







# India, Maldives ties based on mutual interests: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Development of India-Maldives ties is based on "mutual interests" and "reciprocal sensitivity", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Thursday during his talks with his Maldivian counterpart Moosa Zameer. These remarks came in the backdrop of strained ties between the two countries after President Mohamed Muizzu insisted on withdrawal of Indian military personnel operating three military platforms in the island nation. Zameer is New Delhi in the first high-level trip from Male after the Maldives' pro-China president Muizzu assumed office six months ago. "As close and proximate neighbours, the development of our ties is obviously based on mutual interests and reciprocal sensitivity," Jaishankar said in his opening remarks in his meeting with Zameer. "As far as India is concerned, these are articulated in terms of our Neighbourhood First policy and SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) vision. I hope that our meeting today will enable us to strengthen the convergence



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer at a meeting in New Delhi

of our perspectives in various domains," he said. The ties between the two countries came under severe strain in view of Muizzu insisting on withdrawal of Indian military personnel operating three military platforms in the island nation. India has already withdrawn most of its military personnel.

Muizzu had set May 10 as the deadline for withdrawal of the Indian military troops from his country. Nearly 50 personnel have returned. In all more than 85 Indian personnel were deployed in Maldives. "India has been a key provider of development assistance to the Maldives. Our projects

have benefited the people of your country; contributed to the quality of life. They range from infrastructure projects and social initiatives to medical evacuation and health facilities," Jaishankar said. "We have also extended financial support on favourable terms in the past.

India has been a First Responder on numerous occasions for Maldives," he said. "Our cooperation has also enhanced the security and well-being of your country through shared activities, equipment provisioning, capacity building and training," Jaishankar added.

# BJP expresses concern over rise in Muslim population

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday expressed concern over the pace of increase in Muslim population in the country and wondered its impact on the reservation provided to SCs, STs and OBCs, claiming the Congress is "hell bent" on providing quota to the minority community if voted to power.

The ruling party's reaction came after a recent working paper by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) said the share of the Hindu population decreased by 7.82 per cent between 1950 and 2015 in India, while that of Muslims increased by 43.15 per cent, suggesting that there is a conducive environment in the country to foster diversity. The paper titled 'Share of Religious Minorities: A Cross-Country Analysis (1950-2015)' further said the share of Jains in the population of India decreased from 0.45 per cent in 1950 to 0.36 per cent in 2015. The report comes ahead of the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha polls.

"It's a very well-known fact, which has been in the public domain for around a decade. If you see the 1951 census, Hindus were having 88 per cent population and Muslims 9.5 per cent. In the 2011 census, Hindus (population) reduced to 79.8 percent from



80 percent while Muslims' percentage went up by more than 14.5," BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said.

"But, the question arises that if by this pace the population is increasing and Congress is hell bent upon giving reservation to the Muslims on the basis of population, they will cut the share of the SCs, STs and the OBCs," he added. Trivedi said the Congress, if voted to power will, then keep on "changing" the share of reservation in future with increase in the Muslim population, "which is more likely because they (Muslims) are having possibility of multiple marriages".

Muslims share in the reservation will keep on increasing also because of "conversion and infiltration because they are having a secular cover from them (the Congress)," he added. "So this is a bigger question and a bigger challenge which they (Congress) have to

answer," the BJP spokesperson said. Senior BJP leader and Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that the EAC-PM's report raises many questions because one particular community is "increasing its population in a manner where demography of India is being altered, changed".

"This leads to some questions that need to be asked and answered," he said, adding "How much of growth in Muslim community is being caused by illegal immigration and conversion?" he asked.

"What is the impact of this significant increase in the minority community's (Muslims) population on the rights and opportunities (available) for the other minority communities? There are Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians. Is there any crowding out of these minority communities as a consequence of this (rise in Muslim population)?" Chandrasekhar asked.

He alleged that some political parties including the Congress are making "huge attempt to alter the Constitution and bring religion based reservation".

"So, what will be the consequence when you have the Muslim community increasing its population so rapidly, from 9 per cent to 14.5 per cent and there are political forces that want to give them reservation," he said.

# Defence Secretary urges firms to support border areas development

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane on Thursday here emphasised on the need to achieve self-reliance in every field to deal with future challenges and urged infrastructure firms to contribute in Government's effort towards development of border areas. He made these assertions while inaugurating a national symposium and industry meet on 'Emerging Technologies in Infrastructure Development' organized by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO). The two-day event, with the participation from the Armed Forces, academia, industry and DRDO, aims to foster dialogue, exchange knowledge and explore innovative approaches to address the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies in infrastructure development in line with the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. In his address, the Defence Secretary emphasised on the need to achieve self-reliance in every field to deal with future challenges. He stated that India is a country with a significant

percentage of young population, and self-reliance will ensure gainful employment to them. Underlining the importance of achieving 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, Aramane asserted that there is no trusted trend in geopolitics, and India cannot depend on other countries for its security and safeguarding national interests. He stressed that self-reliance will help the country take giant strides on the path of becoming a developed nation by 2047. Highlighting the emphasis being laid by the Government on infrastructure development along the borders, the Defence



Secretary exhorted the infrastructure firms to contribute in further strengthening the apparatus. He added that while the Armed Forces personnel are

being provided with latest weapons and equipment, the private sector should contribute in bolstering the infrastructure set-up in the border areas. He referred to the Vibrant Villages Programme which aims to motivate people to stay in their native locations in border areas, and urged the firms to set up a separate section, within their respective organisations, which focuses on development in far-flung areas. Aramane stated that the DRDO is extending support to the private sector in Research and Development, and

together they can come up with new innovations to build faster and better in the times to come. He called upon the industry to walk hand-in-hand with the government, and focus more on the mass production of quality products in a time-bound manner. He also urged the industry to collaborate with the academia to enhance the skills of the workforce, which can help realise a technology into a product. Speaking on the occasion, DRDO chief Samir V Kamat emphasised on the importance of infrastructure in the development of a nation. He

stated that India is witnessing a phenomenal growth in the field of technical infrastructure, which is required to maintain the country's strategic deterrence. The DRDO Chairman added that technology is evolving rapidly, and the necessity of sustainable infrastructure and green infrastructure is now becoming a part of technical domain. The Defence Secretary also inaugurated the industry-partner exhibition, organised on the sidelines of the event, showcasing latest technologies and products developed by the various industry partners.

# Effective Defence industry ecosystem taking shape in country, says Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Manoj Pande has said an effective defence-industry ecosystem is taking shape in the country and veterans with their field experience are "ideally suited" for incorporation into indigenous research and manufacturing of technological solutions required by the force. In his address at the Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO) Summit 2024 held at the Manekshaw Centre here on Wednesday, he said the Army's responsibility towards its veterans remains a "sacred commitment". The aim of the summit was to bring

together different stakeholders on a common platform, to narrow down the gap between enterprise requirements, veteran competencies and the pursuits of AWPO. "While the demand for skilled and experienced workforce exists at the industry end, at the same time, a human resource pool of veterans with adequate experience and unique skill sets is also available, after they exit from active service each year. "The endeavour is to synergise the two as well as strengthen the linkages that can facilitate veteran absorption into not only the industry but also PSUs and quasi-government organisations," the Army chief said. He said the veterans with their field



experience and insights into operational conditions, logistics of the systems and weapon platforms "are ideally suited for incorporation into indigenous research, development, innovation and manufacturing of

technological solutions required by the Indian Army". They also bring to the table, leadership qualities, and a very sound understanding of the human element and can contribute towards ergonomics and user interface design, aspects which are critical to produce user-friendly equipment, General Pande said. He emphasised the invaluable contributions of veterans to the nation's prosperity. The Army chief said services to the nation by the veterans "do not end" when they bid farewell to military life, instead it transitions into "a new chapter" or second innings of commitment to society and nation building.

He underscored that the Army has undertaken the process of holistic skill certification, as per the core competency of each individual, in collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. He also mentioned initiatives such as 'Project KAUSHALVEER' that help serve personnel in acquiring certification for skill sets according to the established industry standards. General Pande praised the "Veer Nari", who he said also bring with them unparalleled determination and resilience. He urged the entrepreneurs to integrate them too as part of their initiatives on human capital intake.



# National Archives acquires private paper collection of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's rich repository of archival records received a significant enhancement on Thursday as the National Archives of India (NAI) acquired freedom fighter Rafi Ahmad Kidwai's private paper collection comprising original correspondences between Kidwai and other eminent leaders such as Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, and PD Tandon. These documents hold historical importance and provide a unique perspective on the deliberations, decisions, and collaborations that shaped India's journey towards independence and its early years as a sovereign nation. NAI Director General (DG) Arun Singhal told The Pioneer that the family of the late leader had approached them a month ago, seeking to preserve the documents that were contained in three big boxes. After examining the documents, they were found to be historically significant, and now they will be scanned and made available on the abhilekh portal for public viewing, free of cost, he said. Singhal further said that various historical documents, including correspondence and circulars related to leaders like Gandhi, Subash Chandra Bose and other freedom fighters have been preserved in the

portal and if anyone wishes to download them, they have to pay a nominal amount. Access to these primary sources benefit researchers, historians, and the public alike, deepening their understanding of India's past and its journey towards progress and development. The papers related to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai were handed over to Singhal by late leader's family members led by Faiz Ahmad Kidwai who happens to be Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Tazeen Kidwai, daughter of late Hussain Kamil Kidwai, youngest brother of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Sarah Manaal Kidwai.

Now the NAI has ensured that valuable historical materials are safeguarded for future generations and made accessible for research and study about the personality who has left an indelible mark on India's history. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, born on February 18, 1894, in Masauli, Uttar Pradesh, hailed from a middle-class zamindar family. His political journey began with his involvement in the Khilafat Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement, leading to imprisonment. Known for his vivacity, brilliance, and charm, Kidwai dedicated himself to India's independence and fought against communalism and superstitions.

# India, UK review strategic ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and United Kingdom on Thursday here reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral strategic ties during talks with visiting British National Security Advisor (NSA) Tim Barrow and his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval. Barrow also held extensive talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Jaishankar and Barrow discussed various bilateral, regional and global issues. "Good to meet UK NSA Tim Barrow today in Delhi. Discussed a range of regional and global issues of importance. Also reviewed the progress in our bilateral ties," Jaishankar said on X. It is understood that Jaishankar and Barrow delved into the overall situation in West Asia. Barrow is on a two-day visit to India. Talks between Doval and Barrow reportedly focused on Technology and Security Initiative, a major bilateral mechanism aimed at enhancing collaboration in critical and emerging technologies between India



and the UK. The two NSAs also deliberated on bilateral issues of mutual interest and exchanged views on regional and global matters. Barrow arrived in India on a two-day visit to participate in a high-level dialogue led by the NSAs of both countries, which aims to deepen cooperation on various fronts, including security, technology, and regional affairs. This visit is also expected to strengthen and further broaden the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries. In 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his then-British counterpart Boris Johnson agreed to the India-UK 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' and India-UK Roadmap 2030 to steer cooperation for the next 30 years.

# Nearly 12 per cent of eligible Indian children missed measles vaccine: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 12 per cent of eligible children in India have not received any recommended double-dose vaccination for measles, highlighting a significant gap in measles vaccination coverage among the beneficiaries. This deficiency is particularly pronounced in northeastern States like Nagaland, where the share of zero-dose cases is as high as 26 per cent. In contrast, Tamil Nadu was found to report the lowest at 4.6 per cent. Researchers from the Union Health Ministry and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Varanasi investigated previously overlooked critical aspects of measles vaccination, focusing on zero-doses, partially vaccinated, and those fully immunised. They analysed data of over 43,000 children aged 2-3 years, collected through the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5). The team found that close to 30 per cent of the eligible children have received only one measles-containing vaccine (MCV1), while about 60 per cent have been fully immunised (MCV2). The findings are published in the journal Vaccine. In 2017, India adopted the National Strategic Plan for Achieving and Sustaining Measles and Rubella Elimination. The researchers acknowledged that disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the risk



of measles in vulnerable populations. While immunisation programmes were eventually resumed in a phased manner, measles zero-dose children pose a significant obstacle to achieving goals of eliminating the acute and highly contagious viral disease, the researchers said. Occurring primarily in children, symptoms can include high fever, cough, runny nose and a rash all over the body. Being vaccinated is the best way to avoid getting sick and spreading the disease, according to the World Health Organization. The analysis also revealed huge inter-district variations, according to the researchers. They found that in Uttar Pradesh, while Prayagraj and Banda districts were found to have about 34 per cent and 32 per cent of these cases, respectively, Hapur and Etawah have 2.6 per cent and 2.1 per cent of zero-dose cases. The researchers said Arunachal Pradesh

was another such example, where the West Siang district had the greatest share with almost 50 per cent of eligible children receiving no dose of the vaccination, while the Lower Dibang Valley district had only 2.8 per cent of such cases. Socio-demographic factors were analysed to influence the measles vaccination status of children, with those born later in the family being less likely to have received no dose. Low levels of wealth and mother's education too were found to increase the odds of children not receiving any dose of the vaccination. "Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in measles transmission, with individuals from lower socioeconomic classes experiencing higher attack rates resulting in outbreaks," the authors wrote. The findings underscored the need for tailored strategies, especially within districts displaying close to 10 per cent variability in zero-dose cases, the researchers said. "The identification of a notable percentage (11.5 per cent) of children receiving zero-doses signals a concerning gap in immunisation coverage," the authors wrote and pointed out that, this "highlights the importance of last mile effort and application of big push theory in terms of more frequent rounds of campaigns mode vaccine delivery for the target of 95 per cent vaccine coverage for population-level immunity."





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Air turbulence

Air India Express cabin crew's moody 'sick leave' hits operations, leaves fliers high and dry

In the realm of air travel, few situations are as frustrating as flight cancellations. The anticipation of reaching a destination is replaced by uncertainty and inconvenience. Such was the case recently when Air India Express, the low-cost subsidiary of Air India, found itself in a crisis, leading to a wave of flight cancellations. The flag carrier of India has long been grappling with financial woes and operational challenges. Despite various restructuring efforts, the airline has struggled to stay afloat in a fiercely competitive industry. The latest crisis began when over 300 senior cabin crew members of Express flights reported sick at the last minute, resulting in the cancellation of more than 90 flights since Tuesday night, leaving airports in disarray and passengers seething with frustration. Of course, Air India has now lent a helping hand to its subsidiary, deciding to operate 20 flights against 74 Express cancellations on Thursday, and sacking 30 crew members over "sick leave". The root cause of this crisis stems from longstanding grievances articulated by Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU). They have voiced concerns about unfair treatment, citing instances where internal job postings were filled with external candidates, bypassing qualified internal staff. The owners, on their part, do not recognise AIXEU. The Regional Labour Commissioner in New Delhi has also criticised the management for alleged violations of labour laws, highlighting a lack of responsible decision-making. Adding to the turbulence is Air India's ongoing financial struggles and operational challenges.



Air India Express, despite its parent company's losses, remained profitable. In 2021, it was sold to the Tata Group, which merged it with AirAsia India. It aimed to capture the budget aviation market with a focus on non-trunk routes and ancillary services. It is the only profitable airline in the Tata Group's aviation stable — AirAsia India, Vistara and Air India — incurred a combined loss of Rs 15,530 crores. The fallout from these cancellations has been significant, with passengers expressing their frustration on social media platforms. Long queues, missed connections and inadequate communication have characterised the scenes at airports. In response, Air India Express has issued apologies and promises of improved services, but the damage to passenger trust has been done. The Indian aviation sector has huge potential but the issues of mismanagement are galore. The Govt must proactively ensure that the fliers are not taken for a ride and the airlines also do not incur losses. Besides, the pandemic years were very traumatic for the industry and it is slowly recovering. The Govt must resolve the crisis before it snowballs into a crisis and takes down the whole sector. Looking ahead, the fate of Air India and its subsidiaries remains uncertain. Only time will tell whether Air India Express and its counterparts can rise above the chaos and emerge with flying colours.

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### PICTALK



Students perform during the celebration of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary, in Nadia

# An open letter to Shehbaz Sharif

We tolerated terrorist violence for many years but when we could no longer tolerate it, we went to Parliament to do away with Article 370. But we did not resort to violence

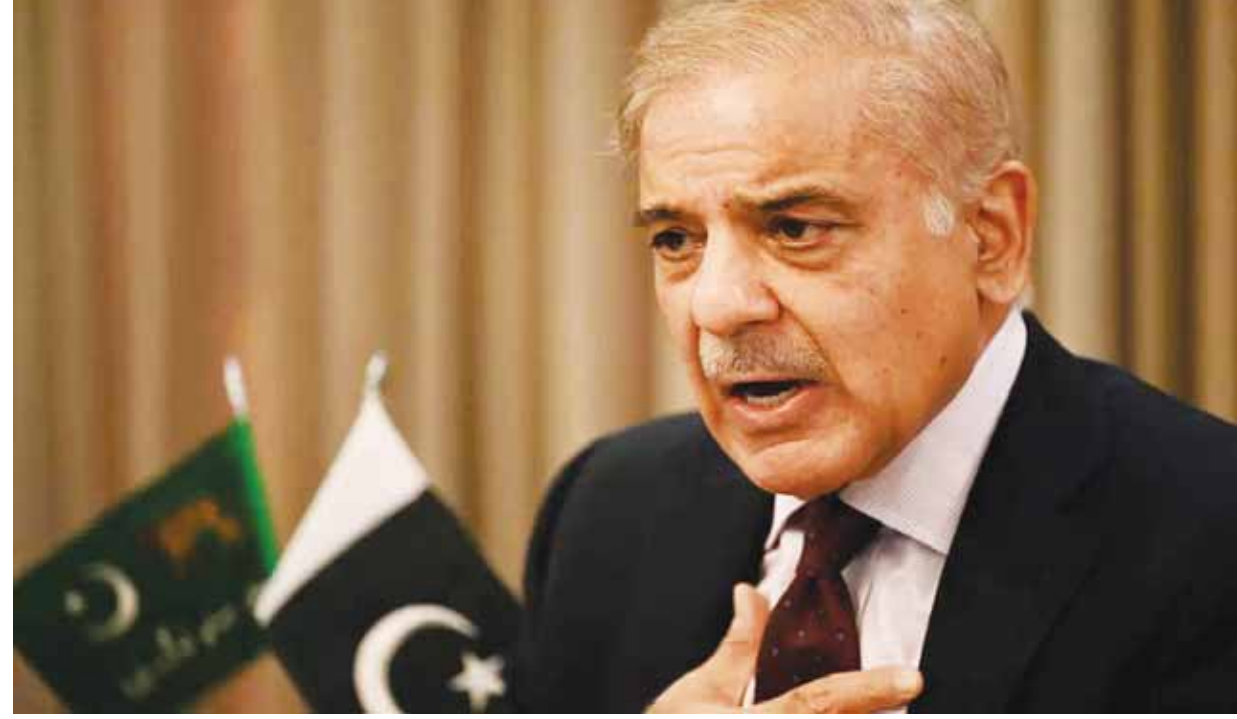


PRAFULL GORADIA

Dear Vazir-e-Azam Shehbaz Sharif Sahab, I have taken the privilege of writing to the Prime Minister of our neighbouring country, which, till 76 years ago, was part of us, but separated in acrimonious circumstances. I'm sure that you're aware, as a lot of in India are, that this separation and the aftermath it gave rise to continues to not only cast its shadow over the subcontinent but also torment relations between various communities. This open letter to you is a humble attempt, not to hark back to the events of those decades and apportion blame, but to address the contentiousness of modern-day issues that continue to trail in their wake.

Whenever the issue of Ayodhya, the Gyan Vapi temple (Varanasi) or the Krishna Janmabhoomi (Mathura) comes up, my mind travels to Lahore and the Gurudwara Shaheed Gunj at the Naulakha Bazar locality of your splendid city. The ownership of the place was disputed by the local Muslims who claimed that the place had originally been a mosque. It had been converted into a gurudwara by the local Sikhs during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When opportune in the 19th century, the people of the city, led by some Muslim Leaguers, went to court over this. They did not win their case for the re-conversion of the gurudwara into a mosque. Legal counsel argued that an appeal could be filed if necessary, right up to the Privy Council. However, the then premier of Punjab Sir Sikanar Hayat Khan advised against any further action as it might open a Pandora's Box across the subcontinent, which was then undivided. Sikanar Hayat also advised against any further litigation.

Any use of the argument of adverse possession might cause the return of many of the temples that had come into Muslim possession. What was then perhaps overlooked was that a Hindu temple is a residence of the divine and not merely a prayer hall. The pratimas (icons) are the first step in the quest for spirituality. Ultimately, spirituality can be



active by having a darshan of the avatar of the divine. In Sikhism, they do not have an icon nor the scope of spirituality in the same way as in a Hindu temple. Prophet Moses, the founding prophet of Judaism, the first of the three Semitic religions—also called Religions of the Book—known in Islam as Hazrat Moosa, had expressly forbidden any idol worship by the second of his Ten Commandments; "Thou shalt not make any graven image of thy lord the god". Your faith has rigidly adhered to this particular Commandment.

However, it does pain me no end to state that you have carried this adherence way too far. In your country, over 75 temples have been desecrated or pulled down after independence in 1947, a sordid trend that is continuing. From my Urdu teacher who was a scholar, I have learnt that it is your bounden duty as a momin (believer) to desecrate butts (idols) installed by kafirs (infidels). But for the sake of friendly relations between us two neighbours, your people should desist from such desecrations. I am saying this after

POLITICAL LEADERS OF YOUR GENERATION MIGHT STILL FIND COMFORT IN THE NOTION THAT INDIANS ARE A PEACEFUL AND DORMANT LOT AND THEREFORE WON'T REACT MUCH. THAT MIGHT INDEED HAVE BEEN THE CASE A COUPLE OF DECADES AGO, BUT IT IS NO LONGER SO

accepting the fact that Islam detests parasti (idol worship) and insists on majahab parasti (adherence to the faith) alone. But we live in a world where adherents of other religions too have equal rights to profess and practice their faith, without hurting others. I appeal to you to care for our sentiments and not target the temples and idols that still survive. Political leaders of your generation might still find comfort in the notion that Indians are a peaceful, and also dormant, lot and therefore won't react much. That might indeed have been the case till a couple of decades ago but is no longer so. India and Indians are changing. Real change in our civilizational journey was heralded in December 1992, of which I was fortunate to be a humble part. In India, we have begun a movement to restore the temples that were casualties of the medieval age. I shall shortly be writing to Madam Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of our eastern neighbouring country. Dozens of temples continue to be desecrated in her country every year. You would agree that good neigh-

bours do not hurt each other. Kindly, remember that there are thousands upon thousands of mosques built upon the ruins of ancient temples. So far, we have preferred to approach the courts of law and minimize unilateral action. I appeal to you to also eschew violence. In Kashmir too, over 130 temples were attacked and desecrated even as India continued to hold control over the state's territory. I am aware that Pakistan took great umbrage when we abrogated Article 370, but it is my wonder that we had to do so? We tolerated terrorist violence for many years, but when we could tolerate it no longer, we went to Parliament to do away with Article 370. But you would certainly appreciate that we did not resort to violence even on this issue. Our Muslim compatriots are cooperating to a moderate degree, even in the state of Kashmir. This is a trend which we hope continues. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Political manoeuvring



Propos the news article, "Modi, Lalu in a tug of war on Muslim quota," published on May 8, this is my response. The recent political discourse surrounding reservations in India has taken a contentious turn, with various parties embroiled in a heated debate over extending reservation benefits to Muslims. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vehemently opposed such a

move, labelling it as a ploy to undermine existing quotas for SC, ST, and OBC communities. The BJP accuses its rivals of attempting to appease a specific vote bank by advocating for Muslim reservations while disregarding the principles of social and educational backwardness outlined in the Constitution and the Mandal Commission report. Conversely, opposition figures argue that denying reservations to Muslims would be unjust and tantamount to disenfranchisement. Amidst these exchanges, accusations of conspiracy and attempts to manipulate voter sentiments loom large. The charged rhetoric underscores the high stakes of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, where competing visions of governance, identity, and social justice are at play. As citizens, it's imperative to critically engage with these debates and hold our leaders accountable for their promises and policies.

Kiara Sharma | Mumbai

a mere whisper against the cacophony of electoral fervor. Expenditure limits crumble under the weight of unchecked spending, leaving us disillusioned with the integrity of the process. The impact of elections extends beyond just voting, as they can turn schools into battlegrounds, with political theatre taking centre stage and the future suffering while the eloquence of our founding luminaries seems lost amidst the mudslinging and vitriol of contemporary discourse. Yet, amidst the chaos, there is a glimmer of hope embodied by figures like APJ Abdul Kalam, whose legacy reminds us of the transformative power of leadership rooted in humility and service.

Arya Kapoor | Kolkata

### BEGGING IS AN EPIDEMIC

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Benevolent hearts: Dynamics of begging and household donations," published on May 8, this is my response. Begging has been ingrained in the roots of Indian society for ages. This sickening culture has become a fashion, a compulsion, a profes-

sion and even a kind of recreation in our country. Beggars in India easily outnumber their ilk in other big countries. To the Westerners, India is a land of mendicants. Beggars are found everywhere—on roads, crossings, footpaths, etc. But their favourite hangouts are bathing ghats, temples, religious fairs, railway stations, trains and bus stands. It is a real nuisance to be confronted by street beggars in all places. Like the Almighty, they seem to be omnipresent. You are waiting for a bus or walking down a road with your friend, and beggars suddenly appear from nowhere and start an endless volley of supplications until you give them a few coins out of sheer disgust and helplessness. The monstrous practice of begging cannot be eradicated from our society because millions are living 'below the poverty line, yearning for a morsel of food. Unfortunately very little has been done by our past and present governments to obliterate the social illness of begging.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

# Enigma of copyright in the digital world

Policy-makers face the formidable challenge of revising copyright laws effectively to tackle the complexities presented by AI



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

People often say that in this digital world, nothing remains secret. Even personal details can be accessed through the Internet. The quantum of information on the Internet is so vast that, despite the security measures, it is not cent per cent foolproof. In such a scenario, one must critically examine copyright's relevance in the digital world. Copyright rules and laws traditionally protect every creation or innovation, so the original creator retains credit for their work and is aptly rewarded through monetary benefits. When an author creates a book, they automatically own the copyright. This gives them the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, perform, and display the book and create derivative works based on it. In most countries, copyright protection for a book typically lasts for the author's lifetime plus 50-70 years. During this time, others generally cannot reproduce or distribute the book without the author's permission unless their use falls under a specific exception, such as fair use or fair dealing. Within the realm of music,



this signifies that the individual responsible for creating a song, the writer of the lyrics, the composer, or the performer, possesses the sole entitlement to utilise, disseminate, and capitalise on that song. In India, organisations such as the Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) and Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) administer the rights of copyright owners and collect royalties on their behalf for the public performance and broadcast of songs. Copyright also extends to research works, protecting and monetising one's creations through patents. Unfortunately, journal publishers own the copyright for research publications. The publishers amass massive amounts through subscriptions and advertisements without providing any monetary benefit to the authors. Most of the reputed journals

do peer reviews free of cost, take processing charges from authors, and get subscription fees and advertisements as revenue. What does the poor researcher get? A mental satisfaction of getting published in a high-impact journal? In a way, it's not fair. A few magazines, of course, practice giving honorariums to the authors. Despite having stringent copyright rules and regulations, its efficacy is questionable in the rapidly evolving digital age landscape. The widespread availability of digital content and the simplicity of sharing information on the Internet have presented unprecedented difficulties and intricacies for existing copyright rules. Today, one can easily copy content from online resources without crediting the original creator. Content available on social media sites, including photographs, is widely reproduced. Identifying the original content creator, be it literary or artistic works, is often difficult. Even stringent protective measures like user authentication mechanisms such as passwords, multi-factor authentication (MFA),

and role-based access controls (RBAC) to restrict access to authorised individuals or groups and watermarking techniques often fail to prevent the infringement of copyrights. The advent of AI in digital platforms has complicated the situation. As AI systems become more sophisticated, their ability to create, replicate, and modify content raises intricate legal questions regarding ownership and authorship. Though AI can do any role, it lacks the human touch in its creation that connects human minds. While individuals are accountable for creating and instructing these algorithms, the AI system autonomously produces the outcome, erasing the distinction between human and machine authorship. The current necessity lies in incorporating ethical, cultural, and economic considerations while crafting a new policy that effectively balances the rights of creators and AI developers. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)

### EVOLUTION OF MONETARY POLICY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Evolution of Monetary Policymaking in India," published on May 8, this is my response. The journey of India's monetary policy from its inception to the present day is a saga of adaptation and evolution. From the establishment of the Reserve Bank of India to the modern era of inflation targeting, each phase has been marked by its unique challenges and responses. The nationalisation of banks in 1969 marked a pivotal moment, transitioning monetary policy towards a more centralised, planned approach. However, external shocks like the oil crises of the 1970s tested the resilience of this system, necessitating revisions and reforms.

The introduction of the Multiple Indicator Approach in 1998 reflected a shift towards a more holistic understanding of economic dynamics. Yet, the global financial crisis of 2008 exposed vulnerabilities, prompting a recalibration towards inflation targeting. While inflation targeting has its merits, recent disruptions such as demonetization and the pandemic have highlighted its limitations in addressing supply-side pressures. As the landscape of inflation evolves, a nuanced and comprehensive policy framework is imperative, one that combines the principles of inflation targeting with proactive measures to mitigate supply-side disruptions. In essence, the history of India's monetary policy underscores the need for continual adaptation in the face of evolving economic realities.

Vihaan Reddy | Bengaluru

### REFLECTIONS ON ELECTIONS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Elected leaders need to rethink," published on May 8, this is my response. Election times unveil a complex tapestry of our democracy, woven with threads of hope, disappointment, and societal reflection. As citizens, we witness the ritual dance of power, where promises collide with reality, and ideals meet the harsh edges of pragmatism. The model code of conduct, ostensibly a guardian of fair play, often feels like



## FIRST COLUMN

### EU-CHINA RELATIONS AT A CROSSROADS

Xi embarks on a strategic journey across Europe, a move laden with symbolism



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Geo-political adjustments are getting done, bilaterally and plurilateral, even as the world's largest democracies are busy calming their domestic constituencies, where a key rallying agenda is China. The two largest democracies, India and the US, both of whom have their own set of issues with China, are in the middle of some of the most competitive election processes, ever seen across the globe. Meanwhile, the EU, or at least many of its member countries, not to mention US allies such as Australia are carefully recalibrating the entangled web of engagement with China.

It is by no coincidence that Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, was on a strategic three-nation tour of Europe, earlier this week. This tri-nation tour, during which the Chinese premier, also met the European Union president Ursula Von der Leyen, comes after a gap of almost 5 years and is also a time when many European nations have been blaming China for pushing highly subsidised electric vehicles into their markets, making several European auto factories redundant. The Europeans also wanted to focus on China playing a larger role in stabilising its "friends without limits" Russia, in the war against Ukraine, pushing up fuel-aided inflation across the region. The Europeans in the plain speak, they are known for, outlined clearly in the president's press statement, "the first topic where we exchanged views on was the geopolitical situation. We especially discussed Ukraine and the conflicts in the Middle East. We agree that Europe and China have a shared interest in peace and security. We count on China to use all its influence on Russia to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. President Xi has played an important role in de-escalating Russia's irresponsible nuclear threats, and I



am confident that President Xi will continue to do so against the backdrop of the ongoing nuclear threats by Russia. We have also discussed China's commitment not to provide any lethal equipment to Russia. More effort is needed to curtail the delivery of dual-use goods to Russia that find their way to the battlefield. And given the existential nature of the threats stemming from this war for both Ukraine and Europe, this does affect the EU-China relations. "The message from the EU to China was, don't help Russia in its unjust war on European soil, or else the bilateral relation would be in trouble. No surprises, Ukraine and the Middle East didn't feature, till the bottom three paragraphs of the press statement issued by the Chinese team, post the trilateral meeting.

Also no surprises with the language which read "On the Ukraine crisis, President Xi pointed out that China, France and the EU all wish to see an early ceasefire and return of peace in Europe, and support political settlement of the crisis. China has been working vigorously to facilitate talks for peace. China's objective and just position and its constructive role have been widely recognized by the international community. China is ready to stay in communication with relevant parties." The other significant element of these conversations was traded, as all parties involved are feeling the constraints of escalating fuel costs, the volatile geo-political environment and, the post-Covid, supply chain mismatch. The EU provided sharp pointers on Chinese subsidised products, free and fair access to each other's markets and supply chain resiliency in their conversations. A defensive China maintained that the two sides have extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation in green and digital transition. It is necessary that they properly address economic and trade frictions through dialogue and consultation, and accommodate each other's legitimate concerns." China has started making, the right moves to woo back some of its largest market partners, at a time when India and the US, the other key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific theatre, are busy with their elections. India will get over elections in about a month, and an agile nimble China policy outlook awaits.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

# Economic progress in India: A reality check

Despite notable achievements, economic progress falters due to the neglect of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Public Sector Undertakings and agricultural reforms



ATUL SEHGAL



India has come a long way since 2014 in the matter of various indices and parameters of economic development. Consider this. India has increased her per capita income through this decade from USD 1560 to USD 2500, a 60 per cent increase. It has purportedly lifted 400 million persons out of poverty during the decade. Its foreign exchange kitty has increased from USD 322 billion to USD 640 billion during the same period. These are impressive figures. Large figures are always impressive, but they need to be checked, compared and corroborated to be sanctified.

Consider this now. The per capita income of India increased from USD 600 to USD 1560 for the period from 2004 to 2014 which is a bigger increase of 160 percent. Its foreign exchange reserves increased from USD 107 billion to USD 322 billion between 2004 and 2014. Whereas the surge from 2004 to 2014 was 200 per cent, it was only 100 per cent in the next decade.

The above comparative figures talk aloud about India's poor economic development in the last decade. This is not an overall performance report on the current NDA government. This government has many unprecedented achievements to its credit. But on the economic front, it doesn't seem to have delivered. Why has the NDA not been able to deliver on the economic front? There are several reasons.

**Neglect of MSMEs:** The micro, small and medium enterprises sector in the country did not receive the attention due to it. This sector is the main source of employment generation. Imports from China continued to swell and many manufacturers closed down their factories to become traders and distributors. Poor implementation of the Make in India programme: The Make in India was a well-conceived ambitious programme

to boost indigenous manufacturing. The scheme had its points of deficiency but regrettably, the major driving points of the grandiose scheme remained largely on paper and were never implemented properly. The result--share of manufacturing in the economy continues to stagnate at 14 percent.



THE GOVERNMENT DID WELL TO BLUEPRINT REFORMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR—THOSE RELATED TO MSP AND PROCUREMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE. BUT THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO IMPLEMENT IT BY CAPITULATING IN FRONT OF FAKE PROTESTERS MASQUERADING AS FARMERS

Absence of bureaucratic reforms: Our obsolete, corruption-ridden colonial bureaucratic system had never delivered earlier and cried for reforms. But the reforms did not come. The result was a failure of key developmental programmes like the 100 Smart Cities Programme. The government did a remarkable job of establishing GST and promulgating the IBC. This enabled a clean-up of banks and a sharp decline in their NPAs. However, the failure of the government to increase the ease of doing business by cutting down on bureaucratic red tape is a big reason behind the continuing lack of a suitable ecosphere for business and big investment.

**Failure to implement Agricultural Reforms:** The government did well to blueprint reforms in the agricultural sector—those related to MSP and procurement of agricultural produce. But the government failed to implement the same by capitulating in front of fake protesters masquerading as farmers.

**Neglect of PSUs:** The government paid very little attention to the state and central PSUs which account for 15 per cent of the total economic activities in the country. It kept on harping on the absence of the need for the government to be in business. This

was an impractical approach to handling the Indian economy and failed to tap the big PSUs in which so much of public money had been invested.

**Failure to bring about judicial reforms:** Justice in this country continues to be delayed, denied and derailed. Despite big talks to the contrary, the government did nothing in the direction of judicial reforms. This was and remains a big dampener to FDI and even domestic investment in new business.

Notwithstanding the above, we must bear in mind that most of the previous governments had left deep pits in our economy that needed to be filled to prepare the ground for the rapid holistic development of the country. The UPA government, between 2004 and 2014 did produce better numbers for FE reserves and economic growth rate but the money generating that investment and growth was preponderantly from the huge proportion of parallel-black money economy out of the overall economy. Money was meagrely flowing for the critical sectors of defence and infrastructure and even for some important socialistic schemes. Modi 1.0 and Modi 2.0 changed this by bringing economic discipline and curbing corruption and economic malfeasance. It brought GST and IBC and did the clean-up of Banks by bringing down drastically the NPAs. It severely dented the black money economy.

These were the pits filled by the Modi government that have prepared fertile soil for the fast-track economic progress of the country now. Given the above, it is imper-

ative and is also expected that the Modi government, if returned to power, will take the undermentioned steps to boost real progress on the economic front. Economic progress is the foundation of the overall progress of a country. Progress on other fronts like defence, foreign affairs, etc. has been significant but sustainable multifaceted development can only be achieved on the foundation of a strong and healthy economic bottom line.

The country needs drastic institutional and bureaucratic reforms. It needs urgent implementation of the farming sector reforms which were shelved after so much drum beating. The education sector calls for a thorough overhaul to replace the colonial Macaulay established system with an indigenous system in tune with the nation's ethos and tradition.

Sloganeering and political gamesmanship need to be replaced by serious, earnest and committed steps for boosting investment, trade, manufacturing and exports. India has a huge potential for becoming an economic powerhouse in quick time but we need to go about building our economy with due seriousness and dedication, rising above narrow interests of caste, class, political affiliations and last but not least, political expediency. It is very much hoped that Modi 3.0, with a two-thirds majority, will usher in the much-needed administrative, bureaucratic and judicial reforms for the speedy economic progress of the country.

(The author is a management consultant; views are personal)

# India and Armenia strengthen defence ties amidst regional instability

As the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis looms, the growing Indo-Armenia partnership emerges as a vital defence against destabilising forces

In recent years, the strategic partnership between India and Armenia has undergone a remarkable transformation—fired by their shared commitment to fortify defence capabilities and confront regional security challenges head-on. Against the backdrop of Armenia's enduring struggle with Azerbaijan and Turkey's support for Azerbaijan's advantages, the precipitating connection between Armenia and India stands for recognition. Armenia's proximity to India and both agreeing to diversify their strategic alignment, deserves special attention on the global stage.

**Military Cooperation:** Armenia's imperative to diversify its security alliances and bolster its military capabilities,



PADMALOCHAN DASH

particularly amidst the enduring conflict with Azerbaijan, is evident through heightened defense spending and collaborations with nations such as India and France. India's involvement with Armenia's military not only strengthens its defensive capabilities but also serves to counterbalance external-internal influences like Turkey and Pakistan in the South Asian region. The expanding Indo-Armenian

partnership encompasses various facets, including the exchange of weaponry, joint military exercises, and strategic consultations, all aimed at enhancing defense readiness and security in their respective regions.

**Advanced Weaponry and Joint Exercises:** The acquisition of state-of-the-art weaponry highlights the growing defense cooperation between India and Armenia. Reports indicate ongoing provision of military hardware from India to Armenia, including multiple-launch rocket systems, anti-tank missiles, and radar systems. Additionally, joint military exercises and training programs are underway to enhance preparedness and interoperability between their

armed forces. These collaborative efforts facilitate the exchange of expertise and tactics, fostering effective coordination for potential future operations, from joint exercises to intelligence sharing, both nations are committed to showcasing their military capabilities and strengthening their strategic partnership.

**Geopolitical Determinations:** Armenia's pivotal role in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) offers India diversified trade routes and enhanced access to Eurasian markets, bolstering strategic interests in economic resilience and geopolitical balancing. Conversely, India's military support for Armenia underscores its commitment to preserving regional peace and countering aggressive

manoeuvres by the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis. Through the realisation of mutual interests, India and Armenia can reshape security dynamics in the South Caucasus region by challenging the dominance of larger geopolitical actors and their support for rogue powers.

**Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan Axis:** The Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis poses a substantial threat to regional stability, with Turkey's unwavering support for Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict then raising concerns about potential escalations. The longstanding military partnership between Turkey and Pakistan, characterised by defence production, joint training exercises, and high-level military dialogues, under-

scores their concerted efforts to advance mutual geopolitical goals and exert influence in the regions. This axis represents a significant challenge to the security and stability of the South Caucasus and South Asian regions, as that axis seeks to consolidate its power and undermine the influence of other regional stakeholders. Responses and Ongoing Efforts: In response to the burgeoning influence of the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis, India's steadfast support for Armenia signifies a resolute stance against their aggressive manoeuvres in the region. Aimed at preserving a delicate balance of power, India and Armenia are all set to intensify their collaboration to address these threats.

While Turkey's stance on

Kashmir validates the burgeoning Indo-Armenia defence cooperation, the nexus between Turkey's involvement in the Kashmir issue and Pakistan's alignment with Azerbaijan's agenda cannot be seen as a mere happenstance, rather a meticulously orchestrated strategy with far-reaching intention. In this backdrop, the urgent need for a meticulously planned multilateral defence partnership underscored. This becomes essential to counter the unholy Turkey-Pakistan-Azerbaijan axis thereby ensuring stability in both the Caucasus and South Asian regions.

**The Promising Prospects:** The emerging strategic cooperation between India and Armenia holds immense promise for enhancing region-

al security and advancing shared interests. Both nations are poised to deepen their partnership and address prevailing challenges through concerted efforts in military collaboration and strategic alignments. India's steadfast support for Armenia underscores its dedication to maintaining peace and stability in the Caucasus region. With far-reaching implications for global geopolitical outcomes, the Indo-Armenia partnership has the potential to redefine the regional balance of power and contribute significantly to the stability and prosperity of both the Caucasus and South Asian regions.

(The writer is working with an Independent Think Tank, views are personal)





# Putin accuses West of fueling global conflicts

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia on Thursday wrapped itself in patriotic pageantry for Victory Day, as President Vladimir Putin celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II by hailing his forces fighting in Ukraine and blasting the West for fueling conflicts around the world.

Even though few veterans of what Russia calls the Great Patriotic War are still alive 79 years after Berlin fell to the Red Army, the victory remains the most important and widely revered symbol of Russia's prowess and a key element of national identity.

Putin has turned Victory Day — the country's most important secular holiday — into a pillar of his nearly quarter-century in power and a justification of his military action in Ukraine. Two days after beginning his fifth term in office, he led the festivities across Russia that recall the nation's wartime sacrifice.



Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces Oleg Salyukov, left, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, centre, and Russian President Vladimir Putin leave Red Square, walk, after the Victory Day military parade in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, May 9, 2024, marking the 79th anniversary of the end of World War II. AP/PTI

"Victory Day unites all generations," Putin said in a speech in Red Square that came on the coldest May 9 in decades amid some snow flurries. "We are going forward relying on our centuries-old traditions and feel confident that together we will ensure a free and secure future of Russia."

As battalions marched by and military hardware — both old and new — rumbled over the cobblestones, the sky cleared briefly to allow a flyby of warplanes, some of which trailed smoke in the white, red and blue of the Russian flag.

Putin hailed the troops fighting in Ukraine as "our heroes" for their courage, resilience and self-denial, adding that "all of Russia is with you."

He accused the West of "fueling regional conflicts, inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife and trying to contain sovereign and independent centers of global development."

With tensions with Washington over Ukraine soaring to their highest level since the Cold War, Putin issued another stark reminder of Moscow's nuclear might.

"Russia will do everything to

prevent global confrontation, but will not allow anyone to threaten us," he said. "Our strategic forces are in combat readiness."

Nuclear-capable Yars intercontinental ballistic missiles were pulled across Red Square, underscoring his message.

The Soviet Union lost about 27 million people in World War II, an estimate that many historians consider conservative, scarring virtually every family.

Nazi troops overran much of the western Soviet Union when they invaded in June 1941, before being driven back all the way to Berlin, where the USSR's hammer and sickle flag was raised above the ruined capital.

The US, UK, France and other allies mark the end of the war in Europe on May 8.

The immense suffering and sacrifice in cities like Stalingrad, Kursk and Putin's native Leningrad — now St Petersburg — still serve as a powerful symbol of the country's ability to prevail against seemingly overwhelming chal-

lenges. Since coming to power on the last day of 1999, Putin has made May 9 an important part of his political agenda, featuring missiles, tanks and fighter jets. Medal-bedecked veterans joined him Thursday to review the parade, and many — including the president — wore the black-and-orange St George's ribbon that is traditionally associated with Victory Day.

About 9,000 troops, including about 1,000 who fought in Ukraine, took part in Thursday's parade. Although the US and UK ambassadors did not attend, Putin was joined by other dignitaries and presidents of several former Soviet nations along with a few other Moscow allies, including the leaders of Cuba, Guinea-Bissau and Laos.

In his speech, he accused the West of "revanchism ... hypocrisy and lies" in seeking to play down the Soviet role in defeating Nazi Germany.

Putin described Victory Day as "very emotional and poignant."

"Every family is honoring its heroes, looking at pictures with dear faces and remembering their relatives and how they fought," he said.

Putin, 71, talks frequently about his family history, sharing memories of his father, who fought on the front during the Nazi siege of the city and was badly wounded.

As Putin tells it, his father, also named Vladimir, came home from a military hospital during the war to see workers trying to take away his wife, Maria, who had been declared dead of starvation. But the elder Putin did not believe she had died — saying she had only lost consciousness, weak with hunger.

Their first child, Viktor, died during the siege when he was 3, one of more than 1 million Leningrad residents who died in the 872-day blockade, most of them from starvation.

For several years, Putin carried a photo of his father in Victory Day marches — as did others honoring relatives who were war veterans — in what was

# Taliban sound warning to journalists, experts

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban on Thursday warned journalists and experts against working with Afghanistan International TV. It's the first time they have told people not to cooperate with a specific outlet.

Afghanistan International TV, which is headquartered in London, is accessible through satellite, cable and social media.

A spokesman for the Taliban-controlled Ministry of Information and Culture alleged the station was committing professional violations and violating moral and legal boundaries.

The Media Violations Commission wanted all journalists and experts in Afghanistan to cease their collaboration with the station, said ministry spokesman Habib Ghofran. "At the commission's meeting held yester-

day (Wednesday), it was decided that participating in discussions and facilitating the broadcast of this media outlet in public places is prohibited," added Ghofran.

He didn't give further details, including what would happen to those who cooperated with the station. The director of Afghanistan International TV, Harun Najafizada, said the decision would not affect the channel because it had no employees or freelancers in the country.

"We don't have anyone on the ground and rely on the reporting of Afghan citizens," said Najafizada. "That's more challenging, but we have tough verification. It's a threat to free media, to other media, and to put pressure on us to forgo out professional standards. It's not going to work."

Afghanistan fares abysmally in terms of press freedom. The latest index from Reporters

without Borders ranked the country 178 out of 180. It ranked 152 last year.

RSF said that three radio reporters were arrested in April for broadcasting music and receiving calls from female listeners during shows. Local authorities weren't available to confirm the arrests.

Also last month, the Taliban suspended two TV stations for failing to "consider national and Islamic values."

The director for one of the suspended stations, Barya TV, rejected the Taliban's allegations. The station is still off air.

Latif Sadiq said the station wasn't informed about the suspension. "The reports that they repeatedly warned (Barya) are absolute lies," Sadiq said on Thursday. "They have decided on their own that (Barya) television is off, broadcasting is off, and they said the case will go to court."

# Japanese aircraft makes emergency landing after glitch

Tokyo (AP): A Japanese defence aircraft carrying eight people made an emergency landing at a commercial airport in central Japan on Thursday after a cockpit window inadvertently slid open during its training flight, officials said. No damage or injuries were reported.

The Japan Air Self-Defence Force said its C-2 transport aircraft experienced the window glitch on Thursday afternoon after taking off from the Iruma Air Base north of Tokyo for a training flight. The incident caused the pilot to request an emergency landing at the nearby Niigata airport, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) north of the air base. The aircraft landed safely and there was no damage or injury from the mishap, officials said.

The JASDF said the roughly 20-inch square window on the left side of the cockpit, which is designed to slide open only manually, did not fall off the aircraft.

# Spanish court shelves tax probe against Shakira

Madrid (AP): A Spanish investigative magistrate on Thursday provisionally shelved the latest probe into an alleged case of tax fraud by pop star Shakira following recommendations by prosecutors.

The Colombian singer had been under investigation for the alleged evasion of 6.7 million Euros (USD 7.2 million) in taxes on her 2018 income via an offshore company. She denied wrongdoing.

State prosecutors who initially brought the allegations said Wednesday "there is not sufficient evidence" of a possible fiscal crime and recommended that the probe be closed. In a statement Thursday, the investigating court said that given that there is no accusation on behalf of prosecutors or the regional government of Catalonia in northeastern Spain, there was no cause to proceed further with the case.

The court said "there is no indication that can prove that Shakira Isabel M R had consciously and voluntarily omitted information and documentation with tax significance."

# IS group claims bombing in Afghanistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for a bombing in Afghanistan's northeast that killed police officers who were part of an anti-poxy crop campaign.

A motorcycle was booby-trapped and exploded, targeting a Taliban patrol in Faizabad town in Badakhshan province, killing and wounding 12 members of the patrol as well as destroying a four-wheel drive vehicle, the group said in a statement late Wednesday.

Abdul Mateen Qani, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said the officers were on their way to destroy poppy crops in the area.

The Islamic State group's affiliate in Afghanistan, a major Taliban rival, has conducted attacks on schools, hospitals, mosques and Shiite areas throughout the country. In March, the group said one of its suicide bombers detonated an explosive belt among Taliban gathered near a Kandahar bank to receive their salaries.

The Taliban pledged to wipe



out the country's drug cultivation industry and imposed a formal ban in April 2022, dealing a heavy blow to hundreds of thousands of farmers and day laborers who relied on proceeds from the crop to survive.

Opium cultivation crashed by 95% after the ban, a report from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said last November. Protests are rare in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, but there was a backlash

in Badakhshan last week in response to the poppy eradication campaign. It prompted a high-ranking delegation led by the chief of military staff Fasihudin Fitrat to visit the region and negotiate with protesters. Protests erupted last Friday after a man was shot and killed by the Taliban for resisting poppy eradication attempts in Darayum district. Another was killed on Saturday during a protest in Argo district.

# Pak leadership vows not to allow May 9 'executors' to get away

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Pakistan's top civil and military leadership Thursday strongly condemned the unprecedented violence by the supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on May 9 last year and vowed not to allow its "executors" to get away with their acts which were aimed at establishing an "individual's dictatorship."

On May 9 last year, violent protests erupted after the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan by paramilitary Rangers from the premises of the Islamabad High Court. His supporters vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander house), Mianwali airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters in Rawalpindi was also attacked by the mob for the first time.

On the first anniversary of the riots, the Pakistan Army issued a statement saying its entire leadership "strongly condemn the criminal acts perpetrated on 9th May 2023".

Terming May 9 (Black Day) as one of the "darkest days in our national history", the Inter-Services Public Relations - the media wing of the army - said that the politically motivated and brainwashed miscreants in an act of rebellion deliberately resorted to violence against state institutions and vandalised sacred symbols of the state and the sites belonging to national heritage.

The army said that after failing to undermine national harmony and stability, the planners, facilitators and executors of this conspiracy embarked upon a sinister campaign of hate against the Armed Forces and the state with an intent to twist the narrative to their advantage and shift the blame on the state institutions.

"It is precisely for this reason there can neither be any compromise with the planners, facilitators and executors of the 9th May tragedy nor they would be allowed to hoodwink the law of land," it said.

"Bringing the real culprits of 9th May to justice is para-

mount to ensure that in future, no one dares to desecrate the memories of our heroes and the symbols of our unity through such unwarranted conduct in future," it added.

Addressing a meeting of the cabinet, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the real aim of the May 9 violence was to end democracy and establish kingship and an "individual's dictatorship."

He said that the May 9 violence was not just a rebellion against Pakistan but against the state, including the army and its chief Gen Asim Munir to create a divide in the country.

"There can absolutely be no soft-peddling of what happened on May 9 and there can be no absolution for those who orchestrated, supported, and assisted the attempt to damage the foundations of our nation," he said in a post on X.

In a message, President Asif Ali Zardari said, "May 9, 2023, will always be remembered as a dark day in Pakistan's history when a politically instigated mob ran amok across the country, damaging public

property and military installations."

Condemning the violence, he said that the incidents "severely tarnished" the country's image and thus only "served the interests of Pakistan's enemies".

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the accountability of the perpetrators and conspirators of the May 9 violence would be taken to its logical conclusion because the characters behind the violence were known to everybody.

Information Minister Atta Tarar said there was evidence about who was involved in the May 9 acts, emphasising that these need to be brought to justice. The violence was also condemned by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz who emphasized "bringing the plotters to justice was necessary".

Pakistan Peoples Party chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari condemned the May 9 acts as "yet another dark chapter in the nation's history". He said the "instigator behind the strongly condemnable events of May 9 is well-known to

everyone".

Meanwhile, Imran Khan refused to apologise for the May 9 riots, a day after the military ruled out dialogue with his party unless they tendered a public apology over the unprecedented violence.

Khan, who spoke to the media after the court proceedings in the 190 million pounds Al Qadir corruption case at Adiala jail on Wednesday, said that he was ready to face an inquiry into the sit-in that his Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf party staged in 2014.

"I condemned the May 9 incidents in front of (former) chief justice Umar Ata Bandial," the 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician said when asked whether he would apologise for the May 9 violence. Khan has been incarcerated since August last year after he was booked in several cases ranging from corruption to violating the Official Secrets Act.

Following the May 9 violence last year, Imran Khan and hundreds of his party workers are being tried under multiple

cases, including one under the stringent Official Secrets Act in connection with the violence.

The government organised several events on the first anniversary of May 9 violence to honour victims whose monuments were defiled by the protestors.

A heavy contingent of police was deployed outside the residence of Imran Khan in Lahore and his party offices across Punjab province to prevent any protest by the party on the first anniversary of the May 9 violence. PTI Secretary-General Omar Ayub Khan said the government launched a crackdown against his party workers to stop them from taking to the streets but they would hold demonstrations.

"Regardless of the crackdown, peaceful rallies and protests will be held all across Pakistan in the morning (of May 9)," he said. A Punjab police officer told Press Trust of India that Khan's party would not be allowed to hold any rally in the province on May 9. Authorities in Islamabad have declared all gatherings as illegal.

# Prez pins Sri Lanka's economic stability on IMF programme

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Thursday told lawmakers that there was no "alternative path" to economic recovery for the island nation other than the IMF-prescribed reform plans.

Sri Lanka has been facing the worst economic crisis, leading to a sharp rise in the prices of essential commodities, including fuel, since its independence from the British in 1948.

President Wickremesinghe's address to Parliament came on the second anniversary of the public uprising against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government over handling the unprecedented economic crisis in the country.

On May 9, 2022, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was forced to resign following anti-government protests.

Ranil Wickremesinghe replaced him as prime minister. Two months later, Wickremesinghe replaced Gotabaya Rajapaksa as the President to save the balance term until the end of 2024.

Wickremesinghe succeeded to steer the bankrupt economy. "When I assumed leadership, our nation was in crisis, the economy was severely contracted with inflation soaring to 70 per cent," Wickremesinghe, also the finance minister, told

Parliament. The president said the budget deficit had surged to over 10-12 per cent, resulting in an increase of interest rate to 30 per cent. He added that there were insufficient funds to import food and essential goods even for a week and the "majority of the population found themselves on the streets with some enduring lengthy queues for necessities".

He said under the IMF bailout of USD 2.9 billion, the government implemented economic discipline. He said he anticipated a growth of 3 per cent this year. He said the interest rates had also decreased substantially to as low as 10-13 per cent. "I reiterate once more there exists no alternative path to reconstructing our economy. No other programme rivals the efficiency of the one currently in place, nor does any other plan offer a viable alternative," he said.

Separately, the Election Commission of Sri Lanka said on Thursday the island nation will hold a presidential election between September 17 and October 16. Although the two main opposition leaders and several others had already announced their candidature for the presidential poll, Wickremesinghe has not announced his intention to seek a second term.

# Yoon rejects S Korean opp calls for probe against wife, top officials

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president on Thursday dismissed calls for independent investigations into allegations involving his wife and top officials, drawing quick, strong rebukes from his political rivals.

After his conservative ruling party suffered a heavy loss in the recent April 10 parliamentary elections, President Yoon Suk Yeol faces what appears to be his biggest political challenge yet as opposition parties would extend their control of the National Assembly to 2028.

The opposition has recently stepped up its demand for an independent investigation into first lady Kim Keon Hee over various scandals, such as her

alleged involvement in a stock price manipulation scheme and the release of spy camera footage showing her receiving a luxury bag from a Korean American pastor.

In a news conference marking his two years in office, Yoon said he apologizes for what he calls "my wife's unwise behavior" in accepting the Christian Dior bag but refused to elaborate because the scandal is under investigation by prosecutors.

Yoon described the demand for a new, special investigation on Kim's shares price allegation as a political offensive, as Kim wasn't charged or convicted from investigations that began when the Democratic Party was in power. Yoon already in January

had vetoed a bill calling for the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate his wife's stock price allegation.

During Thursday's conference, Yoon also made it clear that he opposes another Democratic Party-led push for a special investigation into suspicions surrounding the death of a marine who drowned during a search for flood victims in 2023. Yoon called the marine's death heartbreaking, but stressed that police and an anti-corruption investigation agency have already been examining the case. Yoon said he would approve a new independent investigation if police and the anti-corruption investigation agency fail to address public suspicions over the case.

# House rejects Greene's effort to remove Speaker Johnson

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hardline Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene tried and failed in sudden action Wednesday to oust Speaker Mike Johnson, her long-shot effort swiftly and resoundingly rejected by Democrats and Republicans tired of the political chaos.

One of Donald Trump's biggest supporters in Congress, Greene stood on the House floor and read a long list of "transgressions" she said Johnson had committed as speaker. Colleagues booed in protest.

Greene of Georgia criticized Johnson's leadership as "pathetic, weak and unacceptable."

No sooner than Greene triggered the vote on her motion

to vacate the speaker from his office, the Republican Majority Leader Steve Scalise countered by calling first for a vote to table it. An overwhelming majority, 359-43, kept Johnson in his job, for now.

It's the second time in a matter of months that Republicans have tried to oust their own speaker, an unheard-of level of party turmoil with a move rarely seen in U.S. history.

As Greene pressed ahead despite pushback from Republicans at the highest levels, GOP lawmakers filtered towards Johnson, giving him pats on the back and grasping his shoulder to assure him of their support.

"We need steady hands at the wheel," Johnson said after-

ward. "The country desperately needs a functioning Congress."

The Georgia Republican had vowed she would force a vote on the motion to vacate the Republican speaker if he dared to advance a foreign aid package with funds for Ukraine, which was overwhelmingly approved late last month and signed into law.

But in recent days it seemed her effort had cooled, as she and Johnson met repeatedly for a potential resolution. Johnson of Louisiana marched on, saying he had been willing to take the risk, believing it was important for the US to back Ukraine against Russia's invasion and explaining he wanted to be on the "right side of history."

**BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FARIDKOT**

(Admission Branch)  
**Admission Notice for PPMET (Basic B.Sc. Nursing) Course, session 2024**

Online applications are invited alongwith requisite fee for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course in all the Govt./University constitute/Private colleges of Punjab through University website from **09.05.2024 to 23.05.2024**. Prospectus for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be available on university website from **09.05.2024**. The **Entrance Test (PPMET- 2024) for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be conducted on 05.06.2024**

Note:- Any Notification/Corrigendum/Amendment by Govt. of Punjab will be followed. For Prospectus/fee details/schedule/online counseling/details & updates visit us at: [www.bfhs.ac.in](http://www.bfhs.ac.in)

REGISTRAR  
 001/12/234/2023/34047 Dated CHD :- 5/9/2024

# Household savings decline due to rising home, auto, personal loans

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Household savings are estimated to have declined for the third year in a row in FY24 as liabilities on account of interest towards housing and vehicle loans have continued to rise, but the trend could reverse in 2024-25 on account of the impact of RBI's curbs on personal loan. The net household savings declined sharply by Rs 9 lakh crore to Rs 14.16 lakh crore in three years to 2022-23, as per the National Account Statistics 2024 data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Explaining the data, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar attributed the declining trend in household savings to a sharp 73 per cent year-on-year increase in liabilities during 2022-23. She further said that as per the indication the trend of decrease in household savings has continued in 2023-24, the data for which is likely to be released later. However, the trend could reverse in 2024-25 as Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has taken measures to curb unsecured personal loans, she told PTI. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran



attributed the decline to a shift in portfolio where savings were being channelised to real assets. "Household net financial savings flows were lower in FY23 and there were some concerns around that, which said households are saving less. But, in reality, it was a portfolio shift where the savings were going into real assets," Nageswaran had said at a NCAER event on Wednesday. Following is an explainer of what household savings means, the historical data and the outlook for 2024-25.

1. What does households mean? Households include everything that is not government or corporate within the national accounts statistics system of classification. It can include partnership and sole proprietorship. 2. How has the household savings been historically? Household savings had touched a peak of Rs 23.29 lakh crore in 2020-21 — the year which saw the second wave of the Covid pandemic. Following that it has been on a decline. It then fell to Rs 17.12 lakh crore in 2021-22 and further to Rs 14.16 lakh crore in 2022-23. 3. What are the liabilities that erode household savings? Liabilities are mainly the housing, auto, personal and other loans that an entity takes from financial

institutions. Loans to households by financial corporations and NBFCs increased four-fold to Rs 3.33 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 93,723 crore in 2020-21. It grew 73 per cent in 2022-23 over Rs 1.92 lakh crore worth of loans in 2021-22. 4. Why are the liabilities going up? According to Nayar, a part of this is towards housing loans. We have seen the housing market recover after Covid and housing sales have touched highs in the next few years post Covid. But it is not just housing loans where household liabilities have gone up. It also includes vehicle and education, agri and business loans. "It looks quite likely that household liabilities will go up in FY24 so some of these trends may continue. However, with the recent tightening of regulation by RBI, we do expect that some categories of personal loans will see slower growth in FY25. And that will augur well for household savings rate for the current fiscal," Nayar said. Seeing a surge in personal loans, the RBI in November last year, raised the provisioning requirement for unsecured loans, including personal loans.

# Sensex tumbles over 1,000 points

## Nifty falls below 22,000 amid poll uncertainties

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex on Thursday crashed over 1,000 points while the Nifty dived below the 22,000 level due to across-the-board selloff amid general election uncertainties. Besides, persistent foreign fund outflows and heavy selling pressure in HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Reliance Industries weighed on investor sentiment, traders said. Declining for the third day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 1,062.22 points or 1.45 per cent to settle at 72,404.17. During the day, it tanked 1,132.21 points or 1.54 per cent to 72,334.18. The NSE Nifty dived 345 points or 1.55 per cent to 21,957.50. It tumbled 370.1 points or 1.65 per cent to 21,932.40 during the session. "The broader market witnessed volatility, underscoring caution on account of Q4 earnings and general election uncertainties, which led investors to stay on the sidelines. We expect the trend to continue in the short term as the market slid below the physiological level of 22,000. The global indices are trading with mixed cues ahead of the BOE policy meeting later today and US inflation figures due next week," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.



From the Sensex basket, Larsen & Toubro tanked over 5 per cent after March quarter earnings. Asian Paints, JSW Steel, ITC, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, Tata Steel, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Power Grid were among the laggards. In contrast, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, Infosys and HCL Tech were the gainers. Meanwhile, the country's largest lender SBI reported 18.18 per cent growth in the March quarter consolidated net profit to Rs 21,384.15 crore against Rs 18,093.84 crore in the year-ago period. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on Thursday posted a 25 per cent fall in its March quarter net profit on lower refining margins and announced one free bonus share for every two

shares held. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 2.41 per cent and midcap index dropped 2.01 per cent. Among the indices, oil and gas lost 3.41 per cent, capital goods dropped 3.37 per cent, metal tanked 3.13 per cent, industrials (2.92 per cent), utilities (2.59 per cent) and commodities (2.39 per cent). On the other hand, auto emerged as the major gainer. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,669.10 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. "Nifty ended sharply lower led by institutional selling and traders squaring up due to nervousness on election progress. World shares were mostly lower on Thursday ahead of the Bank of England's policy decision and after the US market's pause stretched

into a second day and as Chinese stocks rose after China reported better-than-expected trade figures for April," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains, while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street closed mixed in overnight trade on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.48 per cent to USD 83.89 a barrel. "The market is continuously witnessing pressure ahead of the election outcome. We don't have any global reason for this correction, while some uncertainty ahead of the big event is causing profit-booking in the market. Our market has been largely driven by domestic investors, including both HNIs and institutional investors, for the last few months. "Now, they are sitting on the sidelines for the last couple of days and taking some profit off the table ahead of the big event, while FIIs are continuously selling in our market, which is pushing the market lower. The Volatility index, India VIX, has risen 70 per cent from its lows, which is also creating some uncertainty among traders and investors," Santosh Meena,

# Fairfax backed Go Digit to float IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Go Digit General Insurance Ltd, a firm backed by Canada-based Fairfax Group, is set to launch its initial public offering on May 15. The initial share sale will conclude on May 17 and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on May 14, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP). Go Digit's proposed IPO comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 1,125 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 5.47 crore equity shares by a promoter Go Digit

Infoworks Services and existing shareholders. At present, Go Digit Infoworks Services owns an 83.3 per cent stake in the company. Proceeds from the fresh issuance have been proposed to be utilised for the augmentation of the company's capital base and maintenance of solvency levels and general corporate purposes. Cricketer Virat Kohli and his wife and actor Anushka Sharma are among the investors in the firm. They are not selling any shares in the IPO.

In March, Go Digit secured approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to float the IPO. The company had first filed the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with the Sebi in August 2022 to raise funds through an initial share sale. However, it was thwarted primarily due to certain compliance requirements pertaining to the employee stock appreciation rights scheme. Sebi returned Go Digit's draft IPO papers on January 30, 2023, and asked the company to refile the documents with

certain updates. Following this, the company again filed the preliminary IPO papers with Sebi in April 2023. Go Digit offers motor insurance, health insurance, travel insurance, property insurance, marine insurance, liability insurance, and other insurance products, to meet the needs of the customers. It is one of the first non-life insurers in India to be fully operated on the cloud and has developed Application Programming Interface (API) integrations with several channel partners.

# IHCL expands partnership with CG Hospitality

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) on Thursday announced a strategic partnership with CG Hospitality with a plan to grow its portfolio in the Indian sub-continent to 25 hotels by 2025, involving a total investment of around Rs 4,000 crore. The portfolio of 25 properties by 2025, will include 11 operating hotels with 900 keys and will add

another 14, which will be under one platform — 'Ekyam' — to pursue opportunities in destinations that offer adventure experiences across the Indian Ocean and Greater Himalayan regions and wildlife escapes, IHCL Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Puneet Chhatwal told reporters. IHCL's Vice President Commercial Ram Maheshwari will lead the 'Ekyam' platform, he added.

# Maruti Suzuki to re-energise small car segment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Betting big on the entry-level segment, Maruti Suzuki India on Thursday said it will continue to "re-energise" the small car segment as the automaker expects the vertical to revive over the next few years, according to MD & CEO Hisashi Takeuchi. Speaking at the launch of the new generation Swift here, he noted that the automaker aims to cater to the diverse needs of customers as it aims to sell 40 lakh units by 2030-31. Takeuchi noted that the entry-level segment continues to be a high volume vertical accounting for around 28 per cent of the overall domestic passenger vehicle sales. "For us to maintain our leadership position, it is important to cater to diverse customer segments. The hatchback segment in India continues to be a high-volume segment, accounting for approximately 28 per cent of total passenger vehicle sales," Takeuchi said. Interestingly, the premium hatchback segment contributes nearly 60 per cent of total hatchback sales, he noted. "As a market leader, we took the responsibility to re-energise the hatchback segment at a time when this segment really needs a



catalyst for growth," Takeuchi said. He noted that the company has a strong belief in India's growth story. "As the government aims to make India a developed country by 2047, we can expect increased economic activity and robust demand for automobiles in the coming years," Takeuchi stated. With only 32 vehicles per 1,000 people compared to over 600 in developed countries like Japan, India presents a vast pool of car aspirants, he said. "As car ownership rises, the hatchback segment will serve as an entry point for many customers, and thus shall expand," Takeuchi noted. Therefore, the hatchback segment will continue to remain relevant for India, and the company's focus on this segment will persist, he added.

# Fitch affirms ratings of Axis Bank, ICICI Bank on supporting operating environment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Thursday affirmed the ratings of Axis Bank and ICICI Bank with a stable outlook citing supportive operating environment and large domestic franchise. Fitch Ratings has affirmed India-based Axis Bank and ICICI Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BB+', the global agency said in two separate rating commentaries. Fitch has also affirmed the banks' Government Support Rating (GSR) at 'bb+' and Viability Rating (VR) at 'bb'. Fitch said its IDR ratings reflect expectation of a moderate probability of extraordinary state support from the government relative to large state banks.

The agency said its expectation of a supportive operative environment is on account of India's robust medium-term growth potential. Fitch expects GDP growth of 7 per cent in 2024 and 6.5 per cent in 2025, supported by investment prospects. "The economy has been resilient as healthy business sentiment, steady financial markets and the government's capital spending buffered global economic headwinds and inflation. These factors are conducive for banks to sustain profitable business, provided risks are well-managed," Fitch said. With regard to Axis Bank, Fitch said the bank's appetite for growth is likely to remain above the sector average, albeit similar to other large private banks.

# HPCL Q4 net falls 25 per cent, records ₹16,000 profit in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on Thursday reported a 25 per cent fall in its March quarter net profit on lower refining margins and announced one free bonus share for every two shares held. Its consolidated net profit of Rs 2,709.31 crore in January-March - the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal year - compares to Rs 3,608.32 crore in the same period of the previous financial year, according to a company's stock exchange filing. The firm earned USD 6.95 on turning every barrel of crude oil into fuel in the quarter against USD 14.01 per barrel gross refining margin a year back and USD 8.50 per barrel margin in the preceding quarter.



Its net profit was also lower because of the Rs 2 per litre cut in petrol and diesel prices. HPCL and two other state fuel retailers were affected in March ahead of the announcement of general elections. The reduction came just as international oil prices climbed, leading to a drop in marketing margins. The firm's pre-tax profit from downstream petroleum dropped 22 per cent in the quarter. HPCL board also approved a

1:2 bonus issue - 1 free share for every 2 shares held. Turnover was higher at Rs 1.22 lakh crore when compared to Rs 1.15 lakh crore in January-March 2023. For the full 2023-24, HPCL reported a record net profit of Rs 16,014.61 crore as opposed to a loss of Rs 6,980.23 crore in the previous year. The annual profit benefited from the nearly two-year-long freeze in petrol and diesel prices. While the freeze was affected when crude oil (the input used for making fuels like petrol and diesel) started rising in 2022 post-Russia's invasion of Ukraine, international rates moderated in most of 2023, helping companies like IOC book handsome profits. It was only in mid-March that petrol and diesel prices were cut by Rs 2. The rate cut, which came just before the

general elections, happened when crude oil prices started inching up. For FY2023-24, the revenue from operations stood at Rs 4,61,638 crore (Rs 4,66,192 crore during the previous year). The average gross refining margin (GRM) for 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024 fiscal) was USD 9.08 per barrel as opposed to USD 12.09 per barrel during the previous financial year. "The reduction in GRMs is in line with the trend of international product cracks," the company said in a statement. The Board of Directors has recommended the issue of bonus shares in the ratio 1:2 - one new bonus equity share of Rs 10 each for every two existing equity shares of Rs 10 each fully paid up, subject to the approval of shareholders.

# India's exports rise in 115 nations out of 238 destinations in 2023-24: Data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's exports have increased to as many as 115 countries out of the total 238 destinations during 2023-24 despite the global economic uncertainties, according to commerce ministry's data. These 115 export destinations, which account for 46.5 per cent of India's export basket, include the US, UAE, Netherlands, China, UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Germany and Italy. The country's merchandise exports dipped by 3 per cent to USD 437.1 billion in the last fiscal. However, services exports rose to USD 341.1 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 325.3 billion in 2022-23. The data showed that despite persistent global challenges, overall exports (goods and services together) hit the

highest level in 2022-23. Overall exports reached USD 778.2 billion in 2023-24 as compared to USD 776.4 billion in 2022-23, registering a marginal growth of 0.23 per cent. The share of India's merchandise exports has also increased marginally from 1.70 per cent in 2014 to 1.82 per cent in 2023. India's rank in world merchandise exporters too has improved from 19th to 17th during the same period. Further, India's export to its top 10 destinations witnessed a 13 per cent year-on-year increase in 2023-24. The UAE has emerged as the primary destination, with a substantial 12.71 per cent growth in export value at USD 35.6 billion. Similarly, exports to Singapore that surged by 20.19 per cent to USD 14.4



billion, to the UK (up 13.30 per cent to USD 13 billion), and to China (up 8.70 per cent to USD 16.7 billion) also recorded healthy growth indicating a sustained demand for Indian products. The data showed that the exponential growth rates observed in countries like Russia (35.41 per cent), Romania (138.84 per cent),

and Albania (234.97 per cent) underscore the exploration of new markets. "Strengthening trade relations with these nations could unlock untapped opportunities and bolster India's overall export competitiveness," an official said. The country's outbound shipments to regions including CIS (commonwealth of independent states, Oceania and Europe too witnessed expansion during 2023-24 over 2022-23. The top five export destinations driving export growth in CIS region during 2023-24 are Russia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Armenia and Tajikistan. Similarly, the top five destinations driving India's export growth in Oceania region in the last fiscal are

Australia, Timor Leste, Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Island. And in Europe, the major countries where Indian exporters recorded healthy growth in their shipments during 2023-24 are the UK, Romania, Albania, Netherlands and Greece. On the commodities front, as many as 17 items have registered an increase in exports in 2023-24 over the last financial. These sectors constitute 48.4 per cent of India's export basket. These sectors include engineering, electronic goods, pharmaceuticals, and cotton yarn/fabrics/handloom products. However, there were notable decline in key sectors in the last fiscal such as petroleum products (- 13.66 per cent) and gems and jewellery (- 13.83 per cent).

According to the data, of the 229 source nations, India's imports have declined from 124 countries in 2023-24. The top 10 source countries, which constitute 59.3 per cent of India's import basket, include China, USA, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Russia, and Switzerland. Decline in imports are reported from countries like the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman and it highlights the need for India to bolster its trade relations, especially with GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) member countries, the official said. "While some declines may stem from market dynamics or economic conditions, they also present opportunities for policy makers to reconsider trade strategies, prioritize domestic production, and foster indigenous industries," the official added.

Meanwhile, India Exim Bank on Thursday projected that India's merchandise exports would rise by 12.3 per cent to USD 116.7 billion during April-June this fiscal. "Positive growth in India's exports could be as a result of India's strong GDP growth fundamentals and outlook, sustained momentum in manufacturing and services sector, backed by expected global easing of monetary tightening spurring global demand, and to some extent due to base effect," it said in a statement. The outlook is, however, subject to risks of uncertain prospects for advanced economies, geopolitical shocks, the Middle East crisis leading to the intensification of the Red Sea crisis and deepening geo-economic fragmentation, among other factors, it added.

# Russian Cultural Centre celebrates victory day with the Cottage



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In commemoration of the 79th Anniversary of the Victory Day of the Russians, a delegation led by Eliana Burman, president of Indian Association of Russian Compatriots, along with families of various Russian citizens living in India visited "the cottage", Tolstoy Marg, Janpath to pay homage to the eminent luminary and renowned Russian writer Leo Tolstoy.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer

# THE ENCHANTING TAPESTRY OF INDIAN CULTURE

The Kendra Dance Festival mesmerised audiences with its captivating blend of dance and storytelling, showcasing India's rich heritage. From spiritual explorations to mythological tales, each performance left a lasting impression, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Step into a world where art transcends boundaries and narratives come alive through graceful movements. The Kendra Dance Festival 2024, hosted at the prestigious Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi, was a mesmerising journey through the rich tapestry of Indian culture. Over three enchanting evenings from May 3 to May 5, 2024, this festival promised and delivered an unforgettable exploration of Indian culture through the captivating art of dance drama.

Each night unfolded a unique dance drama, transporting audiences to a different realm. The festival opened with *Parikrama*, a production that transcended the boundaries of entertainment to delve deep into the human psyche. Through a harmonious blend of direction, choreography, lighting, costumes and production *Parikrama* entranced the audience. The choreography, a brilliant fusion of movements mainly derived from the Chhau dance form, drew a standing ovation, highlighting the dedication and skill of the performers. Principal performer artist Shivam Sahni, essaying the challenging role of Atma, spoke of the difficulty in portraying a non-being showcasing the depth and complexity of the production.

The visionary direction of Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh transformed the



stage into a realm of spiritual exploration. The production beautifully depicted the cyclical nature of existence, from birth to liberation, drawing from the profound concepts of Indian philosophy. The audience was taken on a journey from the potentiality symbolised by *Hiranyagarbh* to the manifestation of the soul as *Atman*, exploring the soul's struggle against the senses and its quest for liberation, ultimately achieving *Moksha*. The innovative use of lighting and sound coupled with a thoughtful script added layers of depth to the performance making it a profound theatrical experience.

The second night brought the epic *Mahabharata* to life with *Karna*. This captivating dance drama delved into the complexities of human existence through the lens of the enigmatic Karna. We stood witness to his struggles and triumphs, his unwavering ideals, and the timeless questions of morality and righteousness that his life embodied. The choreography, expressive and evocative, brought Karna's life to vibrant life on stage, evoking both sympathy and admiration from the audience. The performance was a visual masterpiece, with every detail from the expressive dance to the exquisite costumes contributing to its exceptional excellence. The unwavering support from the audience filling every seat in the auditorium further solidified the importance of celebrating and preserving Indian culture.

The final evening culminated with *Meera*, in vibrant portrayal of renowned saint

poetess. This dance drama, titled after its central figure, delved into her life and legacy. Meera's poetry bursting with vibrancy and effervescence resonated with audiences carrying messages of liberation and inner awakening. The performance challenged societal norms and redefined Meera's image offering an introspective exploration of the struggles faced by women. Drawing inspiration from Rajasthani dance styles, the choreography beautifully captured Meera's enduring influence. The Kendra Dance Festival's success was solidified by the audience's profound engagement with the performances evident in the thunderous applause and heartfelt comments such as "heaven for the eyes" and "a soulful performance."

Throughout the festival, the commitment of the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra to preserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage was evident. Their tireless efforts in organising this exceptional dance festival have not only enriched our lives but also provided a platform for these alluring stories to be shared with the world. The choreography for all three performances by Shashidharan Nair, combined with Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh's visionary direction, created an alluring experience that celebrated the timeless beauty of Indian culture.

As Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh aptly stated, "The Kendra Dance Festival's productions are not just performances; they are reflections of our cultural essence and timeless wisdom." The Dance Festival was

a testament to the power of artistic expression and a celebration of the enduring relevance of Indian culture in today's world. It was an unforgettable journey that left a lasting impression on all who were fortunate enough to witness its magic. The deepest appreciation is reserved for Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh for her visionary leadership and unparalleled artistic direction. Under her guidance, the Kendra Dance Festival has transcended mere entertainment to become a transformative and unforgettable experience showcasing the profound beauty and depth of Indian culture to audiences worldwide.

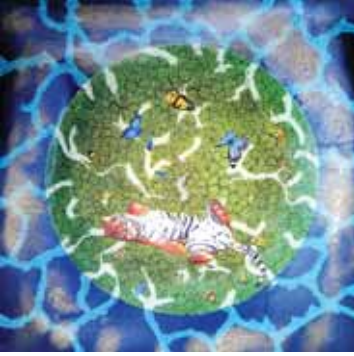
The three-day celebration of dance was an enduring and compelling experience where storytelling, acting, dance, drama, and music converged to create an unforgettable spectacle. The festival beautifully showcased the rich tapestry of Indian history and mythology weaving together narratives that resonated with audiences and left a lasting impression. The performances were a testament to the cultural heritage of India offering a glimpse into its vibrant traditions and timeless stories. This festival was a celebration of artistic excellence and a tribute to the depth and beauty of Indian culture. This festival wasn't just a celebration of dance; it was a celebration of heritage, a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and a glimpse into the soul of India.



## A Journey through Creativity and Appreciation

SAKSHI PRIYA explores the world through the eyes of master artists and emerging talents whose works redefine the boundaries of creativity

Embark on an alluring journey into the vibrant world of art with *Detente: A Haven of Artistic Rhapsody*, an exhibition that celebrates the spirit of creativity and cultural diversity. This exhibition showcase of modern and contemporary Indian and international art invites spectators to explore a variety of artistic themes and narratives, each piece offering a unique perspective on evolution, culture, and society. Stepping into the gallery feels like entering an enchanted world where each painting tells a captivating story, inviting viewers on a journey of emotions and creativity. The exhibition, featuring works by renowned master artists such as MF Hussain, SH Raza, GR Santosh, Satish Gujral, Manu Parekh, B Prabha, Anjali Ela Menon, Ajay Samir, Anup Kumar Chand, Ashok Bhowmick, alongside contributions from contemporary and participating artists like M Narayan, Bahaar Dhawan Rohatgi, Sanuj Birla, Aditee Garg and more, is a testament to the richness and diversity of contemporary Indian and international art. The artwork demands to be seen and appreciated by all, showcasing the exquisite talent of each artist. Visitors stand before the paintings, interpreting and admiring the work in their unique way, captivated by the details, patterns,



and colours. This experience highlights the immense value and appreciation for art in today's world. The gallery itself feels like a journey through memory lane which continues to resonate even after they are no longer with us. Their art speaks volumes, as the saying goes, "an artist's work always stays with us." Artists like SH Raza, GR Santosh, MF Husain, B Prabha, and Satish Gujral demonstrate their mastery through their paintings, with each piece reflecting their profound skill and artistic vision. The walls of the gallery

exude a mesmerising aura, showcasing the true worth and beauty of these artworks. M. Narayan's artwork, with its focus on equestrian aesthetics, captures the power and speed of horses through expressionist strokes and dynamic lines. His paintings convey the thrilling energy and elegant beauty of horses and polo players, drawing viewers into a world of vivid colours and bold strokes. Satish Gujral's canvas delves into the depths of history, channelling an expressionist grandeur of gesture and space. Bahaar Dhawan Rohatgi's art invokes a sense of calmness with abstract explorations

that blend various mediums. Her pieces unlock the immensity within her artistic journey, revealing layers of emotion and dreams through intricate brushstrokes. Manu Parekh's work echoes the rich tradition of Indian folk art fused with modernist sensibilities. His paintings evoke a rousing provocation known for their vibrant and dynamic composition that captures the essence of painting. Aditee Garg's sculptures are praised for their cultural resonance and narrative depth with graceful curves that become

performative in nature. Her work invites viewers to join in transporting them to the realm of magnificent creatures through intricate narratives and expansive spaces. The artwork of Anup Kumar Chand is described as a tribute to the majesty of nature, particularly awe-inspiring tigers. His paintings create a world of fantasy shapes where colours seamlessly blend with the background resulting in a harmonious visual symphony. Sanuj Birla's exceptional painting is noted for its excellence in art, creating dreamy visions inspired by movies and comic books holding a special place in everyone's heart. Each artist's work is celebrated for its uniqueness and ability to evoke a range of emotions and interpretations making the exhibition a truly immersive and inspiring experience for all visitors. The exhibition is not just about showcasing art; it is about honouring the legacy of artists and the impact of their work. It is a celebration of power, grace, and beauty. As visitors immerse themselves in this artistic journey, they

are transported to a world where time slows down and the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. The gallery becomes a testimony to the immersive experience that art can offer, where every piece evokes a beautiful sense of emotion and reality. Sumer Raj Chadha, the founder of Gallery West End reflects on his appreciation for art, nurtured over the years by his grandmother, Santosh Raj Chadha, a passionate art collector. He says, "This exhibit is a tribute to a true art aficionado and a fervent connoisseur of beauty, our vanguard, late Santosh Raj Chadha, my beloved grandmother. She sowed the seed of love for art and has been a custodian of creative curiosity in our family." Chadha's dedication has transformed this exhibition into a platform for artists to showcase their talent and connect with enthusiasts. His commitment to honoring artistic legacies and encouraging creativity shines in every aspect of this remarkable exhibition. 'Detente: A Haven of Artistic Rhapsody' is more than just an art exhibition; it is an incredible source of inspiration and an immersive journey into the artistic vision of modern and contemporary artists. It is a place where art speaks to everyone, inviting them to delve into realms of exploration, connection, and inspiration.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer



# CSK AIM TO CONTINUE ASCENT TO TOP THREE

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Despite being hit by the absence of key bowlers due to injuries as well as international commitments, Chennai Super Kings will still like to display their on-field ruthlessness while taking on wooden spooners Gujarat Titans in a 12th round IPL encounter here on Friday. Caught in a mid-table logjam with 12 points from 11 games, the away match against Gujarat will be very important for Rituraj Gaikwad's men as they are still not assured of a play-off berth and a defeat could really dent their chances. With Deepak Chahar and Matheesha Pathirana out of the tournament due to injuries and Mustafizur Rahman back on national duty, CSK's bowling attack sans Ravindra Jadeja and Tushar Deshpande can at best be termed second string. A lot will depend on how the three CSK spinners — Ravindra Jadeja, Mitchell Santner and Moeen Ali bowl on a two-paced track. Yet, the manner in which CSK defended a total of 167 in

Dharamsala against Punjab Kings will give their fans hope of upping the ante against Titans, who have already lost seven in the tournament so far. A win will take them to third place in the standings, ahead of Sunrisers Hyderabad by virtue of better net run-rate. Among the three teams stuck on 12 points, only CSK (+0.700) enjoys a positive net run-rate. On paper, bottom-placed Titans are still in the mix but with a maximum tally of 14 points, it would be very difficult for the Shubman Gill-led side to get into the top four. The side is low on confidence having managed just one win from their last five matches and has struggled in all departments of the game. Their bowling has lost firepower in absence of the injured Mohammed Shami, while the captaincy responsibility has weighed down heavily on the talented opener Gill, who has three single digit scores and a highest of 35 in his last five outings. Sai Sudharsan, Shahrulkh Khan and David Miller have also been inconsistent.



The bowling unit needs to improve its performance as the likes of Mohit Sharma and Josh Little have been leaking runs in the Powerplay. While defending a paltry 147, their bowlers gave away 92 runs in the Powerplay against RCB, who chased down the target in just 13.4 overs. With no support from the new ball bowlers, the Afghan spin duo of Noor Ahmad and Rashid Khan also seemed less effective. CSK, on the other hand, have no such concerns with skipper Rituraj Gaikwad leading by example. He has been their top run-getter with 541 runs from 11 innings, just one run away from Virat Kohli in the race for the Orange Cap. Daryl Mitchell was also among runs in a 19-ball 30 against PBKS in their last match as they would just hope that Shivam Dube returns to form after capping successive golden ducks. Their biggest plus in the win over PBKS has been the addition of Simarjeet Singh. Making his debut for CSK as an impact player, Simarjeet

clocked 140-plus consistently and returned with 2/16 from his three overs. **TEAMS (FROM)** Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahrulkh Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier and BR Sharath. Chennai Super Kings: Rituraj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Aravely Avaneesh, Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi.

## Will KL Rahul step down from LSG captancy for last two games?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All but out of contention for the IPL play-offs, KL Rahul's future as Lucknow Super Giants skipper is uncertain for the remaining two games after the team received a pasting at the hands of Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on Wednesday. It is a foregone conclusion that the LSG skipper, who was roped in before the auction in 2022 for a record Rs 17 crore, is unlikely to be retained before the mega auctions in 2025. However, there is speculation that the skipper might step down on his own and concentrate on batting during the next two games. "There is a five-day gap before the next game against DC. As of now, no decision has been taken but it is understood that if Rahul plans to just concentrate on his batting for the remaining two games, the management won't mind," an IPL source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Videos of LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka's agitated conversation with Rahul emerged on social media after Sunrisers Hyderabad openers Travis Head (89 not out off 30 balls) and Abhishek Sharma (75 off 28 balls) reached a target of 167 in less than 10 overs. This was after the home team batters struggled to get going on the same track. Worse, Rahul's (29 off 33 balls) batting in the Powerplay has been one of the biggest reasons for LSG's below-par show in the cash-rich league and it seems that Goenka has finally run



out of patience. The India star has scored 460 runs in 12 games and could again cross the 500-run mark for the season but it is his strike-rate of 136.09 which is the problem. LSG are still mathematically in contention as they can reach 16 points by winning their remaining two games — vs Delhi Capitals in New Delhi on May 14 and vs Mumbai Indians at Wankhede on May 17. However, it will be very difficult to massively improve upon the net run-rate (-0.760). In case, Rahul decides to step down, vice-captain Nicholas Pooran, easily the team's most impactful batter in the season, is likely to take over for the remaining two games.

## Backing of captain Cummins, SRH support staff matters a lot: Abhishek Sharma

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The unwavering support from skipper Pat Cummins and the entire think-tank played a big role in his success in the on-going IPL, reckoned Sunrisers Hyderabad opener Abhishek Sharma. The 23-year-old Punjab left-hander fired from all cylinders for Hyderabad this season, making 401 runs from 12 matches and those runs have come at an awesome strike-rate of 205. "Our support staff and Pat (Cummins), the way they think, I have never seen anyone else think like that," Abhishek said on JioCinema Match Centre Live after their remaining two games — vs Delhi Capitals in New Delhi on May 14 and vs Mumbai Indians at Wankhede on May 17. "They're like, 'Go out there and express yourself. Play as aggressively as you can, we'll back you.' I think that matters a lot," said Abhishek, who has hit 35 sixes so far, highest by



any batter this season. The SRH openers Abhishek (75 not out off 28 balls) and Travis Head (89 not out off 30

balls) scaled down 166 in just 9.4 overs, rewriting the record for the quickest chase of 150-plus in T20 cricket. SRH's total of 167 was also the highest by any team by the end of the tenth over in men's T20s. "I think this approach was something I took on during the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy," said Abhishek who played a key role in Punjab winning the domestic T20 title last season. Abhishek (485 runs from 10 matches) was the second highest run-getter behind Riyan Parag (510) of Assam in last season's SMAT. "I feel when I play this way, look at the ball, and react, my shots come off better and the bowler comes under pressure. I always thought if I play in the IPL, I'll try to maintain this," he added. **'BIG FAN OF HEAD':** With Head at his explosive best, SRH have smashed many batting records this season including the highest ever IPL total of 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Abhishek hailed the way Head played spin. "I don't think anyone plays spin better than Travis. The

shots he hit off (Krishnappa) Gowtham, normally batters can't do that, that shows how special he is. "He's very clear, whenever I talk to him, the way he compliments me, I have always been a big fan of him over the last year that I have followed him. "When our understanding was established and our partnership improved, we became good friends off the pitch and have started spending more time," he added. Abhishek then touched upon his strategy against the LSG bowlers, especially pacers. "They were bowling cutters in the middle. I thought the cutters could slow down on their way, but Travis and I had planned to play it the way you would hit a spinner with the spin. "So, if it's an off-cutter, we look to hit towards long-off covers. If it's a leg cutter, obviously we look at mid-wicket or mid-on," he added.

### OTHERS SPORTS

## UWW suspends Bajrang; SAI approves his training stint abroad but wrestler cancels trip

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wrestling's world governing body UWW has suspended Bajrang Punia till the end of this year following NADA's decision to hand him a provisional suspension for refusing to undergo a dope test. However, in a rather surprising decision, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) sanctioned close to Rs nine lakh for his training abroad despite being well aware of NADA's order. Bajrang, one of the country's most successful wrestlers, was suspended by NADA on April 23 after being served a whereabouts failure notice on April 18. In his defence, the Tokyo Olympics bronze-medallist

said he never refused to give his sample for testing but merely asked the Dope Control Officer to explain the presence of expired kits which were brought to take his sample. Bajrang told PTI that he has not received any communication from the UWW about his suspension but the world governing body while updating its internal system clearly mentions that he stands suspended. "Suspended for the following reason until Dec 31, 2024," reads the update on Bajrang's profile. "Provisionally suspended by NADO IND for alleged ADRV (Anti-Doping Rule Violation)," was the reason mentioned. Interestingly, the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), in its



April 25 meeting, was informed that Bajrang has been sanctioned Rs 8,82,000 plus air fare (actual) for his proposal to train at Dagestan, Russia from May 28. Bajrang's initial proposal was for a 35-day training trip from April 24 but, as per the minutes of MOC meeting, due to "conflicting travel dates due to

his whereabouts failure, he chose to defer the travel plans from 24th April, 2024 to 28th May, 2024." The proposal also included travel plans of his strength and conditioning coach Kaazi Kiron Mustafa Hasan and his sparring partner Jitender. Neither Sandip Pradhan, the SAI Director General, nor Col. Rakesh Yadav, joint CEO TOPS, responded to calls or messages, when PTI reached out for an explanation for the decision to sanction his training. Bajrang confirmed that he had given a proposal for approval to SAI. "I am also surprised that SAI cleared it. I have actually cancelled my plan, I am not going anywhere for training

now," Bajrang said, adding that his lawyer has filed the reply to NADA. In the same MOC meeting Sarita Mor, who competes in the women's 57kg category, was sanctioned Rs 5,96,000 for her training stint in the USA along with her husband and coach Rahul Mann from May 5. Anshu Malik had locked the women's 57kg category Paris Olympics quota during the Asian Qualifiers in Bishkek. Anshu's training stint in Japan, along with her father and coach Dharamveer Malik, was also approved at a cost of Rs 14,67,000. If WFI decides to hold one final selection event, Sarita will have to emerge winner in the trials to challenge quota-winner Anshu.

## Diksha set for landmark 100th start on LET

PTI ■ SEOUL

Diksha Dagar will become the first Indian woman golfer to play 100 events on the Ladies European Tour when she tees up at the Aramo Team Series Korea, her first appearance in the series. Diksha, who turned pro in 2019 and won on LET in her first full season, has been a regular on LET since then.

Currently ninth on the LET Order of Merit, Diksha turned 23 in December. She is one of the three Indians to tee off at the New Korea Country Club. The other two Indians in the field are Pranavi Urs and Vani Kapoor. Diksha will also lead the team of Czech Tereza Melecka and Korean Do Yeon Park, while Pranavi and Vani are in the team led by Singaporean Shannon Tan, who has

already won once in her rookie season. Diksha was part of the winning team in the Aramo Team Series in London in 2021. That was the year when the series was played across five countries. Diksha has finished in the Top-10 of the individual section only once. That first Top-10 came this year in Tampa Florida, where she was tied sixth.

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**PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION CUM SALE**

**E-Auction Sale Notice of 30 Days for Sale of Immovable Asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.**

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors in particular, that the under mentioned property mortgaged to Phoenix ARC Private Limited pursuant to assignment of debt by Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited (Earlier Known as Aspire Home Finance Corporation limited - Assignor) will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", by way of "online e-auction" for recovery of dues and further interest, charges and costs etc. as detailed below in terms of the provisions of SARFAESI Act read with Rules 8 & 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) through website <https://www.auctionbazaar.com/> as per the details given below :

Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) / Loan Account	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property	Reserve Price, EMD & Last Date of Submission of EMD	Date and time of E-Auction
LAN: LXRIA00316-170047819 Branch: RAIPUR Borrower: JALANDHAR MAKARIYA NAG Co-Borrower: JAGDISH MAKIYA NAG	28-02-2019 For Rs: 1759689/- (Rupees Seventeen Lac Fifty Nine Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Nine Only)	Kh No-115/12 1156/5 Ph No-81/2 R N M Mandir Hausod Mouja Vill-Pacheda Arang Raipur-492001 Chhattisgarh	Reserve Price: Rs.500000/- (Five Lakh Only) EMD: Rs. 50000/- (Fifty Thousand Only) Last date of EMD Deposit: 13-06-2024	Date: 14-06-2024 11:00 Am to 05:00 Pm (with unlimited extensions of 5 minute each)

**Terms and Conditions of E-Auction:**

1. The Auction is conducted as per the further Terms and Conditions of the Bid document and as per the procedure set out therein. Bidders may visit to the Web Portal: <https://www.auctionbazaar.com/> of our e-Auction Service Provider, M/s. ARCA EMART PRIVATE LIMITED for bidding information & support, the details of the secured asset put up for e-Auction and the Bid Form which will be submitted online. The interested buyers may go through the auction terms & conditions and process on the same portal and may contact to **MANISH RAMSINGH PARMAR 8407997228 & MANISH RAMSINGH PARMAR 9372705231**, details available in the above mentioned Web Portal and may contact their Centralised Help Desk: + 91 83709 69696, E-mail ID: [contact@auctionbazaar.com](mailto:contact@auctionbazaar.com)

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Date: 10-06-2024

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## Real Madrid rallies late to beat Bayern 2-1 and reach another Champions League final

AP ■ MADRID

After yet another magical night at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, Real Madrid is back in the Champions League final. The 14-time European champion pulled off another thrilling comeback on Wednesday, rallying to defeat Bayern Munich 2-1 and reach the final for the second time in three seasons. Like it happened so many times in 2022, Madrid needed some late drama to advance. Joselu scored in the 88th minute and then in stoppage time as Madrid advanced 4-3 on aggregate to set up a final against Borussia Dortmund on June 1 in London. "Well, it has happened again what has



happened so many times before," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "It's inexplicable. Fans who push us on, a fantastic stadium, players who never stop believing - it's simply something magical!" Bayern had taken the lead on an Alphonso Davies goal in the 68th - and then deep in stoppage time thought it had equalized

but hadn't because of an offside call that Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel described as "disastrous" and "against the rules." Joselu's first goal was a tap in after Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer spilled an easy save. The second was initially called off for offside but was eventually allowed after video review. "You always dream of being part of moments like this," the 34-year-old Joselu said. "Not even my best dreams were as good as this." It will be Madrid's record-extending 18th European Cup final, and ninth in the Champions League era, also a record. Madrid beat Liverpool when it last made it to the final in 2022, a season marked by several late comebacks like that one it pulled off on Wednesday.

Madrid at the time pulled off thrilling comebacks at the Bernabeu against Manchester City in the semifinals, Chelsea in the quarterfinals and Paris Saint-Germain in the round of 16. Six-time European champion Bayern was looking to return to the final for the first time since winning the competition in 2019-20. The loss meant there will be no rematch of the all-German final in 2013, when Bayern beat Dortmund to win its fifth European title. "It hurts. It'll take a while to recover, but on the one hand it's a loss where we left it all out on the pitch," Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said. "Of course, it's tough to accept. It's part of reality. No regrets." Dortmund, the 1997 European champion, eliminated Paris Saint-Germain 2-0 on aggregate on Tuesday. It was a mostly even match but Madrid created the most significant scoring chances. But it had not been able to get past what was a terrific performance by Neuer, who had made a series of difficult saves to keep Bayern in the match.