating that it is too capital intensive and not suitable for India.
"The target is not labour intensity, it is mainly strategic and to ensure that we do not



become over dependent on unsecured supply chains," he said.
On ease of doing business, he said they are working on the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) index for which the survey will start in August and this ranking involves a new set of indices which will cover ease of entry, ease of operation and ease of exit of business.
The World Bank has shared a set of 1,370 questions which will be assessed across various economies.
"Our survey starts in September. DPIIT along with various ministries is at work and trying to sort of first assess

the situation and thereafter see whether we can make some quick reforms in certain areas to ensure that our overall performance improves," Singh said.
These rankings despite certain shortcomings have a signalling effect on foreign investors.
"We need to ensure that we do not regress and we continue to improve when it comes to those rankings," he said.
He added that the department is working on the second edition of Jan Vishwas law after getting inputs from industry associations.
"We have to do several rounds of these exercises to eliminate some of the vexatious and penal provisions that are unfriendly for business," the secretary said.
In the first edition of the Jan Vishwas law, over 180 provisions were decriminalised in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 ministries and departments. Under the first Jan Vishwas law, imprisonment and/or fine was removed in some provisions. Some of the legislations that were amended included the Boilers Act, Indian Forest Act, Drugs and Cosmetics Act, Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, Warehousing Corporations Act, Food Corporations Act, Patents Act, and Food Safety and Standards Act.
Further on the country's intellectual property rights (IPR) regime, the secretary said India has created a situation where its patent regime is meeting or getting close to global benchmarks in terms of patent examination time and approval.
The number of patents granted went up from 5,978 in 2014-15 to 1.3 lakh in 2023-24.
On how to enhance involvement of states in the reform process, he said "there are some weapons that we have to nudge them in the reform areas that we feel are really important for the country?"



Expecting good response from many companies on EV policy: Government

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government on Saturday said India is expecting good response from many automobile companies on its electric-vehicle (EV) policy, which was released in March to attract global players like Tesla.
Secretary in Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that in the policy, the government has used tariff tweaks without actually spending any money to seek commitments from manufacturers to set up base in India.
"Everybody talks about one company (US-based EV major Tesla), but we are expecting responses from many companies to that policy," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit.
On March 15, 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 Tesla.
As per the policy, a company will get three years to set up manufacturing facilities in India, and start commercial production of e-vehicles, and reach 50 per cent domestic value addition (DVA) within five years at the maximum.
The companies that would set up manufacturing facilities for

EV passenger cars will be allowed to import a limited number of cars at lower customs/import duty of 15 per cent on vehicles costing USD 35,000 and above for five years from the date of issuance of the approval letter by the government.
At present, cars imported as completely built units (CBUs) attract customs duty of 70-100 per cent, depending on engine size and cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value less or above USD 40,000.
The policy seeks to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs and attract investment from reputed global EV manufacturers.
According to the scheme, the company will be allowed to import CBUs of e-4W manufactured by them at a reduced customs duty of 15 per cent, subject to the conditions.
Singh also said that they have also managed to get commitments for investments in India in the tyre sector from two major multinational firms.
"Two major multinationals came to us with certain products that were on a restrictive (import) list and they wanted that (those goods) to be allowed for imports. We told them that okay, we will allow you to import but we want these product lines to be manufactured in India. Once they gave us those commitments, we allowed those relaxations," he added.
India has imposed mandatory quality control norms for certain types of tyres in India,

besides putting some on the licence list to boost domestic manufacturing.
Citing the example of EVs and tyres, he said, "there are other ways to ensure that the kind of goals that we have under the PLI (production linked incentive) scheme for investments can be met even by prudent use of tariff-and non-tariff policies".
Talking about India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA (European Free Trade Association) free trade agreement, which was signed in March here, the secretary said this is a first of its kind pact where investment commitments are there.
"Those commitments are going to be monitored and there is a provision even to claw back the market access if those commitments are not met," he said.
On March 10, India and EFTA signed a free trade agreement (FTA) under which New Delhi received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.
The EFTA members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
He added that several FTA negotiations are under way and "my own anticipation is that you (industry) will see India becoming a little less conservative when it comes to these FTAs".

Markets end special trading session with gains

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmark indices closed a special trading session on a firm note on Saturday, extending their rally to the third day running amid fresh foreign fund inflows.
The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94. During the session, it jumped 245.73 points or 0.33 per cent to 74,162.76.
The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent to 22,502.
The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE on May 7 said they will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site.
The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the Primary Site (PR) to the Disaster Recovery (DR) site.
In separate circulars, the two exchanges said there will be two sessions — the first from 9:15 am to 10 am from the PR, and the second from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm from the DR site.
The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reached an all-time peak of Rs 4,12,36,791.05 crore in the special trading session.
Among the Sensex components, Nestle,



Power Grid, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Hindustan Unilever and State Bank of India were the major gainers.
JSW Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the laggards.
Wall Street ended mostly higher on Friday.
"The Dow Jones Industrial Average has hit 40,000 for the first time, buoyed by

optimism from a softer-than-expected April inflation report, which has increased bets on a September rate cut by the Federal Reserve.
"This positive sentiment extends to Indian markets, with the Nifty likely trading between 22,000-22,500, facing resistance at 22,500 and support at 22,000," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Friday after days of

unabated outflows. They bought equities worth Rs 1,616.79 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.
"Dow Jones closing in record territory above 40,000 will continue to provide global support for equity markets. A significant trend now is the FIIs turning buyers yesterday, and this takes away the pressure on the markets," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.
The BSE benchmark climbed 253.31 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 73,917.03 on Friday. The NSE Nifty rose 62.25 points or 0.28 per cent to 22,466.10.
In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.77 per cent and the midcap index advanced 0.48 per cent.
All the indices ended in the green, with industrials, healthcare, telecommunication, capital goods and realty emerging as the major gainers.
On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 1,341.47 points or 1.84 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 446.8 points or 2 per cent.
Earlier on March 2 (Saturday), the BSE and NSE conducted a special trading session in equity and equity derivative segments.
Typically, switching to the DR site is done to ensure business continuity in the case of a major disruption.

Debt, equity holders approve merger of IDFC with IDFC First Bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Shareholders and non-convertible debenture (NCD) holders of IDFC First Bank have approved a proposal to merge parent IDFC Ltd with the lender.
The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) convened a meeting on May 17 through video conferencing and other audio-visual means to consider and approve the composite scheme of amalgamation for IDFC First Bank, the bank said in a regulatory filing.
The board of the bank presented the result of voting on the proposal for amalgamation before the NCLT.
"We wish to inform that the resolution approving the Scheme was passed by the overwhelming majority of 99.95 per cent of the equity shareholders, representing



more than three-fourths in value of the equity shareholders of the bank voting through remote e-voting and e-voting during the meeting, in terms of the provisions of Sections 230-232 of the Companies Act, 2013," the lender said.

In a separate filing, it said the proposal was passed by the overwhelming majority of 99.99 per cent of the NCD holders.
As part of the composite scheme of amalgamation, IDFC FHCL would first merge with IDFC and then

IDFC into IDFC First Bank Ltd.
Under the proposed reverse merger scheme, an IDFC shareholder will get 155 shares for every 100 shares she/he holds in the bank. Both stocks have a face value of Rs 10 each.

IDFC was an infra lender in the private sector space, and following its bigger peers like ICICI and IDBI, it also launched a banking subsidiary in 2015 — IDFC Bank — but could not make a mark.
Like HDFC Bank, the merged IDFC First Bank will also have no promoter entity but is fully owned by institutional and public shareholders.
IDFC began as an infra lender in 1997. It got in-principle approval from the RBI to set up a bank in April 2014, and in October 2015, it launched IDFC Bank when on-tap licensing began, following which loans and liabilities of IDFC were transferred to the bank. In December 2018, it took over Capital First, a consumer and MSME-focused non-bank since 2012, and was renamed IDFC First Bank and became a full-service universal bank.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Softbank-backed OYO is set to refile its much-awaited IPO as the global travel tech player is close to finalising its refinancing plans to raise up to USD 450 million via sale of dollar bonds, sources said.
JP Morgan is the likely lead banker for the refinancing through the sale of dollar bonds at an estimated interest rate of 9 to 10 per cent per annum, a source said.
In preparation for the refinancing, OYO has already moved its application with markets regulator SEBI to withdraw its current draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company intends to refile an updated version of the DRHP, after the bond issuance. Oravel Stays Ltd, OYO's parent company, had in November prepaid a significant chunk of its debt amounting to Rs 1,620 crore through a buyback process. The buyback involved repurchasing 30 per cent of its outstanding Term Loan B of USD 660 million. The move

OYO withdraws DRHP, to refile IPO post refinancing: Sources

brought down its outstanding loan amount to around USD 450 million.
A source closely involved in the company's IPO plans told PTI, "The refinancing will result in material changes to OYO's financial statements. Hence as per existing regulations, it will need to revise its filings with the regulator." "Since the decision for refinancing is at an advanced stage, it doesn't make sense to continue pursuing IPO approval with the current financials. So it's prudent to withdraw the current application," he added.
The refinancing will extend the repayment timeline to five years -- versus the repayment of the remaining TLB due in 2026 -- the source said.
The bond issuance would



significantly lower the current effective interest rate of 14 per cent on its existing USD 450 million Term Loan B (TLB) facility.
"The refinancing is expected to

result in annual interest savings of USD 8-10 million (Rs 66.4-83 crore) in the first year, after accounting for the costs associated with the bond issuance. The company anticipates annual savings of USD 15-17 million (Rs 124.5 - 141.1 crore) thereafter, almost all of which would get added to its net profits. Post the debt refinancing, the company is open to contemplating an equity round, to reaffirm investor confidence before a public listing to fortify its financial strength," the source said.
In September 2021, OYO had filed preliminary documents with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for a Rs 8,430 crore IPO. The launching of the IPO was delayed due to the then volatile market conditions making the company prepare to settle for a lower valuation at around USD 4-6 billion instead of the USD 11 billion it was targeting initially.

Sundaram Home Finance hopeful of continuing growth momentum

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Sundaram Home Finance expects the growth momentum to continue in the current financial year and would focus expansion into smaller towns, a top official has said.
The city-based company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sundaram Finance Ltd would also be exploring opportunities in Tier 4 towns in South India, Managing Director Lakshminarayanan Duraiswamy said.
"Given that the small towns in the South Market are seeing a good pace of growth on the back of increased affordability, we continue to be positive on the outlook for the real estate sector and are hopeful that the growth momentum will continue," he said in a



statement.
"Our focus will be to penetrate deeper into smaller towns. We will also look at exploring opportunities in Tier 4 towns in South India and expect these new locations to drive our growth this year," he said.
On the expansion drive launched in Maharashtra and Rajasthan, he said the company would continue to identify pockets of growth

opportunities and steadily strengthen the base in West and Central India.
Sundaram Home Finance which forayed into the small business loan segment (up to Rs 20 lakh) has opened 30 exclusive SBL branches in Tamil Nadu with disbursements of over Rs 125 crore.
Earlier in the day, Sundaram Home Finance reported a net profit of Rs 57 crore for the quarter ending March 31, 2024 as compared to Rs 65 crore registered during the same period of last year.
Disbursements during the quarter under review surged by 20 per cent to Rs 1,469 crore, from Rs 1,222 crore registered in the corresponding quarter of last year.

Sift, Niraj win in Olympic Selection Trials

PTI ■ BHOPAL
Sift Kaur Samra won her third women's 50m rifle 3 positions competition while Niraj Kumar emerged victorious in the men's event for a second time on the penultimate day of the Olympic Selection Trial (OST) 3 and 4 here on Saturday. Sift shot 461.3 in the women's 3P trial 4 final to edge out Nischal by a point. Ashi Chouksey was third with 448.1. Shriyanka Sadangi and Anjum Moudgil were fourth and fifth respectively in the five-woman field. In the men's 3P, Niraj finished on top with a healthy 462.9, a whole 1.7 ahead of second-placed Chain Singh. Aishwary Tomar was third with 449.8, while Swapnil Kusale and Akhil Sheoran finished fourth and fifth respectively. The results confirmed Sift as the top finisher in women's 3P, considering three best scores out of the four trials. Anjum Moudgil also confirmed her position as second best of the trials among the five qualified shooters. In the men's 3P, Aishwary Tomar



and Swapnil Kusale finished 1-2 after the competition of four trial matches. **CLARITY IN AIR EVENTS:** The day also saw the qualification rounds of the men's and women's 10m air rifle and air pistol trial 4 play out. While Sri Karthik Sabari Raj topped the men's air rifle with a score of 631.6, Ramita Jindal was the star of the day, posting a scintillating 636.4 (0.1 more than the existing world record set by China's Han Jiayu at the Baku World Cup earlier this month) to top the women's air rifle. Ramita's effort meant that she

was fourth and fifth respectively. In the men's air rifle, the results had no bearing on the standings as Sandeep Singh (fourth with 628.3) and Arjun Babuta (fifth with 624.7) maintained their top two positions in the calculations. Manu Bhaker confidently topped the women's 10m air pistol standings, finishing on top of the trial 4 qualification round with a score of 581. Surbhi Rao (577) was second while Palak (572) was third. Rhythm Sangwan was fourth on the same score as Palak's but lost out on inner 10s while Esha Singh was fifth with 572. In the men's air pistol, Sarabjot Singh shot 584 to top the trial 4 qualifications, while Arjun Singh Cheema was second with 583. Varun Tomar (577) was third, Ravinder Singh (576) fourth and Naveen (574) finished fifth. The results in air pistol meant that in the present calculations, Manu and Rhythm are 1-2 in the women's air pistol while Sarabjot and Arjun have the top two slots in the men's event.

NBC will have crews at Manchester City, Arsenal for Premier League final

AP ■ LOS ANGELES
Rebecca Lowe has reported on many significant Premier League moments during her 11 seasons hosting NBC's coverage. The one thing missing has been a second-place team overtaking the leader on the final day of the season. This weekend, Lowe and the network's studio show will be at Emirates Stadium as Arsenal tries to do something that hasn't happened in Premier League history - move up from second to first on Championship Sunday. "Are we due one? Maybe," Lowe said this week before leaving for London. Manchester City has a two-point lead going into the final match day. Arsenal needs a win over Everton and needs City to lose or draw against West Ham to win its first Premier League title in 20 years. If City wins, it becomes the first team to win four consecutive titles since the Premier League became England's top division in 1992. Lowe thought she was close to seeing history two years ago when Liverpool took an early lead against Wolves and Manchester City fell behind by two goals to Aston Villa. City rallied for a 3-2 victory and ended up winning the title by one point. While the studio team will be at Arsenal, the top announcing crew of Jon Champion and Graeme Le Saux will be in Manchester. That covers NBC no matter what happens Sunday. Coincidentally, Arsenal was the last team to vault from second to first in England's top division in 1989. "You don't want to be where the story isn't. It is a difficult decision because it is a dynasty in Manchester, but sometimes in sports, the greatest stories are the underdog stories," Lowe said of the decision for the studio show to be at Arsenal instead of Manchester City. NBC will once again have coverage of all 10 matches going on simultaneously. NBC will air the Manchester City match, USA Network has



biggest things coordinating producer Pierre Moossa has been pleased about this season. "We want to make sure we're authentic and true to the sport. But at the same time, we want to be inclusive and welcoming to the new audience," he said. The other has been the addition of Champion, who was already a favorite among U.S. Soccer fans from his work with ESPN. Champion and Peter Drury, who is in his second season with NBC, gives the network two top-flight announcers. "What I've noticed is they bring out different aspects of Lee (Dixon) and Graeme's game. Lee and Graeme when they work with John is a different listen than when they work with Peter. Both are excellent listeners but different perspectives, point of views and commentary. I think the viewers really benefit from that," Moossa said. Besides the title race, NBC will be keeping an eye on Liverpool hosting Wolves in Jurgen Klopp's final match as Liverpool's manager.

Woods makes two early triples en route to a 77 and will miss cut at PGA Championship

AP ■ LOUISVILLE (USA)
Tiger Woods will miss the cut at the PGA Championship after making two triple-bogeys over the first four holes Friday on the way to 6-over-par 77. Woods finished the second round at Valhalla, the site of his 2000 title, at 7-over 149 and left the course tied for 136th place. The top 70 and ties will move to the weekend. When Woods walked off the 18th green, he was eight shots behind the projected cut line. This will be the fifth time Woods has missed the cut at the PGA, and the first since 2019. It will mark his 13th missed cut at a major since he turned pro in 1997. After shooting 1-over 72 on the first day, Woods said he was feeling stronger and needed more real-life rounds. But any hope that he'd get more action in this weekend faded quickly.



On the par-4 second, he tried to flop a shot over a bunker from a patch of rain-soaked rough near the green, but the ball went into the sand. He picked the next shot out of the sand, over the green and into another bunker and made 7. It was a similar scene on the par-4 fourth, which is playing the fifth-easiest this week. On that one, he tried to finesse a shot

just over a greenside bunker, but it hit the top and rolled back in. His first try to get out hit the top of the trap and rolled back in again. That led to another 7 to close a three-hole stretch he played in 7 over. From there, the only question was whether he would break 80 and avoid his worst score ever at the PGA. That remains a 9-over 79 at Southern Hills in 2022. His worst score at a major came last month when he shot 82 in the third round of the Masters, en route to finishing last among those who made the cut. This will be the fifth cut Woods has missed to go with two withdrawals since he captured the Masters in 2019 for his 15th career major. That doesn't include the seven majors he skipped completely since the start of 2021, when he shattered bones in his right leg and ankle in a car wreck.



Satwik-Chirag pair enters Thailand Open final

PTI ■ BANGKOK
India's premier men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty entered the final of the Thailand Open badminton tournament with an easy straight-game victory over Lu Ming-Che and Tang Kai-Wei of Chinese Taipei here on Saturday. Asian Games gold medalist pair of Satwik and Chirag needed just 35 minutes to beat their world No. 80 opponents 21-11 21-12 in the semifinal match of the Super 500 tournament at the Nimibutr Stadium here. Satwik and Chirag have a deep relation with Thailand as it was here five years back in 2019 that they had won their maiden super 500 crown. On Saturday, the Indian pair inched closer to regaining the title after reaching the summit clash again. The Indian pair thus continued to make waves in the BWF World Tour after progressing to their fourth final of the season. The duo had finished runner-up at Malaysia super 1000 and India super 750 before claiming the French super 750 in March. In the final on Sunday, the world number three Indian duo, the top seeds in this tournament, will be up against the Chinese pair of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, who defeated Kim Gi Jung and Kim Sa Rang of South Korea 21-19 21-18 in the other semifinal on Saturday. Satwik and Chirag had some

Zverev to face Jarry in Italian Open final after a comeback win over Tabilo

AP ■ ROME
For about an hour, Alexander Zverev had no answer to the rocket-like forehands and perfectly placed drop shots that Alejandro Tabilo kept producing on Rome's red clay. The fifth-ranked Zverev kept patient, though, and took his chance when it came as he rallied to beat his unheralded Chilean opponent 1-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2 on Friday for a spot in the Italian Open final. "I was just hanging on the second set. I brought my energy up," Zverev said. "He hit me off the court in the first set and I didn't play well at all, but he was a big reason why. He gave me no rhythm." In Sunday's final, Zverev will face another Chilean, Nicolas Jarry, who beat Tommy Paul 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-3 on the American's 27th birthday. The 24th-ranked Jarry came back from a set down to eliminate Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarterfinals and will be playing his first Masters Series final. It was an appealing contrast in styles between the big-serving 6-foot-7 (2.01 meter) Jarry, who goes for a lot of his shots, and the more defensive-minded Paul, who grinds it out and likes to make his opponents play longer points. Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion, had the pinkie on his left hand bandaged following a fall in his previous match, after which he said his finger was "crooked." The German plays right-handed but uses a two-handed backhand. He said his pinkie was swollen and he was using painkillers. "I tore a capsule. ... But I didn't break any bones," Zverev said. "The finger is still very, very big. It was manageable." It's Zverev's third final in Rome. He won in 2017 by beating Novak Djokovic in



straight sets for his first Masters Series title. He lost to Rafael Nadal in the title match a year later. "I've been here before," Zverev said. "I know what it takes and hopefully I can use that." Top-ranked Iga Swiatek will play No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka in the women's final on Saturday. Rome is the last big wup before the French Open starts on May 26. Zverev, who has disputed a penalty order from a German court over allegations that he caused bodily harm to a woman, faces a trial starting during Roland Garros. He said recently that he won't attend the start of the trial. Zverev leads 4-2 in his career meetings with Jarry but the series is tied 2-2 on clay. "Nicolas is one of the most aggressive players we have on the tour," Zverev said. "Obviously huge serve, huge forehand. Tries to hit big from both sides of the court." The 32nd-ranked Tabilo eliminated top-ranked Djokovic in the third round on Sunday and hadn't dropped a set in the tournament until errors helped Zverev win the second-set tiebreaker. Zverev then took control early in the third. Tabilo, who is a leftie, saved a break point midway through the first set with a slicing serve out wide to the ad court then produced three drop shots to serve out the set. Zverev and Tabilo were born in the same year and played often as juniors, when Tabilo represented Canada, where he was born.



Pranavi, Diksha and Tvesa make cut at German Masters

PTI ■ BRANDENBURG (GERMANY)
Pranavi Urs, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik were the only ones to make the 36-hole cut at the Amundi German Masters. Pranavi and Diksha carded 1-over 73 each and were 3-over for two rounds and placed T-30, while Tvesa (77) squeezed inside the cut line at 5-over. Of the four others, Sneha Singh (75) missed the cut by a shot, Vani Kapoor (77) by three shots and Amandeep Drall (78) by five shots. Avani Prashanth withdrew midway through the second round. The cut fell at +5, with 66 players making it through to the weekend. Germany's Alexandra Försterling produced a round of 70 (-2) for the second consecutive day to lead by a stroke. The Berlin native sat in a share of fourth place overnight and began her second round from the 10th tee at Golf & Country Club Seddiner See. Försterling's round was built around the three birdies she rolled in between the sixth and the ninth, as she had four birdies and two bogeys. Since teeing it up at this tournament in 2023, Försterling has won three Ladies European Tour titles. Försterling leads the charge, but there is plenty of German interest behind, with Patricia Isabel Schmidt, Sandra Gal and Helen Briem all one shot further back. The German trio sit in a tie for second place on three-under, alongside LET Order of Merit leader Bronte Law of England. Schmidt, leading on the opening day, had a trickier second round, shooting a 73. Five players sit in a share of sixth place, with France's Celine Herbin, Spain's Luna Sobron Galmes, Hong Kong's Tiffany Chan, Slovenia's Ana Belac and Morocco's Ines Laklalech all on two-under-par. Czechia's Tereza Melecka secured her first hole-in-one as a professional, acing the par-three fifth hole with a pitching wedge.

T20 World Cup: Majority of Indian players to leave for New York on May 25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The majority of the Indian players along with the jumbo support staff will be flying out to New York on May 25, with the rest leaving for the T20 World Cup only after the May 26 IPL final. Earlier, the members of teams failing to qualify for the play-offs were supposed to leave for New York on May 21, two days after the final league game of the IPL on May 19 but it has since been learnt

that there has been some change in plans and now the first batch will leave on May 25. "The likes of skipper Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant, Arshdeep Singh, Axar Patel are some of the players along with support staff who are expected to leave on May 25," a BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity. "Earlier, departure date for first batch was May 21 but



since India is playing only one warm-up game (vs Bangladesh on June 1), the players will get to spend some extra days at home," the source added. Only those players who are part of the IPL final will stay back and will leave for New York on May 27. This will also give adequate time to the squad to reduce jet lag and have at least three to four quality net sessions before the Bangladesh warm-up game. India will open their campaign against Ireland on June 5 in New York, followed by the marquee clash against Pakistan on June 9. **India squad:** Rohit Sharma (Captain), Hardik Pandya (Vice Captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj.



Rajasthan aim to snap losing streak, secure second spot against table toppers KKR

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
Rajasthan Royals will be desperate to snap their four-match losing streak and finish in the top two when they meet table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in an important IPL game here on Sunday. Having secured the playoff berth with 16 points, Royals have started floundering at the business end of the tournament losing four matches on the trot. Their batting flair has eluded them as they have not managed to cross the 150-mark in their last two matches, and with their star England opener Jos Buttler returning home for national duty, the Royals have big shoes to fill. Their top three batters Yashasvi Jaiswal, skipper Sanju Samson and local hero Riyan



Parag will have to shoulder additional responsibilities if they are to snap the losing streak and head to the playoffs finishing in top-two, that will give them two cracks to reach the final. KKR (19 points), on the other hand, have already assured themselves a table top position after a washout against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad in the previous round handed them one point. They will be high on confidence but at the same time they may have to guard against complacency. Since their win in the return leg clash against Mumbai Indians at Eden Gardens on May 11, KKR have not played any match with the washout in Ahmedabad. Travelling to Ahmedabad and then back home in Kolkata for a day's practice and again heading to

Guwahati for the final league clash could be quite frustrating and break their rhythm of four-match winning streak. It remains to be seen if the Gautam Gambhir-mentored side manage to hold on to the winning momentum without appearing to be rusty. In between, they have lost their in-form opener Phil Salt, their second leading rungetter this season as the Englishman is back home for the series against Pakistan in the build up to T20 World Cup next month. Salt and Narine, the two KKR openers, have scored 897 runs with seven fifties and one century between them at strike rate of 182-plus each. The duo's top form has been a key element in KKR's journey to their first playoffs since 2021. Rahmanullah Gurbaz will be a like-for-like replacement for

Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravathy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson and Allah Ghazanfar.
Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian



Coaching India could be exhausting, timing has to be right: Langer

I did not live up to standard but overthinking was not an option: Rohit

PTI ■ MUMBAI
India skipper Rohit Sharma acknowledged that he could not match the expected batting standards in the ongoing IPL but instead of indulging in overthinking, his endeavour was to stay in the right zone and keep working on his flaws. The five-time IPL winning skipper endured a wretched form in the second-half of the season, struggling to cross even a score of 20 in six matches for Mumbai Indians. "As a batter, I know I didn't live up to the standard. But, after playing for all these years, I know that if I overthink, I won't play well," Rohit said on JioCinema Match Centre Live. He returned to form with a 38-ball 68 in their last match against Lucknow Super Giants but MI ended up on the losing side and finished the season at the bottom of the table. "All I try is to stay in a good mindset, in the right zone, keep practicing, and improve on all the flaws in my game. That's all I kept doing. "Our season didn't go according to plan. We blame ourselves for this because we made too many mistakes during the season. We lost many games that we should

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Being the India head coach is one of the biggest assignments in cricket world and former Australia head coach Justin Langer believes that it could be very exhausting if the timing isn't right for the incumbent. Langer, who coached Lucknow Super Giants during this IPL season was asked multiple times about his aspirations to become India head coach, a post set to be vacated by Rahul Dravid after T20 World Cup in the Americas. "It would almost be the biggest job in cricket - being the head coach of the Indian cricket team," Langer replied when asked if the Indian board had approached him for taking on the mantle. "One, because of the huge volume of cricket, the huge expectation. It would be a great challenge. It would be great fun and it would be a wonderful opportunity to win ICC titles," Langer told the media here at the Wankhede Stadium after Lucknow Super Giants beat Mumbai Indians by 18 runs in their last IPL match of the season. Langer cited immense pressure and workload that comes along being an India coach, while adding that it has not been too long since he held a similar role with Australia. "But with all these things, the timing

has got to be right. I did four or so years with the Australian cricket team. It is all encompassing. It is exhausting," said the 53-year-old. "Rahul Dravid will probably tell you the same thing and Ravi Shastri will probably tell you the same thing. The pressure on winning for the Indian team is massive," he said. He did drop a hint that he might not be mentally ready to commit 10 months a year for the job. "I'm sure the next person who gets the job will be really looking forward to the project," Langer added. IPL is as big as a World Cup, Langer likened pressure in IPL with that of a World Cup competition, adding that it is the best domestic competition in the world. "I would say categorically - it is the best domestic competition in the world. I can't get over how tough the competition is. There's so many good players. There's so many good teams. There's so much pressure on performance," he said. "I guess the biggest thing is, it is just really tough cricket. It is like a World Cup. It is honestly like the same sort of pressure as a World Cup, and I've been to a few World Cups now. "That's a great credit to the IPL that we're able to keep producing such fun, entertaining, evolving cricket in front of a capacity crowd with noise every

away, we'll sort of analyse it as well as we can, but it is been disappointing because we had a very good team. We missed a few injuries to our bowlers, which made a difference," said Langer while adding that dropped catches 'killed' his side this season. Standing by KL Rahul, the batter Langer, however, backed Rahul despite consistent criticism over his batting strike rate. "I've heard the criticism, but you know, everyone does it differently. We can't all have, often if you play at a strike rate of 160 or 70 - it is very high risk cricket," Langer said. "The game is evolving and he will evolve and players will have to keep evolving. We've seen that with the opening partnerships in the powerplays this year. I mean, the strike rates have been extraordinary, right?" "He, like the great players, will keep evolving. All the best players and best coaches keep getting better. He'll keep doing that," Langer added. Langer said only Rahul could tell if he was disappointed on being excluded from India squad for the World Cup. "You'd have to ask KL that, but if you look at his numbers throughout the series, it is a pretty good series. Actually, it is a very good series. We're one game off being in the playoffs next week," Langer added.



Impact Player rule has disrupted balance of game: Virat Kohli

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Echoing India skipper Rohit Sharma's sentiments, star batter Virat Kohli has criticised the Impact Player substitution rule and said it is "disrupting the balance" of the game. The mid-innings substitution rule, adopted in the previous edition of the IPL, has sparked a row with Rohit expressing his displeasure in a podcast last month. Now, Kohli has urged for a rethink of the rule. "I agree with Rohit. Entertainment is one aspect of the game but there is no balance," Kohli said on Jio Cinema. "I think it has disrupted the



balance and a lot of people are feeling this way, not just me," he said. Kohli in the podcast had said, "I'm not a big fan... It's going to hold back all-rounders. Cricket is played by 11, not 12 (players)." Punjab Kings set the record for the highest successful chase in T20 history when they overhauled Kolkata Knight Riders' 262 with eight balls to spare. Sunrisers Hyderabad also smashed the record for the highest-ever total in franchise cricket by posting 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. This edition has witnessed eight 250-plus totals and Kohli

Felt sorry for Hardik, never nice to go through something like that: Boucher on boos

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Mumbai Indians coach Mark Boucher really felt bad watching skipper Hardik Pandya face hostile reactions and boos from the fans throughout the disastrous IPL campaign and admitted that it did affect the star all-rounder, something that the management would need to address in coming days. Pandya, after two successful seasons as Gujarat Titans skipper was brought back as captain of Mumbai Indians, removing five-time champion skipper Rohit Sharma, a decision that didn't sit well with legion of fans. "It wasn't great hearing all the boos. I felt sorry for Hardik as well. It's never nice to have to go through something like that," Boucher said after MI lost their last league game to Lucknow Super Giants by 18 runs. "I do think that there are certain things that did affect individuals, which ultimately did affect the team," Boucher said after MI finished last for the second time in three years.

Boucher felt the underwhelming performances and outside pressure did cloud his judgement. "There's a lot of stuff going on around him that, maybe, clouded his thoughts every now and again, which is tough for him as a leader as well. He certainly had a lot of support within our dressing room as well and guys trying to help him out as well. But it's a tough thing to go through as a player," he said. Boucher said if any off-field issues are hampering the team, they require attention from management. "Those are the sort of things that, yes, we do need to sit down and address and hopefully make some good calls going forward, to address the off-field stuff that we can get it right on the field," he added. "Ultimately, this is a professional unit and players and staff and everyone alike gets judged about the performance that they put on the field. If there's stuff that's happening off the field which is hampering that, then we need to address it," he said. Boucher backed Pandya to continue as MI skipper even though he admitted a thorough review of the team's abysmal performance would be assessed but no emotional decisions must be taken. "I think so. As I said, we haven't had discussions. Everything's been about the cricket stuff at the moment. Going forward, I'm sure that he is the guy that the franchise would like to take forward. We'll wait and see. We'll have these conversations



made in the nearest time, which is now in a week's time." "We need to evaluate exactly what's going on, things that we need improvement on, whether it be on the field or off the field stuff. We've got some great heads within the management team as well," Boucher said. "We'll sit down and we'll find a way on how to make it better, ultimately, for the players to come out and produce the sort of cricket that I think we know that these players can produce, which was under par this season," the head coach added. Boucher said Pandya did find form as a bowler but a lot was left to be desired as a batter. "If he was here (at the press conference), he'd also (say that he was) disappointed in his performance. From a captain

perspective, I thought he had some good games," he said. Boucher said Pandya would emerge as a stronger leader from this experience. Pandya was booed twice on Friday -- once he walked out to bat and once after he was dismissed. "A lot of the stuff that he's going through is, personally, maybe a little uncalled for. It'll certainly be a learning curve for Hardik as his growth in leadership. "While times are tough now, a couple of things will pass and it'll make him a tougher leader and it'll certainly grow him in the role as well," he said. Boucher said one of the reasons why Pandya failed as a batter was also due to the change in role from Gujarat Titans to Mumbai Indians. Pandya was 10th among MI batters with a mere 216 runs

from 14 matches at an average of 18 with no fifties. Boucher felt that Pandya has only been effective as finisher when someone else has fired for MI at the other end and mostly during successful years, it was Kieron Pollard. "When Hardik was playing for Mumbai Indians, he was a finisher. He was playing in that sort of role with Polly (Kieron Pollard). He then went to (Gujarat) Titans and he was batting in a completely different scenario," Boucher said. "He was batting up front. There were slight technical adjustments that he had to make to his game in order to face a newer ball and the different lengths when you're facing a new ball as well. "He made himself aware of that as well. Throughout the whole season, it was a work in progress trying to get him back to the new role that he was playing now, more as a finisher, batting in the back end of innings as well," Boucher said, adding that Pandya needed to rediscover his hitting power.

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"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far"
— Swami Vivekananda



The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about, ADITI SHARMA

CANVAS OF CHANGE

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION WITH CREATIVITY

When I was a child, for me the world was a blank canvas, ready to be filled with colors. Each brushstroke was like a step towards understanding everything around me. Art was just more than a hobby for me, it was a way of expressing myself and finding escape in midst of chaos. But as I grew older, societal expectations started weighing me down. My parents and teachers believed that success only came from excelling in traditional subjects like math and science, leaving no room for the creativity that fueled my soul. Elders often believe that stress and pressure are exclusively their burdens to bear, yet who acknowledges that even toddlers struggle to take their first steps and teenagers face immense pressure to prove their worth to the world. This is where schools step in, recognizing the importance of nurturing not just academic growth but also the social and emotional well-being of children. Through socio-emotive learning, students develop vital skills such as problem solving, effective communication, conflict management, and self-care. These abilities enable them to understand and manage their emotions, build supportive and cooperative communities, and ultimately help both themselves and others thrive. One particular innovation that has impressed me is the use of Emotion Charts in schools. These charts have pictures of faces showing different emotions such as sadness, anger, surprise, happiness, silliness, fear, excitement, and embarrassment. Children can use these charts to express how they feel each day. The efforts made by schools to incorporate emotional learning are not only effective but also incredibly beautiful! This new approach to education is producing adults who are better at handling stress, managing their emotions, and controlling themselves.

When I was in 3rd grade, my mother always stressed about my exams and expected me to score a perfect 20 out of 20. This pressure pushed me into an exhausting race for marks. I believe children should be exempted from exams during their primary years so they can enjoy a stress-free childhood and focus on developing their creativity and skills. The new education system has introduced a change many of us wished for as children, which is no exams until 3rd grade. This shift creates a less pressured environment, allowing children to learn at their own pace without worrying about marks or grades. By eliminating early testing, we can cultivate a love of learning in a calm, supportive atmosphere, free from the anxiety of exams.

When my parents were in school, the main focus was on academics. When I was a student, we had academics as well as co-curricular activities and sports. But now, education has evolved even further. It includes subjects and activities like yoga, meditation, journal writing, and mindful coloring. This shift in education has had a significant positive impact on children. It has helped them in several ways with, aggression management, emotions regulation, making thoughtful decisions and better communication in relationships.

Back in my teenage years, the school syllabus was synonymous with exams. Schools viewed exams as a method of assessment, but to me, they were more like photographs. Students needed to memorize information and reproduce it exactly in their answers. It felt as though we were being asked to take a screenshot of our textbooks and paste it directly onto our exam sheets.

Traditionally, assessments focused purely on memory recall. However, today's educational landscape has evolved significantly. Modern assessments extend beyond paper and pencil, embracing practical, hands-on experiences and field experiments. These contemporary methods provide a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's understanding and skills, offering a richer, more meaningful approach to learning and assessment. Back in my 10th-grade days, I vividly remember yearning to choose subjects like English, Biology, and Fine Arts.

BOARDS! THE WORD ITSELF FEELS HEAVY WITH PRESSURE, EVEN THOUGH I NAVIGATED THEM LONG AGO. THE PRESSURE OF BOARD RESULTS WAS SUCH THAT, THOSE TIMES WERE SO STRESSFUL THAT EVEN A PEACEFUL BREATH FELT IMPOSSIBLE, AND MY ANXIETY WAS AT ITS PEAK

Unlike some education systems abroad, Indian education didn't grant us the freedom to pick our own set of subjects. But now, with the advent of the new education policy, the landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation. It's surreal to think that students today have the liberty to tailor their education according to their interests and passions. Imagine a science student delving into the world of music or arts and it's truly an evolution!

When I chose humanities, people often asked me what my future profession would be and if I could earn well with it. The rise in humanities enrollments has validated the importance of creative and critical thinking skills, fostering an environment that values artistic expression and cultural understanding.

BOARDS! The word itself feels heavy with pressure, even though I navigated them long ago. The pressure of board results was such that, those times were so stressful that even a peaceful breath felt impossible, and my anxiety was at its peak. My parents often reminisced about facing board exams in 5th and 8th grades, but as a child of the 2000s, I thankfully escaped that additional stress. For me, board exams were a daunting once-a-year event in 10th and 12th grades. It was a struggle to cover entire textbooks, and while I managed above-average marks, the pressure was intense. However, the upcoming change to split exams into two sessions seems promising. This approach will distribute the workload more evenly, reduce stress and give students more time to prepare for the next session. This division will allow timely feedback on performance, identifying areas for improvement and providing support before the next session, ultimately enhancing student learning and performance. My personal favourite change that has ever been happened in the

Indian education system has been the thoughtful replacement of the word "fail" with "essential repeat" and "back" with "supplementary." This shift was crucial, as the harsh terms "fail" and "back" often demotivate students and heighten the fear of judgment. The new supportive terminology boosts self-esteem and encourages students to persevere, fostering a more positive and resilient mindset.

Cross culture learning is also a major revolution which is crucial as it fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, promoting empathy, respect, and global awareness among students. This inclusive approach not only enriches students' educational experiences but also equips them with the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate and contribute positively to a multicultural society. One of such is National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS offers flexible learning opportunities to students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those from rural areas, tribal communities, and marginalized groups. Through its inclusive curriculum and open learning approach, NIOS promotes cross-cultural understanding by catering to the needs and realities of various communities across the country.

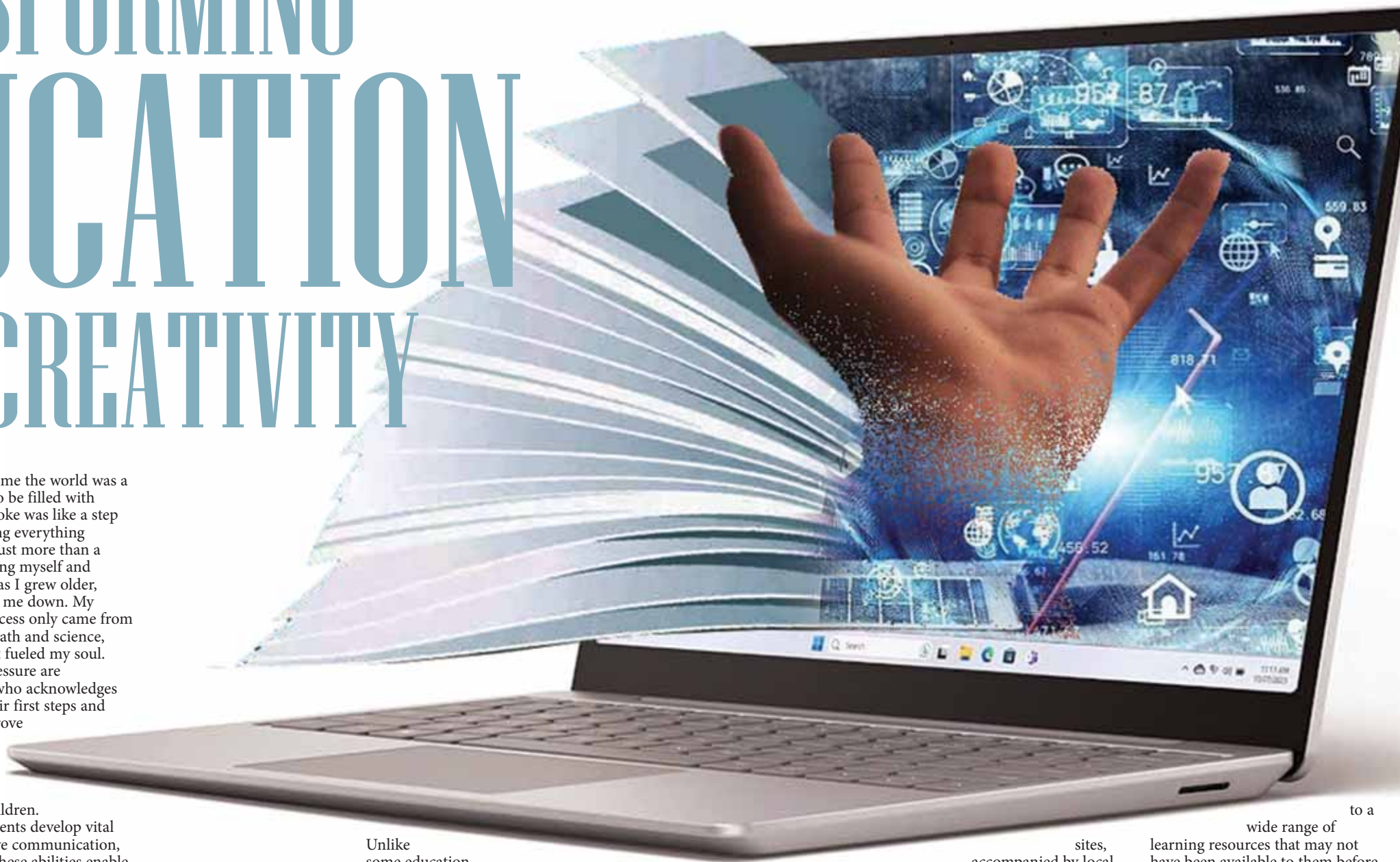
In cultural exchange programs at my school not only exposed me to diverse perspectives but also highlighted the varied approaches to education around the world. Witnessing how children from different international cultures learn and left a profound impact, opens eyes to new possibilities in learning. My school had students from France and they spent a week immersed in the school's community. They also had the opportunity to explore Delhi's landmarks, museums, and cultural

sites, accompanied by local students who act as guides and ambassadors. In return, they organized reciprocal visits, sending groups of students to partner schools abroad to experience different culture.

It is an enlightening experience that underscored the importance of fostering international and global understanding through education, revealing that cultural exchange is not just a leisure activity but an essential aspect of comprehensive learning. With years these programmes have lifted students with gain of first-hand exposure to diverse perspectives, traditions, and ways of life. This experience not only broadens their worldview but also cultivates tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and intercultural communication skills. In the past, they often overlooked the importance of sports and physical education, especially during the crucial 11th and 12th grades. Previously, schools often overlooked this aspect of holistic development. However, there has been a shift in perspective, with educational institutions now recognizing the importance of nurturing not only academic excellence but also mental and emotional well-being through sports and physical activities. Speaking of mental health, it's heartening to see prestigious institutions like IITs and IIMs taking proactive steps to address the issue of student suicides. Programs focused on mental wellness and weekly counselling sessions are now becoming the norm, with institutions like IIT Guwahati leading the way.

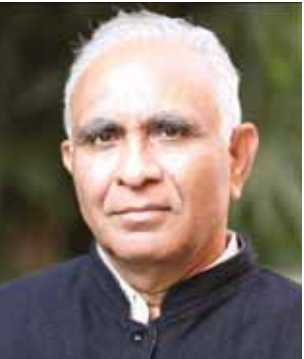
Well on discussing mental health, pandemic has affected our minds and changed the way we view things around us. Were you a quarantine student too? Well I was. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ed-Tech was the only way we could learn. With the introduction of EdTech, students now have access

to a wide range of learning resources that may not have been available to them before. Online platforms offer educational materials such as e-books, videos, and interactive tutorials, making it easier for students to explore different subjects at their own pace. Who would have imagined that tools like ChatGPT could handle assignments, develop content, and become indispensable aids? AI, VR, and AR have transformed education, especially in the arts, by creating exciting opportunities for creative expression and discovery. AI personalizes learning and provides intelligent creative tools, VR immerses students in virtual environments for hands-on artistic experiences, and AR overlays digital information onto the real world for enhanced visualization. Together, these technologies make art education more engaging, interactive, and innovative, fostering deeper creativity and understanding among students. **The education system is changing, and it's not just about academic freedom. It's also about unlocking creativity and supporting overall growth.** As someone who truly believes in the power of art, I'm excited to see more recognition of artistic and creative careers. It's no longer just about commerce and science. With the increasing popularity of vocational courses in fields like culinary arts, design, and interior decoration, India is on track to become a center of creativity and innovation. My passion for improving education comes from wanting to see every child bloom with their innovative and extraordinary minds. I wish to advocate for a system that not only keeps up with the times but also nurtures each person's unique talents and dreams. **The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions, express themselves freely, and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about.**



THE ENIGMATIC WORLD OF LEOPARDS

Leopards are the only large cat species with a widespread presence across the country, its conservation status and population dynamics serve as a barometer for the health of India's ecosystems



H S SINGH

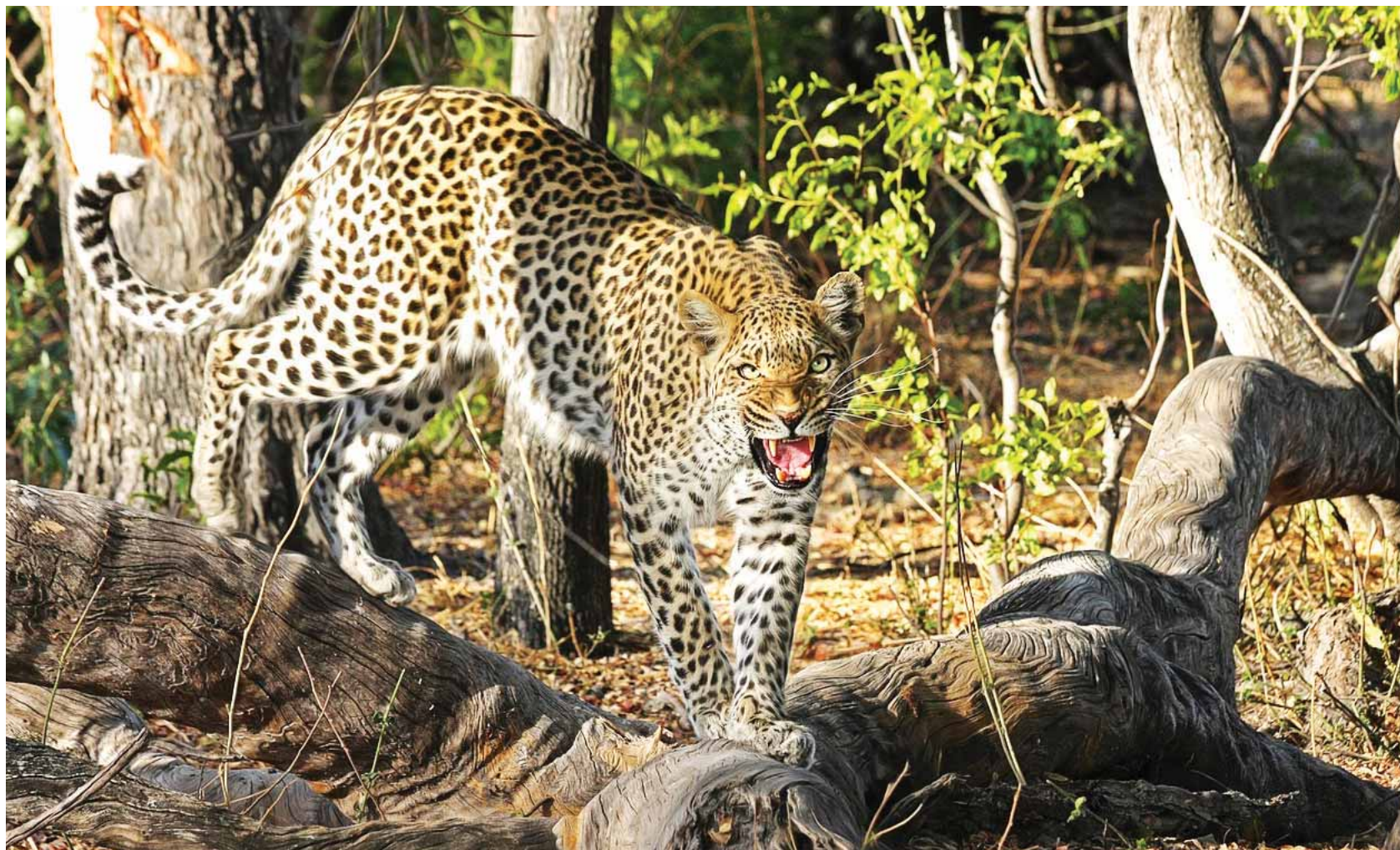
The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*), a sub-species of leopard out of nine sub-species of leopard in the world, is found throughout India from Jammu & Kashmir in the North-West Himalayas to Cape Comorin in the south and, from the Gir forest (Saurashtra) and thorn forest in the arid zone (Kachchh) in the extreme west to the moist forest of Myanmar in the east. Although the majority of them, about 95 per cent are confined to India, its small populations, about 5%, are also found in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, east of the Indus River in Pakistan and a small area of southern China adjoining Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. Out of eight subspecies of leopards in Asia, except the Indian leopard, none of the other subspecies of leopards in Asia, have a population above a thousand, and few of them such as the Amur leopard, and Arabian leopards are Critically Endangered. Only two sub-species, the African leopard and the Indian leopard still have viable populations and distribution ranges.

POPULATION STATUS

Hunting records and British Gazetteers reveal that India had a large population of leopards before the Second World War. It is stated in the publications that about 150,000 leopards were hunted during a span of 50 years (1875-1925). Perhaps, the leopard population was in the range of nearly one lakh hundred years ago. The population drastically declined and reached to lowest level in the 1960s when about 6000 to 7000 individual leopards were estimated in the Indian jungle by the famous naturalist E P Gee (1964). Protection and conservation measures by creating a network of Protected Areas and enacting laws have contributed to the leopard's recovery but the scale of poaching two decades ago slowed the recovery rate. When the scale of poaching declined, the population consistently increased in all leopard habitats, except Naxalite-affected states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Odisha and part of Maharashtra, and states in the North East of India. As per the report on the Status of the Leopard in India (2022), the overall leopard population in the tiger range landscape in 18 states of India was estimated at 13,870 subadult and adult leopards. In the tiger states also, the leopard-dominated area in Uttarakhand, major parts of North-East India and some other minor leopard habitats in those states were not covered in the survey. The Indian leopard occurs in 30 states and Union Territories whereas the population estimate in 2022 was only for major parts of 18 states.

Thus, the population declared in the leopard's report is only for two-thirds of the leopard distribution range, not for the entire India. Using data, as mentioned in the status report of leopard for leopard population in India by media and scientific communities is not correct. Major leopard states such as Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana and major parts of Uttarakhand and North-East states are not covered in this report. After accounting for all habitats, the leopard population was over 8,650 in the Central India Landscape covering eight states. The second major population block supporting over 4,600 leopards in northern India: the Himalayas-Shivalik (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal, Uttarakhand, terai belt of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the northern plains). The third major population block supporting about 3,600 leopards is the Western Ghats (Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala).

The North-East and Brahmaputra plains have extensive forests but moderate to poor wildlife, including the Indian leopard and a total number of smart cats may be in the range of about 1,000-1,100 leopards. Gujarat Forest Department counted 2,274 leopards in the state in 2023. Arid and semi-arid zones comprising Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat State, Dadara-Nagar Haveli and the Western Aravallis in Rajasthan support about 2,500-2,600 leopards. Additionally, leopards are also found in small patches of forests, tea gardens, sugarcane fields, ravine areas and other such lands that are not surveyed.



Man-eater leopards

Stories of man-eating leopards and shunting of innocent ones in search of punishing the culprit have been repeated over centuries. During Jim Corbett's time also, hunters killed several innocent leopards while targeting a man-eater. Like criminals in human society, the man-eating leopard always harmed innocent leopards. When two man-eaters killed one and a half dozen people in Dhanpur taluka in Dahod district in Gujarat in 2003, the authority punished innocent leopards by eliminating 14 of them from the area. When three children were killed between Talala and Veraval in Junagadh in February 2003, a total of 11 leopards were punished by removing them from the wild. When one or two leopards killed five people in Mandavi taluka in Surat districts in the post-monsoon and early winter in 2010, the situation compelled the Forest Department to engage several trap cages in the area. While hunting and trapping the man-eater, about two dozen leopards, including cubs were eliminated from the six villages in three months. When a leopard killed five people in Veraval in Junagadh in March 2012, a total of nine leopards were trapped and removed from the area. Similarly, when a leopard killed eight people in Visavadar and the surrounding area, about one and a half dozen leopards were captured and removed from the area in the year 2019. When leopards caused the death of human beings in the sugarcane belt in the fringe of Gir forests, over two dozen leopards were caged in 2023. The situation in Uttarakhand was not different. There were cases when people retaliated and eliminated a large number of leopards in Uttarakhand, unnoticed by the department when the leopards killed human beings. When people were killed in Borivali National Park near Mumbai by one or two man-eaters, a total of 37 leopards were removed from the park in three years. In Ahmednagar division in Maharashtra, a total of 57 leopards were captured during 2001-05

RANGE OF LEOPARD'S HABITAT

The occupancy area of leopards in the forests is over 320,000 sq. km. Leopards also occupy sugar-cane fields, tea gardens and other such vegetation cover. About one-fourth of the leopard's habitat overlaps with habitats of super cats - tiger and lion where leopards manage to survive under the persecution of the

supreme cats. Seven states - Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh support about two-thirds of the total leopard population. These states are rich in livestock, especially sheep, goats and dogs. As per the Forest Survey of India Report (2021), the extent of forest cover is 713,790 sq.

km. in India. Of this, 684,000 sq. km. is in the states and Union Territories which support leopards. One-third of the forest cover in the leopard's states may not be suitable for leopards. Thus, potential leopard habitats may range over 450,000 sq. km. of forest cover to accommodate the growing population in the present occupancy areas of the leopards. How many leopards or tigers or Asiatic lions can be managed in the Indian forests is a million-dollar question. The big cats are on the path of recovery (about 700 lions, 3,680 tigers and over 20,600 leopards at present) in India but the dispersing big cats do not find proper habitats due to their fragmentations and absence of prey base. There is scope to accommodate the growing population of leopards in the forests which are devoid of leopards and wild ungulates, if herbivores are restocked by taking up long-term habitat restoration works.

HUMAN-LEOPARD CONFLICTS

Only about 35 per cent of the leopard population is found within national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and the rest were counted beyond the Protected Areas' boundaries. Leopards are also found in good numbers in extended habitats such as sugarcane fields, tea gardens, ravines, Prosopis thickets and other such non-forest areas. There are about three dozen Protected Areas or sites in the country where leopard density is high, over 10 adult and subadult leopards per 100 sq. km. and a few of them have very high concentrations, about 20 leopards or more per 100 sq. km. Dhanpur forests in Dahod district, Jambughoda forest in Godhra, sugar-cane belt in Mandvi taluka in Surat, some fringe areas around the forests of Gir and Girnar in Gujarat; Sanjay Gandhi National Park near Mumbai, some sites in the districts of Nashik, Ahmednagar and Gunnar in Maharashtra; Rajaji National Park, some areas in Pauri Garhwal, Teri Garhwal and Almora districts in Uttarakhand; Katarnighat forests in Uttar Pradesh and Kuno and Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Sariska Tiger Reserve and a forest block adjoining Jaipur in Rajasthan; the Western Dooars in West Bengal and some open forest mosaics of central Karnataka have such high leopard concentration and human-leopard conflicts.

Population management in the conflict areas is one of the key management strategies to avoid human casualties and, if it is not done, public unrest may start in a big way against conservation. High leopard density normally results in the depletion of prey and frequent leopard attacks in the villages, leading to the eruption of anger and public agitation. Since the leopard population has doubled in India during the last two and half decades and it is now no longer Endangered or Vulnerable, there should

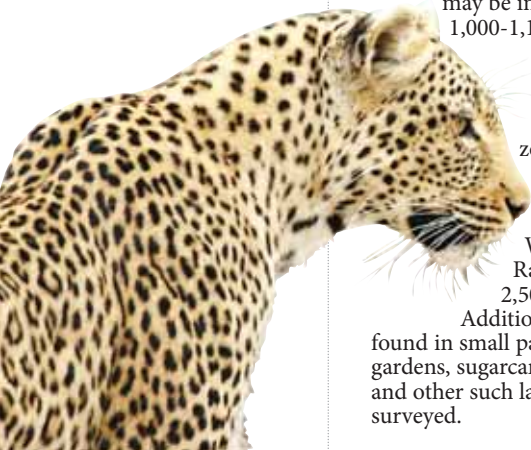
not be any hesitation to remove problem animals from such areas, if the attack on human beings persists. In no case, density should be allowed to exceed 25 adult leopards per 100 sq. km., as serious conflict is unavoidable in such high-concentration sites.

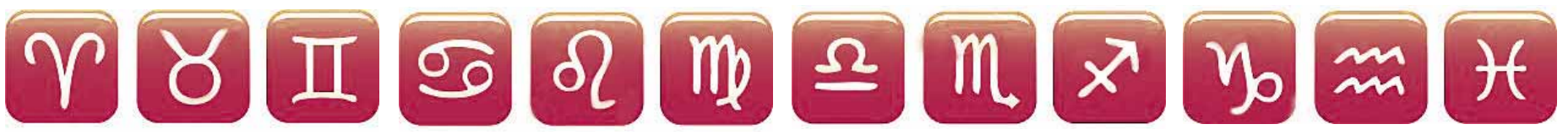
The human death rate in India due to leopard attacks was 400-410 people/year during the first decade of the 20th century (The Indian Forester Jan 1907). It declined drastically after the Independence of the country. Annually, about 95 to 100 human beings were killed by leopards during the first decade of the 21st century. Subsequently, human casualties increased consistently during the last decade due to the leopard's recovery and its dispersion in new areas, including villages and towns. In Uttarakhand, 565 human - beings were killed at an average rate of 22 human deaths/year by leopards since the creation of the state.

During the last few years, the average human death rate was 18 human deaths/year in Maharashtra. Annual death rate was 13 human deaths/year in Gujarat during the last five years. The scale of human deaths in Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Himachal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka is also close to the same range. Thus, annually, over a hundred people are killed and thousands injured by leopard attacks. If population management policy is not placed into operation, the human death rate due to leopard attacks may reach to the level that prevailed a hundred years ago. Since human-leopard conflicts are scaling up with the increase of the leopard population in many states, the management of dispersing leopards in villages and cities and increasing human-leopard conflicts are major management challenges.

The frequency of occurrence of leopard attacks on humans over a specific period should be mapped for the identification of conflict hot spots. The management should establish a Rapid Response Task Team with equipment and infrastructure to attend to cases without delay. A Rapid Response Team with the necessary equipment should be placed into operation in high man-leopard conflict sites. Tranquilizer gun, flashlights (to each member); first-aid Kits (one large kit to each team); mobile phones (to each member); reflector jackets (to each member); baffle shields and batons (to each member); public announcement system (one to each team); pamphlets and posters on 'Do's and Don'ts During Conflict Situations' (one set to each team) along with equipment as mentioned for RRT should be provided. Police Force should be integrated with the Task Force in high-conflict situations.

(Dr H S Singh is a Member of the National Board for Wild Life, Gandhinagar; views are personal)





YOUR WEEK AHEAD




MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Friends or relatives seeking financial assistance for personal events or needs. Given your current stability, you're well-placed to offer support, whether it be emotional or financial. Additionally, consider engaging in some charitable activities. As the week progresses, be wary of getting caught up in unrealistic dreams and desires. While it's natural to aspire for a luxurious life filled with fine dining, elegant apparel, and leisure, it's crucial to maintain clarity in your ambitions. Shifting goals too frequently can lead to confusion and a loss of true joy. Stay grounded and make firm decisions about what you truly want in life. With a realistic approach, you're more likely to achieve a sense of fulfillment. Embrace a positive outlook, as it will naturally attract good fortune, enhancing your overall well-being and prosperity.

Lucky number 7 | **Lucky colour** Turquoise
Lucky day Wednesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You have a natural inclination to lead and influence, often insisting on your own way of doing things. Your meticulous nature shines through in all your endeavors, and you infuse your surroundings with dynamism and responsiveness. Be aware, however, that an excess of intensity can sometimes lead to isolation or disputes, making interactions with colleagues and peers challenging. Situations may arise where differences in opinion could escalate into more serious disagreements. Channeling your robust energy into positive, constructive activities could be beneficial. You are endowed with a strong position and considerable influence, reflecting your hard-earned status. Despite your competitive spirit, fostering a more cooperative atmosphere could enhance your achievements even further. Remember, balancing your assertiveness can help preserve and build upon the successes you've worked so hard to achieve.

Lucky number 4 | **Lucky colour** Indigo
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week may bring some challenges to your health, possibly requiring a short period of medical attention. Despite this, it's a time rich with support and love from your partner, who will be by your side, offering care and comfort. Embrace this opportunity to deepen your spiritual connections; engaging in meditative practices can provide strength and restore balance. Allow yourself to lean into faith, embracing a path filled with love and compassion towards others. Family ties will strengthen as you find yourself sharing more with your partner. It's a perfect time for introspection and spiritual renewal. As the week progresses, you may find yourself drawn to peaceful retreats, which will aid in your recuperation. By week's end, expect to regain your usual pace, feeling refreshed and centered.

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



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may find yourself in a position of influence and responsibility, leveraging your strong communication skills and leadership qualities. Your ability to empathize with others enhances your reputation as a dependable leader in your professional environment. However, be aware that not everyone may appreciate your approach. Some individuals could feel threatened by your success and might attempt to undermine your efforts. It's possible that achievements you've been aiming for, such as approvals or successful interviews, could unexpectedly benefit someone else due to underhanded tactics from competitors. As the week progresses, the weight of responsibilities may leave you feeling exhausted. It's crucial to consider the benefits of sharing tasks. By delegating, you can ensure a smoother workflow and prevent burnout, making your efforts more productive and less stressful.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Magenta
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week ushers in a period of abundance and emotional satisfaction, with financial gains enhancing your sense of security and triumph. Enjoyment comes through entertainment and luxuries, enriching your family life and fulfilling personal desires. As the week advances, you may seek deeper emotional connections, possibly leading to significant romantic gestures. Mid-week, however, could bring a wave of uncertainty, with feelings of instability and a notable chill in personal interactions. By week's end, you'll find it necessary to adapt and reassess your beliefs. This reflective period emphasizes the importance of evolving with the times, encouraging you to adjust your lifestyle and mindset. Embrace these changes to confidently face upcoming challenges, recognizing that sticking to outdated norms may no longer serve you well.

Lucky number 4 | **Lucky colour** Olive
Lucky day Saturday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may find yourself emotionally sensitive, facing challenges that don't align with your hopes, leading to significant emotional distress. Your intentions to provide care might be stifled by circumstances, including health concerns that amplify your worries. Financially, prudent management and budget control are essential. As the week unfolds, it's crucial to adopt a methodical approach to daily activities. A balanced diet and disciplined lifestyle will greatly benefit your well-being. By week's end, you'll see notable progress in your professional life, with financial improvements from various sources boosting your economic status. This period could also be favorable for significant investments or acquisitions, such as a property purchase, bringing you satisfaction and an enhanced sense of stability.

Lucky number 15 | **Lucky colour** Beige
Lucky day Monday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Last week you may have reaped the rewards of your hard work, but this week calls for caution. You may encounter conflicts or disputes at your workplace. Expect to face opposition from a colleague who views themselves as superior, potentially leading to troublesome situations characterized by criticism, rivalry, and verbal disputes. Midweek, you might find yourself influenced by someone whose presence is less than positive, a person who may challenge your principles and push you towards actions that clash with societal norms. However, your determination remains unshaken. With confidence, you navigate through these challenges. Your steadfastness and commitment to integrity will not only see you through but will also bring you success by week's end. As you overcome these obstacles, you'll earn admiration and applause, enhancing your reputation and leaving you feeling validated and respected.

Lucky number 8 | **Lucky colour** Coral
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week promises an enriching experience filled with enjoyment and recognition. Imagine being elevated to a place where success and joy are within easy reach, courtesy of your diligence and divine grace. You embody fairness, generosity, and a strong sense of justice, making you a natural leader whose guidance is sought after by many. Your pure intentions and ability to adapt gracefully to changes enhance your influence, helping you win admiration and respect in both personal and professional spheres. As you navigate through this period, your role as a pivotal figure is likely to be celebrated by your peers and loved ones. However, approach the weekend with caution; stay vigilant as there may be a minor financial setback or a health concern. Preparing ahead can help mitigate these risks, ensuring that your week remains largely positive.

Lucky number 5 | **Lucky colour** Teal
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week starts with tough decisions that might impact you or someone close to you; fairness and clarity are crucial. Aim for a low profile at work, as competition for roles increases—engaging in conflicts won't help. Embrace submissiveness as a theme. By midweek, challenging feedback from a superior might leave you disheartened. To counter this, practice meditation or yoga to restore confidence and mental equilibrium. This is also a time to refocus on your goals and aspirations. As the weekends, the atmosphere will improve. Tensions ease, setting the stage for positive developments in personal relationships, possibly involving a romantic or lifelong commitment, alongside encouraging news. Remain open and receptive to new beginnings and opportunities.

Lucky number 6 | **Lucky colour** Fuchsia
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week begins with a burst of energy, prompting you to take decisive action rather than dwell on feelings. A significant work opportunity arises, requiring immediate attention and the honing of your abilities. Remember, nothing is achieved without effort. Improved efficiency and clear communication will be key to your success. Midweek brings a flurry of financial transactions; you may find yourself both donating to worthy causes and settling debts. Emotions might overwhelm you during this period, prompting a thoughtful reassessment of recent decisions. As the week closes, a new partnership agreement may be on the horizon, enhancing both professional and personal connections. Those in search of romance might find themselves ready to make meaningful gestures, potentially leading to new beginnings in love.


Lucky number 20 | **Lucky colour** Amber
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Lately, you may find yourself overwhelmed with increasing demands at work and in your studies. This surge in activity necessitates a period of rest to heal and replenish your energy. Without proper downtime, you might experience emotional and mental fatigue, which can lead to irritability. It's essential to focus on your health during this time. For women, particular attention should be paid midweek due to potential health sensitivities. Regular check-ups are crucial to maintain your well-being. At work, tensions may rise, potentially leading to disagreements with higher-ups. Managing your emotions and taking time to rejuvenate is key. If not, misunderstandings with authoritative figures in your life could escalate. Now is the time to balance your active life with moments of leisure to maintain harmony and effectiveness.

Lucky number 3 | **Lucky colour** Lavender
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week, you possess a vibrant energy and remarkable work potential. However, without clear goals, your efforts may not yield the desired results. Set specific objectives and channel your creative energies constructively. It's crucial to give your family the attention and care they deserve. Ignoring any health issues could lead to significant financial losses, so taking precautions is wise. Some of you might face personal and financial challenges midweek, and relationships could become strained. Remember, your mental strength and inner fire are your greatest allies during tough times. Opportunities will present themselves towards the week's end, but you must stay alert not to miss them due to preoccupation. Engaging in meaningful conversations and embracing travel can enhance your emotional well-being. Love and mutual understanding are on the horizon for couples.

Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Ivory
Lucky day Friday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Watch and correct thought trends

What's wrong with our destiny indicators that there seems to be no end of our struggle. This, despite so many pujas suggested by pundits to ward off the evil. Why so? Is there no remedial measure that could grant us ease and comfort? My husband, the breadwinner of family, has been subject to unwanted twists and turn in career all through his life? So far, he lost his job nothing less than a dozen times. In between, many a times he remained jobless as well. He is honest, truthful, hardworking, and yet runs out of favour with related bearing on our life. His health too, becomes a matter of concern every now and then." A lady, concerned about her husband's ordeal came asking the other day.

In the above context, let us first examine whether heavenly beings could grant boons in return for transactional pujas offered in their praise, to mitigate our sufferings. Experience suggests that had it been so, no resourceful person would have ever suffered in life. At the best, such pujas can bring in psychological satisfaction, which may help restore your own faith.

It may not be out of place to mention here that Vedas, which serves as the premise on which the Indian philosophy stands, does talk of various deities engaged in cosmic management. That, however, doesn't mean some heavenly form-beings like us, who could selectively respond to our prayers. They, in fact, symbolise various forces playing through the cosmos, vital to our life cycle, and available in equal proportion to all. It is difficult to digest that forces would be imbued with some mind-like organism to respond to our individual call, and that too mediated by pundits. What needs to be appreciated here that our lives are driven by cause-effect chain - "As you show, so shall you reap", which defines the course of our destiny. And it works in a self-automated mode, almost like a software programme. There is no scope for any external agency adjudicating our course of destiny. The question now is: How does destiny play upon in our lives? Going by Indian Philosophical concept, human life is structured in three layers -



Causal, Astral, and Gross bodies. On death, it is just the gross body that disintegrates. The causal and astral bodies that are pure energy platforms do not wither away. They carry over memory impressions pertaining to the past life and make it available to the freshly incarnated body as thought seeds. These thought-seeds set the trends of mind - indwelling desires, virtues & attributes, habits & attitudes, likes & dislikes, prejudices &

obsessions. They, however, do not define in finite term specific events due in emerging times. They rather just offer a lead to proceed with. Here it needs to be appreciated that unless ground suited to germination of seeds is available, they may never bear fruit bearing plants. Invariably, guided by indwelling desires, we take off in life. Their fruition, however, would need qualitative effort, which, in the first place, calls for creating the ground necessary for fruition. Second, assess the environmental constraints as well as challenges posed by competing interests. Accordingly, articulate ways and means to intelligently pursue the task in hand. The irony, however, is that our mind, blinded by indwelling desires, doesn't allow time and space to invoke our own empowerment tool - Buddhi - for due diligence, before taking the final call. And when we fail, instead of trying to find out our own fault-lines, we take refuge in our destiny. The most potent remedy, therefore, is that your husband reflects upon his own mind-trends and makes necessary amends. In this context, let us look at

astrological pointers of the man concerned. The main marker is his Sagittarius lagna. Its lord Jupiter, though in exaltation, but is placed adverse to Uranus, Sun, and Moon. It implies, in the first place an undiplomatic and a tactless person. He would be known for his indiscrete and ill-timed instinctive outbursts at times not even sparing the seniors. Second, he is headstrong and opinionated, who may try to force his viewpoint. Third, he has a swaggering ego, often out of touch with reality that makes him stuck to his self-beliefs and not open to look beyond to explore better options. The Sun also ill-disposed off to Moon makes him vulnerable to conflict and disharmony with others on the slightest pretext. Intelligence signifying Mercury sandwiched between headless Ketu and mischievous Neptune accounts for his inner confusions and insensible reasoning. And the result is there to see.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com