



OPINION 6 INDIA-IRAN REVITALISE CHABAHR PORT

WORLD 8 HAMAS ROCKET ATTACK TRIGGERS AIR RAID SIRENS IN TEL AVIV

MONEY 10 INDIA'S Q4 FY24 GDP LIKELY TO HAVE GROWN AT 6.1-6.7 PER CENT

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ENGLAND MISSED TRICK BY CALLING BACK PLAYERS: VAUGHAN 12 SPORTS

Fires claim 7 kids, 3 others in Delhi

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Twin tragedies struck national Capital on Sunday in which ten people, including seven newborns, charred to deaths. In a tragic incident, a massive fire broke out at a private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, leaving seven newborns dead in the facility functioning at 25 sqft plot.

Police arrested the owner of the children's hospital on Sunday. The owner Dr Naveen Kichi was on the run since the fire outbreak late on Saturday night.

The blaze broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital Delhi's Vivek Vihar at around 11:30 pm on Saturday and soon spread to two other adjacent buildings.

According to Delhi Fire Service (DFS), 16 fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the blaze. DFS chief Atul Garg said 12 newborns were rescued from the medical facility but seven of them died.

Two boutiques, a portion of IndusInd Bank operating from an adjacent building and a shop on the ground floor were also damaged besides an ambulance and a scooter parked outside the building. The Prime Minister's Office has announced Rs 2 lakh as compensation to the families of each of the seven victims, and Rs 50,000 for the families of the injured babies. Delhi



Commuters pass by a children's hospital where a fire broke out on Saturday night at Vivek Vihar area, in New Delhi, on Sunday Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has ordered an enquiry into the matter. In the second tragic incident, three people died after a fire broke out in a four-storey residential building in Krishna Nagar area of east Delhi. The charred body of a 66-year-old woman identified as Promila Shad was recovered from the first floor of the building, while two others identified as 18-year-

old Keshav Sharma and 39-year-old Anju Sharma were declared brought dead by the doctors. President Droupdi Murmu, Prime Minister Modi, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Union Health Minister Manshukh Mandaviya, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Health Minister Bharadwaj condoled the deaths.

Chief Minister Kejriwal said those responsible for negligence will not be spared. DCP Shahdara Surendra Choudhary said, "On Saturday at about 11.30 pm a PCR call regarding fire was received at Police Station Vivek Vihar. At the spot, fire was found in Baby Care New Born Hospital at C-54, Vivek Vihar and its adjacent building. On receipt the call SHO and ATO Vivek Vihar

and ACP Vivek Vihar reached the spot?"

He further said, "In the hospital there were 12 newborns admitted. They were all rescued and shifted to the East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital, Vivek Vihar for treatment. Out of these babies, six were declared brought dead and one died earlier. The seven bodies have been further shifted to GTB Hospital for postmortem." He added that there were no reports of casualties or injuries from the building adjacent to the hospital, which was also engulfed in flames.

Speaking about the fire, the father of a deceased nine-day-old baby Ritik, said, "I came from Bulandshahr and our child was referred to this hospital. He had problems with oxygen. I came to know about the incident through news. The baby was 9 days old. I have spent around Rs 70,000-80,000. The hospital is responsible. They saved themselves and left the children."

According to eyewitnesses, locals and members of an NGO, Shaheed Seva Dal, were the first to rush to help. Some residents climbed the building from the back side and rescued some of the newborns. Members of Shaheed Seva Dal, an NGO operating in the area, were also involved in the rescue efforts, an eyewitness said.

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Rajkot a 'man-made disaster', HC takes suo motu notice of fire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD/RAJKOT

Members of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) held a meeting with local administration in Gujarat's Rajkot city in the wee hours of Sunday in connection with the fire at a game zone here that left 27 persons dead and three injured. The bodies were charred beyond recognition. The DNA samples of the bodies and the victim's relatives have been collected for identification of the deceased, they said. Four children under the age of 12 were among the 27 persons killed in the massive fire that swept through a game zone teeming with people enjoying a summer vacation outing on Saturday evening, as per the officials. The owner and manager of the game zone have been arrested, officials said.

A special bench of the Gujarat High Court on Sunday took suo motu cognizance of the Rajkot fire incident and said it was prima facie a "man-made disaster". Such gaming zones and recreational facilities have come up without the necessary approvals from competent authorities, the bench of Justices Biren Vaishnav and Devan Desai



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel with officials and others at the game zone site where a major fire on Saturday evening killed at least 27 people and injured three, in Rajkot, on Sunday PTI

observed. A stock of highly inflammable materials such as petrol, fibres and fibre glass sheets were stored at the Rajkot game zone where the fire occurred, the court noted. While President Draupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several leaders including Chief Ministers expressed grief over the tragedy, Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel visited the incident site at Nana-Mava road on Sunday morning and a hospital where the injured persons were admitted. The Prime Minister has sought the information of the incident from the Chief Minister and has expressed grief. The PM has directed that strong action be taken against the culprits.

The five-member SIT formed by the State Government, to conduct a probe into the incident and submit a report within 72 hours, reached Rajkot late Saturday night and held a meeting with the local administration. Additional Director General of Police Subhash Trivedi, who heads the SIT said the inquiry will begin immediately to find out those responsible for it and ensure no such incident is repeated in the future. "We will go through all the aspects of the incident and investigate them thoroughly—We will work with commitment and complete honesty and integrity to provide justice to the children who have lost their lives," Trivedi said.

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'City Perpetual' adds artefactual tag to spiritual

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

When one thinks of Varanasi, the image of Kashi Vishwanath Dham often comes to mind. However, the city is now emerging as a beacon of heritage and craftsmanship, evidenced by the rise of Geographical Indications (GI) from 2 to 32.

In 2014, during his visit to Varanasi after assuming office as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi was presented with an angvastram crafted by weaver Bachche Lal Maurya, featuring a "doha" (couplet) by Sant Kabir intricately engraved upon it. This

seemingly simple exchange laid the foundation for a transformative journey in the realm of GI in Varanasi. Rajnikant, a GI expert and Padma Shri awardee, serving as the General Secretary of the Human Welfare Association, highlights the remarkable journey from just two GI tags in 2014 to an impressive 32 designations today. "These encompass a diverse array of crafts including Meenakari, wooden carving, stone craft, and the celebrated Chunar sandstone and hand-blocking technique," Rajnikant told this reporter. Prime Minister Modi's



presentation of Gulabi Meenakari to US President Joe Biden at the G7 meeting in 2022 propelled this GI-tagged art form onto the global stage. This small act has led to the surge in

demand for Varanasi's famed crafts, such as Gulabi Meenakari, and has transitioned these arts from niche markets to mainstream popularity." Himangshu Nagpal, a Government official

said. Rajnikant stressed the transformative impact of GI designations on Varanasi's cultural and economic landscape. "The GI designation has propelled Varanasi's traditional industries, particularly handloom and handicrafts, into a period of unprecedented growth, witnessing a staggering 32 to 40 percent surge," he said. This resurgence has revitalized the livelihoods of artisans and weavers, who form the backbone of Varanasi's rich cultural tapestry.

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Pod of stranded dolphins rescued, back in Ghaghara

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a heartening turn of events sure to warm the hearts of wildlife enthusiasts, a pod of nearly a dozen dolphins, with their tender calves in tow, has been rescued and returned to the waters of the Ghaghara river in Uttar Pradesh. The dolphins were stranded due to low water levels caused by pre-monsoon maintenance work at the Sharda barrage in Lakhimpuri Kheri district in the State.

This uplifting saga of saving the dolphins which were declared national aquatic animals in 2009 unfolded after a relentless 24-hour operation under the scorching sun. Spearheaded by a dedicated team of wildlife officials which involved the South Kheri forest officials, WWF-India, WTI and Turtle Services Alliance (TSA) and State irrigation department, the rescue operation was completed late Saturday evening. Gangetic dolphins are considered to be reliable indicators of the health of the river ecosystem and have been categorized as schedule 1 aquatic animals in the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022. They find place under protected wildlife species. The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.

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Lakhimpur Kheri: Police personnel investigate after a collision between a mini vehicle and a UP roadways bus on the Nakaha-Shankarpur highway, on Sunday PTI

Dumper hits bus in UP; 12 pilgrims die, 10 badly hurt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A shocking accident in Shahjahanpur has claimed the lives of at least a dozen pilgrims who were on their way to the Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhnad. The incident occurred at Hajiyapur village on Saturday night as the privately-owned bus stopped at a roadside eatery. While some pilgrims had alighted for dinner, others remained inside the bus.

Suddenly, an out-of-control dumper truck crashed into the bus, unloading its heavy cargo onto the waiting pilgrims. Eleven people, ranging in age from 7 to 50, were killed on the spot. One more succumbed to the injuries during treatment, bringing the total death toll to 12. Ten other pilgrims were seriously injured and rushed to the Government Medical College for treatment. The driver of the dumper truck fled the scene.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and directed the district administration to ensure proper medical care for the injured. Shahjahanpur Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena

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In poll season, Bengal parties joust with cyclone relief plans

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ DIAMOND HARBOUR/KOLKATA

Even as cyclone Remal hurtled towards the Bengal coast at great speed matching cyclone Amphan — that wrecked havoc in coastal Bengal a few years ago — the entire political fraternity of the State cutting across party lines geared up with relief plans, more so in view of the crucial last phase of elections that will take place on June 1. In an apparent view to wash the black blemish of corruption with relief work and materials post cyclone Amphan, top functionaries of the Mamata Banerjee Government on Sunday set up a 24x7 control room at



Nabanna, the State secretariat, to monitor the situation in the coastal districts from Digha adjoining Odisha and Bakkhali-Mousami sea lines at the mouth of Sunderbans, sources said. The cyclone which was fast

degenerating into a severe cyclonic storm is likely to make a landfall on Sunday midnight somewhere between Ganga Sagar Islands and Khepupara in Bangladesh, weather office said.

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Rare extension in office for Army chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

It is the second time perhaps in independent India that an Army Chief has got an extension. General Manoj Pande was to retire this month end and will now serve till June end. There is only such instance in the past when in 1975 then Army Chief General G G Bewoor was given a one-year extension.

Announcing the decision, the Defence Ministry said here on Sunday "the Appointments Committee of Cabinet, on May 26, 2024, approved the extension in service of Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Manoj C Pande, PVS, AVSM, VSM, ADC for



a period of one month, beyond his normal age of superannuation (May 31, 2024), i.e. up to June 30, 2024, under Rule 16 A (4) of the Army Rules 1954. He was appointed as the COAS on April 30, 2022. He was commissioned in December 1982 in the Corps of Engineers (The Bombay Sappers).

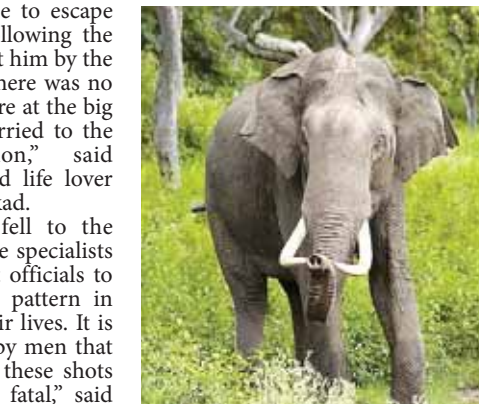
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Errant vets shoot to kill Kerala big cats, jumbos

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala has become a graveyard for elephants, tigers, leopards, and cheetahs if the incidents that happened during 2023 and 2024 are any indication. The year 2024 saw four elephants losing their lives to the veterinarians' tranquilisers which raised questions on the capability of the veterinary doctors who gave the shots and quality of the drugs used in bringing the wild tuskers under control. On Wednesday, a leopard that got trapped in the steel fence around a farmhouse in Palakkad district and

got injured in the melee to escape from the fence, died following the tranquiliser shots fired at him by the veterinary specialist. "There was no need for the doctor to fire at the big cat which was being carried to the nearest forest station," said Rameshan, an avid wild life lover based in Walyar, Palakkad. At least six big cats fell to the tranquilising shots of the specialists "deployed" by the forest officials to tame them. There is a pattern in these animals losing their lives. It is after they are captured by men that the shots are fired and these shots have been found to be fatal," said



John Peruvanthanam wild life conservationist. The charge against these animals is that they "trespassed" into human settlements in search of water and food. But a probe into the charge of encroachment shows that it is the other way round. The human settlements are former reserve forests which have been usurped by the encroachers. The Western Ghats Ecology expert panel under the chairmanship of Madhav Gadgil, noted environmental scientist which was constituted by the Union Government found that the forests

in Kerala that fell under the jurisdiction of the Western Ghat were getting fast depleted because of encroachment and massive illegal quarrying. "These are the prime reasons for the wild animals losing their dwelling places. Encroachments and quarrying have led to the destruction of water bodies and greeneries resulting in animals getting starved. The "trespassing" animals are designated either as man eaters or rogue by the real trespassers to get public sympathy, said John.

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Brisk polling amid complaints of bloodshed, rigging in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ TAMLUK/KOLKATA

Bengal returned to its original self with blood spilling in the Saturday's sixth phase elections that started with a political murder on Friday night and ended with sporadic violence, attacks on opposition candidates and security forces, rampant booth capture and rigging, independent sources said. Violence and rigging apart, the sixth round also witnessed a higher percentage of polling which stood at about 77.99 per cent --- compared to 73-74 per cent in the previous rounds --- till five pm, sources in the Election Commission which looked more miserable than ever before said adding polling percentage could go up as many people were still standing in the queues. Politicians were likely to keep their fingers crossed consid-

ering the higher polling percentage compared to earlier phases, sources said. Curiously at the end of the elections while Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who complained of booth capture by Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari's men in his home turn at East Midnapore, the BJP leader sounded pretty confident with a one-liner that sixth phase had ensured "a new saffron sunrise in Bengal." Curious because the Chief Minister who was addressing an election rally at Rajarhat in the northern fringes of Kolkata said quoting a Rabindranath Tagore line: "Amaar jaar samay holo ... dao biday (It is time for me to go ... bid me farewell)." Cut to the electoral battlefield a TMC worker and a former panchayat member Sk Moibul was allegedly murdered by the BJP men at Mahishadal in Tamluk constituency, sources said adding the police have



arrested five people in that connection. The incident took place in the small hours of Saturday. Saturday's murder comes a day after a BJP woman worker getting killed by TMC men at Tamluk from where retired Calcutta High

Court Judge Abhijit Ganguli is blockaded in a tri-cornered contest against TMC's Debangshu Bhattacharya and CPI(M)'s Sayan Banerjee the former Judge was gheraoed and slogans were raised against him when he went to

various booths after receiving complaints of booth capture. Banerjee too faced similar slogans at various places by angry TMC men. Tamluk --- and nearby Kanthi from where Adhikari's younger brother Soumendu is

fighting on a BJP ticket --- fall in Adhikari's home town of East Midnapore. Despite sporadic violence the two constituencies witnessed about 74 percent polling sources said. As the day progressed reports of violence and rigging trickled in from Jhargram where BJP candidate Pranat Tudu had literally to run for his life when TMC goons chased him and brick-batted his car. The back windshield of the vehicle was shattered and a central force jawan was injured in the attack. A vehicle of a media house too was damaged, sources said. Jhargram witnessed a brisk polling of 79.68 percent. Tudu is pitted in a trilateral fight against Kalipada Soren of Trinamool Congress and CPI(M)'s Sonamani Tudu. At neighbouring Midnapore seat --- which witnessed 77.57 percent polling --- BJP's

Agnimitra Paul was blockaded by alleged TMC men when she was moving around to inspect and address complaints of booth capture. Adhiting Ghatal --- where sitting MP and Bengali super star Deb is contesting against BJP's actor politician Hiran Chatterjee --- the latter was gheraoed and his men were chased away by the TMC men when he went to inspect complaints of booth capture. Ghatal witnessed 78 percent polling. Polling was brisk and long lines could be seen at various booths amid complaints of stray violence in other jangalmahal districts of Bankura, Purulia and Bishnupur too. While 74.09 percent voters turned out to vote at Purulia bordering Jharkhand, 76.79 percent polling was witnessed at Bankura whereas 81.87 percent voters cast their votes at Bishnupur. Out of the eight seats that

went to polls on Saturday six were won by the BJP in 2019 apparently on account of a massive migration of Left votes to the saffron outfit. Though Tamluk and Kanthi seats in East Midnapore were won by the TMC their sitting MPs Sisir Adhikari and Divyendu Adhikari --- father and brother of Suwendu Adhikari --- subsequently crossed over to the BJP. Meanwhile, in Kolkata the Chief Minister continued to attack the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for peddling false promises. "A person who fails on his guarantees should be called a 420 (read Section 420 of the IPC that refer to cheating as an offence)," Banerjee said reminding how he failed to deliver on his promises of depositing Rs 15 lakh on all bank accounts or providing 2 crore jobs per year or for that matter giving free cooking gas to people.

Over 23,000 Kashmiri migrants participate in 2024 LS polls in JK

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A minuscule population of over 23,000 Kashmiri migrants participated in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. According to the information provided by the Chief Electoral Officer of Jammu and Kashmir, out of 113873 registered Kashmiri migrant voters only 63563 opted for voting across special polling stations set up in Jammu, Udhampur, and New Delhi.

Of these 63563 voters only 23504 walked up to the polling booths to exercise their right to franchise on three Lok Sabha seats of Srinagar, Baramulla, and Anantnag-Rajouri. Meanwhile, with the conclusion of the Lok Sabha Polls in the UT, Jammu and Kashmir has registered an unprecedented 58.11 percent polling in its five Parliamentary Constituencies, the highest in the past 35 years.



Addressing a press conference in Srinagar the Chief Electoral Officer PK Pole said, the overall poll percentage on all five Lok Sabha seats of Jammu and Kashmir stood at 58.11 percent. He said the Jammu Lok Sabha seat recorded the highest voter turnout of 72.22 percent, the Udhampur-Doda seat recorded 68.27 percent, Baramulla recorded 59.10 percent, Srinagar 39 percent, and Anantnag-Rajouri recorded 53

percent voter turnout. According to official sources, out of 52100 registered voters in the Srinagar Parliamentary constituency, 17140 Kashmiri migrant electors opted for voting at 26 Special Polling Stations established at Jammu (21), Udhampur (01) and Delhi (04). At these 26 special polling stations, around 6455 voters exercised their franchise recording a voter turnout of 32 % at Jammu and around 50 % at Udhampur and Delhi. In the Anantnag Rajouri Parliamentary constituency out of 26000 electorate, 10349 Kashmiri migrants exercised their right to franchise across 26 special polling stations recording a voter turnout of 39 percent.

their voting rights, out of which, 213 voted at Delhi, 160 at Udhampur and 6327 exercised their voting rights at Jammu.

A total of 25,821 Kashmiri migrants registered as voters from Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency on May 20. Of these, 12,747 were male voters and 13,074 were female voters. Similarly, there were around 21,000 Kashmiri migrant electors in Baramulla who opted for voting at 26 Special Polling Stations established at Jammu (21), Udhampur (01) and Delhi (04). At these 26 special polling stations, around 6455 voters exercised their franchise recording a voter turnout of 32 % at Jammu and around 50 % at Udhampur and Delhi. In the Anantnag Rajouri Parliamentary constituency out of 26000 electorate, 10349 Kashmiri migrants exercised their right to franchise across 26 special polling stations recording a voter turnout of 39 percent.

NFR takes measures to ensure passenger hydration amid rising temperature

PNS ■ MALIGAON

As temperature soar this summer, NF Railway (NFR) with a focus on providing essential means of hydration to its passengers, has ensured availability of water vending machines, water coolers and water taps across the several major railway stations within its zone. Moreover, water refilling of all the long-distance trains is being ensured at regular intervals at nominated stations or as and when noticed by employing the quick watering system method. Adopting a proactive step during this ravishing summer, NFR has sensored operation of more than 100 of Water Vending Machines at several major station platforms which includes stations like Katihar Jn., New Jalpaiguri, Raiganj, Samsi, New Coochbehar, Kokrajhar, Hasimara and many more. These installed WVMs dispense clean and hygiene water



for refilling at bottles and with carry away containers. These machines will enable passengers to purchase potable drinking water at reasonable price. The facility will be available at stations round the clock. Passengers can buy clean & hygienic drinking water for only Rs 5 for refilling and Rs 8 for carry away container of one litre bottles. Similarly, bottles of 5 litre water capacity costs Rs 20 for refill and Rs 25 for carry away containers. NFR towards its commitment of providing better passenger amenities and comfort always intensifies its efforts for supply of clean drinking water at several station premises and on board trains, while availing journeys.

Rare extension in...

From Page 1

He held the appointment of Vice Chief of the Army Staff before taking over as the COAS." Vice Chief of Army Lt General Upendra Dwivedi is tipped to be the next Army Chief as he is the senior most after Pande. Dwivedi assumed the current responsibility this February. He was commissioned into 18 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (JAKRIF) in 1984, a unit he later commanded. Born May 6, 1962, Pande is the 29th Army Chief for over two years. Service chiefs have a three-year term or serve until they turn 62, whichever is earlier. Before assuming the charge of vice chief, Pande was heading the Kolkata-based Eastern Command, which is responsible for guarding India's borders with China in the eastern sector. His tenure saw the Indian Army deploy new weapon systems in the eastern sector to strengthen its posture against the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), amid the lingering border

row in Ladakh. An alumna of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Pande was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers (The Bombay Sappers) in December 1982. He commanded an engineer regiment during Operation Parakram in the Pallanwala Sector along the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir. In his 41-year military career, Pande has commanded an engineer brigade in the western theatre, an infantry brigade along the LoC, a mountain division in the Ladakh sector, and a corps in the northeast. He was the commander-in-chief of Andaman and Nicobar Command before he took charge of Eastern Command. The senior most after Dwivedi is Lt General Ajay Kumar Singh, currently the Southern Army Commander. He was commissioned into 7/11 Gorkha Rifles in December 1984. Both the senior most officers after General Pande are course mates.

Dumper hits bus in UP; 12 pilgrims die, 10...

From Page 1

Then Ajit said, "Papa, let's go and get water for mummy." Meanwhile, he got on the bus to keep some luggage. A dumper full of gravel hit him. After the accident, nothing was visible for a long time in the dust. He kept searching for his son. After a long time, Ajit was found buried under the wheels.

In poll season, Bengal...

From Page 1

A "severe" cyclonic with wind speed that could reach 105 kmph and with a 135 kmph gush would hit the coastal areas of Bengal, weather office sources said. "Cyclone Remal lay over the north Bay of Bengal and will move northwards and intensify further," the IMD further said. "The cyclonic storm lay centered at 0830 hrs today over North Bay of Bengal near latitude 19.8°N and longitude 89.3°E about 260 km south-southwest of Khepupara (Bangladesh), 310 km south of Mongla (Bangladesh), 240 km south-southeast of Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and 280 km south-southeast of Canning (West Bengal). Currently, maximum sustained wind speed of 90-100 kmph gusting to 110 kmph prevails around the cyclone centre," a statement issued by the Department said. Advising utmost caution Bengal Governor Dr CV Ananda Bose said he was closely monitoring the situation and was in constant touch with State and Central experts to ensure a coordinated response to counter it. Both the National and State Disaster Relief Forces had been deployed and were coordinating with the State Police and the control room, a senior Minister said requesting anonymity in an apparent view to keep in line with the model code of conduct. "The contact number of the control rooms has been given ... they are 1070 and 033 22143526," the

Minister said adding there has been strict instruction to the party workers from the TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and Chief Minister Banerjee to rush to the coastal regions and ensure "perfect evacuation and adequate assistance with dry food etc." Senior CPI(M) leader and party central committee member Suján Chakrabarty said his party had already dispatched the "Red Volunteers who worked untiringly during the pandemic to the core areas of inaccessible Sunderbans," adding veteran leader and former Minister Kanti Ganguli was personally supervising relief and evacuation works. "We are very much willing to cooperate with the Government and work in union ... this is no time to do politics ... we have to strike a balance between campaigning and relief," he said. BJP's Sukanta Majumdar said his party had employed "full force" in relief work. "All our workers have been asked to deploy themselves in this hour of crisis ... hope an Amphan-like situation does not revisit us ... we are very much there in hours of need."

foods at the evacuation camps," he said. So fast and sincere was the service that a schoolteacher from Kakdwip sarcastically said, "Evacuation and Government service had never been so prompt and so good in living memory," adding "this is for the first time we understood that elections do really count ... we will pray to God so that election should come every week. A trader from Diamond Harbour said, "This is for the first time we have found them working ... hope they keep this work up for all times to come." Meanwhile, about 350 flights including 170 domestic and 54 international flights could be rescheduled, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport authorities at Dum Dum said adding normal flights could be resumed from 9 am on the Monday depending upon the weather. The Eastern Railways and South Eastern Railways too announced that a number of local and long-distance trains would be rescheduled adding some trains would be suspended from 9 pm till Sunday midnight. Ferry and cargo services at the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata would also remain suspended all cargo affecting the container handling operations. "All vessels across River Hooghly were suspended, authorities said adding ferry services in the Sunderbans area including those at Ganga Sagar had been suspended too.

Fires claim 7 kids, 3...

From Page 1

Vijay Jain (65), a trader, and resident, said his daughter-in-law and son sustained injuries as they tried to escape. "We never saw a doctor there. There were only nurses and men, who would come at night and refill 20-30 cylinders. We filed a complaint with the police and local authorities. Nothing happened. The newborn babies were kept on the first floor while the ground floor and second floor were filled with cylinders and garbage." Ravi Gupta, a local resident, said some locals climbed from the back side of the building and evacuated children one by one. Garg cited oxygen cylinder blast as the cause of the fire. He said, "It was a very tough

operation. We made two teams. One team started fire fighting because there was a blast of cylinders. We can say it was a chain of blasts of cylinders. We had to save ourselves also. We started rescue operations for babies as well. Unfortunately, we could not save all the children. That is a regrettable incident." Delhi Police has registered an FIR against the owner of the New Born Baby Care Hospital Naveen Kichi under sections 336 (endangering life of personal safety of others), 304A (death by negligence) and 34 (criminal activity) of the IPC. He is currently absconding and a police team has been dispatched to Jaipur, where Kichi is believed to be in hiding. The police said teams have been formed to nab the owner. Choudhary said they are checking the fire NOC of the hospital and if it is found without it, IPC sections may be added.

Errant vets shoot...

From Page 1

The church as well as Islamic spiritual leaders undertook an agitation forcing the Government to dilute the recommendations of the Gadgil committee report. Encroaching and quarrying continue unabated in Kerala. Interestingly, the quarrying is done by relatives and associates of political leaders belonging to both the UDF and the LDF.

Rajkot a 'man-made disaster', HC takes suo motu...

From Page 1

"The bodies are charred beyond recognition, and we have completed the process of collecting the DNA samples of the bodies and the relatives who have claimed them so that the identity of the deceased can be established. The death toll is not likely to rise any further," he said. The exact cause of the massive fire is not yet known. The CM has announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to each injured. In the wake of the fire

tragedy, the state director general of police has issued instructions to the commissioners of police and superintendents of police to inspect all the game zones in Gujarat and close those running without fire safety permission. The Gujarat High Court bench directed advocates of the Ahmedabad, Vadodra, Surat and Rajkot municipal corporations to appear before it on Monday with instructions as to under what provisions of law the authorities led these units to be set up or continue to operate under their

Pod of stranded dolphins rescued...

From Page 1

They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to "see" an image in their mind, according to experts. Division Forest Officer (DFO), South Kheri Forest Division, Sanjay Biswal, camped at the spot along with WWF project director Dabir Hasan, WII expert Vipul Maurya, WTI expert Shruti Singh and TSA scientist Dr Shaileendra Singh till all the dolphins were successfully rescued back to the Ghaghara river, their familiar home. "On Friday, reports were received that a group of about ten Gangetic dolphins had been sighted stranded in the shallow waters of Sharda canal and they were unable to swim to safety owing to inadequate water level," Biswal told a news agency.

'City Perpetual' adds artefactual...

From Page 1

The economic impact of this GI revolution is profound, with an estimated annual turnover exceeding Rs 30,000 crore, benefiting approximately 20 lakh individuals engaged in these industries. Before 2014, the estimated turnover in the handicraft industry in Varanasi was between Rs 15,000 and Rs 18,000 crore. Artisan Bachche Lal Maurya highlighted the tangible improvements in the quality of life for weavers and artisans. "Earlier, handloom weavers earned Rs 200 to Rs 250 per day, but with increased demand, they now command rates ranging from Rs 400 to Rs 600 daily," he said. Similarly, wooden craft

artisans have seen their earnings soar from Rs 80 to Rs 150 per day to a substantial Rs 300 to Rs 500 daily, thanks to the increased demand for wooden toys. Economic Renaissance through Tourism The once quiet alleys of Varanasi have sprung to life with a surge in economic activities, ushering in a wave of financial prosperity over the past two to three years. Gokul Sharma, President of the Varanasi Hotel Association, dittoes to the remarkable growth in the hospitality and tourism sectors, particularly over the last decade. Hotels in Varanasi collectively raked in revenue exceeding Rs 2000 crore in the previous year alone. Sharma said that this

figure might not fully capture the economic impact due to the absence of official data on dharamshalas (religious guesthouses) and homestays. The actual revenue would be considerably higher if these accommodations were factored in. Government statistics indicate that over 5.50 crore tourists visited the city in 2023, with 13,700 of them being foreign visitors. In response to the burgeoning tourist footfall, many residents along the banks of the Ganga have transformed their homes into homestays to capitalize on the tourism surge. However, the cumbersome registration process means the exact number of homestays and their respective revenues remain elusive.

licenses, including the licenses to its use and compliance of fire safety regulations" were given to these respective (entertainment) zones that are in territorial jurisdiction of these corporations. These entertainment zones, as newspapers suggest, have come up without the necessary approvals from the competent authorities, the court noted. Not just Rajkot, such game zones have come up in Ahmedabad city as well and they "pose a significant threat to public safety, specially the innocent

children," it said. "Prima facie, a man-made disaster has occurred where innocent lives of children have been lost" and families have grieved their loss, it said. The court listed the suo motu petition for further hearing on Monday, with a direction to the panel advocates for the respective corporations to appear before it with instructions as to "under what provisions of law these corporations led these gaming zones/recreational facilities to be set up or continue and be put to use."

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Expressing grief, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said in a post on X, "The fire tragedy at a hospital in Delhi is heart-rending. My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this incredibly difficult time. I pray that those injured recover at the earliest."



"I pray for the speedy recovery of other children injured in this incident. The news of death of many children due to fire in a hospital in Vivek Vihar, Delhi is heart-rending. May God give strength to the bereaved parents and relatives to bear this shock. I pray for the speedy recovery of other children injured in this incident," President of India Droupadi Murmu said in a post on X in Hindi.



Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena directed the Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to "institute enquiry" into the East Delhi children's hospital fire which killed seven newborns. "Have asked Chief Secy to institute an inquiry into the tragic incidents of fire in children's hospital in Delhi. Also instructed CP to ensure all that is needful. My heartfelt condolences to bereaved families. I assure all relief & will ensure that guilty are brought to book," the LG said in a tweet on X.



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the East Delhi children hospital fire which left seven newborns dead is heart-rending and warned that those responsible for negligence will not be spared. In a post on X, he said the Government stood with those who lost their children in the fire incident in Vivek Vihar, and added the administration was ensuring proper treatment to the injured.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi described the incident as "heart-breaking" and prayed for the early recovery of the injured children. He also conveyed his deepest condolences to the grieving parents of the newborn children who lost their lives in the hospital fire. "The news of the death of many newborn babies due to fire in a Baby Care Hospital in Delhi is extremely heart-breaking. My deepest condolences to all the grieving parents and relatives. I hope that the injured children recover and get well as soon as possible," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

Owner of city hospital where fire killed seven newborns arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The owner of the private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, where seven newborn children were charred to death, Dr Naveen Khichi and a doctor on duty Dr Aakash were arrested on Sunday. According to the police, there were severe lapses on the side of the hospital owners which possibly caused more casualties. The police found out that the licence issued to them by the Government had already expired on March 31 this year and even the expired licence gave allowance for five beds only. Instead, at the time of the incident, 12 newborn were admitted to the hospital. "The doctors are not qualified or competent to treat the newborn child in need of neo-natal intensive care, as they are BAMS degree holders only. There is no fire extinguisher installed in the said hospital for emergency conditions in case of eruption of fire. There is no



emergency exit in the Hospital in case of any untoward incident," DCP Shahdara Surendra Choudhary said, highlighting the severe lapses they found out during their investigation. Additionally, the District Magistrate of Shahdara Rishita



Gupta has submitted a factual report to the divisional commissioner regarding the incident. In the report it was revealed that out of the seven dead new born babies, four were male and three female. Barring one 25 days old boy,

the rest were of 15 days. A detailed report in the matter is awaited. The Delhi Government has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the fire tragedy. In an order issued on Sunday, Divisional Commissioner Ashwani Kumar directed the district magistrate of the Shahdara district to inquire into the fire tragedy that occurred on Saturday night. "And whereas it is essential to cause a magisterial inquiry into the aforesaid incident. Now therefore, District Magistrate (Shahdara)/Chairman, District Disaster Management Authority is hereby directed to inquire into the said fire tragedy so as: To ascertain the circumstances that led to the fire tragedy. "To fix the responsibility on the persons responsible for the said incident. To suggest measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future," it said. The order directed that the inquiry report be submitted "as expeditiously as possible".

Three killed, one injured in Krishna Nagar's residential building fire

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three people died and another was seriously injured after a fire broke out in a four-storey residential building in Krishna Nagar area of east Delhi on Sunday. Officials said the charred body of a 66-year-old woman identified as Promila Shad was recovered from the first floor of the building, while two others identified as 18-year-old Keshav Sharma and 39-year-old Anju Sharma were declared brought dead by the doctors. Five fire tenders were rushed to the spot, they said, adding 14 vehicles and two bicycles at the spot were reduced to ashes. This is the second major fire incident in the city in as many days. At least seven newborns died in a massive fire at a children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar on Saturday night. Meanwhile, police said another fire incident was reported in the area at Krishna Nagar police station on Sunday.



Chief of Delhi Fire Services Atul Garg said a call regarding a blaze at a house near the Bank of India, Krishna Nagar was received at 2.35 am. "The flames were doused by 7.20 am and it was found that the fire began in 11 two-wheelers in the stilt parking of the house and spread to the first floor. The building comprises ground (stilt) plus four floors," he said. Officials said the second,

third and fourth floors were affected by heat and smoke. One charred body was found on the first floor, Garg said. "Station House Officer and other staff reached the spot. Police and firefighters rescued Sonam Sadh (24) from the first floor. Karan Raj Bhalla (56), Seema Bhalla (54), Rahul Bhalla (33), Rohit Bhalla (30), Manish Bhalla (25) were rescued from the second floor. Third floor of the building was vacant," a senior police officer said. "Some of the occupants were rescued from behind of the building. Whereas, Devender Sharma (45), Gaurav Sharma (41), Ruchika Sharma (38) and six-year-old Divyansh were rescued from the fourth floor," the officer said. According to the DFS, two persons were declared dead at the GTB Hospital while one person was referred to Max hospital in a serious condition. Police has booked the owner of the building at Krishna Nagar Police Station. "We have registered an FIR under sections 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter), 304A (causing death by negligence), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 427 (mischief causing damage) of the IPC has been registered at Krishna Nagar Police Station and investigation is being carried out. Post-mortem of the dead bodies are being conducted," said the police officer.

Family members mourn loss of kin in tragic fire

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Allah ko pyaari ho gayi Ameri beti," said a father, whose 11-day-old daughter died in the massive fire in a childcare hospital here. In the aftermath of the devastating fire that killed seven newborn babies, families are struggling to identify their children. Meanwhile, three of the six of the families are reliving the trauma of losing their child. Ruhi, a 17-day-old baby, was admitted to the hospital two days ago due to a fever and died in the fire. Her mother said, "Yesterday I met my baby, and this morning, we received information about the fire. Since then, we have been trying to find out about her." "We admitted her to this hospital to improve her health but we didn't know that this hospital would take away our only child," she said. "They removed all her necklaces, including her 'Najar ki mala'. When they took her in, she was just wearing a diaper," she said. Ruhi was born on May 10, and her family lives



in Karkardooma. A fire broke out at Baby Care New Born Hospital around 11:30 PM on Saturday, officials of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) said. The blaze quickly spread to two adjacent buildings, requiring 16 fire tenders. Three buildings were affected by the fire. "Allah ko pyaari ho gayi meri beti," said a father, whose 11-day-old daughter had not yet been identified. "My daughter was born on May 15 at another hospital. They asked us to keep her in the childcare hospital for 72 hours for observation. After that, we admitted her to the childcare hospital, where she had been for the last 10 days," he said. "My friends called and told me that there was a blast at the childcare hospital in Delhi where my daughter was. When I found out and came here, I learned that my daughter had passed away," he said. Meanwhile, three families among the six of them have

lost children before and are reliving the ordeal after their newborn babies died in the fire. Masialam, a labourer and a father of one of the fire victims had lost a son five years ago. "I have lost my newborn son. What kind of facilities do they have? You can ask the parents who have sold their jewellery or took money on interest for the treatment of their kids. I am a labourer and after finding out that the child, who was born in Manglam Hospital, had an infection, we admitted him to this hospital. I have a three-year-old daughter and lost a son around five years back." Parvinder Kumar, the relative of another fire victim, said, "We have not even informed the mother yet," Kumar said, "This was the first child of my relative, Pawan Kumar. We have no idea how the incident unfolded. The girl was born around six days ago at a hospital in Ghaziabad and was admitted to the care centre the same day. "She was having breathing issues when she was born and was showing improvement in

the care centre. Our relative called us around 9 am and informed us about the incident. The negligence was on the hospital's part. Strict action must be taken against its owner," Parvinder said. He further stated that they are farmers and belong to the Baghat district in Uttar Pradesh. Hritik Chaudhary, whose newborn son also died in the fire, said that every single official who is visiting the hospital is tight-lipped. They have no answer if the hospital was legal, or whether the hospital had an NOC from the fire department. Chaudhary's cousin, Robin said that nobody informed them about the incident and they came to the spot after watching the news. The confusion and lack of information left many families in despair when they reached the hospital. After the incident, District Magistrate (DM), Shahdara, Ritisha Gupta also reached the GTB Hospital. Many families stood outside and raised slogans, "Humein Insaaf Chahiye" (we want justice).

Ensure speedy probe into children's hospital fire, Chief Secretary told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday directed the chief secretary to ensure a speedy inquiry into the fire incident at a private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar that left seven newborns dead. Following the incident, Bharadwaj sent directions to Health Secretary SB Deepak Kumar and Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar. In the communication, he said directions were emailed to Deepak Kumar since he was not responding to phone calls and messages. Bharadwaj ordered a speedy inquiry and sought the names and designations of officers or private people responsible for the "negligence". He has also issued directions to ensure free treatment of the rescued infants in the best private hospitals under the city government's Farishtey scheme. Ordering speedy release of compensation to the families of



the victims and the injured, Bharadwaj also directed to expedite the arrests of those running the facility. Bharadwaj took to X, saying he has asked the health secretary to update him about the situation and ensured that the strictest punishment would be given to those found negligent. "Very unfortunate incident reported. I have asked Secretary (Health) to update about the current situation. Culprits will not be spared. Strictest punishment will be ensured for those found negligent or involved in any wrong doing," he posted. "At night of 25 May 2024, a very unfortunate and tragic

incident occurred due to fire at a Baby Care Centre in Vivek Vihar, Delhi. Though, this incident occurred around 11:30 pm on 25.5.2024, I got to know about this incident through a media flash in the morning of 26.5.2024. I have tried calling Secretary (Health) multiple times and left him many whatsapp messages but he has not responded yet. Therefore, I visited the incident spot alone. As I am not able to communicate with Secretary (Health) who heads the Department of Health, I am sending this note with a copy to Chief Secretary so that quick enquiry can be launched in this matter. You are directed to ensure the following," his X post read. The health minister, while inspecting the fire site, said that it was perhaps caused due to short-circuit and the oxygen cylinder blasts led to fire quickly spreading in the building. "I will try my best to ensure the culprits will not be spared. A complete investigation will be done," said Bharadwaj.

Firefighters face challenges in rescue operation at hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Firefighting personnel faced several challenges during its rescue operation after a blaze erupted at an east Delhi children's hospital that left seven newborns dead, none more so than clearing the crowd that had gathered at the spot and recording videos. Delhi Fire Services officials said a blaze broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital in the Vivek Vihar area around 11:30 pm on Saturday and spread to two adjacent buildings. At least 12 newborns were rescued from the facility but seven of them died. Five babies are undergoing treatment at another hospital, they said. A senior Delhi Fire Services official said, "Several people had gathered at the spot and were recording videos of the fire. Many of them even came close to those trying to douse



the flames." He added that people must avoid coming close to areas where a fire-fighting operation is underway to ensure that those dousing the flames can operate smoothly. The fire had spread from the hospital to a boutique and a private bank in the next building, and an eyeglass showroom and a shop selling

City Government indifferent to mishaps, alleges Sachdeva

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva visited the sites of the two tragic accidents that occurred between Saturday night and Sunday morning in East Delhi and expressed deep sorrow on the loss of 10 innocent lives in both accidents. He also claimed that the Delhi government was indifferent to such mishaps. He said this is not just an accident but a case of murder due to the negligence of the Arvind Kejriwal government. Whoever is guilty in this case should be severely punished. Sachdeva said there have been continuous incidents of major fires in Delhi, but it is unfortunate that the functioning of the fire department remains uncontrolled. The Delhi BJP President inspected the hospital premises in C Block of Vivek Vihar where fire claimed the lives of 7 children and injured several



others, expressing profound condolences on the accident. Sachdeva expressed grief over the deaths of children in the hospital and assured that the BJP is ready to help those grieving families in every possible way. The fire at the hospital spread to a nearby house, injuring three occupants. The BJP state chief also met the affected Bansal family and wished everyone a speedy recovery.

Capital sizzles as temperature soars to 48.1 degrees Celsius

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi sizzled in extreme weather conditions with the mercury soaring to 48.3 degrees Celsius in Mungeshpur, North West Delhi, followed by Najafgarh area at 48.1 degrees Celsius, making it the second hottest place in the country after Phalodi Rajasthan. The average maximum temperature was recorded at 45.4 degree Celsius, a five notches above the normal at safardarjung observatory, which gave the feel factor at 55 degree Celsius. According to the India Meteorological Department, there are no signs of relief from the heat in Delhi. Rather, the sun's heat will increase even more in the next four days. "Red alert has been issued," IMD said. Notably, a "red alert" is issued when extreme weather conditions are a "high health concern" for vulnerable people,

including infants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases and advised to stay indoors. Notably, Seven weather stations in Delhi recorded above 46 degree Celsius which include Palam at 46.1 Degree Celsius, Ayanagar at 46.3 degree Celsius, Jafarpur at 46.9 degree Celsius, Narela at 46.7 degree Celsius and Pusa at 46.8 degree Celsius. The observatories at Ridge, Lodhi Road, Mayur Vihar, Rajghat recorded the maximum temperature above 44 degree Celsius. There was no heat-wave in May 2023 in Delhi, which recorded a highest temperature of 43.7 degrees Celsius in the same month last year. In 2022, the national capital saw four heatwave days, according to the IMD data. A heatwave may also be recorded when the maximum temperature is 40 degrees or more and 4.5 to 6.4 degrees above the normal.

UCC, One Nation, One Election to be implemented in next term: Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said a Uniform Civil Code for the entire country will be implemented within the next five years after extensive consultations with all stakeholders if the BJP returns to power. In a wide-ranging interview with PTI, Shah said the Modi government in its next term will also implement 'One Nation, One Election' as the time has come for the elections to be held simultaneously in the country. The senior BJP leader further said the simultaneous elections will also bring down costs. Asked about the possibility of moving elections to winter or some other time of the year as against the current one being held in scorching heat, Shah said, "We can think over it. If we prepone one election, it can be done. It should be

done. This is also the time of students' vacation. It creates lots of problems too. Over time, the election (Lok Sabha) gradually moved to this period (during summer)." Talking about the Uniform Civil Code, Shah said, "The UCC is a responsibility left to us, our Parliament and the state legislatures of our country since independence by the makers of our Constitution." "The guiding principles decided for us by the Constituent Assembly include the Uniform Civil Code. And even at that time, legal scholars like K M Munshi, Rajendra Babu, Ambedkar Ji had said that there should not be laws based on religion in a secular country. There should be a Uniform Civil Code," he said. The Union Home Minister said the BJP has done an experiment in Uttarakhand where it has a majority government as it is a subject of



states and the Centre. The UCC has been on the BJP's agenda since the 1950s and recently it was enacted in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand. "I believe that the Uniform Civil Code is a huge social, legal, and religious reform. The law made by the Uttarakhand government should undergo social and legal scrutiny. Religious leaders should also be consulted," he said. "What I mean is that there should be an extensive debate on this. And if there is anything to change in the model law made by the Uttarakhand government after this extensive debate. Because someone will definitely go to court. The judiciary's opinion will also come. "After that, the state legislatures and Parliament of the country should think seriously over this and a law must be enacted. That is why we have written in our 'sankalp patra' that the BJP

aims to have a Uniform Civil Code for the entire country," he said. Asked if it can be done within the next five years, Shah said it will be done in this period only. "Five years are a sufficient period," he said. Asked about simultaneous polls, Shah said, "We will also make every effort to achieve 'One Nation, One Election'. This should also be discussed." "The Prime Minister had formed the Ram Nath Kovind committee. I was also a member of it. Its report has been submitted. The time has come that elections should be held simultaneously in the country," he added. Asked whether a bill on this can be introduced in the next session if the BJP returns to power, Shah said, "Our resolution is for five years. We will bring it during this period." In its manifesto for the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, the BJP

has said that Article 44 of the Constitution lists Uniform Civil Code as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. "BJP believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time Bharat adopts a Uniform Civil Code, which protects the rights of all women, and the BJP reiterates its stand to draw a Uniform Civil Code, drawing upon the best traditions and harmonising them with the modern times," the manifesto has said. On 'One Nation, One Election', the BJP manifesto mentioned that the Modi government had set up a high-powered Committee to examine the issues of conducting simultaneous elections and it will work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the committee. It has also promised to make provisions for a common electoral roll for all levels of elections.

SC to hear BJP's plea against Calcutta HC order on advertisements during LS polls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea filed by the BJP challenging a Calcutta High Court order that had refused to interfere with a single-judge verdict restraining the party from issuing advertisements that are allegedly "violative" of the Model Code of Conduct during the Lok Sabha polls. According to the cause list of May 27 uploaded on the apex court website, a vacation bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and K V Viswanathan is scheduled to hear the plea. On May 22, a division bench of the high court had said it was not inclined to entertain the appeal against the interim order passed by the single-judge bench. The single-judge bench on May 20 had restrained the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from publishing advertisements that violated the MCC until June 4, the day the Lok Sabha poll results are scheduled to be declared. The court had also restrained the saffron party from publishing the advertisements mentioned by the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC)



in West Bengal, in its petition claiming unverified allegations against it and its workers. The high court's division bench had said that the BJP can approach the single judge for a review or for modifications or a recall of the order. The BJP had moved the intra-court appeal before the division bench, claiming that the single-judge bench had passed the order without giving it any hearing. In its petition filed in the apex court, the BJP has said the division bench of the high court ought to have considered that the party was not heard and an ex-parte mandatory injunction was granted at an ad-interim stage by the single judge. "It is pertinent to highlight that such interim relief granted by the high court was

beyond the prayer sought by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC/respondent no.1) which was limited only to the grant of interim order directing the ECI (Election Commission of India) to take steps in accordance with law," it has said. The plea has claimed that the single judge "erred by granting an interim injunction" based on the purported violation of the MCC, without taking into consideration that the issue is pending before the EC, which, by virtue of Article 324 read with Article 329 of the Constitution, has the authority to take appropriate action against any political party that violates the MCC. It has pointed out that aggrieved by the publication of certain

advertisements that were allegedly against the spirit of the MCC, the TMC had approached the EC. The plea has said on the basis of the TMC's complaint, the EC issued a show-cause notice on May 18, directing the BJP to file a reply by May 21. "On May 20, 2024, the writ petition was listed before the high court. The single judge, despite observing that the ECI is seized of the issue and a show-cause notice has been issued, proceeded to pass a blanket interim order, which is in the nature of a final order, thereby restraining the petitioner (BJP) from further continuing with the publication of the allegedly offending advertisements till June 4, 2024 or until further orders," it has said. It has added that the division bench ought to have considered that the matter was heard and the order passed by the single judge in the absence of the BJP, which has a "significant impact on its ability to canvas during the election". As an interim relief, the plea has sought an ex-parte stay on the operations of the May 20 interim order as well as the May 22 order passed by the high court.

IAF Chief Chaudhari reviews Passing Out Parade at Indian Naval Academy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

IAF chief V R Chaudhari Saturday reviewed the Passing Out Parade (POP) of 106 Indian Naval Academy Course, 36 and 37 Naval Orientation Courses (Extended), 38 Naval Orientation Course (Regular) and 39 Naval Orientation Course (Coast Guard and Foreign) at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala, navy said here. Chaudhari congratulated the passing out trainees, medal winners and the Champion Squadron for their hard work and outstanding performances. He also complimented the trainees on parade for their impeccable turnout, good military bearing and smart drill. The Reviewing Officer acknowledged the parents' decision for having encouraged and supported the trainees in choosing the noble profession of arms and committing them to the service of the nation. Officials said 216 trainees including 34 women trainees and 10 from friendly foreign countries passed out with flying colours, marking the culmination of their ab-initio



training. Midshipman Pinintla Pradeep Kumar Reddy won the 'President's Gold Medal' for standing first in the overall order of merit. The integration of international trainees at INA not only strengthens India's foreign cooperation but also highlights its world-class training facilities. The 38 NOC is the first NOC course to undergo an enhanced training duration of 44 weeks and includes 05 Women Officers in Executive branch, marking a milestone in the gender-neutral Indian

Navy. The successful trainees marched past the Academy's Quarterdeck in slow march; with their gleaming swords and rifles held in salute, to the traditional notes and poignant farewell tune for their 'Antim Pag' or final step at INA. On completion of the parade, CAS, FOCINC (South) and Commandant, INA along with other dignitaries and proud parents shipped the stripes of passing out trainees, signifying their commissioning in the Navy. The dignitaries interacted with the passing out trainees

and their parents and congratulated them for their successful completion of rigorous training. These officers will now proceed to various Naval ships and establishments to further consolidate their training in specialised fields. The nation has reposed tremendous responsibility on the newly commissioned officers who will play a vital role in upholding and reinforcing the Combat Ready, Credible, Cohesive and Future Ready Indian Navy, imbued with the core values of Duty, Honour and Courage.

WHO fails to come up with plan to deal with next pandemic

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Despite nearly a decade's worth of progress in enhancing life expectancy being erased by the Covid-19 pandemic, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Saturday, attempts to finalise a global treaty even after more than two years of negotiations have failed to come up with a plan for how the world might respond to the next global outbreak. After Covid-19 triggered once-unthinkable lockdowns, upended economies and killed millions, leaders at the WHO and worldwide had decided to oversee negotiations to figure out how the world might better share scarce resources and stop future viruses from spreading globally. Roland Driech, co-chair of WHO's negotiating board for the agreement, acknowledged that countries were unable to come up with a draft. WHO had hoped a final draft treaty could be agreed on at its yearly meeting of health ministers starting Monday in Geneva. "We are not where we hoped we would be when we started this process," he said, adding that finalizing an international agreement on how to respond to a pandemic was critical "for the sake of humanity." Driech said the World Health Assembly next week would take up lessons from its work and plot the way forward, urging participants to make "the right decisions to take this process forward" to one day reach a pandemic agreement "because we need it." The draft treaty had attempt-



ed to address the gap that occurred between COVID-19 vaccines in rich and poorer countries, which WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said amounted to "a catastrophic moral failure." "We will try everything — believing that anything is possible — and make this happen because the world still needs a pandemic treaty," he said. "Because many of the challenges that caused a serious impact during COVID-19 still exist." The latest draft had proposed that WHO should get 20% of the production of pandemic-related products like tests, treatments and vaccines and urged countries to disclose their deals with private companies. Meanwhile, many developing countries said it's unfair that they might be expected to provide virus samples to help develop vaccines and treatments, but then be unable to afford them. On impact on the life expectancy, the WHO in an official statement said, "From 2019 to 2021, the global life expectancy declined by 1.8

years to reach 71.4 years, returning to the level seen in 2012. Similarly, the global healthy life expectancy decreased by 1.5 years to 61.9 years in 2021, also reverting to the level observed in 2012." The report further highlighted the significant health challenges faced by persons with disabilities, refugees and migrants. In 2021, about 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the global population, had a disability. On Universal Health Coverage, the WHO said that it has expanded to encompass 585 million more people, although falling short of the target of one billion. "While we have made progress towards the Triple Billion targets since 2018, a lot still needs to be done. Data is WHO's superpower. We need to use it better to deliver more impact in countries," said Dr Samira Asma, WHO Assistant Director-General for Data, Analytics and Delivery for Impact. "Without accelerating progress, it is unlikely that any of the health SDGs will be met by 2030."

Insurers slow in giving coverage for AYUSH in health insurance policies

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite the directive from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for general insurance companies to frame guidelines for the inclusion of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) treatments in health insurance policies by April 1, 2024, many insurers are moving slow in this direction. This delay in implementing the guidelines is being attributed to various factors, including the complexity of integrating AYUSH treatments into existing health insurance frameworks, the need for thorough consideration of quality standards and procedures, and the challenges associated with ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. Now to bring clarity and guide the stakeholders to how to go about in framing guidelines, the Ayush Ministry will conduct a sensitization program on Monday for executive officials of insurance companies and owners of Ayush hospitals that aims to ensure the effective integration of AYUSH treatments into health insurance coverage. An official from the Ministry said, "Sensitization needs has been felt given that many general insurers expressed that they were clueless in implementing the policies related with the AYUSH system." The programme will majorly discuss the regulatory framework and policy support needed to mainstream Ayush treatments in health insurance schemes and facilitate a dialogue between key stake-



holders to address both challenges and opportunities. Coverage in the Ayush sector, standard treatment guidelines (STG) and ICD codes for the insurance sector, and penetration of Ayush in the insurance sector are the other key issues of discussion. The programme will also discuss Ayush Hospital's achievements, and success stories of AIIA, the onboarding of Ayush hospitals on the ROHINI platform, and the empanelling of Ayush Hospitals for insurance coverage, the ministry said. "Empanelling of Ayush hospitals is the important aspect in ensuring Ayush insurance coverage. This will increase the visibility of Ayush hospitals in the health insurance sector," said a senior official from the Ministry. The IRDAI had asked general insurance companies to have board-approved policy guidelines for AYUSH coverage and give policyholders an option to choose a treatment of their choice. The guidelines were to be effective from

April 1, 2024. The guidelines must include quality standards and procedure for enrolling AYUSH hospitals or day care centres as network providers for cashless treatment. "In recent times, AYUSH treatments have garnered increased popularity and have become an established branch of medicine. Considering the growing demand for AYUSH treatments, there is a need to consider these treatments at par with other treatments," the IRDAI had said. Heads of general insurance companies and Ayush hospital owners, officials of IRDAI, General Insurance Council, Insurance Information Bureau of India, National Health Authority, national institutes of Ministry of Ayush, national commissions of Ministry of Ayush are expected to be part of this programme. In December, the Madras High Court asked the IRDAI to treat AYUSH treatments at par with allopathy in reimbursing medical expenses.

Researchers identify autoantibodies as biomarker in tracking kidney disease

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Using a hybrid technique, a team of researchers has identified anti-nephrin autoantibodies as a reliable biomarker for tracking kidney disease progression associated with nephrotic syndrome. Nephrotic syndrome, characterised by elevated protein levels in the urine, is linked to kidney diseases such as minimal change disease (MCD), primary focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), and membranous nephropathy (MN). The primary cause behind nephrotic syndrome is damage to podocytes, the cells responsible for filtering the kidneys, which allows protein to leak into the urine. Children diagnosed with MCD or FSGS often receive a diagnosis of idiopathic nephrotic syndrome (INS), where the cause of the nephrotic syndrome is unknown. This is frequently because children with high protein levels in their urine rarely undergo a kidney biopsy, which is how the cause is typically determined. Traditionally, diagnosing these conditions has posed challenges due to overlapping histological features and hesitancy to conduct invasive kidney biopsies, particularly in children. While anti-nephrin autoantibodies have been observed in certain patients with MCD and FSGS, their precise role in the advancement of these diseases is not fully understood. The study, conducted across Europe and the USA, introduced a novel approach combining immunoprecipitation with enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay

(ELISA) to reliably detect anti-nephrin autoantibodies. The study is being published in the New England Journal of Medicine. The findings revealed that anti-nephrin autoantibodies were prevalent in 69% of adults with MCD and 90% of children with INS who had not been treated with immunosuppressive drugs. Importantly, the levels of these autoantibodies correlated with disease activity, suggesting their potential as a biomarker for monitoring disease progression. The antibodies were also rarely seen in the other diseases under examination. To further investigate the impact of nephrin immunisation on kidney function and disease, researchers administered laboratory-made nephrin protein to mice, creating a condition akin to MCD in the mice. Immunisation led to the phosphorylation of nephrin and notable alterations in cell structure, indicating the involvement of antibodies targeting nephrin in podocyte malfunction and nephrotic syndrome. Remarkably, unlike other models necessitating multiple immunisations, this model induced swift disease manifestation with a single immunisation, even at low antibody concentrations. Dr. Nicola M. Tomas, co-lead author of the study, commented, "The identification of anti-nephrin autoantibodies as a reliable biomarker, coupled with our hybrid immunoprecipitation technique, enhances our diagnostic capabilities and opens new avenues for closely monitoring disease progression in kidney disorders with nephrotic syndrome."

Modi's mazboot Government replaced majboor UPA: Nadda

PTI ■ ARRAH/JEHANABAD

BJP president JP Nadda on Sunday credited his party with providing a "mazboot" (strong) government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which was capable of penetrating Pakistan's borders to destroy terrorist hideouts. In contrast, the former Union minister charged, the Congress-led UPA government that got voted out in 2014 was "majboor, kamzor aur apang" (helpless, weak and crippled). Addressing back-to-back election rallies in Bihar's Arrah and Jehanabad constituencies, Nadda mocked the UPA for having sent "dossiers to Pakistan when the nation was rattled by terrorist attacks sponsored from across the border."



"When Modi took over, and Uri and Pulwama happened, our troops penetrated Pakistan's borders to conduct surgical strikes and Balakot air strikes and beat the terrorists inside their homes," he said. Nadda also praised the government for scrapping Article 370, claiming it "liberated people of Jammu and Kashmir, who had been held hostage by a handful of political families for years." "In the ongoing elections, Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a record turnout. The enthusiasm of voters is a testimony to the liberating effect of abrogation of Article 370," he claimed.

handset owned by Indians used to be made in China, Taiwan, Japan or Korea. Today, most of your mobile phones are made in India. We are manufacturing 97 per cent of the mobile phones we use. This is an example of the positive changes," he said. Nadda said PM Modi has not simply ruled but has brought a fundamental change in the country's political culture. "The common people, who had become used to a state of indifference, are now resolutely with Modi to take forward the pledge of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India)," he said. Nadda claimed that in the six phases of general elections that have passed, the NDA was ahead in enough number of seats to be well past the majority mark and "we are on course to achieving the target of 400-plus".



Shah: It is Rahul who enjoys vacations abroad vs Modi who celebrates Diwali with jawans

PTI ■ SASARAM/KARAKAT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday asserted that the ongoing Lok Sabha polls were a choice between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who celebrates Diwali among Armymen, and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who "rushes abroad for vacations whenever the weather becomes uncomfortable". Addressing back-to-back election rallies in Karakat and Sasaram Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar, Shah dubbed the INDIA bloc as the one comprising "scammers guilty of financial wrongdoings worth Rs 12 lakh crore" which was taking on Modi, "with an unblemished record during the 23 years he was CM (of Gujarat) and the PM". He said that unlike Gandhi, who was "born with a silver spoon", Modi has worked hard to reach the top, coming from an "ati pichhda (extremely backward class) family" and selling tea at one point of time to make ends meet. The former BJP president claimed that the INDIA bloc lacked a cohesive leadership and "its prominent figures are looking at one year of prime ministership each. Such an arrangement can never provide a strong government capable of defeating Pakistan-sponsored terrorism". The home minister slammed the Congress for being "scared of Pakistan's atomic bombs" and asserted that his government, which has scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, was resolved to claim Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir "which was ours, is ours and shall remain ours". Shah lambasted parties opposed to the BJP for providing

reservations, in states ruled by them, "to Muslims, cutting into the share of SCs, STs and OBCs" and asserted that PM Modi has resolved to put an end to this. He charged the opposition parties with having been opposed to the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya which finally took place with Modi at the helm. In Sasaram, which is a reserved constituency, Shah spoke of budgetary allocation for Dalits' welfare rising to Rs 1.65 lakh crore under the Modi government, compared to Rs 41,000 crore during the previous UPA regime. He also underscored that the PM gave due respect to Babasaheb Ambedkar by organising celebrations in his memory and turning into "teerth sthal" (pilgrimage spots) all the places linked to him. He criticised the RJD, the BJP's principal opponent in Bihar, for "tying up with anti-OBC Congress, which sat on Kaka Kalelkar report and opposed implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations". In Karakat, where NDA partner Upendra Kushwaha has CPI(ML) Liberation as one of the main challengers, Shah reminded the people of the Naxal violence, which used to keep Bihar in the headlines a few decades back, and warned that a victory for the Left party could lead to a fresh spurt in similar incidents. Widely regarded as the BJP's principal strategist, he claimed that the NDA had "notched up 310 seats in the first five phases" of the elections, and in the last two legs, it was on course to achieve the target of 400-plus. "In the third term, we will make India the third largest economy of the world," he asserted.



PM Modi mujra remark insult to Bihar: Kharge

PTI ■ SASARAM

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his 'mujra' remark against opposition leaders and said that he "insulted Bihar" by making such a comment. Addressing an election rally in favour of Manoj Kumar, Congress leader and Mahagathbandhan nominee for Sasaram Lok Sabha seat, Kharge said, "Modi ji insulted Bihar by using this word... It means mujra happens here. This is an insult to Bihar and its people. This is not how a PM should talk. He should be talking in a statesman-like manner." The Congress president's attack came after Modi vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservation by INDIA bloc, which he accused of being "enslaved" and performing "mujra" for its Muslim vote bank. "Bihar is the land that has given a new direction to the fight for social justice. I wish to declare from this



soil that I will foil the plans of the INDIA bloc to rob the SCs, STs and OBC of their rights and divert those to Muslims. They may remain enslaved and perform 'mujra' to please their vote bank," the PM had said while addressing a poll rally in the state on Saturday. Kharge further said, "PM Modi considers himself as a 'Tees Maar Khan' (a person who glorifies himself). He is under the wrong

impression. It is the people who are real 'Tees Maar Khan'. He (Modi) is like a dictator. If he returns to power for a third term, people will not be allowed to speak freely." He alleged that the BJP was spreading communal hatred to divert the attention of the people from issues that matter. "Neither the PM nor other BJP leaders will talk about issues such as growing unemployment or price rise. They are spreading communal hatred. The forces that are attacking the Constitution and spreading the politics of hate... Must be defeated. They are dividing this country on the lines of religion and caste," he alleged. Kharge claimed that the PM was lying that the Congress would impose an inheritance tax if voted to power. "This election is very crucial... It's an election to save the democracy and the Constitution. We have to fight unitedly. This election is basically 'people vs Modi' and not 'Rahul vs Modi'," he claimed.

Record breaking voting reflective of new JK under Modi's leadership: Raina

PTI ■ JAMMU

The record-breaking turnout in the just concluded Lok Sabha elections in all five constituencies is reflective of the new Jammu and Kashmir under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, senior BJP leader Ravinder Raina said on Sunday. Referring to the separatist sponsored poll boycott campaigns, he said that it was heartening to see the parties and their leaders who used to call for boycott of the elections in the past were the ones who came forward and voted with fervour in this election. "In a democracy, vote is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the people to choose their representatives... The new picture of J&K will have a bearing on the overall politics in the coming years," he said. Raina said though the two seats of Jammu region have always recorded high voter turnout, the change in the polling pattern in Kashmir is highly appreciable. "We hope that the new trend of high voter turnout will continue during the upcoming assembly, District Development Council, Block Development Council, Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies elections," he added. Asserting that "BJP is fully prepared for the assembly elections", Raina said, "In April 19, recording 68 per cent turnout followed by Jammu which recorded 69.1 per cent on April 26. In Kashmir, Srinagar witnessed 38 per cent polling on May 13 which was the second highest in three decades, while the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency registered an all time high voter turnout of 58.17 per cent on May 20. Anantnag-Rajouri also recorded around 53 per cent polling. The bumper voting by enthusiastic people is the proof of new Jammu and Kashmir which is treading on the path of peace, prosperity, brotherhood and development under the leadership of Modi whose government was able to create a sense of security in the hearts and minds of the local population," Raina told reporters here.

In battle for Jadavpur LS seat, sore point Bhangore holds key

PTI ■ BARUIPUR (WB)

Finishing his lunch in a hurry at a roadside eatery in Bhangore's Kathalia, Moinuddin Mondal was about to rush with his 'magic-gari' to ferry school students when police stopped him for a security check. As the police rummaged through his micro-van, Mondal said, "This time, the security cover is more than in the previous elections. It is a good thing that they are trying to contain violence, considering what has been happening in this area over the last few years. Tucked away in the outskirts of Kolkata in the South 24 Parganas district, Bhangore has often grabbed media headlines for the frequent political skirmishes that have rocked the area. Notwithstanding the people's familiarity with violence here, the fresh bout coincided with the rise of a new political entity -- the Indian Secular Force (ISF) which, backed by the CPI(M), snatched the Muslim-majority Bhangore assembly seat from the TMC in 2021. As the TMC sought to reclaim its lost ground after the shock defeat and ISF fought for its territory, skirmishes became regular. At least three people were killed during last year's panchayat polls, and several others in the run-up to it and thereafter. The situation prompted Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to bring the area under Kolkata Police's

jurisdiction earlier this year from the state police for better management, and doubled the number of police stations, from two to four, with plans to add four more. With around 2.5 lakh votes in its kitty, Bhangore, seems to have emerged as the segment holding the key to the battle for Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency in the ensuing elections. The seat is headed for a four-cornered fight since ISF failed to stitch an alliance with the Left, with BJP and TMC forming the other two corners of the quadrant. The TMC has been winning Jadavpur since 2009, but it has not given any of its MPs a second term, fielding a new face every time. In 2019, its candidate Mimi Chakraborty bagged the seat by a margin of 2.95 lakh votes, around 48 per cent of the total votes polled, over a third of which came from Bhangore. Two years later, the TMC won six of the seven assembly segments under Jadavpur but lost Bhangore where it polled the most number of votes in 2019. It is also a prestige battle for the TMC since a young Mamata Banerjee stepped into public life as a giant killer from Jadavpur after defeating CPI(M) veteran Somnath Chatterjee in 1984. In 2019, the BJP secured 27 per cent vote share in Jadavpur, and the CPI(M) bagged 21 per cent. While BJP finished second in the mostly rural regions of Baruiপুর and Sonarpur, the CPI(M) was the runners-up

in Bhangore, and urban Jadavpur and Tollygunge assembly seats. "TMC has the strongest organisation in South 24 Parganas. So, there is no question about who will win. The election is about who will come second - the BJP or CPI(M). In Bhangore, we may benefit from the cross-voting there," TMC's Jadavpur-Diamond Harbour organisational district president Subhashish Chakraborty told PTI. "From singer Kabir Suman and historian Sugata Bose to actor Mimi Chakraborty, TMC has fielded apolitical candidates in the last three elections in Jadavpur. But our candidate this time, Saayoni Ghosh, is not new to politics, despite being an actor. She is the president of TMC's youth wing," he said. Among the main issues that the opposition candidates are raising are drinking water woes in the area, extension of metro tracks to Baruiপুর, lack of a state-run multi-specialty hospital and low frequency of trains on the Sealdah-Lakshmikantapur suburban route. CPI(M) candidate Srijan Bhattacharyya said, "My campaign's top focus is on livelihood issues like price rise and unemployment. For Jadavpur, I have an 18-point programme, which includes setting up the Sonarpur IT Park, the foundation stone of which was laid by former CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee but has remained a non-starter for over a decade.

Abhishek faces crucial test in Diamond Harbour LS seat



PTI ■ DIAMOND HARBOUR (WB)

The Diamond Harbour poll battleground encapsulates an intense dynamic in West Bengal's political landscape where the TMC, led by its de facto number two Abhishek Banerjee, touts the seat as a "model constituency" while the opposition paints it as a "laboratory of violence". A victory with an enhanced margin compared to 2019 will surely bolster Banerjee's leadership credentials and consolidate his influence in the party at a time when sharp intra-party fractures have cost the TMC influential leaders like Tapas Roy and Arjun Singh ahead of the ensuing polls and ace organisers like Suwendu Adhikari three years ago, all to the BJP. Nestled between Kolkata and the South 24 Parganas district, Diamond Harbour stands as a strategic stronghold for the Trinamool Congress. The stakes are high, with outcomes poised to influence both TMC's

Diamond Harbour this time is underscored by competing narratives. The TMC, under Banerjee's leadership, is trying to promote Diamond Harbour as a "model constituency", a parliamentary segment that mirrors development and has made significant strides in infrastructure, healthcare, and education.

LOST & FOUND
Mrs. Kirti Kapila Srivastava W/o Mr. Vivek Srivastava R/o J-5061, Devinder Vihar, Near Kendriya Vihar, Sector-56, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001 have lost property payment receipts of my Flat NO. 042, Tower-H, 4th Floor, Privvy The Address, Sec-93, Gurgaon, Haryana Date of Loss: 25.04.2024 from Sadar Bahar. Finder may contact: +919667955148

PUBLIC NOTICE
Known to all that my client known to all that my client BEENA DEVI owner of the PLOT NO-143-A AREA 75 SQ YARDS KHASRA NO-169, VILLAGE BINDAPUR NAND RAM PARK IN BLOCK-A, UTTAM NAGAR NEW DELHI-110055 and BEENA DEVI purchased same property area jointly with her Mother-in-law Bilasa Devi, thereafter Bilasa Devi expired and now only BEENA DEVI Selling Property. Beena Devi and Veena Jain Both are same person. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is informed and/or may know that I, Mohammad Jahangir S/o Noor Mahamad (as recorded on my Passport) R/O A-814, Prem Nagar, Nabi Karim, Pahar Ganj, Central Delhi, Delhi 110055 have changed my name as Mohd Jahangir (as recorded on my Adhaar and PAN) and shall hereafter be known as Mohd Jahangir. I have also changed the name of my father Noor Mahamad and he shall hereafter be known as Noor Mohammad in my record. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection. Vide Affidavit # IN-DL-89518825746093W



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A sorry state

Poor voter turnout in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections continued in Phase 6

It may be due to the heat, perhaps their frustration with politicians, or even a sense of resignation as voters perceive the mess political parties have made of our nation's democratic system — they simply aren't turning out. Barring a few exceptions such as West Bengal, where the voters put up a decent show, most others have stayed away from polling booths. The story in Phase 6 of voting was no different; the recent trends in voter participation across India reveal a concerning decline. This pattern, however, does not hold for all regions; Bengal and J&K stand as notable exceptions with relatively stable or even increased voter turnouts. Understanding the reasons behind this declining voter engagement is crucial to address the challenges facing India's democratic process. Several factors could be contributing to this trend: Adverse weather conditions, pre-decided loyalties or a growing sense of disillusionment with the democratic exercise itself. One of the most likely explanations for the poor turnout



is weather. Phase 6 coincides with the onset of extreme weather conditions, including an intense heatwave. It can discourage voters, particularly the elderly and those with health issues, from making the trip to polling stations. Another plausible reason is the phenomenon of voters already committed to a particular side; sensing that their candidate is losing, they abstain from voting. Indeed, supporters of candidates trailing may feel disheartened, believing their vote will not alter the outcome and thus choosing not to participate. On the other hand, the winning party's supporters could get complacent. The most troubling reason behind

the low turnout, perhaps, is a growing sense of disillusionment with the democratic process itself. If one were to scan social media and heed vox populi, one would get this sense loud and clear. Most people can typically fit into two categories: Those who are committed and overzealous and the disillusioned ones who see no point in the whole exercise. They feel the Government they choose works only for itself. This no-trust vote against the democratic exercise can stem from various factors. Many voters feel that their participation does not lead to tangible changes or improvements in governance. This perception of inefficacy can dissuade individuals from voting as they see little benefit in engaging with a system they believe to be fundamentally unresponsive. Additionally, in regions with frequent elections, voters can experience electoral fatigue. The constant cycle of voting wears off the novelty and sense of civic duty. The lack of appealing candidates can also contribute to a lower turnout. When voters perceive all options as equally unqualified or corrupt, they may choose to abstain from voting altogether. In areas with political violence, safety concerns can deter voters. However, the resilient turnout in J&K suggests a complex interplay of factors, including a strong desire for political change despite the risks.

PICTALK



A myna feeds its chicks, in Moradabad district

PTI

Embracing silence in the age of social media

As we reminisce about a time when joy was safeguarded within the confines of our homes, we ponder the evolution of modern communication

I recently came across this famous quote by Khalil Gibran, "Travel and tell no one, Live a true love story and tell no one, Live happily and tell no one, People ruin beautiful things." In older times when we were children, we were told by our elders not to display our good fortune, lest we catch the evil eye. That meant we had to keep the happiness, the good fortune, or anything good in our life, within the four walls of our house. It was not a successful pearl passed on to us by our forefathers. There were avenues where we could still boast, like in school or during the mandatory evenings out to play with other children in the locality. Those were different times. A visit to our grandparents' during the holidays, or the new toy that we had received from our parents for our birthday, or any other such possession, was valuable - to be cherished and talked about. Even laughter and happiness were something to value and to pass on to our near



and dear ones. Things started changing. My letter-writing stopped. Emails were the new order. However, Government departments and corporations have yet to discover the paperless office. A hard copy of the communication, with a physical signature, was still required to be sent through post for it to be accepted. People said that any document without a physical signature was not legally enforceable; however, I believed that the reason was far simpler — the postal mindset doubted the receipt of email communication by the recipient. This was not baseless — the

mail still finds ways to reach the spam box. But more likely, it had more to do with the sender's capability, or lack of it, in operating the computer. I started writing after my relative withdrawal a few years back from professional life. In the olden days, the only recourse that I had for an outreach, was to send my manuscript with a self-addressed stamped envelope to the limited number of magazines and journals available at the time — to eventually receive a rejection. But I had the satisfaction of waiting in anticipation for a few weeks if not months. Now times have changed. I



SANJAY CHANDRA

recently sent my article to the editor of a reputed daily by email and within hours I received a cryptic reply, "Regret." There is a popular serial currently airing on the TV. Two celebrities have a conversation over coffee - with a k, with another celebrity and talk about mundane subjects. A recent episode captured the changing times perfectly. A star from the 90s was asked about the one thing that she missed not having during her heydays. Her reply was spontaneous, without missing a beat, emphatic and crisp - "Social Media." I cannot even imagine the plight of the corporates who continue to prosper because we are obsessed with social media if people start following Mr Gibran's advice! Not to talk of the withdrawal symptoms for a generation brought up posting all their happiness and even sorrow, on social media!

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

India-Iran revitalise Chabahar Port

Despite the US pressure, India and Iran sign \$370 million deal, reviving Chabahar Port's strategic importance, which would be beneficial for both countries



SANTOSH MATHEW

The Indian Ocean-facing Iranian port of Chabahar is back in the spotlight thanks to a new 10-year, \$370 million agreement between India and Iran, signed on May 13. This deal marks an important step in the long-standing partnership between the two countries, aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and economic growth. India's Chabahar Port project in Iran is more than just a commercial endeavour-it's a strategic masterstroke aimed at reshaping regional trade dynamics and strengthening geopolitical ties. Located on Iran's southeastern coast in the Sistan-Baluchestan province, Chabahar Port offers India a golden gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, circumventing Pakistan and providing a counter-balance to China's influence in the region. Chabahar is the only Iranian port outside the Straits of Hormuz.

The Chabahar Port stands out for several reasons. Firstly, it is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean, providing a critical transit hub for goods travelling between India, Iran and beyond. The project includes the development of port infrastructure and the construction of a railway linking Chabahar to the Iranian city of Zahedan, close to the Afghan border, effectively creating a new trade corridor. This port is pivotal for India as it seeks to bolster its economic and strategic presence in Central Asia. Traditionally, India's trade routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia have been blocked by Pakistan, which does not allow Indian goods to pass through its territory. Chabahar provides a much-needed alternative route, facilitating access to these markets without relying on Pakistani cooperation. The idea for jointly developing Chabahar began during the 2003 State visit to India by Iranian President Muhammad Khatami. At that time, India and Iran shared strategic interests, viewing Pakistan's political interference in Afghanistan as harmful. Both supported the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, against Pakistan-backed Pashtun groups. Developing Chabahar



on Iran's Indian Ocean coast naturally extended this Indo-Iranian partnership. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has seen substantial investments in ports and infrastructure across Asia, often referred to as the "String of Pearls." Gwadar Port in Pakistan, just 72 kilometres east of Chabahar, is a cornerstone of this strategy. By developing Chabahar, India not only counters China's influence but also positions itself as a key player in the regional logistics network.

Chabahar is also vital for Afghanistan. The landlocked nation has been heavily reliant on Pakistan's Karachi Port for its imports and exports. Chabahar provides a viable alternative, potentially reducing Afghanistan's economic dependence on Pakistan. In 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement to develop Chabahar, demonstrating a shared commitment to regional stability and economic cooperation. The port is expected to significantly increase trade volumes and create jobs in Afghanistan, fostering economic resilience.

For India, the Chabahar Port project is a testament to its ability to manoeuvre through complex diplomatic landscapes. Iran, often isolated due to international sanctions,



CHABAHAR IS MUCH MORE THAN A PORT; IT'S A PIVOTAL PIECE IN INDIA'S GEOPOLITICAL CHESSBOARD. WHILE CHALLENGES PERSIST, THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF CHABAHAR COULD REDEFINE TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE REGION

sees India as a crucial partner in its economic development. India's investment in Chabahar signals its intent to strengthen bilateral ties with Iran, enhancing energy security by facilitating greater access to Iranian oil and gas. The port also serves as a symbol of India's growing assertiveness on the global stage. By investing in Chabahar, India underscores its readiness to take on infrastructure projects that have far-reaching geopolitical implications. This move aligns with India's broader "Act East" and "Connect Central Asia" policies, aimed at deepening trade and cultural linkages with East and Central Asian countries. Despite its potential, the Chabahar project faces significant challenges. The re-imposition of US sanctions on Iran has cast a shadow over the port's future, creating uncertainty for investors and complicating financial transactions. However, India has received some exemptions from these sanctions, allowing the project to progress, albeit cautiously. Moreover, regional instability poses risks. Iran's internal political dynamics and its relations with global powers add layers of complexity to the project's execution. Chabahar, the only Iranian port outside the Straits of Hormuz, is back in the news.

The US-envisioned India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is now stalled due to Gaza hostilities. The Suez Canal is also risky due to the Houthis threat. Thus, an alternative route through the Caspian Sea and Russia seems likely. The Chabahar Port project is a cornerstone of India's strategy to enhance its regional influence and economic reach. By providing an alternative trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, countering Chinese influence and strengthening ties with Iran, Chabahar is much more than a port-it's a pivotal piece in India's geopolitical chessboard. While challenges persist, the successful development of Chabahar could redefine trade and economic partnerships in the region, heralding a new era of connectivity and cooperation. This situation presents a win-win for both India and Iran. For India, Chabahar offers a strategic alternative to bypass regional instability, ensuring uninterrupted trade routes to Europe and Central Asia. For Iran, the development of Chabahar boosts its economy and strengthens its regional influence by providing a vital link in global trade networks.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RBI DIVIDEND TRANSFER

Madam — Apropos the news story "India to get rating support if it uses RBI dividend to reduce fiscal deficit: S&P analyst," published on May 24, this is my response. The windfall gain for the Government through the RBI's Rs 2.1 lakh crore unexpected dividend is big positive news. It is a consequence of an increase in interest income from RBI's foreign assets and forex transactions. This has created a considerable fiscal space for the next Government.

Next Government can use it in two ways. First, if the Government uses this money to reduce borrowing, then it is going to positively impact our credit rating, which in turn will attract foreign investors to India. This would be a positive sign for the capital market as well. And if GoI uses this money to stimulate the economy then it will lead to a boost in consumption. So either way it is going to be a win-win situation for our country's economy. The next Government should continue what the last Government has been doing in terms of quality of spending.

Bal Govind | Noida

SUNAK FACES THE HEAT

Madam — Apropos, "UK PM Sunak, opposition labour hit the campaign trail for July 4 polls," The Pioneer, May 24. The UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the national polls to be held on July 4, six months ahead of the due time in January 2025. Many observers wondered: why now? More specifically, why has the PM called an election that is almost certain to lose? For months, polls have placed Sunak's Conservative Party behind the opposition Labour Party. Sunak's decision has been driven by the possibility that it's very unlikely there will be a better time for him and his Conservative party. Almost everything Sunak tries seems to backfire and it's not implausible that his favorability with the public will get even worse before the end of the year.

NTC brings financial inclusion



Apropos the news story "New-to-credit users drive financial inclusion," published on May 25, this is my response. New-to-credit (NTC) users have been driving significant growth in India's lending sector, contributing to financial inclusion and economic progress. With approximately 200 million active credit users and 800,000 new NTC consumers annually, the retail

credit category has expanded rapidly, fueled by easy access to credit cards and short-term personal loans.

While digitisation has facilitated this growth, it has also brought challenges in assessing borrowers' repayment capacities. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has intervened to mitigate risks by tightening credit controls, making it harder for first-time users to access credit. However, specially designed credit products for NTC users help build credit histories. For these new consumers, smart debt management is crucial. Understanding credit card terms, starting with a low credit limit, timely payments and monitoring spending are key practices. Keeping credit utilisation low, avoiding cash advances and regularly checking credit reports are essential steps. Building an emergency fund adds a safety net, promoting financial stability for a healthy financial future.

Neha Gupta | Delhi

The past couple of days have been relatively good for Sunak. The economy does seem to be recovering, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updating the UK's growth forecast and inflation finally returning to something resembling a normal level. Nothing went catastrophically wrong in the last week or so ahead of calling the election. Sunak inherited a mess, no one can deny that. It currently seems unlikely that he has cleaned up that mess enough to earn the Conservatives another term in office. But given the size of the task ahead of him, it makes sense that he seize on this rare period of good news and hope for the best.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

PLASTIC USE MUST BE CONTROLLED

Madam — Although the central and State Governments have imposed a complete ban on polythene covers of thickness less than 125 microns in the State, it is not seen in practice. The viscosity of polythene bags is too high. 75-micron-thick bags, which were once

banned are still being used today. A large number of polythene covers are used in vegetable, tiffin, grocery, big shops and wholesale shops. As authorities have failed to ban polythene covers, they are seen everywhere on roads and canals.

Cattle are falling sick by eating the wastes dumped in these covers in front of the houses and on the road. Criticisms are being heard that even though so many mishaps are happening, the concerned authorities are not paying attention. The authorities should clamp down on the sale of banned polythene bags which harm the environment and take strict action against those selling them. The authorities should make an effort to inform the people about the disadvantages caused by the use of banned polythene bags and to organise awareness programmes to encourage people to use eco-friendly clothing as an alternative..

Appanna Gonapa | Visakhapatnam

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

STRATEGIES FOR INNER PEACE AND EMPOWERMENT

We seek solace and direction, grappling with negative influences and internal strife



RAVI VALLURI

Are we running after a chimaera? Or like Rama and Lakshman are we running after a non-existent golden deer? Or like the Pandavas, (barring the righteous Yudhisthira) do we partake in water from a poisonous lake? In all such situations, our mind is fully aware that what we are attempting is incorrect and inchoate, yet we undertake that activity like a Kamikaze pilot. There are a couple of reasons for this hara-kiri or running after the hubris.

A) We are not wakeful (not sleepy in a literal sense) as we are not focused or centred. We cannot differentiate and distinguish between choices. B) Our mind and thoughts (a human mind on average receives 70k thoughts a day) cannonade us endlessly. Now the company we keep and the food we partake in has a significant impact on the human mind and body.

Negative company drains a person and toxic food and drink enervates and debilitates our system. I was a victim of alcoholism and realised the suffering one goes through. By adopting the techniques of Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama, overcame the disease. It was a weak mind which fell prey to Bacchus.

C) Tools for Effective Time Management- Try the POSEC METHOD - That is to prioritise by organising, streamlining and economising time to be effective. "Undertake a SWOT analysis to emerge triumphant. "We should learn to work in teams and practice the art of delegation. "As a routine, attempt all arduous tasks first. "Build flexibility in one's schedule or else one would suffer from psychosomatic disorders.



"Develop hobbies and read inspirational and self-help books. "Every morning and night while being grateful make an inventory of dos and don'ts and must-do lists. Let us learn to say 'NO' and to utter 'YES' when an oxymoron kind of situation arises. A 'Yes mind' makes an individual take up responsibility. And taking up responsibility can only empower a person.

Live life king-size and learn to celebrate. We can celebrate only if we can quieten our minds. These are some ways to quieten our mind and develop a relaxation room or space in our mind. For that we can do the following:

Go for long walks, talk out our problems, hug a person (perhaps someone whom we do not like), write down all our botherations, be in sync with our breath and movement, pursue a passion, be a daredevil, get out of our comfort zone, exercise vigorously (positive endorphins get released which have a soothing effect on the mind and body), have cold water baths to conquer passion and carnal instincts.

Despite practising all techniques, we may not be able to find our place in the Sun.

So, what does one do?

Just surrender to the immense power within ourselves and learn to accept. Realise that "ham Brahmasmi" - "I am the infinite reality", as written in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Our mind has that immense power. It needs to be harnessed and realised. We just need to declutter our minds.

There are several ways to channel this energy. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques and observing silence to quieten and silence the mind. There may be others who remain focused by playing a game of tennis and sweating it out.

We should feel blessed and feel abundance. Let your mind not be judgemental and complain and cling to negativities. Willy-nilly we provide the hook to hang the coat of negativity.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Punjab voters' dilemma: Choosing the lesser evil



SUKHDEV SINGH

As Punjab gears up to vote in the last phase of the Lok Sabha elections, the State's electorate faces a plethora of options but finds few truly meritorious candidates



In the Lok Sabha election 2024, over twenty million voters in the State of Punjab have plenty more options than ever before for choosing their representatives from among Indian National Congress (INC), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India- Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI-CPIM) and others, yet they are faced with a lack of enthusiasm and disinterest more than ever before in 'who to vote and who not to vote'. On the other hand, every political party is grandstanding to be the best candidate for the voters' choice, yet very unsure, fearful and worried about the voters' response. Among the voters, there is a 'stony silence' while the candidates and political parties are clamouring for their candidature and claim on all the thirteen Lok Sabha constituencies. During the last couple of months, the leaders and the parties have been trying their fresh 'makeover' by switching positions: the individuals by hopping parties as the perceptibly stronger boats for them to sail through the election and the political parties by adopting the leaders of their opponents as perceptibly stronger 'horses' to pull their horse carts. The situation is caused by the politicians' 'faulty' understanding of democracy as a game of 'taking turns' to enjoy as 'rulers' and render the 'citizens' as 'subjects' while following the policies 'not so pro-people' that redefine democracy as



NO POLITICAL PARTY HAS INCLUDED CONVENTIONAL ISSUES LIKE THE TRANSFER OF CHANDIGARH AND PUNJABI-SPEAKING AREAS, WATER DISTRIBUTION AND MORE RIGHTS TO THE STATES ETC IN THEIR MANIFESTOS, SPEECHES AND SLOGANS

a Government of the people, by the people but not 'for the people'. The political parties have been promising at the time of elections but not performing to fulfil the promises after their victory. After the elections, pursuing policies that help the political class, corporations and their associates, the political parties and individuals in power have been dodging the real issues by projecting the emotive but peripheral issues, leaving the people begin with nothing in essence and end with nothing in essence; the politics of 'nothingness' has been going on leading the voters to the current situation of 'the agony of choice' caught in an existential crisis of deciding 'to vote or not to vote' / 'who to vote or who not to vote'. The available choices of candidates and political parties in 'matter' are plenty but all alike in 'essence': distinguishable in appearance but indistinguishable in actions, leaving the voters confused but 'condemned to choose'. Significantly, no political party has included conventional issues like the transfer of Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas, water distribution and more rights to the States etc. in their manifestos, speeches and slogans. Furthermore, no major

political party is firmly raising issues that glare in the face of the people as well as the State: unemployment, poor education, health and civic amenities, migration abroad, drugs, mining, corruption, law & order and urban development. Instead, the game of party switch or candidate hunting, as a 'war' before the election 'war' has been in practice as a principle rather than an exception in this election in Punjab. Facing the 'trust-deficit' of the people and 'self-confidence-deficit', the political class has remained engaged in a dance of party-switch and candidate-hunting. Analysing their profiles can help to see the political parties' faces more clearly. For example, the BJP may be credited with governance and a brisk economy, but it is discredited for pro-rich and anti-small businesses, farmers, shopkeepers, urban and rural poor and religious polarisation. It is a 'crisis of plenty' where the economy of the country is being touted as the 'fifth largest in the world' yet its people have become poorer and the unemployment and prices are on the rise. The Congress may be credited for the all-inclusive politics and the pro-farmer promise of MSP but discredited for a divided house

and ambiguous performance in the past. The AAP is credited for some concessions like free power and free bus travel for women in the State but discredited for non-performance, inexperience and overdependence on Delhi. The SAD is credited for its historical pro-State positions and fights but discredited for family control of the party and a pro-corporate tilt in its position. The communists are credited for honesty, commitment, secularism and pro-poor ideology but discredited for resource crunch to contest elections, inability to win and have much role in the Government. The voters are confused because they are not sure whether their vote shall be for Congress, BJP, SAD or AAP after the candidate wins; they are not sure if the candidate they vote for will remain in the same party or switch to the party more beneficial to him; they are confused because they are not sure if the parties and leaders will do what are saying. Yet they will have to choose someone. But that will happen on the day of voting. The situation is as hazy and ambiguous as the manifestos of the political parties. (The writer is a retired professor from Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar; views are personal)

Key takeaways from ICMR's new dietary guidelines

It emphasises prioritising whole grains, adequate protein intake, limited fat consumption and daily physical activity

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) jointly released a New Dietary Guideline for Indians on 7 May 2024. The comprehensive set of 17 dietary guidelines is aimed at reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease (CHD) in the Indian population. According to NIN, under the apex health research body, about 56.4% of the total diseases in India are due to unhealthy dietary habits. They also stated that having a healthy diet and physical activity can lower the risk of CHD, hypertension (high blood pressure) and type 2 diabetes mellitus



WAJIHA MEHTAB

by up to 80%. The burden of NCDs and resultant mortality is expected to increase unless massive efforts are made to prevent and control NCDs and their risk factors. The dietary guidelines for Indians (DGIs), developed by a team led by the director of NIN, Dr. Hemlata R, are evidence-based food and lifestyle-related recommendations. They are logical, sustainable, easy to follow by

Indians and provide long-term solutions for fighting against malnutrition and having a healthy life. These guidelines are practical approaches for ensuring diet diversity to meet the requirements of essential nutrients among people of all age groups across the country. Following are some of the important and key takeaways from the DGIs: General lifestyle To ensure a balanced diet, it is crucial to include foods from all food groups, selecting a variety that is appropriate for age, gender, physiological status and physical activity level. At least 50% of cereals consumed should be whole grains and millets, which are minimally polished to provide adequate

nutrients. However, cereals should account for no more than 45% of the total caloric intake. Pulses, eggs and meat should contribute 14-15% of the calories, supplying good quality proteins and essential amino acids through natural food combinations. Avoid protein supplements for muscle mass building, as they are unnecessary if a balanced diet is maintained. Fat intake should be limited to 30% of total calories, with essential fatty acids obtained from nuts, oilseeds, milk products and seafood, which should collectively provide 10% of daily caloric intake. Include non-starchy fresh vegetables, green leafy vegetables and at least 30 grams of fruits in every meal. Vegetarians should consume

n-3 PUFA-rich foods like flax and chia seeds to meet their B12 and n-3 PUFA needs. High-fat, high-sugar and high-salt (HFSS) foods should be avoided. Adults should engage in a minimum of 30-45 minutes of physical activity daily, while children should aim for 60 minutes. During pregnancy and lactation, maintaining healthy dietary habits and an active lifestyle is essential. Infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months, with no additional feeds, not even water. Lactating mothers should continue breastfeeding even if they have any disease unless advised otherwise by a medical professional. For cooking and food storage, air-fryers and granite-

coated utensils (without Teflon) are preferable. Earthen pots are the safest cookware as they are eco-friendly, require less oil and preserve nutrition. Avoid using non-stick pans at temperatures above 170 degrees and discard any damaged or broken non-stick cookware. Acidic foods should not be stored in aluminium, iron, or unlined brass/copper containers to avoid chemical reactions that could contaminate the food. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) unveiled new dietary guidelines on May 7, 2024, to combat the rising tide of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India. These guidelines aim

to address the unhealthy dietary habits contributing to 56.4% of the country's disease burden. Evidence suggests that a healthy diet and regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of conditions like coronary heart disease, hypertension and type 2 diabetes by up to 80%. The guidelines, crafted under the leadership of Dr Hemlata R, provide practical, sustainable and culturally appropriate recommendations to ensure a diverse diet that meets the nutritional needs of Indians of all ages. Key recommendations include balancing food groups, prioritising whole grains and millets, ensuring adequate protein intake through natural foods, limiting fats to 30% of daily

calories and including a variety of vegetables and fruits in each meal. The guidelines also emphasise avoiding high-fat, high-sugar and high-salt foods and promoting daily physical activity-30-45 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children. Special considerations are given to pregnant and lactating women, advocating for exclusive breastfeeding for infants during the first six months. Additionally, safe cooking and food storage practices are recommended, such as using air-fryers, granite-coated utensils and earthen pots to preserve nutrition and avoid chemical contamination. (The writer is a Consultant Celiac Dietician at AIIMS Delhi; views are personal)

Hamas rocket attack triggers air raid sirens in Tel Aviv

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH
Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from Gaza that set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months on Sunday in a show of resilience more than seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in what appeared to be the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January. Palestinian militants have continued to sporadically fire rockets and mortar rounds at communities along the Gaza border since then. Hamas' military wing claimed the attack, and rocket launches could be heard in central Gaza. The Israeli military said eight projectiles crossed into Israel after being launched from the area of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where Israeli forces

recently launched an incursion. It said "a number" of the projectiles were intercepted. Earlier, aid trucks had entered Gaza through a new agreement to bypass the Rafah crossing with Egypt after Israeli forces seized the Palestinian side of it earlier this month. But it was unclear if humanitarian groups would be able to access the aid because of ongoing fighting in the area. Egypt refuses to reopen its side of the Rafah crossing until control of the Gaza side is handed back to Palestinians. It agreed to temporarily divert traffic through Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing, Gaza's main cargo terminal, after a call between US President Joe Biden and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi. But that crossing has been largely inaccessible because of fighting linked to Israel's offensive in the nearby city of Rafah. Israel says it has

allowed hundreds of trucks to enter, but United Nations agencies say it is usually too dangerous to retrieve the aid on the other side. The war between Israel and Hamas, now in its eighth month, has killed nearly 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and fighters in its count. Around 80% of the population's 2.3 million people have fled their homes, severe hunger is widespread and UN officials say parts of the territory are experiencing famine. Hamas triggered the war with its Oct 7 attack into Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seized some 250 hostages. Hamas is still holding some 100 hostages and the remains of around 30 others after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last

year. **SOUTHERN GAZA LARGELY CUT OFF FROM AID**
Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera TV aired footage of what it said were trucks entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom. Khaled Zayed, head of the Egyptian Red Crescent in the Sinai Peninsula, which handles the delivery of aid from the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing, said 200 aid trucks and four fuel trucks are scheduled to be sent to Kerem Shalom on Sunday. It was not immediately clear if the UN was able to retrieve the aid from the Gaza side. Southern Gaza has been largely cut off from aid since Israel launched what it says is a limited incursion into Rafah on May 6. Since then, over 1 million Palestinians have fled the city, with most having already been displaced from other parts of the besieged territory.

Sunak plans mandatory National Service for youth in poll pledge

PTI ■ LONDON

In one of his first major election pledge announcements on Sunday, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he will introduce a "bold new" form of mandatory National Service for young people if the Conservatives win another five-year term in the July 4 polls. The British Indian leader said his plan would see 18-year-olds given the choice of a full-time military placement for 12 months or a scheme to volunteer for one weekend a month for a year. The military placement would be selective, with tests used to decide eligibility, and involve working with the armed forces or in cyber defence. "We have so much to be proud of in Britain but one of the problems in our society is that we have generations of young people who don't have the opportunities they deserve,"



said Sunak in a campaign video to announce this new Tory proposal. "Britain today faces a future that is more dangerous and more divided. There's no doubt how democratic values are under threat; that is why we will introduce a bold new model of National Service for 18 year olds to be spent either in a competitive full-time military commission over 12

months or with one weekend per month volunteering in roles within the community, like delivering prescriptions and food to infirm people or in search and rescue," he said. The Tory leader said this would enable young people to gain valuable skills, make the UK more secure and build a stronger national culture. "This ambition benefits our country and our young people alike," he said, pointing to Sweden where 80 per cent of young people completing National Service say they recommend it to their friends. "Uncertain times call for a clear plan and bold action to charter course to a better future. Our plan will ensure new generations and our country meet the challenges of an uncertain world," he added. While he took aim at the Opposition to say they lack such a "clear plan", the Keir

Starmmer led Labour Party hit back against the proposal. "This is another desperate GBP 2.5 billion unfunded commitment from a Tory party which already crashed the economy, sending mortgages rocketing, and now they're spoiling for more. This is not a plan - it's a review which could cost billions and is only needed because the Tories hollowed out the Armed Forces to their smallest size since Napoleon," the Labour Party said in a statement. Questioned on how the Tory plan would be enforced, UK Home Secretary James Cleverly told 'Sky News' that the military option would be selective. "There's going to be no criminal sanctions, nobody's going to jail over this," he clarified, adding that nobody will be compelled to do the military element but those who do will be paid and those who choose to volunteer will not be paid.

Norway grants diplomatic recognition to Palestinian prime minister

Brussels (AP): Norway on Sunday handed over diplomatic papers to the Palestinian prime minister in the latest step toward recognising a Palestinian state, a largely symbolic move that has infuriated Israel. Ireland and Spain made a concerted pledge with Norway to recognise a Palestinian state, a historic move that increases Israel's isolation more than seven months into its grinding war against Hamas in Gaza. The handover of papers by Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide to the prime minister was made in Brussels, where Mohammad Mustafa is also meeting with foreign ministers of European Union nations and high-level EU officials on Monday to drum up support for the Palestinians. Norway itself is not part of the EU.

Over 670 dead in PNG landslide: Reports

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The International Organisation for Migration on Sunday increased its estimate of the death toll from a massive landslide in Papua New Guinea to more than 670 as emergency responders and traumatized relatives gave up hope that any survivors will now be found. Serhan Aktoprak, the chief of the UN migration agency's mission in the South Pacific island nation, said the revised death toll was based on calculations by Yambali village and Enga provincial officials that more than 150 homes had been buried by Friday's landslide. The previous estimate had been 60 homes. "They are estimating that more than 670 people (are) under the soil at the moment," Aktoprak told The Associated Press. Local officials had initially put the death toll on Friday at 100 or more. Only five bodies and a leg of a sixth victim had been



recovered by Sunday, when an excavator donated by a local builder became the first piece of mechanical earth-moving equipment to join the recovery effort. Relief crews were moving survivors to safer ground on Sunday as tons of unstable

earth and tribal warfare, which is rife in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, threatened the rescue effort. Around 250 additional houses have been condemned since the landslide because of still-shifting ground, leaving an estimated 1,250 people homeless, officials said. The national government meanwhile is considering whether it needs to officially request more international support. Crews have given up hope of finding survivors under earth and rubble 6 to 8 meters (20 to 26 feet) deep. People are coming to terms with this so there is a serious level of grieving and mourning," Aktoprak said. He said the new estimated death toll was "not solid" because it was based on the average size of the region's families per household. He would not speculate on the possibility that the actual toll could be higher. "It is difficult to say. We want to be quite realistic," Aktoprak said. "We do not want to come up with any figures that would inflate the reality." Government authorities were establishing evacuation centers on safer ground on either side of the massive swath of debris that covers an area the size of three to four football

fields and has cut the main highway through the province. Beside the blocked highway, convoys that have transported food, water and other essential supplies since Saturday to the devastated village 60 kilometers (35 miles) from the provincial capital, Wabag, have faced risks related to tribal fighting in Tambitanis village, about halfway along the route. Papua New Guinea soldiers were providing security for the convoys. Eight locals were killed in a clash between two rival clans on Saturday in a longstanding dispute unrelated to the landslide. Around 30 homes and five retail businesses were burned down in the fighting, local officials said. Aktoprak said he did not expect tribal combatants would target the convoys but noted that opportunistic criminals might take advantage of the mayhem to do so. "This could basically end up in carjacking or robbery," Aktoprak said.

Macron begins first state visit to Germany

Berlin (AP): President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Germany on Sunday for the first state visit by a French head of state in 24 years, a three-day trip meant to underline the strong ties between the European Union's traditional leading powers.



The visit was originally meant to take place last July but was postponed at the last minute due to rioting in France following the killing of a 17-year-old by police. While Macron is a frequent visitor to Germany as Paris and Berlin try to coordinate their positions on EU and foreign policy, this is the first state visit with full pomp since Jacques Chirac came in 2000. Macron and his wife, Brigitte, are being hosted by Germany's largely ceremonial president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The visit comes as Germany celebrates the 75th anniversary of its post-World War II constitution.

Steinmeier is holding a state banquet for Macron at his Bellevue palace in Berlin on Sunday evening before the two presidents travel on Monday to the eastern city of Dresden, where Macron will make a speech, and on Tuesday to Muenster in western Germany. The state visit will be followed later Tuesday by a meeting between Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and ministers from both countries at a government guest house outside Berlin.

'Yemen's Houthis freed over 100 war prisoners'

Cairo (AP): The Iranian-backed Houthis rebels in Yemen on Sunday released more than 100 war prisoners linked to the country's long-running conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross said. The unilateral release came more than a year after Yemen's warring sides freed more than 800 prisoners in a major exchange in the country in April last year. The release of 113 prisoners took place Sunday morning in the Houthi-held capital of Sanaa, the Red Cross said in a statement, adding that the released detainees were among those the ICRC visited and assisted regularly in their detention in the Yemeni capital. "We hope this paves the way for further releases, bringing comfort to families eagerly anticipating reunification with their loved ones," said Daphnee Maret, the ICRC's head of delegation in Yemen.

One of the released detainees with health issues was transferred in an ambulance to his hometown inside Yemen, the ICRC said without elaborating. The release was delayed by a day because of apparent logistical reasons, said Abdul-Qader al-Murtaza, a Houthi official in charge of prisoner exchange talks. Thousands of people are still believed to be held as prisoners of war since the conflict erupted in 2014, with others missing. The Red Cross viewed Sunday's releases as a "positive step" to revive prisoner exchange negotiations. "We are ready to play our role as a neutral intermediary in facilitating the release, transfer, and repatriation of detainees," it said. Yemen was plunged into a devastating conflict when the Houthis descended from their northern stronghold and seized Sanaa and much of northern Yemen, forcing the government into exile.

AP ■ OKALHAMA CITY
A Texas sheriff says at least five people are dead after powerful storms tore through a rural community, obliterating homes and leaving thousands of people without power on Sunday. Cooke County Sheriff Ray Sappington told The Associated Press that the victims included three family members who were found in one home near Valley View, a rural community near the border with Oklahoma. The destructive storms began Saturday night. Officials said a tornado north of Dallas overturned heavy recreational vehicles, shut down an interstate and caused extensive damage to a highway travel center where drivers had rushed to take shelter. "It took some time to get back in there because of all the

'At least 5 die after severe weather sweeps across Texas, Oklahoma'

damage with the power lines, and trees were down. It was kind of a monumental task just to get back to where they were," Sappington told Dallas television station WFAA. Forecasters had issued tornado and severe thunder storm warnings for parts of both



states, as some heat records were broken during the day in South Texas and residents received triple-digit temperature warnings over the long holiday weekend. A tornado crossed into northern Denton County in Texas late Saturday and overturned

tractor-trailer trucks, stopping traffic on Interstate 35, Denton County Community Relations Director Dawn Cobb said in a statement. The tornado was confirmed near Valley View, moving east at 40 mph (64 kph), prompting the National Weather Service to issue a tornado warning for northern Denton County, Cobb said. The storm damaged homes, overturned motorhomes and knocked down power lines and trees throughout the area including points in Sanger, Pilot Point, Ray Roberts Lake and Isle du Bois State Park, Cobb said. People who suffered injuries in the storm were transported to area hospitals by ground and air ambulances, but the number of injuries in the county was not immediately known, Cobb said, while a shelter was opened in Sanger.

'Two weeks of fighting in Sudan killed over 100'

Cairo (AP): More than two weeks of fighting between Sudan's military and a notorious paramilitary group over a major city in the western Darfur region killed at least 123 people, an international aid group said Sunday. The fighting in el-Fasher, the provincial capital of North Darfur province, also wounded more than 930 people in the same period, Doctors without Borders said. "This is a sign of the violent intensity of the fighting," the group said. "We urge the warring parties to do more to protect civilians." Clashes between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces escalated earlier this month in the city, forcing thousands of people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations. El-Fasher has become the center of the conflict between the military and the RSF, which is

really want you to explain to me what my options are. What's my escape route?" Costello said. Costello said Cohen also insisted that he had made the Daniels deal on his own, that Trump "knew nothing" about it, and that Cohen had no incriminating information about Trump he could offer to federal prosecutors.

Key witness revelations: Inside testimonies of Trump's hush money trial

AP ■ NEW YORK
After 22 witnesses, including a porn actor, tabloid publisher and White House insiders, testimony is over at Donald Trump's criminal trial in New York. Prosecutors called 20 witnesses. The defence called just two. Trump decided not to testify on his own behalf. The trial now shifts to closing arguments, scheduled for Tuesday. After that, it will be up to 12 jurors to decide whether prosecutors have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Trump falsified his company's business records as part of a broader effort to keep stories about marital infidelity from becoming public during his 2016 presidential campaign. He has pleaded not guilty and denies any wrongdoing. A conviction could come down to how the jurors interpret the testimony and which witnesses they find credible. The jury must be unanimous. The records involved include 11 checks sent to Trump's former

lawyer, Michael Cohen, as well as invoices and company ledger entries related to those payments. Here's a look at key trial witnesses and what they had to say: **STORMY DANIELS**
As Trump sat feet away, the porn actor, writer and director, gave a detailed and at times graphic account of a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in Nevada in 2006. After they met at a celebrity golf tournament, she said, Trump invited her to dinner but then engaged her in conversation in his hotel room and startled her by stripping to his underwear while she was in the bathroom. "I felt the room spin in slow motion. I felt the blood basically leave my hands and my feet," Daniels testified. "I just thought, Oh, my God, what did I misread to get here? Because the intention was pretty clear, somebody stripped down in their underwear and posing on the bed, like waiting for you," Daniels said Trump did not physically threaten her, but

"my own insecurities in that moment kept me from saying no". Daniels said she kept in touch with Trump for about a year in hopes of appearing on his TV show "The Apprentice", but it never happened. Daniels spoke about accepting USD 15,000 for a magazine interview in 2011. The story was not printed at the time but ended up on a gossip website without her consent. Her lawyer, in consultation with Cohen, complained and had the story taken down. In 2016, Daniels authorised her manager to shop her story again but found little interest until the release of the infamous "Access Hollywood" recording of Trump boasting about grabbing women's genitals without their permission. Daniels told the jury she accepted USD 130,000 from Cohen in the final weeks of the election in exchange for a legal agreement to keep the claim to herself. Trump's lawyers grilled Daniels about her motivation, eliciting testimony that she hates the former Republican president.

DAVID PECKER
A longtime Trump friend, Pecker was the publisher of the National Enquirer and chief executive of its parent company, American Media Inc, during the 2016 presidential campaign. Pecker told the jury he agreed to be the "eyes and ears" of Trump's campaign, looking out for damaging stories so they could be suppressed. He said he agreed to the role — and to a plan to publish positive stories about Trump and negative stories about his opponents — at an August 2015 meeting with Trump and Cohen. "If there were any rumours in the marketplace about Mr Trump or his family or any negative stories that were coming out or anything that I heard overall," Pecker said, "I would call Michael Cohen directly." **KEITH DAVIDSON**
A lawyer known for representing people trying to sell celebrity sex tapes or other embarrassing information, Davidson negotiated the hush

money deals for McDougal and Daniels. He gave jurors an inside look at the negotiations and helped corroborate Pecker's testimony. At first, Davidson said, the National Enquirer was not interested in acquiring McDougal's story, saying she "lacked documentary evidence." But the tabloid eventually bought it at Pecker's behest. Davidson said he understood it would never be published because of "an unspoken understanding that there was an affiliation" between Pecker and Trump and that the National Enquirer would not run the story "because it would hurt Donald Trump". **MICHAEL COHEN**
Cohen, a flawed but vital prosecution witness, testified about working with the National Enquirer to suppress negative stories about Trump. Cohen insisted he was working at Trump's direction when the lawyer helped orchestrate the payments to McDougal and Daniels. Cohen testified that he kept the detail-oriented Trump

director, Hicks testified about the frenetic days after the "Access Hollywood" leak as she and Trump's political advisers tried to contain the fallout. Hicks said she was "very concerned" about the impact of the tape and she subsequently asked Cohen to chase down a rumour about another potentially damaging recording, which turned out not to exist. Hicks said after The Wall Street Journal published its article detailing McDougal's hush money deal, Trump was concerned about how his wife, Melania, would take it. **ROBERT COSTELLO**
Trump's lawyers called Costello, an attorney and ex-federal prosecutor, as their primary witness in a terse defense case aimed at undermining Cohen's credibility. After the FBI raided Cohen's home and office in 2018, Costello offered to become his lawyer. He told the jury that during their first meeting, Cohen paced anxiously, saying his life, and his family's life, had been "shattered." He said: I

really want you to explain to me what my options are. What's my escape route?" Costello said. Costello said Cohen also insisted that he had made the Daniels deal on his own, that Trump "knew nothing" about it, and that Cohen had no incriminating information about Trump he could offer to federal prosecutors. **JEFFREY MCCONNEY**
The Trump Organisation's former controller testified about working with Weisselberg to set up payments to Cohen, including reimbursement for the USD 130,000 payment to Daniels, a bonus and money for taxes. **DEBORAH TARASOFF**
The Trump Organisation's accounts payable supervisor testified about processing the payments to Cohen, including receiving checks that Trump had signed at the White House. Under defense questioning, she acknowledged permission to cut Cohen's checks came not from Trump himself, but from Weisselberg and McConney.

S Korean, Chinese and Japanese leaders discuss thorny topics

AP ■ SEOUL

The Japanese and South Korean leaders raised sensitive topics like Taiwan, North Korea and the South China Sea as well as ways to boost cooperation when they individually met China's premier Sunday on the eve of a fuller trilateral meeting.



COVID-19 pandemic and complex ties among the three countries. After meeting Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that he expressed serious concerns about the situations in the South China Sea, Hong Kong and China's north-western Xinjiang region.

is part of China. During a separate meeting with Li, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, on his part, asked China, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, to contribute to promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula, while speaking about North Korea's nuclear program and its deepening military ties with Russia, according to Yoon's office.

Bangladesh evacuates over 8 lakh as cyclone Remal approaches

PTI ■ DHAKA

Over 800,000 people from vulnerable areas have been evacuated to shelters on Sunday as Bangladesh prepares for severe cyclonic storm 'Remal' forecast to make landfall by midnight with a potential high tidal surge and heavy rainfall in the country's coastal districts of Satkhira and Cox's Bazar.

reported, citing the latest met office bulletin. State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Md Mohibur Rahman told a press briefing that over eight lakh people were evacuated to cyclone centres and other safer places. "We have taken all necessary measures on an urgent basis to tackle the severe cyclonic storm...all relevant organisations have been asked to work in a coordinated manner to face the cyclone," he said.

offices have been cancelled to tackle the possible aftermath of Cyclone Remal, the Daily Star newspaper reported. The Chattogram Port Authority has suspended all operations in the port as cyclone Remal heads towards the coast, it said.

of the Payra port. "Wind speed is 90-120kmph within 62km of the cyclone centre, as a result of which there is a risk tidal surge of up to 12 feet along the coast," an official meteorologist said.

12 hurt after Qatar Airways plane hits turbulence

London (AP): Twelve people were injured when a Qatar Airways plane flying from Doha to Dublin on Sunday hit turbulence, airport authorities said.

Dublin Airport said in a statement that flight QR017, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, landed safely as scheduled before 1 pm (1200 GMT). It said that upon landing the aircraft was met by emergency services, including airport police and the fire and rescue department, "due to six passengers and six crew...reporting injuries after the aircraft experienced turbulence while airborne over Turkey."

Passengers of turbulence-hit SIA flight inflicted psychological scars: Experts

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

The extreme turbulence on Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight SQ321, which left one person dead from a suspected heart attack and dozens injured, has inflicted psychological scars on the passengers, according to experts.

declaring a medical emergency, before making an emergency landing. Mental health professional Amanda Oh, founder of Budding Space, said a traumatic experience can make it difficult for a person to understand or process a situation, much like "an indigestion in the mind."

insurance professional and musical theatre director at the time of his death, according to British media reports. A total of 41 passengers remain hospitalised across three hospitals in Bangkok, according to the latest update from Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital on Sunday.

Pak asks Af to hand over TTP terrorists involved in attack on Chinese workers

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Sunday asked Afghanistan's Taliban government to hand over banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) terrorists involved in a deadly attack on Chinese workers to Islamabad, according to a media report.

Five Chinese were among six persons killed when an explosives-packed vehicle rammed into their bus in the troubled province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in March, in the second suicide attack on the personnel working on the China-backed hydropower project since 2021.

militants to Pakistan," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said while addressing a joint press conference flanked by officials of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority.

Pakistan Economic Corridor. Some have been attacked in recent years by militants who accuse them of exploiting mineral resources. Pakistan has repeatedly urged the Afghan Taliban to take action against the TTP fighters who are using Afghan soil to attack Pakistan.

Kharkiv attack death toll rises Zelensky warns of Russian troop movements

AP ■ KYIV

President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Sunday that Russia is preparing to intensify its offensive along Ukraine's northern border, as the death toll rose to 14 in an aerial bomb attack on a large construction supplies store in the city of Kharkiv.

within about 25 km (15 miles) of the Russian border. Moscow's troops have in recent weeks captured villages in the Kharkiv area as part of a broad push, and analysts say they may be trying to get within artillery range of the city.

Ukraine during the night. Ukrainian officials said air defence units intercepted 31 Shahed drones and 12 cruise missiles launched by Russia in the Mykolaiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Zaporizhzhia, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia and Chernihiv regions.

'B'desh will seek Interpol's help to bring back lawmaker's murder mastermind'

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh will seek help from Interpol to bring back the fugitive 'mastermind' of the brutal killing of the ruling party lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar, who was found murdered in Kolkata last week, a top official said here on Sunday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) Detective Branch (DB) chief Mohammad Harun-or-Rashid made the remarks while talking to reporters at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Sunday just before leaving for Kolkata to investigate the murder case.

Gopal Biswas, a resident of Baranagar in north Kolkata and an acquaintance of the Bangladeshi politician, filed a complaint with the local police on May 18. According to the Kolkata police, circumstantial evidence indicated that the MP was first strangled and killed after which his body was chopped into pieces and dumped in different areas.

Chile accuses ex-official, firefighter of causing fire that killed 137

AP ■ SANTIAGO

A Chilean judge on Saturday ordered a volunteer firefighter and a former forestry official detained for allegedly planning and causing a mammoth forest fire in the Valparaiso region that caused 137 deaths and made 16,000 people homeless in February.



The regional prosecutor for Valparaiso, Claudia Perivancich, said investigators have evidence the two men agreed "in advance to carry out conduct of this type when the weather conditions were adequate."

The commander of the Valparaiso Fire Department, Vicente Maggiolo, said, "We are very dismayed by the situation." Maggiolo called it an isolated incident and said it should not tarnish the work of the fire department.

Renewed flash floods due to rains kill at least 15 in Afghanistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Renewed heavy rains have triggered more flash floods in Afghanistan, killing at least 15 people, including 10 members of the same family in the northeast, officials said Sunday.



eight children — was reported dead in Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan, said Mohammad Akram Akbari, director of the provincial natural disaster management department in the province, adding that rescue teams were only able to recover the mother's body.

district, and several people have died but was unable to provide further details. However, a local official, speaking on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorised to talk to the press, reported that five bodies have so far been found in the province and rescue teams were looking for more.

Earlier, the World Food Program said the exceptionally heavy rains in Afghanistan had killed more than 300 people and destroyed thousands of houses, mostly in the northern province of Badghlan on May 10 and May 11. Survivors have been left with no home, no land, and no source of livelihood, WFP said.



Bikers attend a motorcycle rally marking a traditional spring's motorcycle festival riding along the center of Moscow, with the famous building of Russian Foreign Ministry in the background, Russia, Sunday

India's Q4 GDP likely to have grown at 6.1-6.7 per cent: Economists

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's GDP in the fourth quarter of financial year 2023-24 is expected to have grown within the range of 6.1-6.7 per cent, lower than over 8 per cent rate recorded in the previous three quarters, according to projections by various economists. The GDP numbers for the fourth quarter (January-March 2024) and the provisional estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal year are scheduled to be released by the government on May 31. According to economists, the expected growth in 2023-24 fiscal is estimated to be in the range of 7.6-7.8 per cent. The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the June quarter, 8.1 per cent in the September quarter and 8.4 per cent in the December quarter of 2023-24. Kotak Mahindra Bank Chief

Economist Upasna Bhardwaj said high frequency data suggests robust growth across the board. Also, trade and hotels have held up in the fourth quarter. "Manufacturing activities have also been good, and construction linked and investment segments should be doing better, but agriculture sector growth could be a laggard and see contraction during the quarter. We are expecting 6.1 per cent GDP growth for the fourth quarter and as a result, the full-year number for GDP growth should be close to 7.6 per cent," Bhardwaj said. India's GDP expanded 6.1 per cent in the March quarter of 2022-23 fiscal, as per May 31, 2023 estimates. The growth for full fiscal 2022-23 was 7 per cent. "We are looking at some moderation in economic activity in the services segment and also on the industrial side across the



board. That is the reason why Gross Value Added (GVA) numbers are expected at 5.7 per cent for the fourth quarter, while

6.1 per cent is GDP number," she added. GDP is the total value of goods and services produced in a given period, while GVA is GDP

minus net taxes (gross tax collection minus subsidy). As far as the current fiscal (2024-25) is concerned, Kotak Mahindra Bank expects growth to be 6.6 per cent but with an upward bias. Bhardwaj said rural consumption is likely to pick up pace, but exports growth could be impacted in the second half of the current fiscal. "At the moment, exports have held up pretty well. We haven't seen too much of an impact of any global disruptions of demand on exports. But we do expect there will be some impact of that going ahead. That is one place where we expect growth to take a hit," she said. The rural consumption demand is going to pick up pace, while we might see some saturation in the urban demand side. Hence, there could be some positive impact on consumption in the current fiscal, Bhardwaj said.

EY India Chief Policy Advisor DK Srivastava said both domestic and international institutions are forecasting a robust growth of around 7 per cent for India in the fiscal year 2025. "It is anticipated that the GDP growth in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2024 might surpass 6.5 per cent, leading to an annual growth close to 7.8 per cent as projected by the IMF," Srivastava said. Another rating agency, India Ratings & Research expects the country's GDP growth rate for the March quarter at 6.2 per cent for 2023-24. Domestic rating agency ICRA on Tuesday projected India's GDP growth to moderate to a four-quarter low of 6.7 per cent in March quarter of 2023-24 fiscal. For the full 2023-24 fiscal, ICRA estimates GDP growth to come in at 7.8 per cent.



India in trade deficit with nine trading partners in 2023-24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners, including China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea, in 2023-24, according to official data. The data also showed that the deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to 2022-23, while the trade gap with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, and Iraq narrowed. The trade deficit with China rose to USD 85 billion, Russia to USD 57.2 billion, Korea to USD 14.71 billion and Hong Kong to USD 12.2 billion in 2023-24 against USD 83.2 billion, USD 43 billion, USD 14.57 billion and USD 8.38 billion, respectively, in 2022-23. China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with USD 118.4 billion of two-way commerce in 2023-24, edging past the US. The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at USD 118.28 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners - Singapore, the UAE, Korea and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc). India has a trade surplus of USD 36.74 billion with the US in 2023-24. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. The surplus is also there with the UK, Belgium, Italy, France and Bangladesh.

Most SFBs would not clamour to become universal banks if RBI eases some curbs: Former Secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Highlighting the importance of small finance banks (SFBs) in fostering financial inclusion, former Financial Services Secretary D K Mittal said most of them would not clamour to become universal banks if some restrictions are eased by the Reserve Bank. To promote financial inclusion in the country, RBI, in 2014, issued the guidelines for licensing of small finance banks (SFBs) in the private sector. Following this, RBI granted licences to a dozen entities. As per the RBI guidelines, SFBs

are required to open at least 25 per cent of their branches in unbanked rural centres and are mandated to provide 75 per cent of loans to the priority sector compared to 40 per cent for the commercial banks. Last month, the RBI invited applications from small finance banks meeting specified criteria, including a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore, for becoming regular or universal banks. "While issuing guidelines for Small Finance Banks to become universal banks, it would be in the larger national interest of financial inclusion if RBI lifts

some of the restrictions imposed on such SFBs including tag of SFBs," he told PTI. Talking about restrictions, he said, the RBI should consider allowing co-lending, pass through certificate (PTC) and securitisation, and setting up of subsidiaries. Idea should be to make them at par with commercial banks except for three basic principles of priority sector, below 25 lakh and Basel II for capital, he said, adding that these should work as universal banks with a differentiated focus on financial inclusion.

"After all they comply with all guidelines applicable to universal banks except a few related to capital but with additional responsibility of 75 per cent priority sector and 50 per cent below Rs 25 lakh lending. This will ensure that customers look at all commercial banks as equal which is so," he said. "If it is done, they would be as good as a universal bank with the added responsibility of furthering the objective of financial inclusion and serving the population of the lowest strata of society. This will also ensure that most SFBs would

not clamour to become universal banks," he added. As per the April guidelines of the RBI, an SFB aiming to become a universal bank should have a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore at the end of the previous quarter (audited) and the shares of the bank should have been listed on a recognised stock exchange. It should also have a net profit in the last two financial years and Gross NPA and Net NPA of less than or equal to 3 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, in the last two financial years.



Telcos directed to block incoming international spoofed calls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has directed telecom operators to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers, an official statement said on Sunday. The Department of Telecom (DoT) said that it has been reported that fraudsters are making international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cyber-crime and financial frauds. Such calls appear to be originating within India but are being made by cyber-criminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line identity (CLI) and have been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, FedEx scams, drugs or narcotics in courier, impersonation as government and police officials, disconnections of mobile numbers by DoT or TRAI officials, etc. "DoT and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have devised a system to identify and block such international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking such incoming international spoofed calls," the statement said. The incoming international spoofed calls with Indian landline numbers are being already blocked by the TSPs as per the directions issued by DoT. "Despite best efforts, there may still be some fraudsters who succeed through other means. For such calls, you can help everybody by reporting such suspected fraud communications at the Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi," the statement said. Last week, the DoT issued directives to the telecom operators to carry out immediate re-verification of 6.8 lakh mobile numbers within 60 days that are suspected to have been obtained using invalid, non-existent, or fake documents. The department has flagged around 6.80 lakh mobile connections as potentially fraudulent after advanced AI-driven analysis.

Domestic airfares on northward trajectory; still among lowest globally, say experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic airfares are sailing northwards, surging up to 40 per cent in key routes on higher traffic and capacity constraints in the last six quarters. Still, ticket prices are among the lowest in the world, according to experts. India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and on average, 4.5 lakh passengers travel on domestic flights daily. While only a small percentage of the country's population travels by air, capacity constraints are a key challenge as many aircraft are grounded mainly due to supply chain issues. Aviation consultancy firm CAPA India said that average fares on the top 20 domestic routes had not moved significantly in nominal terms for the last two decades, until the last six quarters during which they have been up by close to 40 per cent. The routes include Mumbai-Delhi, Bengaluru-Delhi, Bengaluru-Mumbai and Delhi-Hyderabad. The trend has been driven by serious capacity shortages with an average of 150 aircraft on the ground due to supply chain and other issues, CAPA India said during a webinar this week and added that structurally, high pricing should continue into FY2026. "In the last three years, especially after the coronavirus pandemic, fares have gone up. Still, the average fares are among the lowest in the world. "For instance, the average fare for a flight between Delhi and Mumbai will be around Rs 5,000 to 6,000. It



might seem like a big rise in terms of percentage but the quantum of rise is not significant when the overall inflationary pressure is taken into account," Sanjay Kumar, President & CEO of InterGlobe Technology Quotient Ltd, told PTI. Part of the InterGlobe group, the company is into the travel technology segment. Kumar, who had also served as the Chief Commercial Officer at IndiGo, also pointed out that while Indians are supposed to be price-conscious, airfares in the country have actually come down in comparison with the inflationary pressures over the years. The low fare regime also resulted in quite a few airlines having gone out of business due to the mismatch in their costs and revenues, he added. CAPA India noted that adjusted to inflation, the average fare of Rs 4,989 in FY2004 rose to around Rs 11,000 in FY2020. In the early 2000s, despite far less efficient operations with respect to

seat and aircraft utilisation, airlines were largely able to break even because in real terms, fares were significantly higher, it added. Air ticket prices in the country are deregulated, and fares are mostly a function of supply and demand. Data shared by aviation analytics firm Cirium with PTI showed that India had the lowest average domestic airfare among the key markets in 2023. As per the analysis, the one-way average economy class fare was USD 80 for a distance of 622 miles while it was USD 167 for 768 miles in Australia and USD 114 for 709 miles in Brazil. In the case of the US, the fare was USD 180 for 1,108 miles, USD 126 for 860 miles in China, USD 106 for 813 miles in Europe and USD 173 for 928 miles in Canada. An aviation industry expert said that compared to various developed markets, airfares are very affordable in India, which is also a very price-sensitive market.

The affordability and paying capacity of people in the Western countries are high compared to India and also there is the element of overall costs being relatively low for Indian carriers compared to other markets, the expert said. "Airlines have resumed a more effective pricing strategy for revenue maximisation, with fares increasing steadily in the last month prior to departure, and especially during the last three days," CAPA India said. Kumar emphasised that airlines should be able to strike a balance between their cost which is primarily a reflection of efficiency and revenues which are a reflection of fares. "While we have also seen airlines can be profitable with lower load factors with reasonable fares and at the same time, can be financially weak despite operating with over 90 per cent loads with low fares. If an airline is able to remain profitable with around 60 to 65 per cent load factor, then that is also good commercially," he said.

* Airline CEOs on airfares There is healthy and tough competition in the Indian market, which is also price-sensitive. The overall price levels in India are very very competitive, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers told PTI in March. When you compare them to parts of Europe, East Asia, North America or any decent-sized aviation economy in the world, India has some of the most affordable airfares by a long margin. Indian airfares are incredibly affordable, Akasa Air Founder and CEO Vinay Dube told PTI in March.

BharatPe, PhonePe settle trademark dispute on Pe suffix

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech unicorns BharatPe Group and PhonePe Group have amicably settled all long-standing legal disputes pertaining to the use of the trademark with the suffix 'Pe', both companies said in a joint statement. BharatPe and PhonePe had been involved in long-drawn legal disputes across multiple courts, over the course of the last five years. The settlement will put an end to all open judicial proceedings, the statement said. "BharatPe and PhonePe amicably settled all long-standing trademark disputes," the statement said. As a next step, parties have already taken steps to withdraw all opposition against each other in the trademark registry, which will help them to proceed with the registration of their respective trademarks, the statement said. "This is a positive development for the industry. I appreciate the maturity and professionalism shown by the Management of both sides, working closely to resolve all outstanding legal issues and moving ahead to focus their energy and



resources in building robust digital payment ecosystems," BharatPe, Chairman of the Board, Rajnish Kumar said. Both organizations will undertake to take other necessary steps to comply with the obligations under the settlement agreement in respect of all cases before Delhi High Court and Bombay High Court. "I am glad that we have reached an amicable resolution in this matter. This outcome will benefit both companies to move forward and focus our collective energy on growing the Indian fintech industry as a whole," PhonePe, Founder and CEO, Sameer Nigam said.

FPIs take out ₹22,000 crore from equities in May amid poll jitters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out a massive Rs 22,000 crore from Indian equities so far this month, due to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections and outperformance of Chinese markets. This came following a net outflow of over Rs 8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Before that, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,099 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February. Going forward, as clarity emerges on the election front, Foreign Portfolio

Investors (FPIs) are likely to buy in India, since they cannot afford to miss the post-election results rally. Actually, the rally may begin even before the election results, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. According to data with depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) witnessed a net outflow of Rs 22,047 crore from equities this month (till May 24). "This heavy selling was triggered by the massive outperformance of Chinese stocks. The Hang Seng index, dominated by Chinese stocks (FPIs invest through the Hong Kong market since there are restrictions on

investing through the Shanghai market) surged 7.66 per cent during the last month," Vijayakumar, said. The election-related jitters, too, might have influenced FPI selling. With the on-going general election in the country and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome, foreign investors at this point are wary to enter the Indian equity markets before the announcement of election results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. "In recent times, the US Fed has indicated that it would not go ahead with rate cuts until inflation cools and consistently moves towards



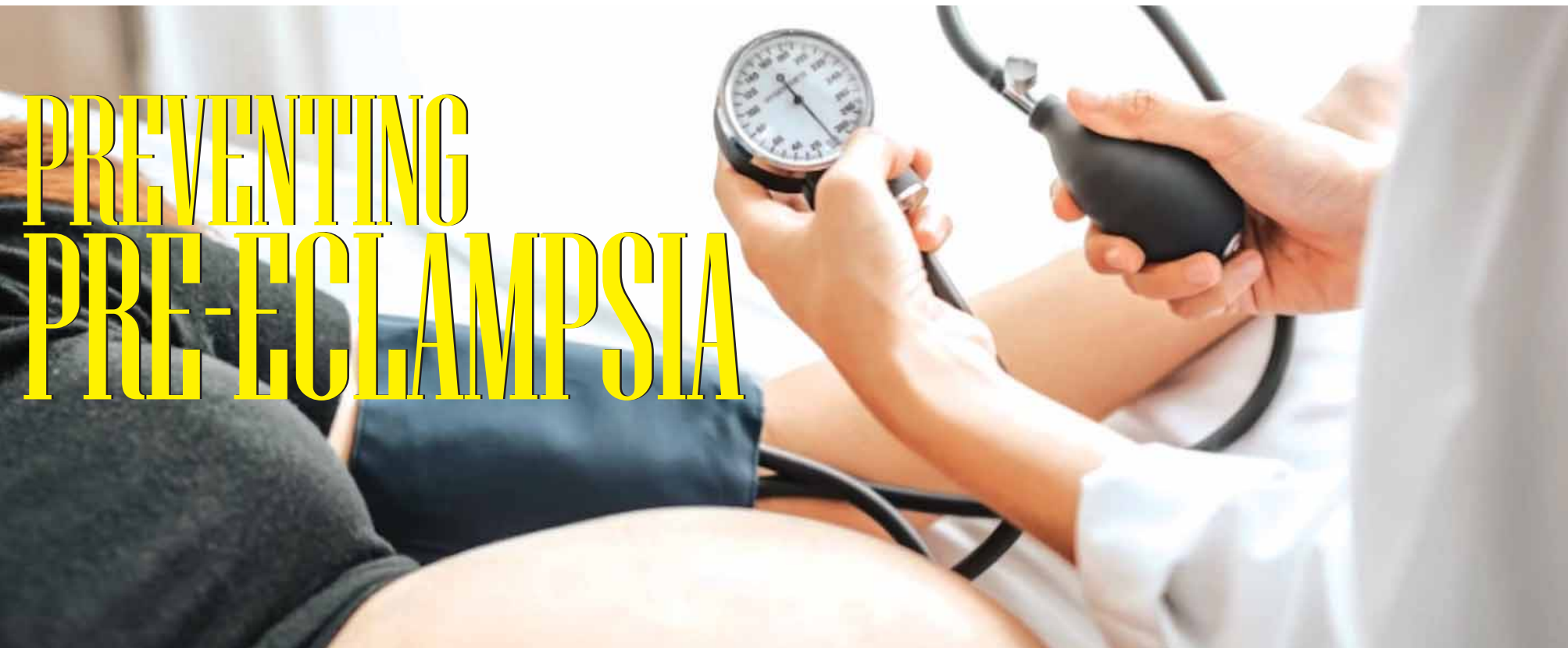
the target range. This has raised scepticism over the possibility of an early rate cut.

"It led to the appreciation in the US Dollar leading to a surge in US Treasury yields. This doesn't augur well for

the emerging markets like India, as under such scenario investments also tend to shift from riskier assets like

emerging market equities to more safer asset classes such as US Dollar and US Treasuries," he added. On the other hand, FPIs invested Rs 2,009 crore in the debt market during the period under review. Before this outflow, foreign investors put in Rs 13,602 crore in March, Rs 22,419 crore in February, Rs 19,836 crore in January. This inflow was driven by the upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. "The long-term outlook for FPI flows into Indian debt is positive due to India's inclusion in global bond indices. However, near-term flows are being impacted by global macroeconomic

uncertainty and volatility. The trend will reverse once the interest rate outlook becomes clearer," Vipul Bhowar, Director, Listed Investments at Waterfield Advisors, said. JP Morgan Chase & Co. In September last year announced it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024. This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around USD 20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months. Overall, FPIs have withdrawn a net amount of Rs 19,824 crore in equities in 2024 so far, however, invested Rs 46,917 crore in debt market.



PREVENTING PRE-ECLAMPSIA

Early signs of fatal Pre-eclampsia, like abnormal growth patterns, changes in placental structure, and reduced amniotic fluid levels in a pregnant woman are often identifiable through ultrasound. Doctors emphasize to **ARCHANA JYOTI** the importance of radiologists taking Pre-eclampsia seriously, as timely and precise imaging can profoundly impact outcomes

On the occasion of World Pre-eclampsia Day last week, Delhi-based Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital's Department of Radiodiagnosis, held a seminar to highlight the importance of properly planned and performed antenatal ultrasound by radiologists in preventing adverse outcomes in pregnancy such as Pre-eclampsia.



DR SHIBANI MEHRA



DR VAISHALI SHARMA



DR SONAM KAUR WALIA



DR KAVITA ANEJA

The issue is significant as Pre-eclampsia, a well-known hypertensive disorder of pregnancy, with a greater incidence associated with advanced maternal age contributes to 2 per cent to 8 per cent of pregnancy-related complications, more than 50,000 and over 500,000 maternal and fetal deaths, respectively worldwide.

fatal sometimes for both mother and baby if not managed properly. Dr Mehra further explained, "Antenatal Doppler performed between 11 and 14 weeks of pregnancy (third month of pregnancy) can detect risk of Pre-eclampsia and its prevention can be possible if treatment by a single drug is initiated immediately. The medicine used to prevent Pre-eclampsia in pregnancy is inexpensive and easily available."

Dr Sonam Kaur Walia, Assistant Professor, Dept of Radiodiagnosis at the RML Hospital, concurs as she said, early detection and management are crucial for minimising complications. Management strategies depend on the severity of the condition and the stage of pregnancy. Dr Walia spoke in detail about the severe outcomes due to untreated Pre-eclampsia. "If not properly managed, Pre-eclampsia can lead to serious complications for both the mother and the baby. Cerebrovascular disease is the leading cause of maternal mortality in women with Pre-eclampsia, with the majority of deaths caused by intracerebral. Hypertension or a blood pressure reading 140/90 mm or higher and urinary protein (proteinuria) level of 300 ml or more found in urine sample are the two major factors of determining Pre-eclampsia. However, in some cases Pre-eclampsia may occur with other signs such as severe headaches

Samrakshan: A beacon of hope in the war against Pre-eclampsia

WHAT IS SAMRAKSHAN?

Samrakshan is a national program of the Indian Radiological & Imaging Association of India (IRIA) to address the high rates of perinatal mortality, low birth weight and preterm babies in India. The project was conceived and founded by Dr Rijo Mathew Choorakuttil who was the first national coordinator for this project that was initiated by IRIA.

Protocol based management for Preterm Pre-eclampsia and Fetal Growth Restriction

SAMRAKSHAN 757

Samrakshan is now scaling up to cover all districts of India. The scale up, that aims to have at least one Samrakshan Fetal Radiologist in every district of India is based on the encouraging results after two years of Samrakshan and the significant reduction in perinatal mortality achieved in the program. These Fetal radiologists or Samrakshan Yodhas will form synergistic teams with childbirth care stakeholders and lead the integration of Fetal Dopplers and Ultrasound assessment with antenatal care in each district. The Samrakshan 757 project aims to reduce preeclampsia to less than 3% and Fetal growth restriction to less than 10% in India over an 8 year period.

AIM

The program aims to reduce perinatal mortality in India through an approach that focuses on Integrating fetal Doppler studies with routine trimester specific antenatal scans in pregnancy. Determining a customized risk assessment for preterm pre-eclampsia and fetal growth restriction for each pregnant woman

and vision problems including blurred vision, seeing spots or flashing lights, and in severe cases, temporary blindness. Upper abdominal pain, nausea, swelling and shortness of breath are other possible symptoms. Preeclampsia

can also lead to severe complications such as eclampsia (seizures), stroke, organ failure, and HELLP syndrome (a combination of hemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, and low platelet count), all of which can be

intrauterine growth restriction and other severe issues. Early signs of preeclampsia can often be detected through ultrasound, including abnormal growth patterns, changes in placental structure, and decreased amniotic fluid levels. "By being vigilant and thorough, radiologists can identify these early signs and alert the healthcare team, enabling prompt intervention.

"This collaborative approach is crucial for implementing timely treatments, such as medication to lower blood pressure and strategies to ensure the baby receives adequate nutrients. In severe cases, early delivery may be necessary to protect the health of both the mother and the baby," reiterated Dr Vaishali.

Dr Kavita Aneja, Director and Senior Consultant, Radiologist, Images Ultrasound Centre pinned hopes on 'Samrakshan' launched by IRIA with a mission to extend the reach of safe motherhood initiatives across all districts of India.

"With a pledge to reduce preeclampsia from 8%-10% to 3%, and fetal growth restriction from 25%-30% to 10% by the turn of the decade, IRIA Samrakshan exemplifies the dedication needed to address and mitigate the risks faced by pregnant women and new-borns," she added.

Dr Vaishali batted for active communication between radiologists and expecting mothers about the importance of regular imaging scans and what they entail. Awareness can empower pregnant women to understand the potential risks of preeclampsia, encouraging them to adhere to scheduled appointments and follow medical advice rigorously. Clear communication can also alleviate anxiety in the would-be-mom.

Ability to See the World Differently!

DR ASHWINI ANIL KUMAR SIRAPANASETTY (Obstetrics/ Gynaecologist Surgeon and Senior Counsellor of the Army wives welfare association questions why to fit Autism in a box when those born with the conditions are born to stand out



It is said that the famous Artists, Pablo Picasso and Michelangelo both had Autism. They created amazing works of art with the way they saw the world. This reflects their uniqueness for what and who they are. We must understand that Autism is not a processing error, it's a different operating system.

So when you meet someone a little bit different from you, that might scare you or make you feel uncomfortable and that's okay. Because anything new is a little difficult at first but once you learn more about it, you get used to it. Because then you know. Knowledge helps you to understand and understanding makes it easy to accept. All of us are different. No one is the same. We all have our talents, characteristics, strengths, and challenges hence don't address them as "Autistic kids" They are just born with Autism which is just one part of their amazing personality. Autism can mean a lot of different things.

Some kids who have autism seem like typical kids and it only impacts the way they act and communicate in certain situations. Sometimes in some kids Autism impacts the way they act and communicate all the time. Sometimes autism impacts kids so much that they might not be able to control their bodies or communicate by speaking. No one knows for sure why kids have Autism. Scientists and doctors are working hard to figure it out. But what we do know is that autism affects the way the brain and bodywork. For kids who have Autism their senses, thought processes, communication and body movements happen differently. It causes them to experience the world in a very unique way. Autism isn't a birth defect. It's not a disease. It's not contagious. Autism is just something that they are born with. It's something they live with and they will have it for their whole life.

AUTISM MEANS

- A- Acceptance (Accept People for who they are)
- U- Understand (understand through knowledge)
- T- Time (give them time to do things at their own space)
- I- Include & Invite
- S- Special interests (kids with Autism enjoy talking about certain subjects, welcome their conversations)
- M- Memories (allow them to make memories with you in their own way)

Thyroid Health: Symptoms, Awareness, Prevention

Located in the neck, Thyroid gland, a butterfly-shaped gland affects many bodily functions through the hormones it produces. Managing thyroid disorders requires recognizing symptoms, raising awareness, and implementing preventive measures, doctors tell THE HEALTH PIONEER

Despite its significance, thyroid disorders are common and often go undiagnosed, impacting approximately 200 million people worldwide, including 42 million in India.

RECOGNIZING THYROID SYMPTOMS

Thyroid disorders can manifest in various ways, affecting multiple bodily functions. Common symptoms to watch for include unexplained weight changes, fatigue or excessive energy, changes in heart rate, neck swelling, and hair loss or changes in skin texture. These symptoms often arise because the thyroid gland's hormones are integral to regulating metabolism and energy. Two primary types of thyroid disorders are hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Hypothyroidism, or an underactive thyroid, is characterized by symptoms such as fatigue, weight gain, dry skin, and cold intolerance. Hyperthyroidism, or an

overactive thyroid, presents with symptoms like weight loss, heat intolerance, increased appetite, and nervousness. Early recognition of these symptoms is crucial for effective management and treatment.

DOCTORS INSIGHTS ON THYROID HEALTH

Experts emphasize the importance of awareness and early detection in managing thyroid health. Dr. Chandrakant Sambhaji Pandav, a member of the National Council on POSHAN Abhiyan and former head of the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, Delhi, underscored the necessity of awareness in tackling the rise in thyroid diseases. He highlighted that iodine deficiency, historically a major cause of thyroid disorders, still exists in some regions. Adequately iodized salt is essential in preventing thyroid diseases. "Without



DR CHANDRAKANT SAMBHAJI PANDAV



DR SUBHASH K WANGNOO

awareness, you cannot move forward. Awareness is necessary to ensure early detection of thyroid diseases and can prevent major ailments," he asserted. Dr Pandav was sharing his views at the ASSOCHAM CSR Council's panel discussion on the eve of World Thyroid Day, titled 'Thyroid Matters: In Health & Disease.' Experts from various fields had gathered to discuss the importance of thyroid awareness. Dr. Mudit Sabharwal, Consultant Diabetes and Endocrinology at Fortis La Femme Multi

Specialty Hospital and Director and Consultant at Dharma Diabetes and Metabolic Clinics, Delhi & NCR, highlighted the symptoms of both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. He recommended simple exercises like Surya Namaskar to help control hyperthyroidism and stressed the importance of a healthy lifestyle to prevent related health issues like high cholesterol and diabetes. Dr. Subhash K Wangnoo, Senior Consultant - Endocrinologist and



DR MUDIT SABHARWAL

Diabetologist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, on the other hand enlisted additional signs of thyroid dysfunction such as unexpected weakness and postpartum depression in women. He emphasized the importance of careful monitoring in pregnant women, as late detection can affect the intelligence quotient in babies. "Thyroid does a lot of work to help metabolize and maintain blood pressure, body temperature, and heart rate. Pregnant women also need to be very careful," he explained.



DR DINESH KUMAR TYAGI

PREVENTIVE MEASURES Taking preventive measures is crucial in safeguarding thyroid health. Dr. Dinesh Kumar Tyagi, Additional Director of Internal Medicine at Fortis Hospital, Greater Noida, talked about the wide-ranging impact of thyroid disorders, which can cause cretinism in children, obesity, infertility, and even cancer if a malignant tumor develops. He too batted for maintaining a balanced diet, managing stress levels, reducing exposure to environmental toxins, monitoring iodine intake, undergoing regular thyroid screenings,



ANIL RAJPUT

abstaining from smoking, and incorporating regular exercise into one's routine. A balanced diet rich in iodine, selenium, and zinc is particularly important, as these nutrients support thyroid function. "Foods such as fish, dairy products, and iodized salt can help maintain adequate iodine levels. Additionally, managing stress through mindfulness practices and regular physical activity can positively impact thyroid health. "Regular screenings, especially for individuals with a family history of thyroid disorders, are essential for

early detection and effective management," he said.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Anil Rajput, Chairperson of the ASSOCHAM National CSR Council which has been providing platform to raise awareness on various public health issues, emphasized the need for heightened awareness and proactive measures to address the increasing prevalence of thyroid disorders. He called for gender-sensitive approaches. "The increase in the prevalence of thyroid-related health issues warrants heightened awareness and pro-active measures to be put in place with a greater sense of urgency to effectively address this challenge of significant proportions. Thyroid ailments affect both men and women with the latter reporting a higher incidence necessitating the need for gender-sensitive approaches to be looked at in greater detail," he stated.



ENGLAND HAVE MISSED TRICK BY CALLING BACK PLAYERS FROM IPL AHEAD OF T20 WC: VAUGHAN



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Former skipper Michael Vaughan feels England "missed the trick" by recalling its cricketers from the IPL to play a T20 series against Pakistan, saying it had denied them experiencing pressure-cooker situations of the playoffs, which could have helped them prepare better for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas. Top England players, including skipper Jos Buttler (Rajasthan Royals), Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders) and Will Jacks (Royal Challengers Bengaluru) were among the players called back home by the England and Wales Cricket Board for a four-match T20I series against Pakistan, leading to severe

criticism from several former Indian cricketers including the legendary Sunil Gavaskar. In fact, it was skipper Buttler who had pushed for players to get back in the English camp for the T20 World Cup with the series against Pakistan, director of cricket Rob Key had earlier revealed. "I'm all for international cricket, but now and again this tournament (IPL) in particular is so exposed to pressure, and these players under a huge amount of pressure from fans, owners (and) social media, it's massive," said Vaughan on a Club Prairie Fire podcast. "They (ECB) have missed the trick by sending all their players home. Will Jacks, Phil Salt, (and) Jos Buttler in

particular, playing in the IPL in the Eliminations pressure, crowd expectation, I would argue that playing here (IPL) is better preparation than playing a T20 game against Pakistan," Vaughan opined. The first match of the bilateral white-ball series in Headingley was washed out on May 22, while England won the second match against Babar Azam's side by 23 runs on Saturday. Vaughan felt that Salt and Jack, in particular, could have got valuable lessons in handling pressure, which would have served them better in the T20 World Cup beginning on June 2 in the West Indies and USA. "I just felt particularly those two (Salt and Jacks) and Buttler probably not as much, but I still think he

could have stayed here. But Will Jacks and Phil Salt, they would have been better prepared (for T20 WC) staying here playing in the IPL than going back to Headingley to play a game. Vaughan said he was not "disrespecting" either Pakistan or England with his views but just stating that the standard of IPL is probably "better." "This tournament (IPL) is so pressurised and the skill levels are so high, you could argue and I'm not disrespecting Pakistan or the England side... They haven't been playing lot of T20 together. But I would say the standard here (IPL) would possibly be better than the game that we're gonna do at Headingley (May 22). Australian great Adam

Gilchrist too felt England players had missed a big opportunity to play in the business end of the IPL. "I'm sure there's a number of players that could have fulfilled those obligations in the international setup (vs Pakistan) there, but the guys that were actively involved in the IPL in the finals period (Buttler, Salt and Jacks), yeah, I think that's a missed opportunity, too. Spot on (Vaughan)," said Gilchrist. "What you're walking out into, what you're learning from, all the various aspects that the glare and the focus and the microscope on you because that's going to prepare you for what they would hope (in T20 World Cup). Every nation hopes to be playing in a World Cup final eventually," he added.

T20 World Cup in US going to be landmark event: Pradhan

Huge excitement among diaspora, says India's US envoy

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The T20 World Cup in the US is a "landmark event" and there is huge excitement among the diaspora as well as across America, India's envoy here said emphasising that the tournament is playing a "very significant role" in bringing cricket to the country's mainstream and will further contribute towards the bilateral people-to-people relationship. "This is the first time we are having a (cricket) World Cup being played on US soil. There is huge excitement, not only among the Indian diaspora members but even in the United States," Consul General of India in New York Binaya Srikanta Pradhan told PTI here in an exclusive conversation ahead of the much-anticipated tournament. He said American congressmen, senators, elected representatives are talking about the T20 Cricket World Cup being held in the US. The T20 World Cup is being jointly hosted by the USA and the West Indies from June 2 to June 29. The Indian cricket team, which has departed India for New York, will begin its campaign against Ireland on June 5 at the newly-constructed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York. India will face arch-rivals Pakistan on June 9, followed by matches against co-hosts USA (June 12) and Canada (June 15) in their Group A matches. India had won the inaugural edition way back in 2007 in South Africa. "I am sure this is going to be a landmark event," Pradhan said. "Team India represents India in more than one way. There is huge excitement, not only in the community, but even in the Indian Consulate," Pradhan said, adding that "we are looking forward to welcome them and will be there to cheer



for them, and they will have fun here." India will play three matches in New York -- versus Ireland, Pakistan and the United States. "This is the first time India will be playing with the American team. So it's a truly momentous occasion," he said. On the fever-pitch anticipation for the match between India and Pakistan, Pradhan said tickets for the game were sold out months before the tournament, with a lot of visitors from India expected to travel to New York especially for the match. "There is huge excitement," he said, adding that several very distinguished people from the Indian diaspora, American public would be watching this match. "So we're also looking forward to that," he said. Cricket is not a mainstream sport in the US, which has traditionally been a baseball, American football, basketball, ice hockey, and soccer-playing nation. Members of the diaspora from the Indian sub-continent as well as those belonging to other cricket-playing nations such as the West Indies and Australia play the sport in the US but usually on temporary, make-do pitches on baseball fields, in parks and on school sports fields during the summer months.

Pradhan said that the T20 World Cup is playing a "very significant role" in promoting cricket in mainstream United States. In the run-up to the World Cup, the Consulate General of India in New York released a special video highlighting the comparison and similarities between cricket and baseball to "inform the American audience that they should look forward to this game and this sport is very much similar in some ways to baseball." Pradhan said the response the Consulate has received has been tremendous. Noting that cricket at the moment is very popular among the Indian diaspora, Pradhan referred to the professional Twenty20 cricket league in the United States Major Premier League and the Minor Premier League. "It's already catching up in the diaspora. But I'll not be surprised if in a few years' time, you will find the American -- not the Indian-origin Americans, but the Americans will be playing cricket as a mainstream game," he said. Pradhan noted that cricket infrastructure, including proper stadiums are now coming up in the US, as he cited the Nassau County stadium where India will play three matches.

OTHER SPORTS

NEERAJ CHOPRA CLARIFIES

Not injured, withdrawal from Golden Spike precautionary move

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Sunday clarified that he is not injured but has pulled out of the Ostrava Golden Spike meet in Czech Republic on May 28 as a precautionary measure after he felt "something" on his adductor muscles during a recent training session. Chopra said he would not want to risk injury in an Olympic year and hence decided to skip the prestigious meet. "Following a recent throwing session, I decided not to compete in Ostrava as I felt something in my adductor. I have had problems with it in the past and pushing it at this stage can lead to injury," Chopra wrote on his Instagram. "Just to clarify, I am not injured but I don't want to take any risk during the Olympic year so had to take this

decision. Once I feel it's fully recovered, I will get back to competitions," he added. Chopra's clarification came just hours after the organisers of the prestigious meet said he has decided to skip the event due to an injury he sustained while training two weeks ago. "Due to an injury that he sustained in training two weeks ago (adductor muscle) he will not be able to throw in Ostrava, but he will arrive at the event as a guest," the organisers of Golden Spike said earlier in the day. The 26-year-old world champion will, however, attend the meet as a guest, according to the organisers. This was to be Chopra's first foray in Golden Spike meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour Gold level event, which is a going to see a star-studded field, with Tokyo Olympics silver medalist and 2023 world championships bronze winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic



and former world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada set to be in action. Chopra has competed in two competitions this season -- the Doha Diamond League and the Federation Cup.

He commenced his 2024 season on a strong note, clinching silver with an impressive throw of 88.36 metres at the Doha Diamond League on May 10. He then made a return to domestic competition after almost three years,

winning gold in the Federation Cup on May 15 with a throw of 82.27m, pushing DP Manu to second spot in Bhubaneswar. The Golden Spike was not initially announced to be Chopra's third competition of the season. But during Doha Diamond League on May 10, he said he would be competing in the Golden Spike. Before that, Chopra had announced that he would be taking part in the Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland on June 18. Chopra is one of India's best medal hopes in the Paris Olympic Games where he would be keen to retain the gold medal he won at the Tokyo Olympics. The Golden Spike organisers said they had received a note from Chopra informing them about his pull out from the competition. "The organisers did not a message from the Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra."

Sindhu signs off with runner up finish at Malaysia Masters

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR



Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu's wait for a much-needed title extended further as she faltered in the finishing line, going down in three games to world No. 7 Wang Zhi Yi of China in the summit clash here on Sunday. Fifth seed Sindhu, a double Olympic medalist, last won the Singapore Open and Commonwealth Games in 2022 and finished runner-up at the Madrid Spain Masters in 2023. The title here looked within her reach when world No. 15 Sindhu held a massive 11-3 lead in the decider after winning the opening game but the former world champion imploded after the final change of sides to go down 21-16 5-21 16-21 in a 79-minute women's singles final. The title would have been an icing on the cake but her impressive run to the final will still give her a lot of confidence as Sindhu looks to put the finishing touches ahead of the Paris Olympics. It was her first final on BWF world tour after more than a year. Sindhu, a double Olympic medalist, used a combination of poise and power to dominate the proceedings against the reigning Asian champion Wang for most part of the match but everything fell apart after the break in the decider as the USD 420,000 crown slipped out of her hands. A silver and bronze medalist in the last two editions of the Olympics,

Sindhu had lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings. Interestingly, it was Wang against whom Sindhu had won the finals during her last BWF title at the Singapore Open. On Sunday, Sindhu was leading 11-3 at the interval in the third game but she fell into a pool of errors after the change of sides as Wang won 18 off the next 23 points to seal the trophy in her name. World No. 15 Sindhu, who will be eyeing her third Olympic medal at the Paris Games, has looked subdued since making a comeback from a knee injury early this season. It has been a while since Sindhu has defeated big guns such as Carolina Marin, Tai Tzu Ying, Chen Yu Fei and Akane Yamaguchi -- whom she is expected to come across at the Paris Olympics. But the 28-year-old from Hyderabad, who now trains at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in Bengaluru, looked in fine fettle this week but the loss against Wang from a winning position is something which she would have to address in the coming months.

AP ■ BILBAO (SPAIN)

UEFA celebrates growth of women's soccer as Barcelona lifts another Women's Champions League trophy

It was a night of celebration for Barcelona after another Women's Champions League title, and for the women's game in general after another season with significant growth in the sport. Barcelona defeated Lyon 2-0 to win its third European trophy and to add to its recent dominance in the sport on Saturday, capping a year that saw increased attendance, additional revenue and more participation by women across all levels of the sport. A record crowd of 50,827 for a final was on hand to see Barcelona lift the trophy after beating record eight-time champion Lyon with goals by stalwart players Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas at the packed San Mames Stadium in Bilbao.

The Barcelona victory came as soccer officials celebrated the success of a five-year plan to boost the women's game, a plan that was renewed ahead of the final to keep the sport growing. The "Time for Action" project was put in place by UEFA in 2019 to try to improve women's soccer. The European soccer body aimed to double the number of women and girls playing the game, and said it more than doubled that target with nearly three million women and girls currently playing soccer thanks to "investment



in key initiatives" such as "UEFA Football in Schools." UEFA said there are now 47 associations with a strategy in place for woman's soccer, and

noted that almost 20% of its committee members are now female. Centralised media and commercial rights helped increase the competition's value more than four-fold, UEFA said, "funding a financial distribution model which extends the benefits across the entire women's club landscape." "The investments and changes to the UEFA Women's Champions League and UEFA Women's EURO, plus a highly successful commercial programme, have meant that we have exceeded our expectations in terms of

doubling the reach and value of these flagship competitions," said Anne Rei, chair of UEFA's Women's Football Committee. "This has also gone a long way to changing perceptions." What also helped revitalize the Women's Champions League was the introduction of a new group stage ahead of the 2021-22 season, with four groups of four teams playing each other home and away to add "strength in depth." And beginning in 2025-26, UEFA will introduce a single-league stage featuring 18 teams, and a second club competition in

women's soccer. UEFA said "both steps will give the chance to more clubs within the football pyramid to compete at the highest level, promoting domestic growth and competitive balance." UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said ahead of the final in Bilbao that the European soccer governing body "prioritized the growth of women's football" and achieved "significant progress through a focused strategy, substantial investment, and a commitment to making the sport accessible to all." "The UEFA Women's Champions League played pivotal in this process, highlighting the skills of top players, breaking remarkable attendance records, and inspiring generations of girls to engage with our beloved sport," he said.