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HEARTBREAK FOR SHOOTER MANU BHAKER

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Modi reaffirms India's role as Vishwa Bandhu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India has become a food surplus country and is also working to provide solutions for global food and nutritional security. Inaugurating the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) at the National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex in the national Capital, which is being organised in India after 65 years, Modi said, "now India is a food surplus country," he said, adding that the country is the number one producer of milk, pulses and spices across the world. Also, the country has become the second-largest producer of foodgrains, fruits, vegetables, cotton, sugar and tea.

"There was a time when India's food security was a concern for the world. Now, India is working to provide solutions for global food security and global nutritional security," he said at the conference, attended by about 1,000 delegates from around 70 countries. Therefore, Modi said, India's experience is valuable for discussions on food system transformation and will benefit the global south. The Prime Minister reiterated India's commitment to global welfare as a 'Vishwa Bandhu'.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the inauguration of the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) at the National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex, in New Delhi on Saturday. Photo: PIB

He highlighted various mantras put forward by India on various fora, including 'One Earth, One Family and One Future', 'Mission Life' and 'One Earth One Health'. He underlined India's approach of not viewing the health of humans, plants and animals in silos. "Challenges before sustainable agriculture and food systems can only be

tackled under the holistic approach of One Earth, One Family and One Future," he said. Modi emphasised the importance of the agriculture sector in the Indian economy and highlighted the work done by his government in the last 10 years for the growth of the farm sector in a sustainable manner. "Agriculture is at the centre of India's

economic policies," he said. In Indian agriculture, 90 per cent of farmers own very little land, and these small farmers are the biggest strength of India's food security, Modi said. He pointed out that a similar situation is prevalent in several developing countries in Asia, making India's model applicable. The Prime Minister also said India has provided 1,900 new climate-resilient varieties of crops in the last 10 years. India is promoting chemical-free natural farming, he added. He also said the country is moving towards achieving the 20 per cent ethanol blending target petrol.

The conference will highlight India's proactive approach to global agricultural challenges and showcase the nation's advancements in agricultural research and policy. The Prime Minister also acknowledged the seriousness of the nutrition challenge, along with water scarcity and climate change. He presented Anna, Millet, as a solution given the superfood's quality of minimum water and maximum production. Modi expressed India's willingness to share millet basket with the world. In his speech, he also talked about how India is leveraging digital technology in the agriculture sector.

Ripple effect of Israel, Iran tension in Delhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

Even as tension flares up in West Asia, the Delhi Police has reviewed the security of the Israeli Embassy and Chabad House following alerts from the intelligence agencies in the wake of the killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran. A multi-layered security has already been put in place with several CCTV cameras installed around both the structures. According to a senior officer, more personnel may be deployed, if required. On July 31, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and his bodyguard were killed in an airstrike that hit a residence where Haniyeh was staying in Tehran as a guest. According to sources, senior officers of the Delhi Police force have held a meeting to plan a massive security net around the two Israeli buildings in the national Capital. This came after the Delhi Police debunked rumours of an "explosion" at

the Embassy, calling it a hoax. The police said on X that it was a fake alert before deleting the post. Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Israel on Friday issued an advisory for the Indian nationals living in the country to stay vigilant and "adhere to safety protocols". "In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indian nationals in Israel are advised to stay vigilant and adhere to the safety protocols as advised by the local authorities. Please exercise caution, avoid unnecessary travel within the country and stay close to safety shelters," the Embassy of India in Israel posted on X. Air India has already cancelled its flight to Tel Aviv in the wake of escalating tensions in West Asia.

In the past three years, two low-intensity blasts have taken place near Israeli Embassy in the national Capital. No one was injured in the both attacks. Security around the Israeli Embassy was upped after a war between Israel and Hamas broke out last year. In December last year, a low-intensity blast was heard near the Israeli Embassy in the high-security Lutyens' zone, triggering concern among the Indian security and intelligence agencies and prompting them to carry out an extensive search in the area. During this operation, a letter addressed to the Israeli Ambassador was recovered at the spot. Following the back-to-back assassinations of Haniyeh in Tehran early on Wednesday and top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut the evening before, international diplomats have scrambled to head off a full-fledged regional war after Iran and its regional proxies vowed to retaliate.



Fresh trouble in Manipur

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Shots were fired and an abandoned house was torched in Manipur's Jiribam, triggering fresh tensions within a day of the Meitei and Hmar communities reaching an agreement to make efforts to restore normalcy in the district, officials said on Saturday. An abandoned house in Lalpani village was torched by armed men on Friday night, they said. "It is an isolated settlement consisting of a few Meitei houses, and most of those were abandoned after violence broke out in the district. Miscreants, who are yet to be identified, took advantage of security lapses in the area to commit the arson," an official said. The armed men also fired several rounds of shells and gunshots, targeting the village, he said. Security forces were rushed to the area following the incident, he added. Representatives of the Meitei and Hmar communities reached an agreement in a meeting held at a CRPF facility in adjoining Assam's Cachar on Thursday. The meeting was moderated by Jiribam district administration, Assam Rifles and CRPF personnel. Representatives of the Thadou, Paite and Mizo communities of the district were also present in the meeting.

In Bhubaneswar

Man arrested for marrying 5 women

Also dated 49 others to extract money

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Saturday arrested a 36-year-old man on the charge of duping several women on the plea of marrying them.

The accused, identified as Satyajit Managovind Samal, used to cheat the victims on the matrimonial websites by posing as a Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB) officer. He married five women and dated with 49 others.

Samal hails from Jajpur district and was staying in the



Chandrasekharpur area in Bhubaneswar.

Sources said an undercover woman police officer interacted with Samal, who used to flee to Dubai after duping women. Samal was nabbed based on the complaint filed by two victims at the Capital police station. He had duped

the first victim to the tune of Rs 36 lakh and a car and Rs 8 lakh and a Bullet motorbike from the second victim.

Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda said the accused subsequently used to engage the vehicles on hire.

"After chatting with victims on matrimonial websites, the accused took cash and vehicles. After committing the crimes, Satyajit used to move to Dubai and spend time there," said Panda.

During verification, it was found that Satyajit was involved in chatting with 49 more girls on the matrimonial websites.

Police have seized two mar-

riage agreement documents.

"The accused used to target divorcees and used to chat with them on matrimonial websites. After entering into a marriage agreement, he used to take cash and vehicles from the victims," said Panda.

As the accused was fleeing to Dubai, his arrest was challenging. Hence, a trap was laid and the accused was nabbed, he added.

Cash of Rs 2 lakh along with some vehicles has been seized from the accused. Rs 1 lakh in his bank account has also been frozen. Bank accounts with over Rs 1 lakh deposit and cash over Rs 2 lakh, some vehicles have also been seized, said the police.

CM wants mega steel plant in Keonjhar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday directed Industries Department officials to take all measures for establishment of a mega integrated steel plant in Keonjhar district.

Despite being rich in iron ore, Keonjhar district is yet to have a mega steel plant. So, the CM expressed concern over this matter.

Notably, Keonjhar is Majhi's native district.

While holding a review meeting on the progress made in the State's industrial sector, Majhi said the State Government aims to create 3.5 lakh employment opportunities in the next five years. Sectors like textile and food processing have more employment po-



tentials. So, he advised Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and Principal Secretary Hement Sharma to pay attention to how more industries can be established in all these areas. He also advised Odia entrepreneurs to set up industries in these sectors.

It was decided in the meeting that a taskforce under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja would be

constituted to fast-track the process of setting up a mega steel plant in Keonjhar with various interested industries.

Principal Secretary, Industries, Hemant Sharma said that since 2016, the State has received 989 proposals for setting up industries, of which 674 projects have been approved by the State Single Window Clearance Authority. Out of the approved

project, land has been handed over to 352 projects. Apart from this, work has been started for setting up 183 industrial projects and 74 industries have been operationalised.

Similarly, the State has got 12 foreign investment proposals. The State Government has been making efforts to implement 41 important investment proposals, he informed.

BSKY card to continue in State: Minister

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government in its annual Budget for 2024-25 has announced re-branding of the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) as Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY).

However, the announcement made in the Budget presented in the State Assembly by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has created confusion among beneficiaries as no specific date has been mentioned about the start of the scheme with the new name.

In this situation, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling clarified the position and said the BSKY card is still continuing in the State.

BSKY beneficiaries would continue to avail the facilities in all government and private hospitals for now, he said, adding that the government is taking all steps in this direc-

tion. The process for issuing new cards for GJAY would be initiated after the Budget Appropriation Bill is passed in the Assembly in September, the Minister said.

Stating that all the beneficiaries would be provided with GJAY cards after the passage of the Appropriation Bill, Mahaling said the GJAY would be implemented in phases.

Notably, the State Government has allocated Rs 5,450 crore in the Budget for GJAY, which is set to replace the BSKY launched by the previous BJD regime.

The Minister further said steps would be taken for making available anti-rabies vaccine in all hospitals and medical colleges across the State.

Arrangements would also be made for vaccinating stray dogs through joint efforts by the Housing and Urban Development and Health Departments, he informed.

Damaged Arpan rice kicks off political slugfest

- Cong wants rice be destroyed
- BJD alleges neglect in preserving stock
- BJP says rice never fit for offering to Lords

PNS ■ PURI

A political slugfest has ensued over the 'Arpan rice' after the servants of Suara Mahasura Nijog requested the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief to distribute the rice before it becomes unsuitable for consumption.

The State unit of the Congress said the Arpan rice which was collected before the inauguration of the Puri Heritage Corridor Project



is damaged now and thus, they should be destroyed instead of being offered to Lord Jagannath.

"The 4.5 crore people of Odisha should know why the rice was collected. They should know if the rice was collected for religious purposes or just for securing their seats," said Congress MLA Ashok Das.

When asked what should be done with the rice, Das said, "There is no other option but to destroy the rotten rice. If they are not fit for human consumption, how they should be offered to our

Lord?" The opposition BJD said the ruling BJP is politicising the Arpan rice.

"It is unfortunate to do politics over the Arpan rice. People spontaneously donated the rice for Lord Jagannath. It would be better if it is used for 'Prasad'.

"It is the duty of the administration to preserve them. If there is any negligence on their part, it is also unfortunate," said BJD MLA Pradeep Disari.

On the other hand, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan took

a swipe at the Opposition and said his party had already made it clear that the rice was not fit for offering to the Lord but the then BJD Government went ahead without paying any heed.

"Considering the way the rice was collected then, we had told that the collected rice was not fit for 'Arpan' (offering). Then the servants, too, told them that they couldn't be used inside the temple. The rice will be so treated with as the temple managing committee decides and directs," said the Law Minister.

Chief Engineer arrested in DA case

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Vigilance police on Saturday arrested Pravas Kumar Pradhan, Chief Construction Engineer, Anandpur Barrage Project in Keonjhar district, on the charge of possession of disproportionate assets.

The development came after it was found that Pradhan was in possession of 85 plots besides other multiple properties.

The Chief Construction Engineer was produced in court by the anti-graft agency. He was arrested after he was found in possession of disproportionate assets including a five-storied building of more than 11,000 sqft, a market complex of around 5,000 sqft, 335 grams of gold, bank deposits of Rs 78 lakh, Rs 11.7 lakh in cash during raids conducted on his properties.

Vigilance officials had conducted the raids on the properties linked to Pradhan at seven places in Baleswar district on Friday.



Panel formed to estimate govt's immovable assets

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha Government has constituted a State Level Committee to estimate the market valuation of various immovable properties of the State Government.

Additional Chief Secretary Revenue and Disaster Management (ACS) Satyabrata Sahu has issued the notification. "In pursuance of decisions taken in the high level meeting on the market valuation of immovable properties, the Government in Revenue and Disaster Management Department have been pleased to constitute a Committee with the members given below which will examine and suggest measures for rationalisation of fixation of market value of immovable properties," read the notification.

As per the orders, Additional Secretary Shashidhar Nayak has been appointed as Chairman of the Committee while Additional Secretary Diganta Routroy is the Member Convener of the panel.

In Cuttack Huge croc in Kathajodi triggers panic

PNS ■ CUTTACK
A huge crocodile was spotted in the Kathajodi river in Cuttack on Saturday, triggering panic among locals. The Gharial was around 8 to 10 feet long and was lying on sand in middle of the river.



According to reports, people gathered on the Trisulia bridge over the river to take a look at the crocodile which led to a traffic jam. With the Shraavan month underway, Kanwariyas are regularly going to the riverbank and locals who go to the river for their daily chores are now filled with fear of getting attacked. "The crocodile that appeared is a Gharial, which is a fish-eating crocodile. This species normally doesn't attack humans. This Gharial got swept away from the Naraj Barrage due to heavy rainfall recently. The crocodile is basking under the sun after food. We will try to drive it away since it has resulted in heavy traffic jam, but we are waiting for the rain to stop," said a Forest Department official.

DMF State-level committee stresses on livelihoods



DMs asked to place annual progress report
SUDARSHAN CHHOTARAY ■ BHUBANESWAR
A high-level meeting on monitoring and evaluation of District Mineral Fund (DMF) under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja on Friday stressed the need for focusing on promoting livelihoods.

The meeting witnessed presentations of district-level year-wise fund allocations and utilisation, project-wise fund allotments and progress of implementation of different projects. As the State has eight DMF districts like Angul, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Rayagada, the Chief Secretary asked the district Collectors to compile district-level progress report on fund allocations and utilisation and status of projects. While reviewing the progress of DMF fund allocations and utilisation, Ahuja directed the Collectors to ensure quality infrastructure development and underlined the need for improving services. He also emphasised to work for developing quality life standard of people at the bottom, promoting livelihoods and ultimately ensuring Sustainable Development Goals. Joining the meeting through virtual mode, the Collectors presented their districts' progress reports and success stories. The meeting took stock of formation of DMF in districts, financial status, plan and projects, work order process, administrative approval of funds for utilisation and operational guidelines of DMF funds. It was found that the funds have been utilised for construction of roads, bridges, buildings, education development, drinking water supply, improving health services, promoting livelihoods, irrigation development, welfare of women, children, PwD community, energy, environment, capacity building and housing for poor. The meeting was attended, among others, by Development Commissioner Anu Garg, Additional Chief Secretaries Satyabrata Sahu, Deo Ranjan Singh and VV Jadav, Panchayat Raj Commissioner-Secretary Sushil Kumar Lohani and I&PR Secretary Sanjay Singh.

CM visits Capital Hosp in night



Says facilities to be modernised
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi late on Friday evening visited the Capital Hospital in the city to have firsthand information on medical facilities and services for the patients. Majhi interacted with patients about amenities and healthcare besides food, staying, bed and facilities for attendants, on overall cleaning and sanitation system, etc. The Chief Minister also wanted to know the care of patients in nights, discussed with temporary sanitation workers and asked them about their revised wages notified recently. Majhi advised doctors and other staffs to be sensible for patients. He assured that the facilities and services in the Capital Hospital would be further modernised soon. Hospital Director Dilip Panda was present during the CM's visit.

Road caves in as pipeline bursts in Cuttack again

BJP, Cong target Mayor alleging substandard work, corruption
PNS ■ CUTTACK



A large portion of a road caved in following a pipeline burst in Nuapada Chhak in Cuttack on Saturday. The road communication between Nuapada and Khannagar was disrupted. It was alleged that such a situation cropped up due to the ongoing JICA project and corruption. Following the pipeline burst, BJP leader Sritam Das, who visited the spot, said, "All works, be it roads or buildings under the previous government, are of substandard quality. Earlier, a portion of the road had caved in at Choudhry Bazaar." Das alleged that there has been corruption in the execution of ongoing projects in Cuttack.

"The concerned officials should conduct a spot meeting and take immediate action. A couple recently got injured in a similar mishap. The Mayor should resign over similar incidents happening in the city," Das demanded. Congress Corporator Santosh Bhola said, "Be it JICA or WATCO, the agencies are not working properly. We had held several discussions with concerned officials, but they are also not listening."

Bhola said whatever the Mayor is saying, it is just limited to pen and paper only. Nothing is changing at the ground level. A corruption case would be lodged with the Vigilance soon. Responding to the allegations, Mayor Subash Singh said, "JICA is undertaking a major project in Cuttack. A similar project is also underway by WATCO. Similar incidents had happened in Choudhry Bazaar and Bidanasi areas. We have ordered to inspect the chambers of JICA and WATCO."

In Cuttack Techie, parents hospitalised after suicide bid

PNS ■ CUTTACK
The Markatnagar police here have started an investigation into suicide attempts by a software engineer and his parents at CDA Sector-6 in Cuttack on Thursday.

As per reports, Soumya Ranjan Panda and his father Umacharan and mother Sarojini are admitted to the SCB Medical College Hospital here after the trio consumed poison. Soumya Ranjan is working in an IT company in Bengaluru. Reports said that Soumya Ranjan and his parents were rescued in unconscious conditions from their rented house at night. The condition Soumya Ranjan was stated to be stable while his parents were admitted to an ICU of the hospital. It was suspected that all the three of the family tried to end their lives after consuming poison. However, it was yet to be ascertained why they wanted to take the extreme step. Police started an investigation into the matter.

IIT BBS welcomes new batch of students

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar has welcomed the new batch of students with a great enthusiasm. Separate orientation programmes for the students and parents for individual courses and an inspiring talk were organised by the institute, followed by the admission process for the academic year 2024-25.



During the orientation programme, Director, Prof Shreepad Karmalkar introduced the new members of the campus to the unique features of IIT Bhubaneswar. Deans and senior faculty members briefed the members about various academic and non-academic facilities of the institute. The queries and concerns of the students and parents were addressed during these sessions.

The orientation included a talk by motivational speaker Cdr VK Jaitly on 'Shaping Your Future in the next 4 years at IITBhubaneswar.' Dr Vijayakrishna Kari, Professor-in-Charge (Seminar), coordinated the programme. The admission to different courses at IIT Bhubaneswar commenced from July 9, with the enrolment of the PhD students. As many as 451 students have joined in BTech, 240 in MTech, 107 in MSc, 6 in MS by Research and 115 in the PhD course. Out of these, 3 foreign students have enrolled as part of the 'Study in India' program. The institute has started a new stream, namely Engineering Physics, and introduced MTech degree programs in Semiconductor Technology and Chip Design, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, and Blended-mode MTech degree in 'Advanced Maintenance Technology.' Soon, 50 students are going to enrol in the 2nd batch of the 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP).

Dr KC Satapathy, Regional Director of DAV Institutions, Odisha said the secrets of success lie in self-belief and determination. Principal of the school Dr Sujata Sahu presented the achievements of the students. Chairman of the school Santosh Kumar Satapathy presided over the function. Among others, Chairmen and Principals of the DAV Schools of the twin cities were present as guests. The phenomenal achievers, toppers, endowment prize winners, and teachers were honoured during the occasion.

Felicitation fest at CSpur DAV



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
A felicitation ceremony for the achievers of Class-X CBSE exam 2024 was held at the DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, on Saturday. Chief guest Subrat Tripathy, Chief Executive Officer, Adani Ports and SEZ, emphasised upon an all-round development of the children in all spheres. He also appealed to focus on goals and remain away from distractions including the excessive use of social media.

Navyata 2024 Design excellence and star power at NIFD



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Leading institution dedicated to nurturing and developing the next generation of fashion and interior design professionals, NIFD Global Bhubaneswar recently hosted its annual event, Navyata 2024, a dazzling showcase of design innovation and creativity in the presence of chief guest Ashley Rebello, the renowned Bollywood fashion designer and exclusive stylist for Salman Khan and Bollywood celebrity Sanjeeda Shaikh, whose remarkable career and versatility as an actress captivated audiences. Centre Director, NIFD Global Bhubaneswar Asutosh Panda said, "Navyata is a testament to the boundless creativity and innovative spirit of our students. This annual event brought together a fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern design, showcasing the best of both worlds." Sanjeeda Shaikh brought her extraordinary talent into the limelight once again.

Rebello's unparalleled expertise in fashion and his influential role in shaping the Bollywood fashion scene added a prestigious touch to the event. His artistry had adorned leading personalities such as Shahrukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Tabu, Katrina Kaif and international figures like Nicole Kidman. Since the last six years, 1,000 students passed out from this institute where more than 80-per cent placement was done for fashion designing and 100-per cent placement done form interior designing department. The event was attended by a distinguished audience, including dignitaries from the textiles, crafts and interior design sectors as well as celebrities and social media influencers from Odisha. The fashion design students presented an impressive array of collections inspired by various themes.

CSpur DAV School Foundation Day Celebrating success in the midst of challenges

Education plays a vital role in nation building and shaping the future of the present generation. The age-old tradition of the Indian education system is capable enough to fulfil the expectations of the millions. After so many experimentations and practices it has sharpened its objectives to reach the desired destination. It's well-expected that the stakeholders would realise their responsibilities and act upon accordingly. In this context, the role of DAV movement pioneered by Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati and further spearheaded by Mahatma Hans Raj has been crucial and catalytic. Founded on 04.08.1989 with a vision to impart holistic education and instil deep rooted values, DAV Public



SUJATA SAHU
School, Chandrasekharapur has since been a beacon of knowledge, nurturing young minds to become responsible global citizens. Over the years, the school has evolved and adapted to the changing times, embracing innovation while staying committed to its core principles.

As we commemorate this milestone, we extend heartfelt gratitude to all the stakeholders who have played an instrumental role in shaping the school's legacy right from the founder management members to the founder teachers whose relentless efforts and unwavering attitude have paved many a challenging path to rewrite history in a renewed manner. The heart and soul of any educational institution, the students have consistently demonstrated academic excellence, sportsmanship, and creative prowess. Their dedication and enthusiasm continue to inspire us all. The passionate and dedicated educators, along with the supporting staff, have been the pillars of knowledge and guidance for generations of students. Their commitment to fostering a conducive learning environment is commendable and has taken the school to every nook and cranny of the country. We express our sincere gratitude to the parents for entrusting us with the education and development of their children. Their continuous support and collaboration have been crucial in the success of our students. The proud alumni have made significant contributions to various fields, bringing laurels to both the school and the nation. Their achievements continue to motivate the current students to strive for excellence and outshine them. The visionary leadership provided by the management and trustees has been pivotal in steering the school towards growth and progress. Their unwavering commitment to educational excellence has been the foundation of our success. We extend our thanks to the wider community and well-wishers who have supported the school in various ways, be it through valuable contributions or patronage. As we reflect on the past 35 years, we also look ahead with optimism and determination. The future holds new challenges and opportunities, and we are confident that with the continued support of all stakeholders, DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, will continue to shine as a beacon of knowledge and virtue and re-

write further glorious chapters for the history of academics. Congratulations to everyone associated with the school on this momentous Foundation Day celebrations! Your collective efforts have made the school a place where dreams take flight and futures are shaped with flamboyance. While celebrating the occasion, we renew our commitment to the principles of NEP, continuing to evolve and innovate to provide an education that empowers students to be compassionate, curious and duty-bound individuals, ready to face the challenges of a rapidly-changing world. (Dr Sahu is the Principal of DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar)

Historical monument tag for Utkal Ashram demanded

By Odia Bhasa Andolan activists in Brahmapur

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR
The Odia Bhasa Andolan has formally demanded the recognition of Utkal Ashram, a symbol of Odia pride and historical significance, as a national heritage monument. The demand was presented to the Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj here on Thursday. Notably, a memorandum addressing this demand was initially submitted to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi last month. The demand was also raised during the



World Odia Language Conference held at Janata Maidan in February.

Utkal Ashram, a site that has contributed to Odia language, literature, culture, and numerous national events for a century, is now in a state of neglect. It is regrettable that individuals have been treating this sacred site as their personal property without considering its national importance.

Preserving the sanctity of the Utkal Ashram campus is a primary responsibility and a critical issue for the activists of the Odia Bhasa Andolan. The movement is committed to taking all necessary steps to elevate the status of Utkal Ashram to a national level, ensuring its recognition and preservation. Every effort will be made to achieve this goal if the Government supports our

demand, Odia Bhasa Andolan convenor Dr Sagar Ranjan Tripathi sa "Utkal Ashram is known to every Odia and I will raise this matter at the top level," Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said.

During the meeting, discussions included organizing State Government events to honor the notable sons of Ganjam. Senior educator and culture enthusiast Ramesh Charan Tripathy also discussed with Minister Suryabanshi Suraj the promotion of Sanskrit education by opening more Sanskrit language departments in Berhampur University and other colleges.

Present during this meeting were Sanskrit enthusiast Pandit Gopal Krishna Padhi, Brahmapur MLA K Anil Kumar, BJP district president Dr Subhash Chandra Sahu.

In Mayurbhanj Dy CM launches Mega Oil Palm Plantation Drive

PNS ■ BARIPADA

The 'Mega Oil Palm Plantation Drive', approved by the Dept of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt of India, has got its starting point in Odisha as Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo inaugurated it on Saturday in Dhanpur village under Betanati block in Mayurbhanj district.

According to the Union Government's commitment, the drive will be effective in 20 districts in the State from July 16 to September 15. Priority has been given to Mayurbhanj.

The drive focuses on the livelihood of the farmers. Farmers would be able to earn more than Rs 2 lakh per hectare of land.

Housing & Urban Development Minister Dr Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, two MPs and six MLAs of Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts were present at the inauguration ceremony.

The guests in their speeches educated the people on the excellence of palm oil and how the cultivation of this crop can make farmers self-reliant and profitable.

The BJP leaders also criticised the former BJD government for failing to keep their words on providing various facilities like water, forest and land. They said the BJP government has initiated its first scheme, keeping the welfare and financial gain of the farmers in mind, within 42 days since coming to power in Odisha.

Minor girl molestation case 3 youths get 2 yrs' jail term in JSpur

PNS ■ JAGATSIINGHPUR

The POCSO court in Jagatsinghpur sentenced three youths to undergo imprisonment for two years and pay a fine of Rs 2,000 each while delivering a judgment on a minor girl's molestation case that occurred in the Balikuda area in the year 2023.

The accused youths were identified as Soubhagya Das, Pradumnya Routray, and Mahesh Behera, all hailing from Chakulipada village under Balikuda block. They had allegedly intercepted a minor girl while she was returning

from school and indulged in rough behavior against her.

After the incident, the victim's father lodged an FIR at Balikuda police station.

Police registered a case against the accused youths under sections 354D, 506, 341 IPC, and 12 POCSO Act, and the trial of the case was taken up in the Pocso court Jagatsinghpur.

After examining witnesses, shreds of evidence and documents supplied by the prosecution, the court found the accused trio guilty and awarded the punishment on Wednesday.

Fish farming workshop held in B'patna



PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

A district-level workshop on fish farming was held recently at the RRTTS, in Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi.

State Project Director of Reliance Foundation, Rajendra Singh presided over the event, which was organized by DAPTA and KARTTABYA, two prominent voluntary organizations in the region.

Deputy Director of Fisheries Arun Kumar Behera attended as the chief guest of the programme.

Other notable attendees included RRTTS, OUAT, Joint Director Bhabanai Shankar Nayak, District Fisheries Officer Draupadi Majhi, Assistant Fisheries Officer Prashanti Nayak, CEO of KARTTABYA

Ashok Patnaik, and fish farming entrepreneur Netranand Mohanty.

The workshop focused on various methods, challenges, solutions, and government schemes related to fish farming. The Speakers emphasized that adopting fish farming as a business can lead to a sustainable livelihood and overall happiness.

Bijaya Pradhan of DAPTA delivered the vote of thanks.

The event saw participation from 25 women fish farmers from seven self-help groups across Dharmagarh, Golamunda, and Bhawanipatna blocks, as well as five fish farmers from a producer group. Debendra Patel and Sushil Behera of Reliance Foundation were also in attendance.

Maniabandha HS School holds Induction Prog



For Plus II Ist yr students

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

As per the direction of the Director, Higher Secondary Education, the Maniabandha HS School organised the Induction Programme for fresh students admitted into +2 first year class.

Decorating the campus with welcome banners, flowers and balloons, the staff and second year students of the institution organised a grand welcome ceremony in its conference hall where Principal Bijaya Kumar Parida presided. Plus two second year students revealed their

experience and guided the new comers to obey the rules and regulations of the institute.

Lecturers Santosh Kumar Beura, Srinivas Beura, Khageswar Mohapatra, Sanghamitra Panda, Saradananda Dash and DC Das intimated the new students the location of different lecture theatres, rules of the institute and the curricular and extra curricular activities done in the institute. Top marker of annual higher secondary examination 2024 in the institute Miss Pramodini Chanda was felicitated on the occasion who spoke her experience in the meeting to inspire the new comers.

Fate of BeMC outsourcing staffers uncertain

As civic body prepares for fresh tenders for manpower recruitment

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

The fate of the employees at the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has been thrown into uncertainty as the corporation prepares to call for new tenders for outsourcing services. The move comes after years of controversy surrounding the employment practices of Udayabhanu Marketing Agency (UMA), a private firm based in Bhubaneswar.

In 2016, the BeMC employed 101 workers in various departments, including Program Assistants, Data Entry Operators, Security Guards,

Electricians, Gardeners, Supervisors, and Night Watchmen. The annual expenditure for these employees amounted to approximately Rs 2 crore from BeMC's treasury. Initially, UMA was awarded the contract for managing these employees through a tender process for one year. The contract was renewed annually for the years 2017-18 and 2018-19. However, it has been revealed that the agency has continued to handle the responsibility without a formal tender or contract for the past few years, raising significant concerns about transparency and legality.

In 2021, the Department of Housing and Urban Development of Odisha issued a notice to BeMC to cease the employment of additional workers through outsourcing. Consequently, many of the workers employed under the agency

faced issues receiving their salaries, leading to strikes and a halt in several municipal operations. The situation was temporarily resolved through the intervention of Mayor Sanghamitra Dallei, who ensured the pending bills were paid.

As BeMC prepares to issue a new tender for outsourcing services, there is growing concern among the current outsourced workers about their job security. These workers have been serving BeMC for the past seven years, and there is apprehension about what will happen if UBA loses the new tender to another company.

"We have dedicated years of service to BeMC and now are facing the possibility of losing our jobs. We demand assurances from BeMC that our employment will be protected, regardless of the outcome of the new tender process," Data

Entry Operator Ramesh Behera said.

The workers have called for clear communication from BeMC regarding their job security and the steps the corporation will take to ensure their continued employment. They urged BeMC to ensure that all future contracts and employment agreements comply with legal and regulatory requirements, preventing any repeat of the current situation.

The BeMC officials have stated that they are committed to resolving the issue transparently and ensuring the fair treatment of all employees. They have assured the workers that their concerns will be addressed during the tender process.

As the situation unfolds, the employees of BeMC remain anxious about their future, hoping for a resolution that secures their jobs and livelihoods.

'Chandra Bose misleading nation about Netaji death'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

National adviser, Netaji Subhas Birth Soil Yatra Debiprasad Prusti has condemned Chandra Bose's statement on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

In a letter, Prusti has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reject the demand of Chandra to accept August 18, 1945 as the death date of Netaji Subhas and to bring the ashes from Japan temple. It is sheer madness of Chandra to claim such, Prusti stated.

Chandra Babu's claim is false fabricated and ill-motivated, Prusti mentioned in his letter.

The Sahanaawaz Khan Com-

mission and Khosla Commission accepted Netaji's death in plane crash in Taiwan, but brother of Netaji Subhas, Suresh Chandra Bose who was a key member of Sahanaawaz Commission inquiring Netaji's disappearance, did not agree to the report and even did not sign in the report. He released a Dissent Report mentioning he rejected the plane crash theory.

Lastly Justice Manoj Kumar Mukherjee Commission formed by the AB Vajpayee Government, discarded the plane crash death. But the UPA Government did not accept this report without showing any valid reason. That time Netaji's

Nephew, Subrat Bose, the then MP Lok Sabha, had raised the issue to accept Justice Manoj Kumar Mukherjee Commission report. (Subrat was the youngest son of Sarat Bose, elder brother of Netaji). These are all historical truth, Prusti mentioned.

Many a time, demand for DNA test of the ashes kept in Japan temple was raised from various quarters, but that's not accepted by the Government. Moreover, time and again Netaji's grand niece Jayanti Bose Rakshit and grand nephew Abhijit Bose Ray have outrightly Rejected the plane crash theory. Even ten years back during the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra

Modi at his residence in Delhi on October 14, 2015, where Prusti was also an invitee by the Prime Minister, Chandra did not raise the issue. So, why now? Prusti questioned.

Branding Netaji as the tallest leader of undivided India that's today's India Pakistan and Bangladesh, Prusti said any attempt or conspiracy to spread rumours about him will not be accepted.

In the letter along with Debiprasad Prusti, convenor Prof Kishore Swain, president Chaman Lal Marothia, Suryakant Sethi, Payal, Suranjan Pradhan, Mehfuza Alam, Gitanjali Swain, Tushar Swain, Akhik Nayak Manoranjan Nayak and Pritankan are other signatories.

In Ganjam Truck mows down 3 including 2 Kanwariyas



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Three persons, including two Kanwariyas, were killed after being hit by a speeding truck near Dimiria Chhak on National Highway-16 under the Khallikote police station in Ganjam district on Saturday morning.

The deceased were identified as Ranjit Nayak and Papu Nayak of Banpur in Khordha district and Banamali Patra of Dalibati village in Ganjam.

According to sources, the mishap occurred when the two Kanwariyas were on their way to the Umamaheswar temple in Balugaon after fetching water from Rushikulya river.

After hitting them, the fish-laden truck en route to Bhubaneswar from Brahmapur ran over a passerby and overturned. All three died on the spot. Getting information, the Khallikote police reached the spot and seized the truck. The driver was also detained.

Illegal prawn gheries cause waterlogging in Erasama coast

Thousands acres of paddy land affected

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSIINGHPUR

Thousands of acres of farmland have come under serious threat due to mushrooming of prawn gheries in Erasama coastline, triggering hurdles for the smooth discharge of rainwater to the sea and creating waterlogging at the river mouth.

The alleged prawn gheries have been spotted mainly near the Jatadhari river mouth, a confluence of the Hansu river and other water bodies and tributaries identified as Mahanga, Santara, Hadua, Balamara rivers under Gadakujanga Panchayat and Noliassahi village in Erasama block.

The gheries are not only creating waterlogging but toxic and chemical effluents discharged by gheries are harming the environment destroying farmlands and contaminat-



ing water bodies, alleged Mahavir Krushak Surakhya Mancha president Duryadhan Pradhan.

The mancha leaders informed that illegal prawn gheries are in operation in various areas adjacent to the Jatadhari river mouth connecting to Sandhakuda near Paradip. As a result, thousands of acres of farmland get marooned during the rainy season. The civil administration has failed to act against the owners of these gheries, they charged.

Although it violates the Environment Protect Act 1986, the Revenue and Forest departments are silent on the issue

due to a few undisclosed reasons. A farmer from Gadakujanga village said that thousands of acres of farm land are submerged in the rains of last few days affecting the paddy saplings. If the water doesn't get released, it will damage the saplings causing huge loss to the farmers, he added.

Taking advantage of the Revenue department's inaction, prawn gheries have mushroomed on thousands of acres of land in Erasama coastline, the gullible farmers added.

Local environment lover Girija Prasad Mohanty alleged that the gharries are being established in contravention of the guidelines framed by the

Forest and Wildlife departments, Coastal Aquaculture Authority and the Central Empowered Committee of Orissa High Court. The prawn feeds, medicines, and chemical fertilizers used in the gheries are destroying the environment in many villages, Mohanty stated.

When contacted Kujanga Forest and Revenue officials said that the eviction drives against the illegal prawn gharries have not stopped. "We are acting accordingly with earlier Orissa High Court orders. Meanwhile, plans are afoot to survey the gheries causing waterlogging on Jatadhari river mouth," he added.

'Karjayakaram' Skill Dev Prog at Centurion



In association with LTIMindtree

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Centurion University of Technology and Management, in collaboration with LTIMindtree CSR inaugurated the "Karjayakaram" Skill Development Program.

The initiative is set to empower over 1,000 students across Odisha by providing essential training and employ-

ment opportunities.

The inaugural event marked the beginning of the first phase of the programme, during which 60 students will receive specialized training as industrial sewing machine operators and CNC operators.

The phase sets the stage for future expansions, aiming to uplift the youth of Odisha through skill development and job placement.

Regional Director of CSR and Sustainability for LTIMindtree in the East Zone

Jitender Ghangas, Vice Chancellor of Centurion University, Prof Supriya Pattanayak were present on the occasion.

"The 'Karjayakaram' Skill Development Program is a significant step towards equipping our students with industry-relevant skills and enhancing their employability," stated Prof Pattanayak. "We are grateful for LTIMindtree's collaboration and support in this endeavour."

Ghangas expressed his enthusiasm for the program,

stating, "LTIMindtree is dedicated to contributing to the communities in which we operate.

Through 'Karjayakaram,' we aim to create sustainable livelihoods and foster economic growth in Odisha."

University Comptroller of Finance Debasish Panda, Senior General Manager (Projects), Sanjeev Mishra and Deputy Managing Director, Social Entrepreneurships Swagatika Mohapatra were present, among others.

SC Dalit sub-quota verdict may help BJP boost outreach

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP may not have taken a categorical stand at the national level on the Supreme court's landmark decision allowing States to create sub-categorisation within the SCs and STs, but several of its leaders are of the view that the verdict can help the party boost its outreach to the more disadvantaged sections of Dalits.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has assiduously cultivated the numerically-weaker Scheduled Castes (SCs) in many States, such as Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, over the years, and the apex court's verdict may allow the party to promise these communities with their most coveted wish -- their fair share in Government jobs and schemes, they said. The erosion of Dalit votes that hit the BJP in the recent Lok Sabha polls has sent its brain trust to the drawing board, as the party looks to reinvigorate its outreach to the community after the opposition's allegation that the Narendra Modi



Government wanted to change the Constitution found some traction in the election. However, a section of the party is of the view that it should tread cautiously on an issue rife with political uncertainty and assess the overall mood within the Scheduled Castes and Tribes before outlining its position. "Most parties, be it the BJP or the Congress or many regional parties, have refrained from taking a categorical stand. It is because the reaction from within these communities is itself divided. There are divided views within even a party, depending on who you speak to," a party leader said. What has made things tricky for the BJP is the stand of its ally,

Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), against the verdict, apparently driven by the fact that its support base of Paswans in Bihar is unhappy with the idea of dividing the Dalit quota along caste lines. LJP President and Union Minister Chirag Paswan has been a staunch BJP ally. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the principal opposition party in Bihar, has also come out against any move to fix a sub-quota for different SC communities. However, several BJP leaders, especially in different States where the party has long sympathised with the more disadvantaged among the Dalit castes, have welcomed the Supreme court judgment. Tamil Nadu BJP

President K Annamalai noted in a post on X that the Centre, in its affidavit to the court, had favoured the sub-categorisation. He said the verdict will ensure that the Madiga community receives its due, a reference to the more disadvantaged Dalits who live mostly in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana but are also present in other southern States. BJP MP Brij Lal, who comes from the Dalit community, had also welcomed the verdict, saying it addresses the disparity within the SCs. Economically and numerically stronger Dalit groups, like Malas in Telangana or Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh, are not considered to be pro-BJP. The Centre formed a high-level committee in January to examine the administrative steps that can be taken to safeguard the interests of SC groups like the Madigas. The panel has been tasked with recommending ways to ensure a fair allocation of benefits for the most disadvantaged communities within the SCs, which have been cornered by comparatively affluent and influential groups.

CJI highlights Lok Adalat's role in dispute settlement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

People get "so fed up" with the matters of courts that they just want a settlement, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said on Saturday while highlighting the role of Lok Adalats as alternative dispute redressal mechanisms. Lok Adalats are forums where disputes and cases pending in courts or at pre-litigation stage are settled or compromised amicably. No appeal against the mutually accepted settlement can be filed. "Log itna trast ho jate hain court ke mamlon se wo koi bhi settlement chahte hain...Bas court se dur kara dijiye (People are so fed up with the matters of the court that they just want a settlement). This process is the punishment and that is a cause of concern for all of us as judges," Chandrachud said at the commemoration of the special Lok Adalat week at the Supreme court. The CJ said he got tremendous support and cooperation from everyone including the Bar and the Bench in setting up of Lok Adalat at every stage.



Chandrachud said when the panels for the Lok Adalat were constituted, it was ensured that every panel would consist of two judges and two members of the Bar. "The purpose behind doing this was to give ownership to the advocates over the institution because this is not an institution which is only run by the judges, and this is not the institution of the judges, by the judges," he said. "There is so much that we learn from each other. We learnt from the advocates about how much command they have over little procedural issues," the CJ said.

Chandrachud said he genuinely felt that the Supreme court may be located in Delhi but it is not the Supreme court of India, he said. "Since I took over as the CJ, we have made efforts to bring officers from all over the country in the Registry. They bring great amount of inclusion and diversity," he said. The CJ said the special Lok Adalat began with seven benches initially as "we were sceptical if we would be successful". "By Thursday we had 13 benches and there was so much work," he said. "Purpose of Lok Adalat has been to take justice to the homes of people and ensure people that we are constant presence in their lives," Chandrachud said. The week-long special Lok Adalat, celebrating 75 years of the Supreme court, began with the aim to "facilitate amicable settlements of suitable pending cases", in matters that have "elements of settlement". The top court held the special Lok Adalat till August 3 in an effort to reduce the pendency of cases.



Coast Guard achieves significant milestone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant milestone, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) successfully conducted its maiden night landing of the ICG Dornier aircraft at Agatti Airport in the Lakshadweep Islands on Friday, officials said here on Saturday. Giving details, they said located approximately 460 kilometers west of Kochi in the Arabian Sea, Agatti features the only airstrip in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. This successful operation marks a remarkable enhancement in the Indian Coast Guard's operational capabilities. The ability to conduct night landings will provide critical support to the local populace during natural disasters, medical evacuations, and other emergencies, even during the darkest hours. The night landing was achieved through excellent coordination between Coast Guard District Headquarters, Lakshadweep, the Airport Authority of India, Agatti, and Coast Guard Air Enclave, Kochi. This achievement ensures the round-the-clock presence of the ICG in the Lakshadweep archipelago, thereby strengthening the region's overall safety and security. The successful night landing at Agatti Airport underscores the Indian Coast Guard's commitment to operational excellence and its readiness to address challenges in the most demanding conditions. This capability significantly contributes to national security and regional stability.

SSB DG to hold additional charge of BSF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) director general (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhary will hold the additional charge of the Border Security Force (BSF) following the premature repatriation of incumbent Nitin Agrawal, a Government order said Saturday. Agrawal, a 1989-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Kerala cadre, was removed as the BSF DG on Friday by an order of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC). Headed by the Prime Minister. A Union home Ministry order issued on Saturday said Chawdhary, a 1990-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, will hold the additional charge of the post of BSF DG "till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier."



Chawdhary is the DG of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), the force that guards India's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan. The ACC on Friday ordered similar premature and immediate repatriation of Agrawal's deputy and Special DG (west), Yogesh Bahadur Khurania, to his parent cadre of Odisha. The Government's decision to remove the two top BSF officers comes against the backdrop of the Jammu region, along the India-Pakistan international border, witnessing a spate of terror attacks leading to killing of number of army and security personnel as well as civilians.

Urban areas rapidly becoming dengue hotbeds: Data

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Urban areas are rapidly becoming dengue hotbeds due to climate-induced higher temperatures, erratic rainfall leading to waterlogging, population concentration, and rapid construction. Inadequate solid waste management and improper water storage practices further exacerbate the problem, contributing to a higher density of the Aedes mosquito, which spreads dengue. Data speaks. In 2022, a total of 2.33 lakh cases and 303 deaths and in 2023 a total of 2.89 lakh cases and 485 deaths due to Dengue were reported. The urban areas have been contributing 55-58 per cent of the total cases for the last few years, however in 2023 it increased to around 68 per cent. The highest number of cases have been reported from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.

Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra sounded alarm recently at a meeting saying that with the onset of the monsoon and dengue cases nearly 50 per cent higher than at the same time last year, there was need for a joint action plan with the Urban Development Ministry. "This collaborative effort aims to address the rising dengue cases in urban areas through enhanced surveillance, increased public awareness, and effective vector control measures," he said. The Secretary said that dengue cases have been increasing over the past four years, year after year. Although dengue cases generally peak in October, this year's trend shows that, as of July 31, 2024, the number of cases is already almost 50 per cent higher than at the same time last year, he said, indicating that dengue is fast emerging, outbreak-prone, and mosquito-borne viral fever.



However, Chandra asserted that there was no need to panic as "while the number of cases has been rising over the past four years, the Dengue Case Fatality Rate has decreased from 3.3 per cent in 1996 to 0.17 per cent in 2023 due to focused, timely and collaborative efforts." Chandra was chairing a high-level inter-ministerial meeting (conducted in hybrid mode) to review the dengue situation in nine high-burden states and assess the preparedness of the public health system for the

prevention, containment, and management of dengue, given the onset of the monsoon and the rise in dengue cases. He highlighted the need for pre-emptive steps and public health measures ahead of the monsoon season, when dengue cases typically peak around August, September, October, and November. Chandra advised the States to be prepared with effective hospital management of the dengue patients. The Secretary also advised for identification of the hot spots, increased vec-

tor surveillance, geotagging of the cases for taking preventive actions etc. He stated, "We need to ensure the availability of platelets and hospital resources in the health departments to bring down the fatality rate." He assured all support to the states in combating dengue and encouraged the states to submit their proposals to the Ministry regarding the support they require. The meeting, held recently included participation from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) as well as Secretaries and high-level officials from the nine states of Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Total of 18 municipal corporations including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai virtually participated in the meeting.



Submarine INS Shalki arrives in Colombo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining close defence ties between the two countries, Indian Navy's submarine INS Shalki is in Colombo, Sri Lanka on a two day visit (02 - 04 August). The submarine was accorded a ceremonial reception by the Sri Lanka Navy on Friday, Navy said here on Saturday. During the visit, the Commanding Officer is scheduled to call on the Commander of the Western Naval Area Rear Admiral WDCU Kumarasinghe, followed by visit and briefing of Sri Lanka Navy personnel onboard. Personnel from High Commission of India in Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka Defence Forces are also scheduled to visit the submarine. INS Shalki is a Shishumar class diesel-electric submarine, commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1992. This is the first ever submarine to be built in India. Earlier, Kalvari class submarines INS Karanj and INS Vagir had visited Colombo in February 2024 and June 2023 (to celebrate International Day of Yoga).

India set example for world by evacuating students from war-hit Ukraine: Kovind

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India set an example for the world by evacuating its students from Ukraine and it could happen after Prime Minister Narendra Modi negotiated with both Russia and Ukraine for a 24-hour ceasefire, former President Ram Nath Kovind said on Saturday. Delivering the fifth Dr Rajaram Jaipuria Memorial Lecture here, the former President said India is on the path of being a 'vishwaguru' or global leader and called upon the youth to contribute to it. He also gave several examples of how India proved itself to be a global leader, including the recent Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam for giving reservation to women in legislature. Talking about the Russia-Ukraine war, the former President said everyone expected it to be over in a month or two, which is why several Indian students got stuck in the war-struck Ukraine. "When six-eight months passed, the situation became such that it was difficult to survive. The concern of parents of the students was acknowledged by the Government. I am deliberately giving this example, I was in Rashtrapati Bhawan at that time," Kovind said. "I asked why so many Indian students go to Ukraine. I was told medical education is cheap there. Our students got stuck, if something would have happened to them, the Government would have been held responsible. Though it was not the Government's responsibility, parents sent them there, but the Government would have been blamed," he added. Asserting "our Government set an example", Kovind said they played the role of a global



leader and talked to both nations, Russia and Ukraine, to have a ceasefire for 24 hours. "Both are big nations. Would they have agreed if any other country would have intervened? No," he said. "Our Prime Minister talked to both Russia and Ukraine, and thank god both agreed. For 24 hours, war was paused," Kovind claimed. He also said the students from other countries like the US, Pakistan and China were also stuck, but their Governments could not evacuate them. "Their leaders were also told to follow the example of India, but they refused. They told the parents you did not ask us before sending the students..." he said. "This is global leadership and India is being recognised as a global leader as of today," he said. Kovind also said that the idea of Vishwaguru does not mean there will be a global Government Headed by India. "There used to be a concept of universal Government - it is not that India will become the Head of State and there would be a world capital in India. Countries will remain the same, but our recognition of global leadership will take us to the top," he said. Kovind said the Indian Government has taken a lot of steps to empower the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women.

Closure of weather advisory offices for farmers slammed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday alleged that 199 district agro-meteorological units, which provided farmers at the block-level free-of-cost weather advisory services, were shut down as the NITI Aayog "misrepresented" their role to justify the decision. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared a media report on social media which claimed that the farm weather advisory offices were shut in March this year as the NITI Aayog "misrepresented" their role and sought privatisation. "The India Meteorological Department shut down 199 district agro-meteorological units (DAMUs). These agromet units provided all farmers at the block-level free-of-cost weather advisory services, and crucial information related to sowing,



use of fertilisers, harvesting and storing crops," he said. Experts suggest that while the budget outlay for these units every year was around Rs 45 crore, the benefit was around Rs 15,000 crore, Ramesh pointed out. The shutdown was opposed by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, and by several key stakeholders, including the Gujarat-based Association of Agrometeorologists, he claimed. "RTI documents now reveal that it was the NITI Aayog that suggested that district agromet services be privatised and monetised. In fact, the Aayog misrepresented their role to justify this decision,

arguing that the agromet units be shut down because data was now automated," he said. "This is untrue - agromet staff customised central forecasts for local use and tailored data for other advisories, such as those related to the use of fertilisers," Ramesh said in his social media post. "The Aayog's deception and its lack of courage in standing up to the Government when faced with the Government's poor decision-making is illustrative of its role over the last ten years as a mere drumbeater and cheerleader for the non-biological PM," Ramesh said, slamming the public policy think-tank.

Army hospital wins laurels for work in organ transplant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The army's Western Command Hospital on Saturday received a national recognition for its contribution to the field of organ transplantation. It has been awarded the title of 'Best Emerging National Transplant Retrieval Hospital' by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), a senior official said. The Command Hospital of the Army's Western Command (CHWC) is located at Chandimandir in Haryana. The award was presented by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel to the hospital's organ transplant team during the 14th Indian Organ Donation Day function held here on Saturday, the Army said. The CHWC stood out among nearly 300 such hospitals across the nation, demon-



strating excellence in organ donation and retrieval practices, it said. The introduction of organ donation and retrieval within the armed forces began in the late 2000s, with CHWC launching its programme in 2014. "Since then, the hospital has successfully performed 75 organ transplant procedures. The CHWC has also achieved several significant milestones for military hospitals in the country like harvesting pancreas from a brain-dead person and retrieving the organs from a cardiac-dead person," the Army said.

Call for finding solutions to mushrooming coaching centres

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs a comprehensive policy solution to mushrooming of coaching institutes, the Congress said on Saturday and called for a revision of syllabi, more resources for all exam-takers and investments in the quality of education. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said data provided by the Department of Higher Education to the Rajya Sabha shows that GST collections from coaching institutes have risen rapidly between 2019 and 2024, from Rs 2,241 crore to Rs 5,517 crore. This represents an astonishing 146-per cent rise in Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections,

some part of which may be attributable to better enforcement, but it also likely comes from the growing market size, he said. "Worryingly, the GST collections of Rs 5,517 crore in FY24, collected at a rate of 18 per cent, suggests a market of Rs 30,653 crore for coaching institutes annually. This is an extremely worrying figure, since it corresponds to about two-thirds of the Union Budget's allocation for higher education in FY24," Ramesh said in a social media post. GST figures are likely underestimating the market for coaching institutes, which is notorious for its poor regulation, the Congress leader added. "India needs a comprehensive policy solution to this mush-



rooming of coaching institutes syllabi need to be revised, and brought in line with school curriculum, more resources need to be made available for all exam-takers, and investments must be made in the quality of education," he said.

His remarks came amid a focus on coaching institutes following the death of three civil service aspirants after the basement of such an institute in Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar area was flooded due to rains. Ramesh also posted on social

media a written answer on coaching institutes given by Minister of State in the Education Ministry Sukanta Mazumdar in Parliament last week, in which he said keeping in view the growth in the number of unregulated private coaching centres in the country in the absence of any laid-down policy or regulation, the Ministry has circulated the Guidelines for Regulation of Coaching Centre among the States and Union territories on January 16 for consideration by way of an appropriate legal framework. Education being on the Concurrent list, the States and Union territories need to take further action by way of an appropriate legal framework, Mazumdar said.

MASKED ASSAILANTS RANSACK VENEZUELA OPPOSITION'S HEADQUARTERS

AP ■ CARACAS

Half a dozen masked assailants ransacked the headquarters of Venezuela's opposition Friday in an escalation of violence against President Nicolás Maduro's opponents after several countries called for proof of his claim he had won the disputed presidential election. Assailants broke down doors and hauled away valuable documents and equipment in the raid around 3 am, opposition leader María Corina Machado's party said. Images published by Machado's party on social media show several walls covered in black spray paint. The raid follows threats by top officials, including Maduro, to arrest Machado, who has gone into hiding while still urging Venezuelans and the international community to challenge Sunday's election results. The Biden administration has thrown its support firmly behind the opposition, recognising candidate Edmundo González as the victor and discrediting the National Electoral Council's official results. González was

tapped in April as a last-minute stand-in for Machado, who has been barred from running for political office for 15 years. The US announcement late Thursday followed calls from multiple governments, including Maduro's close regional allies, for Venezuela's electoral authorities to release precinct-level vote counts, as it has done during previous elections. On Friday, Uruguay recognised González as the winner. The electoral body declared Maduro the winner Monday, but the main opposition coalition revealed hours later that it had collected copies of more than 80% of the country's 30,000 voting tallies - printouts from the electronic voting machines - and that they show González prevailed by a more than 2-to-1 margin. "Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear to the United States and, most importantly, to the Venezuelan people that Edmundo González Urrutia won the most votes in Venezuela's July 28 presidential election," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. Maduro responded with a quick admonishment: "The United States needs to keep its

nose out of Venezuela!" González, whose location is also unknown, posted a message on X Friday thanking the US "for recognizing the will of the Venezuelan people reflected in our electoral victory and for supporting the process of restoring democratic norms in Venezuela." On Friday, Venezuelan electoral authorities gave an updated vote count, but not the precinct-level tallies demanded. National Electoral Council President Elvis Amoroso said that with 96.9% of tally sheets counted, Maduro's margin of victory was more than 8 percentage points over González: 52% to 43.2%. He attributed the delay in updating results to "massive attacks" on the "technological infrastructure." Blinken's announcement came amid a flurry of diplomatic efforts by Brazil, Colombia and Mexico to convince their fellow leftist to allow an impartial audit of the vote. On Thursday, the governments of the three countries issued a joint statement calling on Venezuela's electoral authorities "to move forward expeditiously and publicly release" detailed voting data.



But it's unclear what leverage the countries have over Maduro, who has shown little desire to rethink his entrenched position. On Friday, Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the lower house of Russian parliament, emphasized that Russian election monitors have witnessed Maduro winning a legitimate victory. He accused the US of fomenting tensions in the country. "Washington is playing by its rules, which are aimed at maintaining its

hegemony and expanding its influence," Volodin said. "It doesn't accept any other outcome but the victory of the candidate it backs." Although no ally or anyone in the armed forces has yet to break with Maduro over the contested elections, he faces huge obstacles righting Venezuela's economy without the legitimacy that can only come from a credible election result. Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven crude reserves

and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into a free fall marked by 130,000% hyperinflation and widespread shortages after Maduro took the helm in 2013. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2014, the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history. US oil sanctions have only deepened the misery and the Biden administration - which had been easing those restrictions - is now likely to

ramp them up again unless Maduro agrees to some sort of transition. "He's counting on being able to wait this out and people will get tired of demonstrating," said Cynthia Arnson, a distinguished fellow at the Wilson Center, a Washington think tank. "The problem is, the country is in a death spiral and there's no chance the economy will be able to recover without the legitimacy that comes from a fair election." Thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets Monday after the National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner of the election. The government said it arrested hundreds of protesters and Venezuela-based human rights organisation Foro Penal said 11 people were killed. Machado and González addressed a huge rally of their supporters in the capital, Caracas, on Tuesday, but they have not been seen in public since. Later that day, the president of the National Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, called for their arrest, describing them as criminals and fascists. On Wednesday, Maduro asked

Venezuela's highest court to conduct an audit of the election, but that request drew almost immediate criticism from foreign observers who said the court - which like most institutions is controlled by the government - lacks the independence to perform a credible review. On Thursday, Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice agreed to conduct the audit and ordered Maduro, González and the eight other candidates who participated in the presidential election to appear before the justices Friday. A spokesman for González said he did not know if the candidate planned to attend. In an op-ed published Thursday in the Wall Street Journal, Machado said she is "hiding, fearing for my life, my freedom, and that of my fellow countrymen." She reasserted that the opposition has physical evidence that Maduro lost the election and urged the international community to intervene. "We have voted Mr Maduro out," she wrote. "Now it is up to the international community to decide whether to tolerate a demonstrably illegitimate government."



Hunter Biden set to be sentenced on gun charges in November

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hunter Biden is set to be sentenced on felony firearms charges in November under an order signed by a judge on Friday. The president's son could face up to 25 years in prison at sentencing set for November 13 in Wilmington, Delaware, but as a first-time offender he is likely to get far less time or avoid prison entirely. Hunter Biden is also facing another trial on tax charges in California set to begin in September. He's charged in that case with failing to pay USD 1.4 million in taxes. President Joe Biden, who dropped his reelection bid last month, has said he will not use his presidential powers to pardon his son or lessen his sentence. Hunter Biden was convicted of three felonies after lying on a federal form to purchase the gun by saying he wasn't a drug user in 2018, a period when he has acknowledged struggling with addiction. US District Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by former

Republican President Donald Trump, will decide how much time, if any, Hunter Biden serves behind bars at the sentencing scheduled to fall shortly after Election Day. He was supposed to plead guilty to misdemeanour tax offenses and avoid prosecution in the gun case if he stayed out of trouble for two years in a deal with prosecutors last year. However, the agreement fell apart after Noreika questioned unusual aspects of the proposed agreement, and the lawyers could not resolve the matter. Hunter Biden is also pushing for dismissal of both the tax and gun cases against him, citing a ruling in Florida that threw out a separate prosecution of Trump after his attorneys argued the Justice Department special counsel in the case was improperly appointed. Hunter Biden is also being prosecuted by a special counsel appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland. A representative for his legal team did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment on the sentencing.

AP ■ ZEITA (WEST BANK)

Two Israeli airstrikes in the northern West Bank killed nine Palestinian militants on Saturday, Israel's army said, as violence flared again in the Israeli-occupied territory with tensions high over the war in Gaza. The Israeli army said its forces first struck a vehicle in a rural area northwest of the city of Tulkarem in early morning, killing the five occupants. The army said they were on their way to carry out an attack. The Palestinian Health Ministry said the men's bodies were taken to a nearby hospital. Hamas later identified all five as militants with the group, including a local commander. According to an Associated Press journalist and witnesses, the blast took place along a road connecting the Palestinian villages of Zeita and Qaffin. "We came to the site and found a young man martyred here on the street and half of his face was missing," said Taiser Abdullah, a Zeita resident who said he had been going to work when he heard the strike nearby. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said four of the bodies were "burned and charred beyond recognition".

Israel's army says airstrikes in northern West Bank kill 9 Palestinian militants

Later Saturday, Israel's military said it killed four other Palestinian militants in the Tulkarem area shortly after they opened fire on Israeli troops operating in the area. No further information was immediately available. Over 590 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war began in Gaza in October, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most have been killed during Israeli raids and violent protests, but the dead also include bystanders and Palestinians killed in attacks by Jewish settlers. The northern West Bank has seen some of the territory's worst violence over the past 10 months. Tulkarem, with its two refugee camps, has become one of the main flashpoints and is regularly raided by Israeli forces. Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are active in the city. The strike came days after the assassinations of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran early Wednesday and top Hezbollah commander



Fouad Shukr in Beirut the evening before. The escalation threatens to plunge the region into a full-fledged regional war. Iran and its proxies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, vowed to retaliate against Israel, which said it killed Shukr but has not confirmed or denied its role in the killing of

Haniyeh. Iran's Revolutionary Guard said a short-range projectile was behind Haniyeh's death and accused the United States of supporting the attack. The Pentagon said late Friday the US military will move a fighter jet squadron to the Middle East and maintain an aircraft carrier in the

region. The previous day, President Joe Biden said he had urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seize the chance for a cease-fire with Hamas, adding that Haniyeh's killing had "not helped" efforts to negotiate an end to the war. Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas' military and governing capabilities. At least 39,550 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in the nearly 10 months since Hamas' brutal Oct 7 attack on Israel triggered their latest war. That's according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. Israel has accused Hamas of embedding in the civilian population and putting it at risk. Most of Gaza's population of about 2.3 million is displaced, many people multiple times, as Israel's military returns to areas where it says Hamas militants have regrouped. Health services and sanitation have largely collapsed across the territory as hunger grows.

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine has taken delivery of a second Turkish-built navy corvette, officials said, although they did not say specifically how the warships might be used in the war against Russia. Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, attended the launching ceremony of the Ada-class corvette during a visit to Turkey, the Ukrainian presidency announced on its website. The corvette Ukraine already had was currently undergoing sea trials. Turkish Ada-class ships are typically able to strike planes, other ships and submarines. Ukraine, which has coastlines on the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov, had a small navy at the time of Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion. But it has developed deadly

Ukraine adds another Turkish corvette to its navy for war with Russia

uncrewed sea drones that have severely limited Moscow's Black Sea naval capability. The Ukrainian presidency said the corvettes would help protect the country's interests in the Black and Azov seas "but also, in particular, in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean." "So now the second corvette has been launched," Ukrainian Navy spokesman Dmytro Pletenchuk told The Associated Press. "The next step is to equip it with the appropriate weapons systems and train the second crew." He said a new crew of 100 men would be trained to



work on the ship. International law forbids the passage of warships through Turkey's busy Bosphorus Strait, which links the Mediterranean and Black seas, during times of war. However, the presidency's statement didn't say where exactly the Turkish shipyard was located, meaning it could be on the northern side of the strait, with a direct route to Ukraine. Ukraine ordered the two Turkish corvettes under an agreement signed in 2020, the presidency said. Ukrainian authorities last month adopted a Maritime Security Strategy that aims to rebuild its naval capability. It is also getting help with that from Western partners. The maritime capability coalition, headed by the United Kingdom and Norway, was established last December.

Mourners bury Hamas chief Haniyeh in Qatar as more escalation looms over Middle East

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Thousands of mourners converged around the flag-draped coffin of Hamas' slain political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, in the emirate of Qatar on Friday as the fallout surged from his death in an alleged Israeli attack. The funeral ceremony in Doha, Qatar's capital, attended by members of Gaza's militant Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups, as well as Qatari and Iranian officials, was subdued. But across the Muslim world - from Jordan and Morocco to Yemen and Somalia - angry crowds waving Palestinian flags rushed out of mosques after Friday prayers, chanting for revenge. "Let Friday be a day of rage to denounce the assassination," said Izzat al-Risheq, a senior Hamas official. Haniyeh had lived in Qatar, along with other senior members of Hamas's political leadership. Following the back-to-back assassinations of Haniyeh in Tehran early on Wednesday and top

Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut the evening before, international diplomats have scrambled to head off a full-fledged regional war. Iran and its regional proxies vowed to retaliate. Major airlines canceled flights to Tel Aviv, Israel and Beirut, Lebanon. France on Friday beefed up security for Jewish communities nationwide. Poland warned its citizens against travelling to the Mideast. Pakistan and Turkey lowered their flags to half-staff, prompting Israel to summon Turkey's deputy ambassador for a "stern reprimand". Turkey's foreign ministry spokesperson Oncu Keceli shot back that Israel "cannot achieve peace by killing the negotiators" - a reference to Haniyeh's role in the cease-fire talks - as hundreds of Turks gathered at the historic Hagia Sophia to pay tribute to the slain Hamas leader as his funeral service got underway in Doha. "We are sure that his blood will bring out victory, dignity and liberation," senior Hamas official



Khalil al-Hayya, seen as a possible successor to Haniyeh, said from the Doha mosque where Haniyeh's coffin was displayed beside that of his bodyguard who was also killed in the attack in Tehran. Israel has not confirmed or denied its role in the targeted killing of Haniyeh. On Thursday, Israel announced that it killed the shadowy leader of Hamas' military

wing, Mohammed Deif, in a July airstrike. Hamas had previously claimed Deif survived last month's targeted airstrike in the besieged Gaza Strip, where the deadly pattern of Israeli airstrikes and skirmishes continued this week, with 15 Palestinians killed when a Gaza City school was hit on Thursday. At least 39,480 Palestinians have

been killed in Gaza in the nearly 10 months since Hamas' brutal Oct 7 attack on Israel triggered the latest Israel-Hamas war. Palestinian health authorities providing the casualty tolls do not differentiate between civilians and combatants. Tensions were also running high on Israel's northern border days after Israel claimed responsibility for killing Shukr, the Hezbollah commander. On Friday, Hezbollah claimed a series of rocket and artillery attacks on Israel, causing a fire but no casualties in an evacuated Israeli town. Israel claimed its warplanes struck two Hezbollah militants in southern Lebanon who it said had fired the volley of rockets. The exchange was more of the same tit-for-tat that have flared along the Lebanese-Israeli border throughout the Israel-Hamas war. But Israelis and Lebanese were bracing for more after Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Thursday declared that the Shukr's assassination in the southern suburbs of Beirut had pushed the war into a "new phase".

From contested Jerusalem, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, the imam of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, mentioned "the martyr Ismail Haniyeh" in his weekly sermon to the thousands of Palestinian worshippers who had come to Friday prayers. "We ask God Almighty to have mercy on him and to grant him a place in His spacious gardens," the imam said, adding that the Palestinians in Jerusalem were mourning the late Hamas leader. Sheikh Sabri was promptly arrested. The Israeli police said they were interrogating him on charges of incitement to violence. "My policy towards instigators is clear - zero tolerance," far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted on X. Across the region, vows by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, that Israel would pay the price for killing Haniyeh on Iranian soil quickly led to calls for intense diplomacy to prevent further escalation. Late on Thursday, President Joe Biden urged Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu to seize the chance for a cease-fire and "move on it now." Netanyahu has sought to portray the recent striking of Hamas leaders as bringing Israel closer to a deal that would free the remaining Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Their distraught families rallied Thursday in Tel Aviv to mark the bitter milestone of 300 days of their captivity. Tor Wennesland, the UN special coordinator for the Mideast peace process, said he was racing to work with Lebanon, Qatar, Egypt and other powers to "prevent a spillover of the conflict". UK Defence Secretary John Healey and Foreign Secretary David Lammy visited Israel on Friday "to push for an immediate cease-fire and drive de-escalation in the Middle East" while Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said he spoke with his American counterpart, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. "The unprecedented security cooperation between Israel and the United States against Iran and its proxies is critical," Gallant said.

Next round of India-Asean trade agreement review talks soon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The next round of talks for the ongoing review meeting of the India-Asean free trade agreement in goods will be held in November, an official statement said on Saturday.

The third round of the negotiations was concluded on August 1 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Eight sub-committees have been constituted under the India-Asean Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee for undertaking negotiations on different areas related to the review of the pact.

"The next meeting of the AITIGA (Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement) Joint Committee will be held in India from 19-22 November 2024," the Commerce Ministry said.

The AITIGA was signed in 2009.

In September 2022, both sides tasked the AITIGA Joint Committee to undertake the review to make the agreement more trade-facilitative and mutually beneficial.

During the third round of



negotiations in Jakarta, Indonesia, all eight Sub-Committees dealing with national treatment and market access, rules of origin, standards, technical regulations, customs procedures and trade facilitation held substantive discussions.

"The review of AITIGA, signed in 2009, will help create further opportunities for businesses on both sides to enhance the level of India-Asean trade," the ministry said.

ASEAN is an important trade partner of India with about 11 per cent share in India's global

trade.

India's exports to the 10-nation bloc ASEAN were USD 41.2 billion in 2023-24, while imports aggregated at USD 80 billion in the last fiscal.

Both sides are aiming to conclude the review in 2025.

The review of the AITIGA was a long-standing demand of Indian businesses.

India is asking for a review of the agreement to eliminate barriers and misuse of the trade pact.

Asean members include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Finance Ministry asks insurers to speedily disburse claim amount to victims of Wayanad landslide

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry on Saturday asked public sector insurance companies including Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to speedily disburse the claim amount to landslide victims and their families in Wayanad and other districts of Kerala.

The insurance companies have initiated efforts for reaching out to their policyholders through various channels (local newspapers, social media, company websites, sms, etc) to provide the contact details for assistance in the districts of Wayanad, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Thrissur, where a significant number of claims are being reported, the finance ministry said in a post on X.

"In view of the unfortunate landslide incident and heavy rains in Kerala, the government has mandated the Public Sector Insurance companies (PSICs), including LIC, National Insurance Corporation, New India Assurance, Oriental Insurance, and United India Insurance to extend all possible support to the victims



of the calamity so that the insurance claims can be expeditiously processed and paid," it said.

LIC has been asked to speedily disburse the claim amount in respect of the policyholders under the PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, it said. The documentation required for processing of claims has been relaxed comprehensively to ensure speedy dispersal of the claim amount, it said.

It further said, the General Insurance Council will coordinate with the insurance companies to ensure that claims are processed and paid expeditiously and will host a portal for all insurers to report claim status daily.

The central government and finance ministry remain committed to supporting the victims of this calamity and ensuring they receive the necessary assistance without delay and trouble, it added.

Atmanirbhar should not degenerate into inefficient import substitution: Ex-RBI chief

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Due to supply disruptions caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war, many countries started thinking about being self-sufficient with respect to 'critical imports' and India needs to ensure that "Atmanirbhar" should not degenerate into inefficient 'import substitution', former RBI Governor C Rangarajan said on Saturday.

Addressing the 14th convocation of the ICFEI Foundation For Higher Education, he said India's development strategy should be multidimensional and growth may be stimulated by raising investment rate, emphasising agriculture, manufacturing and services, absorbing new technologies and promoting a mix of sectors that are employment friendly.

"Any import substitution must look at cost. Expensive, import substitution is not to the advantage of anybody. What we need to do is efficient import



substitution. Atmanirbhar should not degenerate into the old style import substitution. I think that is contrary to what is good for our country," he said.

Jobless growth is certainly a matter of concern. But job creation without growth is equally bad even as the new technologies can not be ignored, the former Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council said.

"Job creation is going to be the toughest challenge ahead not only in India but the world over," he said.

Based on some

assumptions about the future exchange rate of rupee and domestic inflation, India needs to have an average annual real rate of growth of six to seven per cent to achieve over USD 13,000 per capita income by 2024.

According to him, though, India need not belittle what it has achieved, there is an inescapable need to strengthen higher education in terms of quality and effectiveness.

The three dimensions of the reform of higher education are access, equity and quality, Rangarajan opined.

FICCI CASCADE organises awareness rally about illicit trade, impact on economy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FICCI Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) on Saturday organised an awareness rally against illicit trade and smuggling of counterfeit products that have a negative impact on India's economy.

According to the 2022 FICCI CASCADE study, there has been a significant rise in the illicit trade market across critical industries such as FMCG-packaged foods, FMCG-household and personal goods, alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

The rise in size of illicit trade market can be gauged from the fact that in the 2010-2020 period, the FMCG packaged foods segment in particular witnessed an alarming rise of nearly 600 per cent when the market grew from Rs 20,378 crore in 2010 to Rs 1,42,284 crore in 2020, FICCI CASCADE said in a statement.

Flagging off the auto rally for awareness, Praveen Khandelwal, Member of Parliament, said, smuggling has a crippling effect on our economy and many illicit



players use funding from those sources to boost terror funding.

"I also request FICCI to conduct awareness drives of this nature in every state and I will exhort the retailer community to participate wholeheartedly in these initiatives. I will also engage in discussion with the FICCI CASCADE team to see how we can move towards eradicating this menace," he said.

Smuggling activities not only have a debilitating impact on the economy in the form of job losses and revenue leakages, but they also have implications on national safety and security, FICCI CASCADE Chairman Anil Rajput said.

"Sometimes, illicit players use smuggling as a route to enter Indian markets, we should ensure that smuggled goods do not infiltrate our markets," Rajput said.

Classic Legends to open 200 Jawa-Yezdi showrooms every year

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Classic Legends, a subsidiary of Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd, and retailers of Jawa and Yezdi range of motorcycles in India has announced plans to open 200 retail showrooms every year, a top official said on Saturday.

Classic Legends was also gearing up to launch the popular BSA range of motorcycles on August 15, company CEO Ashish Singh Joshi said here, after inaugurating a new outlet 'Swastik Motors' spread across 6,000 sq ft at Mount Poonamallee, dubbed as the largest showroom in the country.

"We have about 450 dealerships currently. We have planned to take it up to 600 by this financial year. If you compare this with anybody else, we still have a long way to go. For the next few years, we will keep on adding 200 odd (showrooms) every year," he told reporters.

On setting up the largest showroom in the city, he said, "we are excited to open the doors to the country's largest Jawa Yezdi dealership in Chennai. Tamil Nadu is a significant market for us, and



this expansion reflects our dedication to giving our patrons the best experience possible from the time they enter our store until they ride out on their brand-new motorcycle. We are optimistic that this facility will help us add many more enthusiasts to the clan."

To a query, he said, "Right now our average age of a customer is between 21 and 32 years old. 80 per cent of our customers or bulk of our customers are in this age group. Our Jawa 42, Jawa 40 Bobber, Jawa 350 are doing very well (in the market). The Adventure is a steady seller. Roadster is a big seller for us," Joshi said the company was working on electric vehicles

and it would be introduced into the domestic market when the charging infrastructure was ready.

Elaborating, he said, "I sell you a motorcycle, which can do 300 kms (as per charging of a battery). But again it will take 5-6 hours to charge the battery. Because the fast charging network is not available. I will put a fast charger in the bike but if it cannot be supported, it will take higher than two hours to charge. You need charging infrastructure, higher voltages (to charge the vehicle battery)."

On the launch of the BSA range of motorcycles, he said, "BSA Company is launching BSA motorcycles in India.

Currently one model will be launched. Like it launched BSA motorcycles across the world. It is expected to launch on August 15," he said.

In 2016, Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd acquired the British two-wheeler major BSA Company for about Rs 28 crore.

Joshi said in the five and half year of operations in the Indian market, two years were impacted due to COVID-19 outbreak and the company was just a three and half year old firm.

"Maybe, we are the youngest in the country or in the world. In 3.5 years, we have put out 8-9 products, 3-4 engine platforms, and so many other product platforms. I do not think there is any other company that works as quickly as we do," he said.

The company on the occasion of new dealer outlet, also showcased the upgraded Yezdi Adventure offered at Rs 2.09 lakh (ex-showroom).

"With the newly launched Yezdi Adventure, we are disrupting the category with the perfect trinity of bold design, advanced features and unbeatable performance," Joshi said.

Coal India arm NCL contributed ₹15,000 cr to Govt exchequer in FY24: CMD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL) CMD B Sairam on Saturday said that the company despatched 94 per cent of its total coal to the power sector and contributed Rs 15,000 crore to the central as well as state exchequer in FY24 in the forms of royalty and GST.

Sairam also reaffirmed the company's commitment towards fulfilling the energy security of the nation.

Speaking at the sidelines of Singrauli Industrial Summit 2024 organised by NCL at its headquarters, the CMD of the Coal India arm also outlined the company's contribution to the inclusive development of the Singrauli region.

He also underscored the benefits of adopting an integrated approach based on shared values for the holistic development of Singrauli.

The summit was organised with the objectives of driving economic growth, sustainable industrial growth, diversification, harnessing the full industrial potential, and creating employment opportunities with socio-economic upliftment and regional development.

The summit marked brainstorming discussions



about creating opportunities in various sectors like energy, aluminum, cement, chemicals, and infrastructure. Besides, a panel discussion was held on the long-term development of Singrauli region.

In the summit, an e-book named 'Industrial Landscape of Singrauli Region' was also released.

NCL is eyeing 139 million tonnes (MT) of coal production and dispatch in the current fiscal. In 2023-24 NCL had produced 136.15 MT of coal, despatched 137.63 MT of coal, and spent Rs 4,727 crore as capital expenditure.

NCL is a Singrauli-based flagship subsidiary of Coal India operating out of 10 highly mechanised opencast coal mines located in the Singrauli and Sonbhadra regions of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, respectively.

Global capability centre industry to become catalyst for creating jobs: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With India emerging as the hub of Global Capability Centres, a report on Saturday revealed that 78 per cent professionals expect the GCC sector to become a catalyst for creating jobs, particularly benefiting temporary workforce in the country.

A majority of 78 per cent foresee GCCs as catalysts for creating new job opportunities, particularly benefiting gig workers and the temporary workforce in India, said a report by HR Services and Workforce Solutions provider Genius Consultants.

This optimism about job creation reflects a positive outlook on GCCs' potential to diversify and expand employment avenues in the evolving job market, the survey stated.

The report on GCCs and their potential impact on the Indian industrial market is based on an analysis of inputs from 1,033 professionals.

Almost all the respondents agreed on the pivotal role that GCCs play in advancing the adoption of cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and Internet of Things (IoT), said the report.

This consensus underscores GCCs' significant



contribution to enhancing India's technological landscape and fostering innovation across various sectors, it added.

The report also said that an overwhelming 94 per cent of respondents believed that GCCs will positively influence and enhance India's overall economic output.

This sentiment underscores the perceived role of GCCs in stimulating economic growth through increased investments, technology transfer, and job opportunities, it added.

However, a small fraction (3 per cent) holds a contrasting view.

Among those participated in the survey, 84 per cent expressed confidence that the establishment of GCCs by multinational corporations in India will lead to improved job availability and increased opportunities for local professionals.

This sentiment reflects the belief that GCCs not only bring advanced technological capabilities but also contribute positively to the local job market by creating diverse employment opportunities, the report noted.

"The findings of our report underscore the growing recognition of GCC as pivotal to enhancing organizational agility and competitiveness in a globalised economy. With a majority of respondents acknowledging the strategic benefits of GCCs, it is clear that these centres are poised to play a transformative role in shaping the future of India's industrial landscape," Genius Consultants CMD R P Yadav told PTI.

Organisations that capitalise on this trend stand to gain a significant advantage in terms of operational efficiency, innovation, and market responsiveness, he added.

SBI profit rises 4 per cent in April-June on higher provisions, lower core income growth

PTI ■ MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) on Saturday reported a 4.25 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit in April-June quarter at Rs 19,325 crore, held back by a rise in loan loss provisions and lower growth in core income.

On a standalone basis, the profit growth was much slower at almost flat pace of 0.89 per cent during the quarter at Rs 17,035 crore.

SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara, whose over four years stint at the helm will be ending soon, said the first quarter is generally slow and there were "distractions" which limited the growth. He said the bank is confident of growth picking up in the remainder of the fiscal year, and achieving his aspiration of the largest lender reporting a net profit of Rs 1 lakh crore in FY25.

The core net interest income grew 5.71 per cent to Rs 41,125 crore on the back of a 15 per cent advances growth and the domestic net interest margin narrowing by 0.12 per cent to 3.35 per cent.

The other income declined to Rs 11,162 crore in the latest first quarter from the Rs 12,063 crore recorded in the year-ago period, and the fall was attributed by Khara to the change in regulation that led to the reclassification of investment book.

Khara declined to comment



on the impact of the RBI's draft norms on liquidity coverage ratio, but pointed out that the critical number for the bank stands at 129 per cent whereas it has a comfort level of taking it down till 110 per cent. The deposit growth came at 8 per cent, and Khara said the bank will be able to fund the credit growth target of 15 per cent even if the deposit growth is sustained at the same level. However, he added that the bank would want to increase the deposit growth to 10 per cent.

He, however, made it clear that the bank will not want to compromise on NIMs in the process and hinted that more hikes in deposit rates are not in the offing. It will target to keep the NIMs in the 3.2-3.4 per cent range, the chairman said.

Khara explained that the bank has been able to manage with a lower deposit growth because it had put its accretions in the past into investment book

which is now being deployed for advances.

Corporate loans grew by over 15 per cent during the quarter, while retail -- the mainstay in the last few years -- was slower at less than 14 per cent. Khara said within corporates, it is the mid market segment which grew 20 per cent where the bank sees maximum opportunity.

Large corporates have many alternatives like the bond markets to go to, Khara said, adding that the current corporate loan pipeline stands at Rs 4.62 lakh crore.

On the asset quality front, the bank witnessed fresh slippages of Rs 7,900 crore, with a major Rs 3,000 crore of it coming from personal and home loans.

Khara said a few states' inability to pay employee salaries on time led to slippages of Rs 1,600 crore but was quick to add that the amount has been recovered as

the salaries came in.

The gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 2.21 per cent during the quarter as against 2.24 per cent in March.

The loan loss provisions jumped 70 per cent to Rs 4,580 crore, which included Rs 2,488 crore for the ageing assets, Khara said, asserting that there is no challenge on the asset quality front and he does not expect the quantum of money being set aside going up under his successor C S Shetty.

Khara said the RBI's increase in risk weights on assets led to a calibration on the personal loans front, but stressed that there is no adverse impact on the quality of the book and the GNPA's continue to be under 1 per cent.

The bank has formed a dedicated 500-member team of relationships managers to improve the current account deposits by engaging with private sector clients, including family offices and trusts as well, Khara said.

"We were known as a corporate lender for a long time, now we have oriented ourselves to be a corporate banker," he added.

It has also revamped the wealth management business by putting together a 2,000-member team of specialist relationship managers, he said, stressing that the benefits it will accrue will ensure that the cost to income ratio does not get impacted.

SRM donates ₹1 cr to CM's Distress Relief Fund for Wayanad

Kattankulathur: SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur, has played a significant role by contributing an aid of Rs.1 Crore towards the rehabilitation efforts at Wayanad, Kerala.

The Chancellor of SRMIST, Dr TR Paarivendhar, has personally donated ₹1,00,00,000 (rupees one crore only) to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund.



Annual convocation held

New Delhi: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore 39th Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore, held its 39th annual convocation on August 2, 2024. Prof Anil D Sahasrabudhe, Chairman of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), National Board of Accreditation (NBA), Executive Committee-National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was the Chief Guest.





DEEPIKA FAILS TO DECODE OLYMPIC PUZZLE

INDIA'S ARCHERY CAMPAIGN ENDS

PTI ■ PARIS
Deepika Kumari placed herself in an advantageous position against Korea's Suhyeon Nam by winning two of the first three sets but shot a horrible 7 with the second arrow of the fourth set to throw away a great opportunity as India's archery campaign folded at the Paris Olympics here Saturday. Deepika had begun the day well with a 6-4 win over Germany's Michelle Kroppen but lost by the same margin to Nam, who had won the women's team gold on Friday. Teenager Bhajan Kaur was eliminated earlier in the day after losing her pre-quarterfinal match to Indonesia's Diananda Choirunisa in a shoot-off. Competing in her fourth Olympics, Deepika yet again

left the big stage empty-handed. However, there was no hope around her this time, following disappointments in London, Rio and Tokyo editions. The fourth place finish by Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj Bommadevara in the mixed team event was India's best performance in archery in Paris. Leading 4-2, Deepika aced a 10 to start the fourth set but fell into the red zone with a seven after the Korean shot a 10 and a nine. Nam did not make any mistake on her final shot, making a 10 to force a decider. In the fifth set, the Korean began with a 10 and Deepika followed with a nine. Nam managed a 9 and 10 on the following shots but Deepika got only two 9s to lose the quarterfinal 4-6.

Even in the second set, which she lost, Deepika had fluffed the second shot, managing a poor 6. "It is disappointing. I don't know how and why I keep losing at the Olympic Games. Maybe the atmosphere gets to me. It's the weight of own expectations," Deepika said after her defeat, admitting it was her best chance to do well. "Those were bad two shots and I feel like I have gifted her the match." Coach Purmina Mahato explained that after taking the anchor position, the archers need to release early to stand a better chance of scoring well. "Ideally, you should have your shot within 5-7 seconds of taking anchor position. If you hold, all kinds of thoughts start coming to your mind. She held that shot long (6 in second set) and the second time (7 in

fourth set) she released it early due to pressure," said Mahato. The coach said India needs a consistent supply of archers but does not think that it's time for Deepika to quit. "She must continue. People do well, win medals in this sport, even when they age." Meanwhile, the 18-year-old Bhajan did well to stretch her Indonesian rival to a shoot-off but fluffed the first shot by managing an eight when she needed a 10 to secure her passage into the last eight. "Certainly I was lacking in something, that's why I lost. I will work on that when I go back home," Bhajan said after her 1/8 elimination round match. Asked if she felt the nerves going into the shoot-off, she said, "Wo toh poore match mein hi rehta hai (nervousness remains throughout)," she said

with a chuckle. "I was not thinking of shooting a 10, I was just focussed on following the process," she said. "I have learnt a lot from this campaign," she added but could not explain what, and again let out a smile. After disappointing results in other team events, the mixed team of Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj Bommadevara was on Friday in line to win a bronze but finished fourth. Coach Mahato said she had told the archers not to think about the results and just stay focussed on shooting. "We told them, do not think about win or loss, just shoot. It's 90 percent mind game. You have to be mentally strong. "Bhajan fought well but missed that last shot. We were actually assured that she will do well."

Heartbreak for shooter Manu

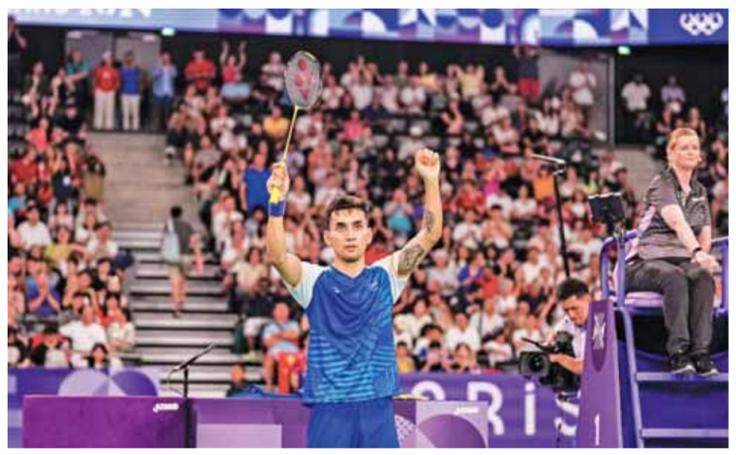
PTI ■ CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE)

The sensational Manu Bhaker's dream of a grand treble went up in smoke after she lost the tie-shoot for bronze medal to Hungarian Veronika Major by the narrowest of margins in the women's 25m sports pistol event at the Olympic Games here on Saturday. In a high-quality final, Bhaker gave it her all and was placed No.1 among eight shooters for a brief period, but she could not maintain her consistency and eventually finished fourth. Nonetheless, the 22-year-old will return home with her twin bronze-medal feat in women's 10m air pistol and mixed team 10m air pistol partnering Sarabjot Singh. The affable Indian shot 28 in the final to be tied at third place along with Veronika after the eighth series of five shots. She missed two of the five shots to aggregate three points, while Veronika drilled in four bullets into the target to clinch the third spot, leaving Bhaker to pack up the kit and leave her firing station. Expectations were really high from Bhaker to bring home a hat-trick of medals given her awe-inspiring form. She stood up to the challenge even after slipping to sixth position early in the final. Bhaker conceded at the end of the contest that she was nervous, and no matter how hard she tried to remain calm, she couldn't. "I got like really nervous about it, but again, I was trying my best to keep calm and to just try to do my best. But that was not enough," Bhaker said after the event. The first series was a disaster in



which Bhaker missed three out of five targets, but gradually she cut down on the errors and bounced back in the second and third series, shooting two consecutive 'fours' to take her points tally to 10 going into the elimination round. The elimination round was topsy-turvy to say the least. Bhaker's chances waxed and waned until she took the top spot for a brief period in the seventh series (fourth elimination round). However, South Korea's Jin Yang wrested back the top spot immediately even as Bhaker slipped to tied third with a rank bad three misses in the eighth round, which saw her slump from second spot to joint third with Veronika on 28 points. The shoot-off was nerve-jangling for both the markswomen and Bhaker had three clear shots out of five on target, while Veronika had

four. The ace shooter said that she will take a lot of positives from the fourth-place finish and come back stronger in the Los Angeles Games in 2028. "It (Olympics) turned out to be very good for me, but well, there's always a next time so I'm already looking forward to the next one (in LA)," she said. "I'm glad that I got two medals, but right now, I'm not very... Well, fourth place is not a very good place," said Bhaker with tears in her eyes. Her finish just outside the medal bracket once again brought back memories of fourth-place finishes of Indian shooters in the quadrennial showpiece. She joined the likes of Joydeep Karmakar (men's 50m rifle prone, 2012 London), Abhinav Bindra (men's 10m air rifle, 2016 Rio) and Arjun Babuta (10m air rifle, 2024 Paris Olympics), among others.



Lakshya aims to dial up 'Sen-mode' against Super Dane Axelsen in semis

PTI ■ PARIS
India's Lakshya Sen will need to play out of his skin to keep his maiden gold medal hopes alive when he takes on the reigning Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen in the men's singles semifinals at the Paris Games here on Sunday. Making his Olympics debut, Sen created history on Friday after becoming the first Indian individual male shuttler to reach the last four of the showpiece with a 19-21 21-15 21-12 win over Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen in an intense quarterfinal match. The Indian will have yet another uphill task at hand when he takes on Axelsen, the baby-faced badminton giant, who has terrorised his opponents in the last few years. The 30-year-old from Odense, Denmark, has won the Tokyo gold and Rio bronze, two world championship titles in 2017 and 2022, a Thomas Cup triumph in 2016 and multiple BWF world tour and Superseries titles to experience a dominating run as world No. 1 from December 2021 to June 2024. Sen, a 2021 World championships

medallist, has lost seven times to the super Dane, who faced defeat just once against the Indian at the 2022 German Open. The 22-year-old, however, has shown little to no respect for the past records against his higher-ranked opponents so far as he plotted the downfall of world number 4 Jonatan Christie in the group stage and Chou, ranked 11, in the quarters. Axelsen has looked a tad subdued this season with just one title at the Malaysia Masters. The Dane also suffered an ankle injury in early June during the Singapore Open and was forced to withdraw from the Indonesia Open. Sen, on the other hand, hasn't looked fitter in his career. He has been rock solid in his defence as he covered the court well and played at a high pace. His ability to produce winners at will has held him in good stead. The 1.94m-tall Dane has an all-rounded game and is known to rain down brutal smashes from a great height. Axelsen, who received a bye in the pre-quarterfinals, had just

one real challenge in the quarterfinals but he got past former world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore without much ado. In their eight meetings, only two matches have gone to three games, including the contest in Muelheim an der Ruhr. After seeing off the speedy and consistent Chou in a gruelling three-gamer on Friday, Sen will be now backing himself to prevail if it goes the distance against the Dane. Axelsen had robbed him of All England glory two years back when he beat him in the final. Then there were those twin losses in the 2021 BWF World Tour Finals and Sen will be itching to return the favour at the world's biggest stage. A semifinalist gets two chances to return with a medal. A win will keep Sen on course for Indian badminton's maiden Olympic gold, while a loss will give him a shot at the bronze medal in the play-offs. "There's lot more work to do. Now, the real test starts," Sen had said after his quarterfinals. For Sen, who wears "Sky is the limit" tattoo on his neck, only the gold can quench his hunger.

Denied spot in Paris by Dutch Olympic committee, Weber leads Portland Classic

AP ■ PORTLAND

Denied a spot in Paris because the Dutch Olympic committee didn't think she was good enough to contend, Dewi Weber shot a 10-under 62 to take the second-round lead in the Portland Classic. Weber qualified for the Olympics under International Golf Federation standards, but was left out because of the country's separate standards for all sports to meet a realistic chance of a top-eight finish. "We're two rounds in, so we'll see how this all unfolds and if I can really make a statement," Weber said. "Of course it's in the back of my mind because it's the week before the Olympics. It was something that I was looking forward to... "It sucks, but all we can do is like try to prove why those standards were so silly, and I

really hope to do that on Sunday." Playing only her second LPGA Tour event of the year, Weber had nine birdies in an 11-hole stretch in her afternoon round at Columbia Edgewater, making seven birdies in a row on Nos. 5-11. She closed with a birdie on the par-4 18th for a two-shot lead over first-round leader Polly Mack and past champion Andrea Lee. "Very easy, very relaxing, not really putting my pressure on myself," Weber said. "Just like roll that ball as well as I can and see what happens." The 28-year-old former Miami player also had seven straight birdies Thursday in an opening 66. She the final eight holes Thursday and the first 13 Friday in 16 under - and was 16 under overall for 36 holes in pursuit of her first LPGA Tour title. "I did a really good job both



days of just going shot for shot, which I know is such a cliché but I've never been able to really do that," said Weber, who has four top-seven finishes in 11 starts this year on the Epson Tour. Mack followed her opening 63 with a 67 in the afternoon. The 25-year-old German also is winless on the LPGA Tour. She eagled the par-5 seventh, and

and dropped back with a bogey on the par-4 15th. "You obviously want to do well after that round, but it's still not the easiest golf course," Macks said. "It's still a golf course. It's still 18 holes to get through it. I think I did pretty well." Lee shot 63 in the morning, running off six straight birdies of her own in a back-nine burst. The 25-year-old

American won the 2022 event for her lone LPGA Tour title. "I love Portland, Columbia Edgewater," Lee said. "It's always great to come back here. I always find the course conditions to be perfect. It's a great golf course. Obviously, a lot of the low scores out here, but I feel really comfortable." Jenny Shin (65) and Grace Kim (65) were 13 under, with Alexa Pano (64) and Emma Talley (67) another stroke back. Lauren Coughlin, the CPKC Women's Open winner Sunday in Calgary, Alberta, for her first LPGA Tour title, was 9 under after a 69. With the Olympics next week, no one from the top 30 in the world ranking is in the field. The lone Olympian in the field is Aditi Ashok of India. She was 7 under after a 67. Defending champion Chanettee Wannasaen shot a 70 to get to 6 under.

Siniakova and Machac win gold but keep relationship status top secret

AP ■ PARIS

Katerina Siniakova and Tomas Machac hugged and kissed each other when they won the 2024 Olympics mixed doubles tennis gold medal for the Czech Republic on Friday night, then laughed about keeping their relationship status "top secret." Siniakova and Machac defeated Wang Xinyu and Zhang Zhizhen 6-2, 5-7, 10-8 in a match tiebreaker in the final. Olympics doubles uses a first-to-10, win-by-two tiebreaker instead of a standard third set. Social media has been speculating about where things stand romantically between the new champions, who apparently have been a couple but might no longer be. Machac rolled his eyes when a reporter at the post-victory news conference brought up the topic by asking: "Are you still together?"

"That's our personal life, so you don't need to know that," Siniakova said with a chuckle. "We like when you are confused." Machac chimed in to add: "This is top secret." Siniakova now owns the only two Summer Games tennis titles for her country. She teamed with Barbora Krejickova to win the women's doubles gold at the Tokyo Games three years ago. Siniakova is a doubles specialist who has won a total of nine Grand Slam trophies. The first seven came alongside Krejickova. Since they stopped playing together, Siniakova teamed with Coco Gauff to win the French Open title this June - at Roland Garros, the same site being used for tennis during these Olympics - and with Taylor Townsend to win Wimbledon in July. "I showed myself that I can play well with anyone," Siniakova said, "and I should be more proud of myself."



The mixed doubles bronze went to Gabriela Dabrowski and Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada, who beat Demi Schuurs and Wesley Koolhof of the Netherlands 6-3, 7-6 (2). Machac's two best results in men's doubles at Slam events came with Zhang as his partner this year. They are good pals and reached the Australian Open semi-

finals in January, then the quarterfinals at the French Open. "Friendship's totally broken," Zhang joked. "He destroyed my Olympic Games." He and Wang leave Paris with a silver medal. Another player from China, Zheng Qinwen, will play in the women's singles gold medal match on Saturday against Donna Vekic of Croatia. Chinese tennis "is getting better," Zhang said. As for what advice the more-experienced and more-successful Siniakova offered Machac ahead of Friday's final, he offered a kidding response, saying she told him: "Ace on the line and winner on the line." Siniakova made clear that her view actually is: "With a team, you are two, so it's really helpful when you communicate and you help each other." Sounds like perfect words of wisdom for a doubles pair.

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Canadian teen McIntosh bringing home impressive haul of medals

AP ■ NANTERRE

Summer McIntosh is really Shaded for a golden birthday. The Canadian swim star turns 18 on Aug. 18, and she has already learned so much about the world - including just how heavy an Olympic medal is. "The first night when I put the silver on my neck I was actually in shock how heavy it was," she said, "because no other medal has been that heavy before." McIntosh is getting a feel for those weighty medallions now

- and has already collected quite a haul for the suitcase going home. A silver in the 400-meter freestyle, and golds in the 400 individual medley and 200 butterfly. Oh, and you bet she's planning on adding another in the 200 IM on Saturday night. Even if she was second fastest out of the semifinals Friday night, finishing in 2 minutes, 8.30 seconds, behind American Alex Walsh's 2:07.45. It's those races when she's not in her tip-top form "I think I learn the most from," she said. McIntosh added she had only

competed in the 200 IM previously in international competition at a Commonwealth Games. McIntosh won the 200 butterfly Thursday night to add a second gold to her total after her 400 IM victory Monday. When McIntosh won the 2:03.03, her mother and 1984 swimming Olympian Jill Horstead jumped for joy and pumped her fist from the stands. This one meant so much to McIntosh because it used to be her mom's signature



race. "So sharing that moment with her was pretty cool," McIntosh said. "I know she's just so proud of me along with the rest of my family." Still, there's no time for much nostalgia. Not yet anyway. She insists her routine is pretty basic when it comes to taking care of herself between races. No word puzzles or reading to clear her mind. A little bit of music is more her style. "It's a lot more simple than probably people think behind the scenes," she said. "All I'm doing is eating and sleeping

other than when I'm not swimming, so just keep it simple and try to rest my brain as much as I do my body. That's kind of what works best for me to prepare for my following races." Canadian teammate Kylie Masse, who won a bronze in the 200 backstroke Friday, is in awe of not only McIntosh's remarkable poise on the world stage but also the ability to quickly switch gears from one event to the next. "It's incredible. For the number of events she swims, it's really impressive," Masse

said. "For me, I had a full day off in between of just training, but to be able to not come here, race, go through the whole process, but for her she's had quite a number of back-to-backs and a 200 at night and a 200 in the morning. It can be really taxing on your body and your mind. So it's really important to turn off, like she said." McIntosh might not have the screaming French fans willing her on for every pull and kick like beloved Léon Marchand, yet she still feels plenty of love from Maple Leaf-waving fans

throughout La Defense Arena. "Being able to represent Canada, it's such an honor," she said. McIntosh might leave Paris with a medal in every individual event she swims and the Maple Leaf draped around her. "It's pretty surreal, I'm not reflecting on it too much right now," she said. "Yeah, while it's been a pretty amazing Olympics for me, but yeah I'm not done yet. I'll have lots of time to celebrate after, but right now I'm just keeping it simple."

India look to find a way past Lankan spinners, slow pitch in second ODI

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Measures to battle a sluggish pitch and an assortment of Sri Lankan slow bowlers will feature high on India's strategy list for the second ODI to be played here on Sunday. Chasing a manageable 231, India were comfortably placed at 130 for three in the first ODI on Friday before losing their way against Lankan spinners, who showed enough pluck to bowl out the visitors for 230 to earn a tie. Once they survived the Rohit Sharma onslaught up front, Lanka executed their plans well against the Indian batters, who are not the cleverest performers on rank turners, while not many are though. The home side employed their army of twerkers against Virat Kohli, KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, the meat of Indian top and middle-order, with a telling amount of success. The trio was not uncomfortable but was unable to break free either against some well-directed moves of the Lankans, who were precise in their calculations. Kohli was tied up by Dunith

Wellalage, the left-arm spinner, and leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga as the 29 balls that the Indian batter faced out of a total of 32 were by the spinners. Hasaranga eventually nicked him off, while seeing the comfort of Shreyas against spinners, Lankan skipper Charith Asalanka pressed pacer Asitha Fernando into service. Fernando repaid the faith in him with the wicket of Shreyas with a peach, also the only Indian wicket to have fallen to a quick. Rahul, another excellent player of spin, too was snuffed by Hasaranga. But stuttering in one match offers too small a footprint to go after some of the accomplished names, but the Indians will be eager to bat long and rotate strike, which is the key to nullifying spinners on such decks. Sri Lankans Pathum Nissanka and Wellalage showed that en route to their fifties despite a flurry of wickets at the other end, while dealing with Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar effectively. The four Indian spinners,



including Shubman Gill, leaked 126 in 30 overs for four wickets, while their Lankan counterparts' figures stood at -167 in 37.5 overs for nine wickets. So, the Indians will want to minimise the damage without compromising on their run-making ways. Bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said as much. "We did bat well in patches, and we could have had some partnerships that would have taken us (home) with less wickets going. We tried our best to get into partnerships," said Bahutule after the first match. One option India can mull is to bring in either Rishabh Pant or Riyan Parag as both are extremely good at countering spinners and can upset their rhythm playing some of those unorthodox shots. Wellalage did that to perfection while scooping and reverse sweeping Washington Sundar and Axar. Additionally, Parag comes in with the bundle offer of being an off-spinner and leg-spinner at the same time. But it remains to be seen whether the Indian team management will make a change after just one match,

which has not been their trait for a while now. From Sri Lanka's perspective, they will enter the second match of the three-match series with a better frame of mind after shackling a much superior and vastly experienced opponent. However, they will keep an eye on the fitness of Hasaranga, who was seen clutching his hamstring towards the end of his spell in the opening one-day. **TEAMS (FROM): India:** Rohit Sharma (C), Shubman Gill (VC), Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Washington Sundar, Arshdeep Singh, Riyan Parag, Axar Patel, Khaleel Ahmed, Harshit Rana. **Sri Lanka:** Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kamindu Mendis, Janith Liyanage, Nishan Madushka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Chamika Karunaratne, Maheesh Theekshana, Akila Dananjaya, Dilshan Madushanka, Matheesha Pathirana, Asitha Fernando.

Indian top-order batters will be given ample opportunities to bowl: Bowling coach Bahutule

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule indicated that India will continue to give bowling opportunities to their top-order batters as it can work as a "surprise element" to the opposition. Shubman Gill was given a chance to roll his arm against Sri Lanka in the first ODI, which ended in a tie here on Friday, and Bahutule said it will be the way forward even though the opener gave away 14 runs in his lone over. "I think our batters are good bowlers as well, to be honest. You know their primary skill is batting, so at times, they don't focus much on their bowling. But they have the skills," said Bahutule in the post-match press meet. In contrast, Lankan skipper and their premier batter Charith Asalanka bowled 8.5 overs and walked away with returns of three for 30, including the wickets of Shivam Dube and Arshdeep Singh in two successive balls, helping his side to snatch a tie. Bahutule used the example of Suryakumar Yadav and Rinku Singh bowling in the T20Is against Sri Lanka to validate his point. "You might have seen in the T20Is...Rinku and Surya contributed with the ball. So, an opportunity was given to Shubman here. It's going to be an all-rounder's game in the coming days. So, if one or two (batsmen) from the top-order can bowl it will definitely help the team, of course, depending on pitch conditions and situations. Also, it will be a surprise element to the opposition, if a batter can bowl. So, moving ahead there will be ample



opportunities for batters to bowl," he explained. Bahutule said the visitors could have tried to forge better partnerships after starting from the blocks in a blazing fashion. "To have a tie in ODI is always exciting. Yeah, we should have got that one run and finished off the match. Nevertheless, I thought we bowled really well. We did bat well in patches, and we could have had few partnerships that would have taken us (home) with less wickets going," he said. Bahutule admitted that the Lankan spinners used the nature of the pitch to the hilt. "I think the nature of the pitch and the way they bowled...Hasaranga and Asalanka executed their skills very well. We tried our best to get into the partnerships, and Shivam (Dube) also batted well and contributed. But yes, we could have put in that extra effort of scoring that single run." The former India leg-spinner said the team should have capitalised on the start given by skipper Rohit Sharma, who made a rollicking 58 off 47

balls. It helped India reach 75 in 12.4 overs before the rot set in. "The start given by Rohit was fantastic, and at one stage it looked like we wouldn't lose too many wickets. It (the way Rohit batted) was important when the ball was hard and coming onto the bat. I think it was his first ODI innings after the (50-over) World Cup. "It didn't look like there was a break. He takes on the responsibility, sets the tone against any opposition, any pace attack. He is very positive in his intent." Bahutule rued the fact that Sri Lanka managed to add a few extra runs after being reduced to 142 for six. "They had a partnership after we got them down to 160 for six, maybe we could have got them for 15-20 runs less. But overall, I think the bowlers did well. Arshdeep and Siraj began well and Shivam bowled well on a wicket which was slightly helpful to the spinners. "I think spinners - Washi, Axar and Kuldeep - contributed well. To restrict them to 230 was, I think, a good effort," he added.

My coaching days end here: Boe bows out after Chirag-Satwik fail to win Olympic medal

PTI ■ PARIS

Mathias Boe, the coach of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, on Saturday announced his retirement from coaching following the ace Indian badminton pair's exit from the ongoing Paris Olympics. Satwik and Chirag were considered India's biggest medal hope at the Olympics but the Indian duo lost to Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik, the Tokyo bronze medallists, in the men's doubles quarterfinals 21-13, 14-21, 16-21 here on Thursday. Boe, a silver medal winner in the London Olympics, had

joined Chirag and Satwik as their coach ahead of the Tokyo Olympics. "For me, my coaching days ends here, I'm not going to continue in India or anywhere else, for now at least. I have spent too much time in a badminton hall and it's also pretty stressful to be a coach, I'm a tired old man," the 44-year-old from Denmark wrote on his Instagram account. Under Boe's guidance, Satwik and Chirag had claimed a bronze medal at the 2022 world championships and a gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. The duo went on to win the



Asian Games gold, the Asian Championships title and also achieved the feat of becoming the first Indian badminton doubles team to become world No. 1. The Indian pair additionally

Their sensational run ahead of the Olympics made Satwik and Chirag hot favourites for the coveted title but the duo couldn't go the distance at Paris, and Boe consoled them. "I know the feeling all too well myself. Pushing yourself to the limit every day, to be in the best shape of your life, and then things doesn't go as you would have hoped for. "I know you guys are gutted, I know how much you wanted to bring a medal back to India, but this time it wasn't meant to be," Boe said. Boe, however, said he is leaving the position as a satisfied man despite his wards failing to return from Paris with a medal.

Khelif taking Olympic boxing ring after days of gender outcry

AP ■ VILLEPINTE (FRANCE)

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif atakes to the ring at the Paris Olympics again Saturday following days of sharp scrutiny and online abuse as misconceptions about her gender have exploded into a larger clash about identity in sports. Khelif meets Anna Luca Hamori of Hungary, whose boxing association planned to contest the matchup with the International Olympic Committee but still let the fight go ahead, in a quarterfinal in the women's 66-kilogram quarterfinals. If Khelif wins, the veteran amateur will secure the seventh Olympic boxing medal in Algeria's history, its first since 2000 and the nation's first ever in women's boxing.

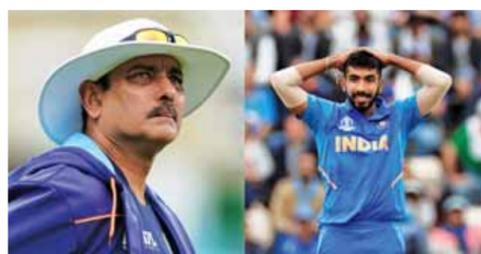
athletes. IOC President Thomas Bach on Saturday defended Khelif and fellow boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan. Khelif and Lin were disqualified in the middle of last year's world championships by the International Boxing Association, the now-banned former governing body of Olympic boxing, after what it claimed were failed eligibility tests for the women's competition.

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Bumrah can make ball obey his command: Ravi Shastri

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri stopped just short of calling pacer Jasprit Bumrah a magician with the ball and said his standout moments in the T20 World Cup in the Americas were India managing to thwart Pakistan's charge in the group stage and Rohit Sharma's side pulling the rabbit out of the hat in the final against South Africa. India managed to defend a paltry 119 in their Group A clash against the arch-rivals, winning the contest by six runs with Bumrah changing the momentum of the game by getting rid of the dangerous Mohammad Rizwan to send Pakistan into a free fall when they were chugging along nicely at 80/3. Bumrah then bowled a game-changing spell against the Proteas in the final at Barbados, conceding just four runs in the 16th over before getting rid of the dangerous power-hitter Marco Jansen to take the fight out of the rivals in the chase of 176.



"He (Bumrah) just showed the world what it takes...And you know, it's not often in your career when you have a ball in your hand and you say, 'do this and the ball does that,'" Shastri said in the ICC Review. "I think the India-Pakistan (match) because India were made to fight there and realise what the right combination should be going forward in the tournament. That and then of course the (T20 World Cup) final, those final five overs," said Shastri. Rohit unleashed Bumrah in the death overs on the well-set Rizwan and the wicket shifted the momentum back

to India. "I'd say one was Jasprit (Bumrah) getting Mohammad Rizwan. Extremely crucial, because that could have tilted the balance of the game. And it happened on the first ball of a new spell," he added. Shastri said his other favourite moment was Bumrah sending back Jansen. "Brought back into the attack and then getting it to reverse and sneak through bat and pad (of Marco Jansen), I thought that was a very, very important wicket at that time," Shastri recalled. Jansen was the sixth Protea wicket to fall in the 18th over

with the South Africans requiring 21 runs for victory off 15 balls. Before that all-rounder Hardik Pandya removed Heinrich Klaasen in the 17th over, caught by wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant. "Hardik (Pandya) had done the main damage by taking Klaasen (in the previous over) but I thought back-to-back, that over and that wicket was extremely important." Bumrah was adjudged 'Player of the Tournament' for his 15 wickets at an average of 8.26 and Shastri compared the 30-year-old to former greats like the late Shane Warne, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis. "Very few have done it (change the flow of the game). I thought Wasim (Akram) and Waqar (Younis) had it in their prime when they played white-ball cricket. Shane Warne had it where he could literally tell the ball, go there, pitch there, hit leg stump," Shastri said. "People who are on top of the game have that ability. I think Bumrah had that in this

World Cup," he added. He was all praise for Suryakumar Yadav's stunning catch on the boundary to send back David Miller and reduced the Proteas to 161/7 with just five deliveries remaining in the final. "I think that (catch) was a game changer because you know what David (Miller) can do," Shastri said. "Another big shot (from Miller), and then, you know, the game's in the balance. So, I thought the timing couldn't have been better." Shastri said he was amazed by Pant's resoluteness to return to top-notch cricket after a near-fatal car crash, which left him out of the game for more than a year. "He did his job with the bat, but it was his keeping that really surprised everyone. For someone to recover that quickly and then move the way he did. "He hardly missed anything, albeit he must have felt the pressure as the tournament got on because it's not easy to come back and do all the stuff he did," Shastri added.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL: BRAJRAJNAGAR
C-327
E-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.: BRJNRM-01/2024-25.
Total No. of Works:- 02Nos.
Tender ID:- 2024_ORULB_104028
Tender Value:- Rs.78.24 Lakhs to 103.47 Lakhs
Bid security:- Rs.78,240.00 to Rs.1,03,470.00
Available Period:- Dt.02.08.2024, 11:00 A.M to 14.08.2024, 05:00 P.M.
Tender opening date:- 17th August 2024, 11:00 A.M.
Bidders are requested to participate in advance with their Class-I and Class-II Contractor DSC before the closing date.
Further details please visit:- www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Executive Officer
Brajrajnagar Municipality.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
MAIN DAM DIVISION, BURLA
AT/PO-BURLA, DIST.SAMBALPUR, (ODISHA) 768017
Government of Orissa
"e" Procurement Notice No.MDD-e-03/2024-25 (Online)
Email Id :- semaindamdivn@gmail.com
No. 7887 /Date: 31.07.24

- No. of work : 08 nos.
- Estimated cost : Rs.8.42 to 17.38 lakhs
- Period of completion : 03 (Three calendar) months
- Date & Time of available of bid document : 12.08.2024 at 10.00 A.M. in the Portal
- Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 22.08.2024 upto 05.00 P.M.
- Date of opening of bid : 23.08.2024 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name & Address of the Officer inviting : Superintending Engineer
Main Dam Division, Burla
At/PO: Burla, Dist-Sambalpur, Odisha
Email:- semaindamdivn@gmail.com

Further details, any corrigendum or addendum can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>
OIPR-32017/11/0002/2425
Superintending Engineer,
Main Dam Division, Burla

GOVT. OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
DIRECTORATE OF GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT
UNIT - 8, BHUBANESWAR, PIN-751012, TEL- 0674-2973581
767 E-mail- executiveengineerpbbs@gmail.com Dt. 01.08.24

E-PROCUREMENT NOTICES No: GWD DIVN.-1, BBSR-02/2024-25, dt.01.08.2024
3nos of work as mention below

Sl No	Name of works	Estimate cost (without GST)	Bid identification no-	Period of completion	Class contractor	Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal	Date and time of receipt of bids in portal	Last date and time for receipt of bid in the portal	Date & time of opening of bid document (Bid opening date)	Date of lottery	Bid security	Cost of tender paper	Procurement officer
1	Construction of 5nos Rooftop rain water harvesting structure (RRHS) in Govt. building under CHHATA scheme in Bhubaneswar Urban of Khurda District under GWD Division-I, Bhubaneswar during the FY-2024-25. Phase-I.	1.Rs.18,11,515/- 2.Rs.14,36,644/- 3.Rs.10,53,725/-	1. GWD DIVN.-1, BBSR-04/2024-25 2. GWD DIVN.-1, BBSR-05/2024-25 3. GWD DIVN.-1-BBSR-06/2024-25	Two month	D & C	01.08.2024, 11.00hrs to 16.08.2024, 17.00hrs	01.08.2024, 11.00hrs to 16.08.2024, 17.00hrs	16.08.2024, upto 17.00hrs	17.08.2024 at 12.00hrs in the office of the Executive Engineer, G.W.D. Division-I, Bhubaneswar.	To be intimated to the responsive bidders through their registered e-mail	1.Rs.18,200.00 2.Rs.14,400.00 3.Rs.8000.00	1.Rs.6000.00 2.Rs.8000.00	Executive Engineer, G.W.D. Division-I, Delta square, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar.

OIPR-32462/11/0010/2425
Executive Engineer
GWD Division-I, Bhubaneswar

"This journey of education and breaking stigma around HIV is something that will have a legacy everlasting"
— Gareth Thomas



OVERCOMING HIV STIGMA YOUTH BREAKING BARRIERS

In the face of deep-seated stigma and discrimination, young people living with HIV in Goa, are finding hope and resilience through the Human Touch Foundation. **SHOBHA SHUKLA** explores their personal journeys and examines the collective efforts that are transforming their lives and challenging societal norms

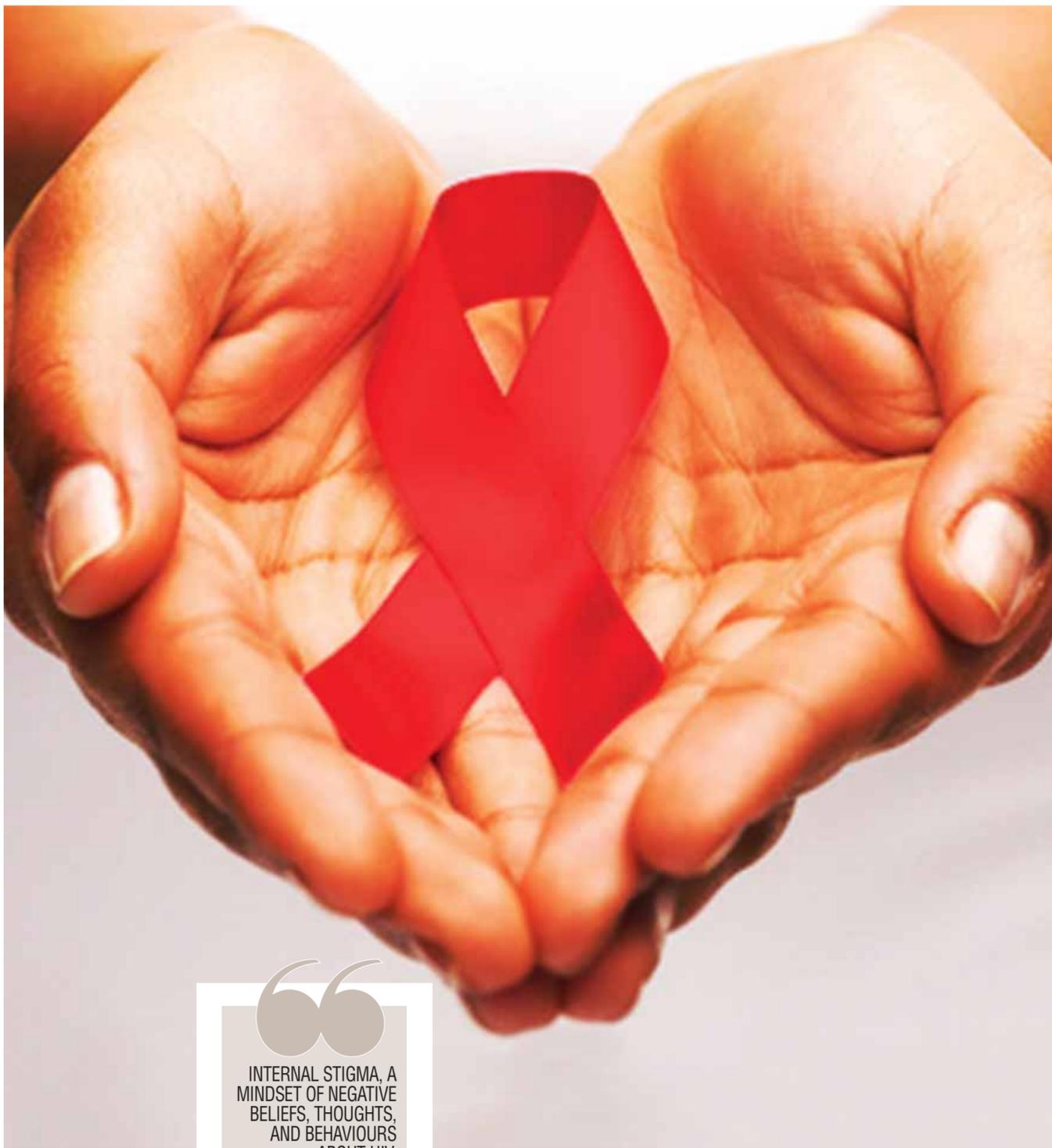


SHOBHA SHUKLA

Living with HIV often comes with a heavy burden of internal and external stigma. For many young people, this fear of discrimination can be paralyzing, affecting their ability to live normal lives. HIV-related misconceptions remain a significant barrier for those living with the virus, impacting their mental health, relationships, and opportunities in life. However, through the dedicated support of the Human Touch Foundation, these youths are not only overcoming their fears but also becoming advocates for change in their communities.

THE WEIGHT OF STIGMA

A young person living with HIV shared, "As a young person living with HIV, I had self-stigmatised myself due to the fear of discrimination... fear of discrimination if I dare disclose my HIV positive status to others... this fear had stopped me from living life like a normal person." This sentiment, echoed by many, underscores the profound impact of internal stigma. Internal stigma, a mindset of negative beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours about HIV, manifests as shame, guilt, feelings of contamination, reduced self-efficacy, self-loathing, low self-esteem, and self-rejection. "Internal stigma happens when we internalise external stigma and judgements and believe that they are true. Internal stigma also happens in the absence of external stigma and discrimination," explained Nadine Ferris France, CEO of Beyond Stigma. A youth shared his trauma, "I and my youth peers have confronted HIV-related stigma and discrimination in schools, workplaces, and societal levels. Sometimes, it is the teachers who were not cooperating or discriminating against them. The fear of disclosure – which means sharing our HIV positive status with family members, friends or others in society – the fear of being discriminated, is faced by many... the fear if we would be thrown out of the house or will our friends unfriend us..." The Human Touch Foundation, based in Goa, India, is dedicated to supporting young people living with HIV. The organization provides a comprehensive range of services including mental health counselling, nutritional support, educational and vocational training, and medical assistance. By fostering a supportive community and empowering youth-led initiatives, the foundation addresses stigma and discrimination at multiple levels. Their efforts ensure that those living with HIV can lead healthier, more fulfilling lives while advocating for broader societal change. A young girl living with HIV



shared how the Human Touch Foundation helped her overcome her fears of stigma and discrimination: "From my childhood I have been touched by Human Touch Foundation which helped me overcome my fears of stigma and discrimination related to disclosure – and helped me in various ways." She added, "As I am living with HIV, I faced a lot of stigma and discrimination from my own family as well as from society. People in the society told the family to not let me come out otherwise I will spread the virus to their children. I even faced it in my relationship with one guy. I knew him for one year and had shared everything with him but still he blamed me that I got infected because I have been sleeping with others." Despite these challenges, she found a supportive community within the Human Touch Foundation, which provides a range of services including nutritional counselling, mental



INTERNAL STIGMA, A MINDSET OF NEGATIVE BELIEFS, THOUGHTS, AND BEHAVIOURS ABOUT HIV, MANIFESTS AS SHAME, GUILT, FEELINGS OF CONTAMINATION, REDUCED SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-LOATHING, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, AND SELF-REJECTION. "INTERNAL STIGMA HAPPENS WHEN WE INTERNALISE EXTERNAL STIGMA AND JUDGEMENTS AND BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE TRUE. INTERNAL STIGMA ALSO HAPPENS IN THE ABSENCE OF EXTERNAL STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION," EXPLAINED NADINE FERRIS FRANCE, CEO OF BEYOND STIGMA

health support, and job opportunities.

PERSONAL TRIUMPHS AND COLLECTIVE SUPPORT

Another young person recounted their journey: "I got to know my HIV status at the age of 13. I was with my relatives because I had lost my parents. That is when I first felt being stigmatised and discriminated against by my own family. For example, I was told not to use the common family nail cutter because if any blood comes out while cutting my nails then it can put others at risk. Or sometimes there were separate utensils for eating food. It used to hurt me." Finding support through the Human Touch Foundation, this individual connected with peers facing similar challenges and received guidance from Peter Borges, the foundation's CEO. "Peter Sir helped me a lot from the very beginning. He helped me with my documents too. We used to

have residential camps back then too, with adolescents living with HIV. I learnt a lot from these camps. Doctors were involved in these camps where we learnt a lot about HIV and how can we overcome problems we face."

THE POWER OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Human Touch Foundation emphasizes the importance of youth-led initiatives in the HIV response. "Youth are the best equipped to lead the response to HIV," said a young intern at the foundation. Sandhya Chavan, Lead for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing, highlighted the comprehensive support provided: "We at Human Touch Foundation provide a range of youth-led services, such as mental health counselling, psychosocial support, help them avail a range of social protection schemes, nutritional packages, medical help, or treatment adherence support, among others." Masooma Sheikh, a

counselling psychologist at the foundation, stressed the need for proper mental health services in HIV care centres and a holistic approach to support young people living with HIV.

A BEACON OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE

As the Human Touch Foundation celebrates its 15th anniversary, its impact is evident in the lives it has touched. Peter Borges reflected on the journey: "Human Touch always had something different to offer when it came to support system or ecosystem which surrounded HIV care and support. For example, young people themselves speaking at different conferences including AIDS 2024 is so important. Lately, the realisation has grown over us about the importance of resilience: we must focus more on building the resilience of the young people. Issues like relationships or livelihoods cannot be missed while young counsellors themselves provide

mental health services." The foundation continues to address various needs, including relationships, sexual and reproductive health, substance abuse, TB and HIV co-infection, and child sexual abuse. Their commitment to non-institutional care and resilience-building for families and communities remains steadfast. The Human Touch Foundation has also been instrumental in initiating viral load monitoring in Goa and ensuring the uninterrupted supply of antiretroviral therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer free vocational training for young people with HIV, helping them build skills and secure employment. Dr. Kashyap Bandodkar, a volunteer with the foundation, emphasized the importance of humane and holistic care: "Usually patients appear as a 'number or statistic' in a report. But experiences (like Human Touch) tell us the life story behind those numbers or statistics. This help us – doctors – provide better care because I believe that humane and holistic care is so key." The Human Touch Foundation's journey and the stories of those it supports underscore the importance of tackling HIV-related stigma and discrimination through empathy, education, and comprehensive support. Their work serves as a beacon of hope and a model for other organizations worldwide. Despite significant advancements in the treatment of HIV, societal stigma continues to pose a major challenge for those living with the virus. The personal stories shared by young people in Goa highlight the persistent fear of discrimination that can prevent individuals from living their lives to the fullest. Internal stigma, which manifests as self-loathing and low self-esteem, often results from the external judgments and prejudices of society. Organizations like the Human Touch Foundation are making remarkable strides in addressing these issues. By providing comprehensive support services, fostering youth-led initiatives, and promoting resilience, the foundation is helping to dismantle the barriers that stigma creates. Their work emphasizes the importance of empathy, understanding, and community in overcoming the challenges faced by people living with HIV. However, the fight against stigma requires collective effort. It is crucial that society as a whole becomes more informed and compassionate towards those affected by HIV. We must reject discriminatory attitudes and instead offer support and acceptance. By doing so, we can create an environment where individuals living with HIV can thrive without fear of prejudice. Only through such a unified approach can we hope to eradicate the stigma associated with HIV and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy, fulfilling life. (Shobha Shukla is Managing Editor and Executive Director of Citizen News Service (CNS) and a health and development justice advocate. She is Coordinator of Asia Pacific Regional Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and Global AMR Media Alliance; views are personal)

LIVING IT UP IN JAIPUR

Jaipur, a bustling hub of commerce and culture in North India, is famed for its grand palaces, majestic forts, and exquisite crafts. Known globally for its intricate artwork and stunning jewellery, the Pink City exudes charm with its vibrant colours and rich artistic heritage. Alongside its historical grandeur, contemporary spaces reflecting local elegance have emerged as the city continues to evolve and thrive

BY AKANKSHA DEAN



JAIPUR, is a delightful place to visit with its colourful palaces, historic forts, lively markets showcasing local crafts, and diverse food options. It's a city that offers something for everyone. The pink city is also home to luxurious hotels and unique restaurants. Stroll along streets lined with palaces, temples, and the occasional cow. Indulge in royal culinary delights, explore exquisite jewellery shops, and discover a weekend of tranquillity amidst the bustling vibrancy.

TRADITION MEETS CONTEMPORARY

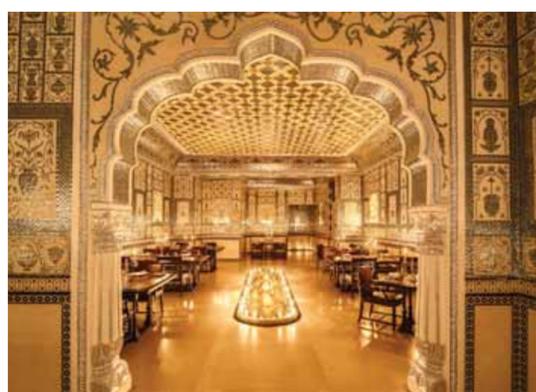
Nestled near Amber fort off Delhi-Jaipur highway, The Leela Palace Jaipur sits with the backdrop of Aravalli hills amidst 8 acres of gardens. This hotel aims to impress guests with luxury while maintaining a cosy atmosphere. Royal opulence can be felt in the wood panels, windows, and artwork, yet there's a touch of modernity. The design reflects local artistry, from ancient Thikri mirror engraving to Shekhawati canvases on the walls. Traditional meets contemporary in a blend of comfort and grandeur at this splendid hotel. Stepping into the Leela Palace Jaipur feels like entering a world of extravagance and refinement

deeply rooted in history. This stunning hotel offers a range of accommodation options, including rooms, suites, and villas - all meticulously designed to provide a lavish experience. The Royal Plunge Pool villa is a highlight of my stay, radiating a sense of lightness and luxury. The spacious layout, complete with cosy armchairs, indulgent day beds, and a private pool, makes me feel like royalty. The attention to detail was exquisite, from the walk-in wardrobe to the marble-trimmed bathroom with a tub, not to mention the plush robes and organic toiletries provided. And for those seeking the epitome of luxury, the Maharaja suite exceeds all expectations with its grand living spaces, luxurious bathrooms, and stunning Palace views. One of the standout aspects of my experience at Leela Palace Jaipur is the warm and welcoming presence of Sharad Puri, the General Manager. His humble approach and dedication to ensuring guests feel at home set the tone for the genuinely gracious service throughout the hotel. The meticulous butler service, provided by a dedicated team of footmen in true Leela Palace style, adds an extra touch of luxury to my stay. In terms of relaxation amenities, the expansive spa and well-equipped

gym are truly remarkable. One can also enjoy exploring the local area with running maps provided by the hotel, along with the option to use bikes for leisurely rides or even embark on a customized cycling safari itinerary. Situated close to the capital, the hotel offers a perfect base to explore Jaipur in all its splendour, with historical sites, vibrant bazaars filled with textiles and handicrafts, and renowned silver and gemstone markets just a stone's throw away. My stay is a seamless blend of opulence, comfort, and exceptional service, making it a truly unforgettable experience.

INDIA'S ONLY CANDLE LIT RESTAURANT AND MORE

From its impressive design and stylish interiors to the refined culinary offerings and carefully curated immersive experiences, Leela Palace Jaipur epitomizes authentic Indian luxury. As my eyes wander through the architectural marvels of the Sheesh Mahal, I find myself at Mohan Mahal, the Indian specialty restaurant glowing softly with candlelight. The ambience is crafted with 350,000 pieces of Thikri mirror, meticulously assembled by artisans over three years, creating an aura of refined elegance. Being India's only candle-



lit restaurant, it is truly a delight for the senses. The royal cuisine from Rajasthan and Awadh served at Mohan Mahal is a blend of simplicity and artistry, with standout dishes like the Seekh kebab dressed with barley. Breakfast is equally splendid, presented on beautiful tableware and featuring a selection of à la carte favourites. In the afternoons, I enjoy a delightful tea service at the Jharokha bar, where expertly crafted cocktails are served till late. I am particularly impressed by the Martini concocted by the talented mixologist, who

shares stories of mixing drinks for royalty. For a more intimate dining experience, Hawa Mahal offers a private rooftop setting where both the views and flavours are rich with captivating charm. Truly The hotel creates memorable moments that capture the essence of Indian indulgence, blending traditional rituals with modern hospitality seamlessly. ALL VEGETARIAN Burrowed discreetly within the vibrant Johri Bazaar, known for its jeweller's market, the intimate Johri Restaurant seamlessly blends into

the bustling surroundings. Tucked away on a tranquil lane just off the main colonnaded street, which played a pivotal role in securing the city's spot on the UNESCO World Heritage list, this hidden gem welcomes all guests. Attached to a charming five-suite boutique hotel, The Johri, the restaurant offers a unique dining experience that harmoniously intertwines with the heritage and allure of the historic marketplace. Savouring Jaipur's iconic zero-sized peas here is a revelation. Despite its fame that stretches as far as Dubai and Japan,

these peas had somehow escaped my taste buds back in Delhi. The petite yet incredibly sweet and flavourful green peas are beautifully served alongside corn and spinach on a generous plate. Chef Somu Kumar has expertly crafted a menu that celebrates local and regional flavours with organic, seasonal, and vegetarian ingredients. Signature dishes like paan patta chaat and Dal Johri add a timeless charm to this culinary experience. Indulge in expertly crafted dishes that stay true to their origins, whether presented in a classic style or with a modern twist. The Jackfruit Nihari and truffle cheese kulcha stuffed with mushroom and local cheeses offer a burst of flavours in every bite. Accompanied by Missi roti and palak kofta in cashew gravy, the menu caters to diverse palates. Dietary preferences are accommodated, with gluten-free and Jain-friendly options like sangri ki shammii kebab and mirchi ka halwa.

Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category.



Indulge in Pure Joy

Step into a world of craft brews and culinary delights at BeeYoung Brewgarden, the latest hotspot in South Delhi's vibrant social scene

Delhi's social scene has a new star. The BeeYoung Brewgarden, nestled in the bustling heart of South Delhi at The Panchshila Rendezvous. This lively venue is set to redefine your nights out, offering an unparalleled blend of craft beer, exquisite cuisine and endless entertainment. Whether you're a local or a visitor looking for a memorable night out, BeeYoung Brewgarden promises to deliver an experience that is both dynamic and delightful. As you step inside, you're transported to a European getaway, with chic barn-style ambience and lush, vibrant décor. The carnival-like atmosphere is inviting, with alfresco seating and stylish indoor spaces perfect for both intimate gatherings and spirited weekend celebrations. It's a setting where every detail contributes to a sense of revelry and relaxation.

At the heart of BeeYoung Brewgarden is its commitment to craft brewing excellence. The menu takes you on a culinary journey, artfully pairing finely crafted brews with gourmet dishes designed to delight the senses. Each dish reflects an immersive culinary art approach, where flavour and presentation come together to create unforgettable dining experiences. With a global array of flavours, local and seasonal specialties cater to South Delhi's cosmopolitan crowd. The emphasis on quality ingredients and creative recipes ensures that every visit offers something new and exciting for

even the most discerning palates. Entertainment at the Brewgarden is as diverse as its menu. Enjoy a blend of games and nostalgia with options like Bocce Ball, Cornhole and vintage arcade machines, providing endless hours of competitive fun. The venue hosts live sports screenings, vibrant music performances and sets by an in-house DJ, ensuring a dynamic atmosphere that keeps you engaged throughout the evening. Whether you're in the mood for a lively party or a serene escape, BeeYoung Brewgarden caters to all your social needs. The soul of BeeYoung Brewgarden is its namesake beer, India's first crafted strong beer, known for its smooth, citrusy notes and crisp finish. BeeYoung Beer embodies the youthful spirit of India, with every sip reflecting the Himalayan Beverages' dedication to quality and innovation. For those looking to immerse themselves in a world of craft brewing, vibrant social scenes and exquisite dining, BeeYoung Brewgarden is the place to be. It's where the art of microbrewing meets community and celebration, promising unforgettable experiences with every visit. Address: The Panchshila Rendezvous, Panchshila Park, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, 110017 Timings: 11 AM - 12 AM Instagram: @beeyoungbrewgarden Price For Two: INR 2500/- (Approx) For Reservations: +91 9354431386

Modern Twist on Classic Gastropubs

Embark on a culinary journey with Monkey Bar's latest gastropub sensation, blending contemporary design and inventive dishes for an unparalleled experience

In a city that's no stranger to culinary innovation, the revamped Monkey Bar emerges as a beacon of excitement and fresh perspective. Nestled within the iconic pyramid glass building in Vasant Kunj, this beloved gastropub has returned with a vibrant new look and a promise to elevate the dining experience.

Monkey Bar, which first captured attention in 2012, was instrumental in popularising the gastropub concept in India. Now, it's back with a renewed vision, blending its signature charm with contemporary flair. The space has been transformed into an 'Urban Tropical Dreamscape,' reflecting a design ethos that is both inviting and dynamic. The lush greenery and bright, cheerful hues of yellow and sage green infuse the venue with a sense of energy and warmth that's perfect for any time of day.

The menu at Monkey Bar is where the true magic happens. It's a celebration of flavours, seamlessly melding the familiar with the innovative. From classic favourites like their renowned burgers to new, exciting dishes such as Methi-spiced Prawns and Jackfruit Tacos, the culinary offerings are designed to surprise and delight. Each dish is crafted with a blend of regional Indian spices and global influences, providing a taste experience that is both unique and accessible. One of the standout features of the revamped Monkey Bar is its new coffee programme. The introduction of three distinct categories, 'The Usual Suspects', 'You Do Your Brews', and 'The Unusual Suspects' offers something for every coffee lover. Whether you're in the mood for a classic Espresso or something more adventurous like the Nitro



Cold Brew, there's a brew to suit every palate. This thoughtful addition enhances the café's appeal, making it a versatile destination for everything from morning pick-me-ups to evening relaxation. The bar menu, crafted by Lead Mixologist Harish Chhimwal, continues Monkey Bar's tradition of inventive cocktails. By incorporating local ingredients and innovative techniques, the drinks menu offers a refreshing take on both classic and contemporary cocktails. The new creations, such as the Manga Mule and Rasam ki Kasam, provide a unique twist on traditional flavours, demonstrating a commitment to both creativity and quality. The revamped Monkey Bar is more than just a place to eat and drink; it's a space designed for enjoyment and connection. With its lively atmosphere, interactive elements like a pool table and Instagram-worthy spots such as the quirky banana sofa, the venue encourages guests to relax,

socialise and make lasting memories. This thoughtful redesign makes it clear that Monkey Bar is committed to providing a comprehensive, engaging experience for its patrons. The new Monkey Bar offers a delightful fusion of tradition and innovation. Its updated menu, inventive drink options and vibrant atmosphere ensure it remains a top choice for those seeking a memorable dining experience. For anyone looking to explore new flavours, enjoy expertly crafted drinks or simply unwind in a dynamic setting, Monkey Bar's latest incarnation promises to be an exceptional destination. Wallet Factor: Meal for two with alcohol: INR 1800 plus taxes | Meal for two without alcohol: INR 3000 plus taxes Open 7 days a Week: Sunday to Saturday - 1pm. to 1am. Address: Monkey Bar, Local shopping complex, 11 Vasant Kunj, Next to mini cooper-110070 Instagram: monkeybarind Facebook: monkeybarind

Redefining Coffee Culture

Discover a fresh take on coffee with First Coffee, blending innovation and indulgence to cater to the modern coffee lover's palate

Step into a revolution in coffee culture with First Coffee, where each cup is more than just a beverage - it's a celebration of bold flavours and innovative experiences. This fresh, dynamic brand is transforming the coffee scene with a blend of artisanal quality and modern flair, setting a new standard for coffee lovers everywhere.

Founded by Sohrab Sitaram, a distinguished name in Delhi's food and beverage world; Shiv Dhawan, a serial entrepreneur with a passion for innovation and Chandini D Purnesh, the visionary behind the Harley Estate, First Coffee brings together expertise and enthusiasm to craft the ultimate coffee experience. Their beans, sourced from the renowned Harley Estate in Chikmagalur, promise an exceptional taste journey, reflecting the lush landscapes and rich heritage of the estate. First Coffee's appeal extends beyond its premium blends. The cafés offer a stylish, minimalist setting that caters to both quick stops and relaxed hangouts. The design ethos emphasises clean lines and a vibrant atmosphere, creating a space that feels both contemporary and inviting. The menu showcases First Coffee's dedication to flavour and creativity. Dive into the 'Untamed Espresso' for a bold start or savour the 'Cold Blooded Brew', a daring concoction that combines cascara syrup with a robust coffee base. For a whimsical twist, try the 'Jelly Jolt Affogato', where coffee meets ice cream and jelly in a delightful fusion. Classic offerings like 'The OG Cold Coffee' are given a modern twist, ensuring there's something for every palate. Tea enthusiasts can also rejoice with the unique blends available. The 'Teaminator', a refreshing mix of hibiscus and watermelon syrup and 'Cascara Thunder' offer bold new takes on traditional favourites. The Boba Nova collection is particularly exciting, featuring the 'Mango Boba Bomb' and 'Lychee Loca Bomb' for those who love a playful and fruity twist. First Coffee stands out as a game-



changer in the coffee industry. The brand's focus on combining artisanal quality with innovative offerings makes it a notable player in the market. The variety of options, from bold espressos to playful boba teas, caters to a wide range of tastes and preferences. Moreover, First Coffee's commitment to sustainability adds a layer of ethical responsibility that enhances its appeal. This brand isn't just offering a cup of coffee; it's creating a vibrant, inclusive coffee culture that resonates with modern consumers. It's exciting to see a brand that balances exceptional quality with social consciousness, setting a high bar for others in the industry.

In a world where coffee culture is evolving, First Coffee stands out as a beacon of quality and creativity. With its commitment to exceptional brews and a vibrant coffee experience, it's more than just a place for your daily caffeine fix, it's a destination for those who appreciate the art of coffee. Embrace the revolution and make First Coffee a part of your daily routine. Your taste buds and your coffee cravings will thank you. Instagram: @yourfirstcoffee Price For Two: INR 450/- (only beverages) Locations: DLF Cyber Park, Gurugram; Pacific Mall in Pitampura; Pacific Outlet Mall in Jasola.



BK SINGH

A RECIPE FOR DISASTER IGNORED WARNINGS AND THE PERILS OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Despite advice in 2020 to relocate 4000 families from landslide-prone areas, Kerala proceeded with a mega hydro-electric project nearby. Incessant rains led to devastating landslides, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable development and better disaster management

The flooding and landslides in Kerala since 1991 had reportedly claimed several human lives, till the state witnessed the worst disaster of its kind at Mundakkai, Wayanad in the wee hours of 30th July. In 2020 State Disaster Management Authority advised relocation of 4000 families from landslide-prone areas that included Mundakkai. State did not heed the warning and on the contrary, has proposed a mega hydro-electric project involving an underground tunnel barely two km from the site of the current horror.

Incessant rains of 572 mm in 48 hours have led to two major landslides, one at 2.00 am at Mundakkal followed by another at 4.00 am at Chooralmala towns trapping hundreds of families. The debris further covered Vellarmala GVH school. The landslide also washed away the bridge connecting Chooralmala town with Mundakkai & Attarmala. So far 126 people have been found killed, 196 injured and more than a hundred missing or marooned in swathes of slush, mud and misery triggered by continuous and heavy rainfalls for two days. Dead bodies have also been found at Pothukal village that were carried by flowing water for 20 km in the Chalayar River. High Tension lines and transformers of the Mekkadi electrical section have also been damaged and resuming power in the area has been a challenge. Landslides washing away the bridge have posed further challenges for relief and rescue operations, though all state and central agencies are putting up their might to remove debris, find survivors, treat the injured and move the people to safer locations and camps. Rescuers are crossing the river in spate with the help of the ropeways but mist, bad weather and unstable terrain are making it more difficult. Army has rushed to set up Bailey Bridge to the site, which has been moved on the road from Chennai.



This deluge affected adjoining areas of Karnataka and left the Kapila River in the Mysuru district in spate, after 80,0000 cusecs of water were let out of the Kabini dam, severely affecting the traffic between Karnataka and Kerala. Kodagu roads were also flooded and many persons stuck were rescued. Landslides also occurred repeatedly on the Shiradi Ghats section of NH 75 connecting Bengaluru and Mangalore holding the traffic for several hours and eventually re-routing them via Kodagu and Sampaji Ghats. A few weeks earlier a landslide had occurred near Ankola, Uttar Kannada district along the newly widened National Highway burying moving vehicles underneath that claimed a dozen human lives, and many others went missing. Next to the Himalayas, the

Western Ghats have the most fragile ecosystem and despite the disasters striking frequently, we have not mended our ways and continued to engage in unsustainable activities in the name of development. The entire Ghats section from Gujarat to Kerala once had luxuriant tree/forest cover that provided the source and the catchment of several east-flowing and west-flowing rivers – a key lifeline for everyone in peninsular India. With the changes in land use patterns, the integrity of the catchment of the rivers is compromised, resulting in many of the streams and rivers becoming seasonal. People who have enjoyed the perennial flow of water in the streams in the past have now been suffering for their basic needs for drinking, agriculture and plantations.

Western Ghats comprise undulating terrain and diverting lands comprising tree growth for cultivation of tea, coconut, banana, coffee, spices etc is never sustainable. Kerala has lost its natural forests at a very fast pace and individuals, public and private agencies have grown plantations for quick cash. Some areas are also encroached. Proponents of such projects argue that destroying forests and growing bananas, tea, cashew coconut etc provide employment and help in GDP growth. This perception is highly misplaced. Such projects are not evaluated on a long-term basis. There are hardly any methods to work out an economic valuation of forests destroyed in the process. When a heavy downpour occurs for days, it causes landslides, landslips, destroys houses, roads bridges etc. To rebuild the

infrastructure we need to further spend money. The infrastructure destroyed in 2018 and 2019 in the Kerala flood disaster was rebuilt by spending more than 50,000 crores rupees. If the true environmental cost is considered, none of the plantation projects of growing tea etc would be viable. Labourers of tea gardens as well as banana and coconut gardens must be re-skilled and their services can be utilized for manufacturing etc. 2018 floods in Kodagu Karnataka, a district adjoining Wayanad, also played havoc with the life of the people. I have discussed the reasons for flooding and landslides in this region, in my book, "Changing Land Uses – Shrinking Streams and Carbon Sinks". Like Wayanad, Kodagu is again a hilly district covering an area of nearly 4200 sq km. However only 1750 sq km was reserved as forests and

Protected Areas, leaving another 1000 sq km occupied by habitation and agriculture; the remaining 1450 sq km had still quite a luxuriant tree cover until the 1980s. These were wooded areas under the control of the Revenue Department of the state, and the tree felling in such areas was regulated by the Karnataka (Preservation) of Trees Act, where forest officers were empowered to grant/ deny permission for the removal of trees. There is evidence on record to suggest that some officers had connived with the timber merchants and granted permission to remove tens of thousands of trees every year. This has resulted in compromising the ecological security of the region leading to frequent disasters of the type we are experiencing. The only solution that comes to everyone's mind is to stop

destroying the natural forests and making any changes in land use. There is a proposal to tag the Western Ghats as Eco sensitive area, but both governments of Kerala and Karnataka have yet not come on board. Unless they mend their ways the disasters would keep on striking more frequently and would be more destructive. Finally, let the column also deal with the reasons why there are heavy downpours for days in this warming world. The world at present including India is faced with heat waves, wildfires and heavy downpours leading to flooding. The uncontrollable wildfires in Canada, California and other parts of Western world are the consequences of global warming. Leh in India, which is located 3 km above the mean Sea level has the airfield at the highest altitude in the country and has been registering 32 degree Celsius temperature for some days in the last week of July. Due to such unusual temperatures, the air at this altitude gets rarefied and engines cannot develop the thrust required for takeoff. For the first time, all flights to and from Leh have remained suspended for these days.

High downpours are functions of higher rate of evaporation from Sea surfaces. As the Sea surfaces warm, evaporation increases leading to excessive moisture-laden clouds in the atmosphere. Once the conditions are favourable, it leads to heavy downpours. It can have very dangerous consequences in urban centres, as we have recently seen the drowning of three students in the basement of Rau coaching centre, Rajendranagar Delhi. The Civic Agencies must re-model the stormwater drains to take the load of 100 mm of rain per hour. These drains were originally designed for 25 mm of rain per hour. Building bylaws should also change; Basements should have only huge sumps and Parking space for vehicles and nothing else.

(The writer is Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Karnataka; views are personal)

Unveiling the misogyny in fairytales: A feminist critique

In the enchanting world of fairytales, age-old stories have woven themselves into the fabric of our culture, shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world around us. Yet, beneath the guise of magic and fantasy lies a troubling reality: the portrayal of women through archaic tropes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes writes **SULAGNA MOHANTY**

In the enchanting world of fairytales, age-old stories have woven themselves into the fabric of our culture shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world around us. Yet, hidden beneath the guise of magic and fantasy lies a troubling reality; the portrayal of women through archaic tropes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. If seen from a feminist lens, tropes like the witch, the evil stepmother and the damsel in distress reflect and reinforce harmful stereotypes about women and limit and distort our understanding of women's experiences.



SULAGNA MOHANTY

It is essential to challenge and dismantle these harmful stereotypes to create a more inclusive and empowering society for women. By portraying women in positions of authority as capable, compassionate and supportive, we can inspire future generations of women to aspire to leadership roles and contribute positively to society

withcraft and executed in brutal witch hunts. These women were often healers, midwives or other powerful figures in their communities targeted for their knowledge and independence. The fear of witches and the persecution of women accused of witchcraft spread to colonial countries like India where women were often accused of witchcraft and subjected to violence and even death. Even today, women in some parts of India are killed in the name of witch hunts accentuating the lasting impact of this harmful stereotype. This concept of the witch reflects society's discomfort with powerful women and is a reminder of the importance of challenging stereotypes and celebrating women's autonomy and strength.

Further, the portrayal of the evil stepmother in fairytales not only vilifies women in positions of authority but also perpetuates a harmful narrative of competition and division among women. By pitting a woman against another woman, society creates a "divide and rule" policy where women are encouraged to fight among themselves rather than unite for their common rights and goals. This stereotype undermines the credibility of women in leadership roles by painting them as inherently



dangerous and untrustworthy. It diminishes the achievements of women by suggesting that their success comes at the expense of others developing a culture of suspicion and mistrust among women. Moreover, the depiction of the evil stepmother discourages young girls from aspiring to leadership roles as it reinforces the idea that women in power are to be feared and avoided. Instead of inspiring girls to pursue their ambitions and dreams, this stereotype instills fear and self-doubt, limiting their

potential and opportunities for growth. It is essential to challenge and dismantle these harmful stereotypes to create a more inclusive and empowering society for women. By portraying women in positions of authority as capable, compassionate and supportive, we can inspire future generations of women to aspire to leadership roles and contribute positively to society. The damsel in distress trope exemplified by characters like Cinderella, Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty portrays women as

helpless victims in need of rescue by a male saviour. This narrative diminishes women's agency by suggesting that they are incapable of taking care of themselves and solving their problems. It also underpins the idea that a woman's ultimate goal in life is to find a man to rescue and protect her. In Cinderella, the titular character is rescued from her life of servitude by Prince Charming who saves her from her oppressive stepfamily and offers her a life of luxury and love. Similarly, Rapunzel is locked

away in a tower by a wicked witch until she is rescued by a prince who climbs up her hair. Sleeping Beauty is cursed to sleep for a hundred years until she is awakened by true love's kiss. These stories send a harmful message to audiences particularly young girls by implying that women are incomplete without a man to rescue them. They fail to acknowledge women's strength and ability to overcome challenges on their own. By perpetuating this trope, these stories emphasize outdated gender

roles and limit the potential of women to be seen as capable and independent individuals.

Hence, it is time to challenge these harmful tropes and create new narratives that empower young girls and women and celebrate their diversity and strength. Instead of portraying women as either wicked witches, evil stepmothers or helpless damsels, fairytales must depict women as complex, multifaceted individuals with agency and autonomy. By telling stories that reflect the diverse experiences and identities of women, we can create a more inclusive and empowering narrative for future generations. One must realise that the witch, evil stepmother and damsel in distress tropes in old fairy tales are not harmless storytelling devices; they are powerful tools that shape our perceptions of women and their place in society. By examining these tropes through a feminist lens, we can begin to challenge and dismantle the stereotypes they perpetuate paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering narrative for women everywhere. It is time to tell new stories to our kids; stories that empower and inspire women to embrace their true selves and rewrite their destinies.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

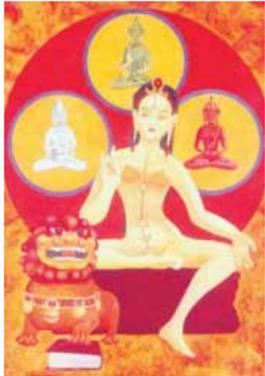
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

The upcoming week promises a flurry of activities that will challenge your resilience and determination. Your engagements will deepen your understanding of your ambitions and desired pathways. You will enjoy familial contentment, and travel will feature prominently in your schedule. The early part of the week may involve demanding, work-related journeys. Adjustments in your professional life, such as relocations or new positions, will bring satisfaction towards the week's close. Midweek, a wave of sentimentality might encourage you to reconnect with loved ones, reminiscing about past experiences. A trip to your place of origin could arise, fulfilling a deep-seated need. Anticipate positive developments—a significant gain or inheritance may be forthcoming, enhancing your financial landscape.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Wednesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week may bring unexpected challenges that disrupt your usual ease. You might find yourself embroiled in disagreements, whether at work or within your home, which could push you towards seeking an escape. However, retreat isn't your only option. Embrace your inherent strength and resilience. Facing these issues head-on with clarity and determination can reveal straightforward resolutions. Your inner wisdom will be a guiding force, enabling you to navigate and overcome these hurdles effectively. Moreover, this period is significant for personal relationships. Embrace your intuitive and emotional insights—they will greatly benefit your romantic pursuits. Expect meaningful connections, heartfelt communications, and possibly romantic gestures or outings. Stay focused on managing your life and pursuing your aspirations confidently.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Burgundy
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

An enchanting opportunity is on the horizon, bringing unexpected shifts that might initially seem out of your grasp. The influences of these changes are tangible in your life, hinting that while fate often appears unannounced, its signs are perceptible for those attuned to observe subtle cues, making the enigmatic less so. Prompt yet considered decisions are necessary—act decisively but thoughtfully. A new acquaintance could spark a quick-flourishing romance, and an upcoming journey with a significant other may be forthcoming. Harness your communicative prowess and imaginative capabilities to captivate your partner and swiftly tackle a persistent issue. Your adeptness at expressing affection shines brightly. A challenging decision might arise, necessitating a choice between your partner and a new love interest. In such moments, seek guidance from your inner moral compass to lead the way.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week brings a vibrant connection with loved ones, enhancing your overall joy and visible contentment. The warmth from your home life will radiate in your actions and expressions. Those not currently in a relationship will find themselves surrounded by romantic gestures and potential lifelong partnerships, sparking delight. Midweek promises gatherings that celebrate these bonds, infusing your interactions with renewed vigor and creative inspiration. Additionally, you may find yourself drawn towards more spiritual or introspective pursuits, perhaps discovering new passions. Financially, it's a favorable period for making contributions to causes you value or managing existing financial commitments effectively. You might also find opportunities to support your close ones financially, fostering a sense of community and shared well-being.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Ocean Blue
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you find yourself energized and driven, eager to pursue your ambitions with determination. You possess the strength to turn your aspirations into accomplishments, reaching for your highest potential. Relationships, whether friendships or collaborations, are favored during this period. Midweek might bring a longing for comfort and familiarity, stirring deep reflections and enhancing your understanding of others' motives and actions. Your nurturing nature shines, offering support and comfort to those in need. Creatively, you are drawn to expressive outlets that stir the soul, such as music and the arts, where your imagination can flourish. However, take care to balance your enthusiasm with practicality; overly idealistic dreams could lead to challenges if not tempered with a grounded perspective.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This period marks a pivotal phase of renewal, urging you to clear the canvas of your life for a fresh beginning. Acknowledge that errors are merely stepping stones in the journey of knowledge. Leave your previous challenges behind and embrace the prospects that lie ahead with a clear determination to move forward. At times, you'll encounter scenarios that resist resolution through peaceful means or insightful strategies, and you might feel compelled to adopt a more assertive approach. The resolution or escalation of disputes or disagreements is on the horizon. Embrace your inner resolve and clarity, which will empower you to navigate through these conflicts successfully. As the week concludes, expect an array of unexpected and intriguing experiences. Exercise caution with enticing opportunities, understanding their full implications before committing.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Fuschia
Lucky day Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, your ability to navigate complex decisions will be enhanced, covering a range of personal and professional matters. Have faith and trust in your won inner strength and self-assurance, this will help you facing challenges. Midweek, you might encounter an individual whose characteristics starkly differ from yours, potentially leading to temporary discomfort. This person could be a newcomer in your workplace and might pose challenges to your professional path. However, with your grounded nature and honest approach, you will manage to maintain control of the situation. Your persistence, strategic thinking, and intelligence will help you navigate through these obstacles effectively. You possess a unique ability to maintain equilibrium in various aspects of life, which consistently leaves a positive impression on those around you.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Musterd
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you might find yourself captivated by flights of fancy. Recently, you've been deeply immersed in worldly pursuits, possibly to the detriment of your inner balance. Now may be a good time to dismantle any self-created barriers built from such indulgences. Embrace a more grounded approach, especially if you've been resistant to change. This shift aligns with a deeper spiritual beckoning. It's crucial to monitor your aspirations to ensure they remain achievable, as fleeting satisfactions are outweighed by enduring impacts. As the week concludes, anticipate significant shifts or transitions. These changes, whether they involve moving locations or pivotal figures entering or exiting your life, will happen quickly and are essential, albeit not always by choice.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week may test your resilience and patience as various challenges emerge across different aspects of your life. From health issues to complications at work or home, unexpected events could stir mental tension. It's crucial how you handle these situations. You might face skepticism from those around you or encounter unpredictable behavior in public spaces. In such scenarios, adopting a strategy of compromise could be beneficial. Hold your ground and stay calm, even under the most challenging conditions. As the week closes, you might find yourself overwhelmed with regret and anxiety, potentially leading to restless nights. Instead of dwelling on past events, focus on addressing the real issues at hand to prevent further distress.

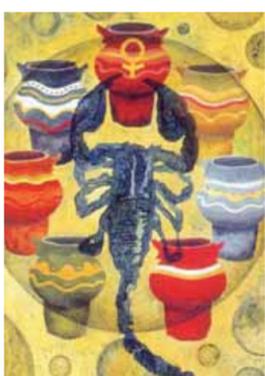
Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Monday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week holds great promise for you as favorable influences surround you. You exhibit creativity, initiative, and a spirit of adventure, allowing you to effectively tackle and complete any task or project at hand. Your approach includes building a solid base and addressing core issues, ensuring durable outcomes and success in your endeavors. Emotional challenges might arise mid-week, but with the support of a partner or through a beneficial partnership, these can be navigated successfully. This period also brings opportunities for forming new connections, whether in your personal or professional life. Those not in a relationship might receive encouraging signs of affection, while those committed can experience deeper intimacy and connection. However, stay alert to the deceptive tactics of untrustworthy individuals. Assertiveness and tact will be key in countering any negative influences.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week opens with a sense of joy and gathering, marking significant personal and communal celebrations. Embrace the richness surrounding you, and express gratitude for those who enhance your life. As you encounter new opportunities, whether in your career or personal projects, a proactive and courageous approach is essential. Now is the moment to harness your capabilities and embark on ventures with confidence, fully equipped to see them through. An influx of energy and determination arrives, urging immediate action to capitalize on emerging prospects. Utilize this surge to advance your ambitions. As the week closes, expect interactions with influential individuals, particularly a discerning leader. Honesty will serve you well in these exchanges, even as challenging conversations prompt personal growth and deeper understanding.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week is all about embracing change and pursuing personal growth. If monotony has crept into your routine, it's time to inject some excitement and joy. However, beware of neglecting your responsibilities amidst minor distractions. A lack of discipline, especially in financial matters, could lead to disorder. Balancing your commitments to both family and career is crucial to maintain stability. Consider tightening your budget as this discipline may be beneficial for your well-being too. Adopting a new wellness routine, including a nutritious diet and regular physical activity, is essential. Despite challenges, remember that every ending paves the way for new beginnings. As the week closes, take time to restore yourself, nurturing both your physical and mental health for overall harmony.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Thursday

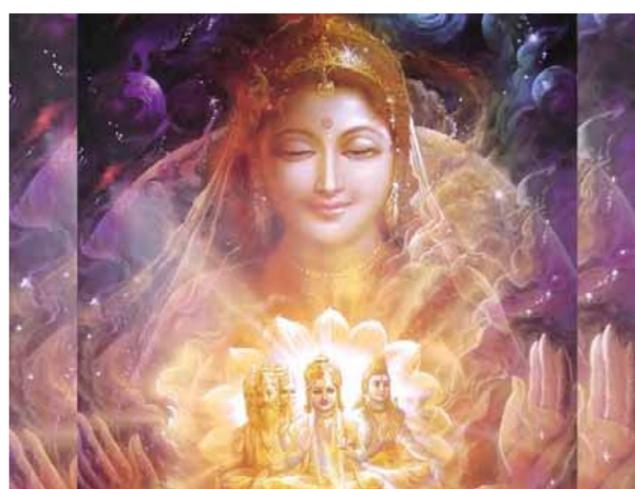
Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



Revealing and Veiling dimensions of Shakti trinity

Picking up threads from the previous issue, it's time to look at a few other dimensions of the Shakti -trinity. Inherent in Sata is the 'revealing principle'. We have already discussed that when Tamasa engages with the seeds of creation stirred up by Rajas element, it leads to creation. The creation, however gains stability and thereby form existence with name when aided by Sata element. Once the form existence is in place, the eternal element of Consciousness finds a platform to manifest. The radiance inherent in Consciousness Element brings into light (in cognitive domain), the form-existence designated with a name and form. Tamasa, its counterpart, is marked with 'veiling nature', as it does all the processing in hiding. It is something like a plant bearing seed, which has to necessarily go into hiding in the dark realms of mother earth's womb for a specified period, for it to draw succour from the earth mass. Following which, the seed first sprouts, and then grows into a fruit bearing tree. Evidently, the tree-form remains veiled in the seed; but once manifest, the particular seed

creating it would not be in sight. Similarly, at the primal-source, which is supposedly self-revealed, the fine print of manifest world remains veiled in seed-form. But once the world becomes manifest, the root on which life cycle is premised gets veiled, as it goes out of reckoning in human being's perceptible domain. It is for this very reason that in Indian context, darkness is not perceived as negative. For, it remains just one phase of nature's creation process. So, veiling and unveiling aspects are just two faces of nature's creation cycle. But then a look at the way seed-tree-seed cycle runs, an intriguing question arises in mind, especially in view of the fact that seed goes out of sight once it transforms into a plant. Would it mean that the primal source would also lose its presence once the manifest world comes to light? Looking at the seed-tree cycle analogy, it may appear so. But then, it needs to be appreciated that the manifest ephemeral world has to be rooted somewhere in some inexhaustible eternal reality. Otherwise, it will not be able to draw succour necessary to



continue recycling again and again. But for which, the manifest world would not have sustained so long. Here, it also needs to be appreciated that the Primal-Source is infinite,

inexhaustible and an outflowing eternal reality, beyond the bounds of time, space, and causality. It is only a finite thing that may lose its presence, once transformed into another form.

A look at the emergence and disappearance of tidal waves in the sea may throw further light. When the sea is in fury, tidal waves envelope the sea. The sea goes out of our sight. Once the tidal waves settle down after doing their round for a while, it comes out that only the surface water had temporarily gone into fury. The main sea body was there in its place. Even in tidal wave state, it remains a part of the main sea body itself. So, whereas existence of the tidal wave can be measured in time frame, the main sea body remains beyond its limit. Similarly, the disorder just at the surface level of the primal source is enough to manifest the world we live in. But the primal source would remain very much in place, and therefore, is beyond the limitation of time. Again, when the manifest world finally disintegrates, it gets back to its primal source, the way main sea body takes back the tidal waves into its womb. So, the primal source happens to be an eternal reality beyond the binds of time. The revealing, veiling, and activating aspects of Sata, Tamasa, and Rajasa

have psychological imperatives on human minds as well, in so far as their individual character is concerned. As already discussed above, with body-mind organism getting revealed, the root of life gets veiled. That clouds human perceptible and comprehensible abilities in five different ways. Since these limitations arise as a sequel to the design parameters underlying the making of a being, they are there by birth. We may call them as elemental limitations. Kashmir Shaivism calls this as being under the spell of Maya(delusion). The human limitations are viewed in the backdrop of the primal source believed to be enjoying singular ownership of the whole manifest world and thereby carrying a sense of fullness; being omniscient; being beyond limitation of time and space as wells as laws of causation.

The issue continues.....

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-981803723/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com