



OPINION 6

THE UNYIELDING SPIRIT OF MILITARY FAMILIES

WORLD 8

STRIKES ON GAZA KILL 18; TWO DEAD IN TEL AVIV

MONEY 10

RBI LIKELY TO KEEP INTEREST RATE UNCHANGED AT 6.5%: EXPERTS

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SEN FALLS TO AXELSEN IN SEMIS 12 SPORTS



Fresh violence rocks Bangladesh



People participate in a rally against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Government demanding justice for the victims killed in the recent countryside deadly clashes, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Sunday AP/PTI

At least 91 people, including 14 policemen, were killed and hundreds injured on Sunday in fierce clashes between protesters demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and the ruling party supporters in different parts of Bangladesh on the first day of the non-cooperation movement over a Government jobs quota system. The clashes broke out this morning when protesters attending the non-cooperation programme under the banner of the Students Against Discrimination with the one-point demand of the Government's resignation faced opposition from the supporters of the Awami League, Chhatra League, and Jubo League activists. So far, 91 people have been killed in day-long clashes across the country, the leading Bengali-language daily Prothom Alo reported. According to the police headquarters, 14 policemen have been killed across the country. Of them, 13 were

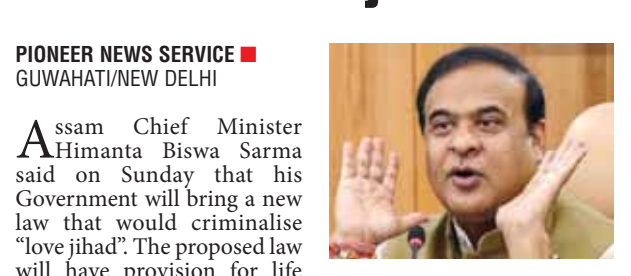
killed in Sirajganj's Enayetpur police station. One person was killed in Comilla's Elliotganj, the paper said. As violence escalated, the Home Ministry imposed an indefinite nationwide curfew from 6 pm on Sunday. A Government agency has ordered the shutdown of Meta platforms Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram. The mobile operators were ordered to shut down 4G mobile internet, the paper added. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Hasina said those engaging in "sabotage" across the country



Death toll rises to 11 in Himachal cloudbursts

With the recovery of two more bodies from Mandi district, the death toll due to flash floods triggered by cloudbursts in three districts of Himachal Pradesh has increased to 11. Over 40 people are still missing after a series of cloudbursts occurred in Kullu's Nirmand, Sainj and Malana, Mandi's Padhar and Shimla's Rampur subdivision on the night of July 31 and wreaked havoc. The bodies of Sonam (23) and three-month-old Manvi were recovered from Rajbhan village in Padhar area of Mandi district, officials said. The rescue operations are still underway and sniffer dogs, drones and other equipment are also being used to locate the missing people. According to officials, 410 rescuers from teams of the Army, NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, CISF, Himachal Pradesh Police and home guards are involved in the hunt. Over 30 people are missing in Samej village in Gram panchayat Sarpara in Rampur subdivision. More machines have been deployed and the rescue operations are going in full swing. As the flow of water has reduced, now machines have reached the spot where the missing persons could be possibly found, Up-pradhan Sarpara C L Negi said. The State Government on Friday announced an immediate relief of ₹50,000 for the victims and said they would be given ₹5,000 monthly for rent for the next three months along with gas, food and other essential items. The State has suffered a loss of ₹662 crore since the onset of monsoon on June 27 till August 3.

Assam to bring law soon for life term in 'love jihad' cases



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday that his Government will bring a new law that would criminalise "love jihad". The proposed law will have provision for life imprisonment if found guilty. Sarma's statement comes days after the Uttar Pradesh Assembly passed the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2024, providing for a maximum punishment of life imprisonment to the offenders convicted under certain circumstances. Speaking at the State BJP executive meet held at the Assam's capital, Sarma said, "We spoke about 'love jihad' during the elections. Soon, we will bring a law, which will award life imprisonment in such cases." However, he did not talk about any deadline regarding the proposed law. Sarma also said the Government will also bring in new domicile policy, allowing only those born in the State to be entitled for Government

Wall collapse kills 9 kids making Shivlings in MP

Some 15 children happily engrossed in making 'parthiv shivling' (creating shivlings out of clay) in Shahpur in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district on a wet Sunday had no inkling that a cruel twist of fate would snatch nine of their friends forever. Nine children in the 10-15 age group were killed and two injured after a wall of a dilapidated house near a temple collapsed between 8:30am and 9am, wiping out the happiness residents of Shahpur town were deriving from the three-day 'parthiv shivling nirmaan' programme, a staple of the month of 'Saavan', underway at Hardoi Temple. "I was returning after offering



Rescue work underway after a wall collapsed at Shahpur village, in Sagar district, on Sunday PTI

water to the shivling when a wall collapsed, trapping several children who were making clay shivlings under a tent. I was stunned and could not fathom what was happening. The urn in which I had taken water for the offering fell from my hand. I shouted and people for all around rushed to help," said an eyewitness, who was one of the organisers of the religious event. A video of his narration of the incident to local police at the site, in which he can be heard saying the programme was on for the past three days, went viral on social media soon after. "The wall collapse took place in a dilapidated house belonging to one Patel. We did not know how precarious its condition was or else we would never have erected a tent using it as support. Constant rains further weakened the structure," he said. At the local primary health centre, a tearful parent said there was no one to bandage the wound on her niece's hand, adding that the facility was a neglected one. **Continued on Page 2**

IMD issues red alert for Rajasthan, MP, Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra

After Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhnad, and Kerala where rains have caused havoc in the past few days, now it's the turn of the western Madhya Pradesh, eastern Rajasthan, Gujarat, the Konkan region, Goa, and central Maharashtra to brace for heavy rainfall. The Meteorological Department on Sunday issued a red alert for these States. The most severe category, a red alert, indicates extremely heavy rainfall exceeding 204.5 mm within 24 hours. This poses a significant threat to life and property. Widespread flooding, disruption of essential services, and evacuation orders become likely. In the coming days, heavy rainfall is also expected in Kerala, Coastal Karnataka and Tamil Nadu while in Maharashtra, a red alert has been issued in Palghar, Pune, and Satara, while an orange alert for very heavy rains has been issued in Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Nasik. **Continued on Page 2**



Bulldozers erase Khyber Pass residents' homes, memories

A demolition drive in Khyber Pass, located in the Civil Lines area, carried out by the Land and Development Office on Sunday, left a trail of devastation that extended far beyond the physical destruction of houses and shops. It obliterated the cherished memories of residents who had called this place home for generations. The morning calm was shattered as locals woke to the alarming sight of bulldozers lined up in their neighbourhood, poised to demolish their homes. These structures held not just their belongings but the essence of their lives, their memories intricately woven into the very walls that now lay in ruins. Among the many hit was Bhupinder Singh Bhatia, a small shop owner whose livelihood and legacy were reduced to rubble. He stood amid the debris, gazing at the remnants of his life with despair. His small shop, a cornerstone of his existence, was now nothing more than a pile of broken bricks and shattered dreams. "I have been living here for 70 years. I built this house and shop with my hard-earned money and today, it is gut-wrenching to see the house being demolished," Bhatia said. A large-scale demolition drive at Khyber Pass was also carried out last month which led to over 250 houses being razed and hundreds of residents being displaced. Shahana Begum, 55, said she has been living in the area for decades but a demolition drive last month razed all her memories. "Last month, they demolished my house in the Civil Lines area and today, they demolished my daughter's house," she said,



A police personnel during a demolition drive at Khyber Pass area, in New Delhi, on Sunday Ranjanj Dimiri/Pioneer

He said, "This is my only shop, Gupta Store, which will be demolished on August 13. I am very worried as to how I will earn and support my family." The demolition scare has made Gupta move to Burari area for the time being. "The rent there is so high that all my savings are spent paying it. For how long can I sustain? I have to pay the fees for children's studies too," he rued. At the site, the air was dense with dust as machinery demolished buildings. Several residents were seen sitting among the rubble that was once their home. Many of the children who have moved from the area are now returning worried for their parent's security. Nisha, who returned from Dubai on Saturday night after learning about the demolition of her parents' house, was worried about her elderly parents. "Where will I take my family now? My father is not keeping well. They razed my house in no time and many useful things have been destroyed," she said. Nishant, 40, was in despair seeing his house being razed. He said while he had built a proper house with all the papers, no one came to their rescue. "We had all the papers for the house but now all my belongings have gone. No one came to help us. What do I do now? This was my home for all my life and now I am left with nothing," he said. A petition in this regard was filed in the High Court in 2010 and the court had directed that "no coercive steps be taken" against the petitioners. However, the petitioners filed an application in the matter for clarification, after authorities passed an order earlier this year threatening removal of alleged unauthorised occupation and construction from the area.



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A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR HEALING A TROUBLED MIND

Through spiritual practices and positive affirmations, one can find the peace



RAVI VALLURI

Recently I received a message on my cell, "I am the son of Lord Krishna, I keep visiting Tirumala, yet I take drugs. Why do I suffer? Kindly help me!" My response was, "Meet a psychiatrist, undergo counselling, and undertake a holistic programme of wellness." But the caller remained unsatisfied and kept pestering me with a flurry of such messages. This person was positively in a state of misery and fear. His crutch and lifeboat were Lord Krishna. The mind of the caller was both fragmented and deeply disturbed. He appeared to be in a state of imbalance. Patanjali Yoga Sutras have identified the following as root causes of miseries in life—Avidya, Asmita, Raga, Dwesha and Abhinivesha. 1) Avidya—This is nothing but a lack of knowledge or ignorance. Everything around us keeps changing constantly. It could be our cells, blood, stomach linings, and hair to name some. But we are oblivious to the change. 2) Asmita—This is our intellect and our self. We get stubbornly stuck to our opinions. The caller was fixated on the idea that he was the child of Lord Krishna and stayed put at Tirumala. Yet he was partaking in drugs. 3) Raga—This is nothing but craving. Normally craving arises out of certain pleasurable experiences of the past. It has a deep imprint on the mind. But such impressions only aggravate our wants and misery. 4) Dwesha—Is nothing but hatred. Hatred is antithetical to craving. Though it arises out of craving, the premise is an unpleasant experience. This could be because of certain trag-



ic moments in the past or unrealistic expectations which do not materialise. 5) Abhinivesha—This is fear of the unknown. An emotion that affects all of us. Only a clairvoyant sage through penance and austerity overcomes this barrier. The caller proclaiming to be the son of Lord Krishna was in obvious pain and agony. He could experience ecstasy only through scientific help that is, consulting a psychiatrist, taking proper medication and a wellness programme.

The troubled individual's mind could have undergone say the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living or Vipassana to combat fear. But he remained an escapist by not attending either. This is how a fragmented and escapist mind reacts. The caller continued to escape and obviate the inevitable. It keeps hunting for excuses, and alternatives. Invariably the cloak of negativity and ignorance shrouds the mind from combating the problem. Exercising all love, caution, and care, I asked him to chant "Om Namah Shivay", 108 times thrice a day to purge his mind of all negative thoughts and by making positive affirmations through writing "I am happy, healthy and peaceful".

This task was also to be done thrice daily 108 times, and the tapas was to be continued for 41 days. In case a day is missed for some reason, repeat the process for 41 days. Such signals to the mind are extremely useful and powerful. The mind then responds to positivity and discards negative feelings and emotions. He has not contacted me thus far. Presumably, he has embarked on the journey of tapas and hopefully has found support and a beacon of light in the dark tunnel. His Ishta Devata, Lord Krishna wielded Sudarshan Chakra wading through negativity and impurity. Sudarshan Kriya, Pranayama, Yoga and Meditation will certainly swathe through the cobwebs of his troubled mind and increase his Prana, Chi, or energy to obliterate the negativity. I am waiting for the 41 days to end so that he can be happy, healthy, and peaceful and lead a purposeful life.

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

The global crisis of over-tourism

Around the world, over-tourism is emerging as a big problem. The overwhelming influx of tourists causes significant hardships for local residents and destinations



ARCHANA DATTA



The growing problem of over-tourism across the globe! Archana Datta. Recently, thousands of residents of Barcelona in Spain, protested against tourism, urging tourists to 'go home', waving placards and squirting water guns at outdoor diners, averring that tourists increased prices and put pressure on public services in Spain's most visited city. Not only Barcelona alone, Venice also introduced a five euro entrance fee to dissuade day-trippers from crowding into the city's limited space and public resources.

Japan, too, has put up a giant screen to block views of Mount Fuji to discourage tourists from gatherings at the iconic spot. Closer home, in Chikmagalur, Karnataka, police resorted to a special drive at tourist destinations to curb the unruly behaviour of visiting tourists. Now, people have been travelling for centuries, and have traditionally been welcomed to visit countries. While, in India, the spirit of 'atithi devo bhava', treating guests as Gods, prevailed. Over the years, travel as tourism, has turned into one of the most important economic sectors. The ease in global air connectivity and people's increasing craze for exotic visits, adventure and leisure in the internet-connected world, created an unprecedented rise in the number of tourists, which, eventually, evoked a 'tourist phobia', an aversion and social rejection among the locals, as happened in Spain, and elsewhere.

In 2019, when, 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded, a hike of 4% from the previous year, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) called for managing 'such a growth of tourists responsibly to best seize the opportunities that tourism can generate for com-



ONE TOURIST PRODUCES FROM 1 TO 12 KG OF SOLID WASTE PER DAY WHEN VISITING A NEW PLACE, DEPENDING ON FACTORS LIKE LOCATION, THE TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION, PERSONAL PREFERENCES, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE STAY

munities around the world'. While, tourism has been described as 'the excessive growth of visitors in areas where residents suffer negative consequences such as permanent changes to their lifestyles, denial of access to civic amenities and damages in their general well-being' (Milano et al., 2019).

It has a social dimension too that 'impairs the place-person interrelationships and induces changes in residents' attitudes towards tourism' (Gössling et al., 2020). Over tourism, also makes urban life 'more tense and stressful' and for women 'a concern for safety in public space'. (Maja Hristov, Nebojša Stefanovic, Nataša Danilovic Hristic, Serbia, 2021). However, the present-day discourses predominantly veer around the issue of sustainability (Gowreesunkar & Thanh, 2020), as tourist hotspots are mostly located in sensitive ecosystems.

Water, a precious natural resource, gets seriously misused by the tourism sector affecting the water cycle of the area. In Zanzibar, an average household consumes a little over 93 litres of water per day, while, the average consumption per room in a guesthouse is 686 litres, 7 times more, which in a luxurious 5-star hotel room, rises to 3,000+ litres of water per day. Spain, an important producer of vegetables and fruits for Europe, struggles over water utilisation in two competing economic sectors, tourism and agriculture (Water Equity in

Tourism, 2012). While, a 2022 study said that in case of water scarcity, women are the most affected ones, as it worsens their daily life tasks.

One tourist produces from 1 to 12 kg of solid waste per day when visiting a new place, depending on factors like location, the type of accommodation, personal preferences, and the character of the stay. If the present trend continues, there will be an increase of 251 per cent in solid waste production because of tourism by 2050 (UNEP). Cruise ships are among the top polluters, and their raw sewage affects the coral reefs.

Sewage from Mexico's tourism industry threatens the Caribbean coast, and the Mesoamerican Reef has already lost 80 per cent of corals to pollution. In 2023, Santorini Island in Greece, which has a population of fifteen thousand, received around 800 cruise ships, which caused a layer of pollution around the caldera. Notwithstanding, tourism is an economic powerhouse. The Travel & Tourism sector (T&T) witnessed a boom in 2019, accounting for 10.5% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$ 10.3 trillion).

In India, in 2019, the T&T sector was worth about \$194.3 billion, added 6.8% to the GDP and employed 40 million people. By 2033, the tourism industry is slated to represent 11.6% of the global economy. While, women comprise 54% of the workforce, but, they are mostly in lower-

skilled, lower-paid and often in informal employment (UNWTO). Now, some cities have gone for new or revised taxation, fines, etc, to de-market tourism.

However, tourism de-growth cannot be considered a remedy, which can push tourism-dependent local economies into crisis, as happened in Myanmar's temple city, Bagan, where people suffer to make ends meet for want of visitors, as the country is deep into civil wars. While, regenerative tourism as an antidote, was mooted in 1987 in the Brundtland Report, which set the tone for 'building back better', going beyond the concept of 'not damaging the environment'.

The UN called for a holistic understanding of living systems in the entire tourism ecosystem, as everything is inter-connected, the government, private sector, voluntary sector, and the communities'.

The tourism industries should also operate in a new way by discarding the 'make-use and dispose' linear extractive model and fit themselves into a circular economy model of 'reuse/no waste', the world body urged. Isn't it high time for the burgeoning tourism sector to follow the path of regeneration, and herald an era of intergenerational equity, without compromising the planet for future generations?

(The author is former Director General, Doordarshan, All India Radio)

Jammu and Kashmir post-Article 370: Tackling terrorism and ensuring integration

Recent terrorist attacks in Jammu highlight the necessity for a having deeper emotional connect with the people and addressing their concerns

This is a 'Stop Press' moment for Jammu and Kashmir after the significant and benefiting legislation of the abrogation of Article 370 - a step towards demystifying and demolishing the 'special status' of Jammu and Kashmir which was a hydra-headed invitation to the West to make a spectacle of India's extreme problems of terrorism as it was and is being transported from Pakistan and India's Foreign Minister Dr. Jai Shankar has often enlightened us on our Nation's self-interest. I say the 'Stop Press' moment because there has been a spike in terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, especially in Jammu and has brought under the lens the



PRATIBHA CHOPRA

local support for Pakistan terrorists. So what does the 'Stop Press' moment signify? In this 'stop press' moment, we need to dig deep - the abrogation of Article 370- will not integrate into the body-politic on its own - it has to be integrated as a living experience to attain validation in the Being and Soul of Jammu and Kashmir and its people. The definition of the people

of Jammu and Kashmir is 'Indians' where Indians from the rest of the country also become an active agency.

This calls for a few hardcore resolute living and active steps- the foremost being understanding the minds of the people of Jammu and Kashmir - a lot has been done - but we need to engage with this relentlessly and break the ice to pierce their 'special status', 'isolation' and 'exclusivity' which has not done them any good except for dragging them into the mindless narrative of asking for 'autonomy' and realizing it the hard way that Pakistan has always worked out of bounds, and still does so, to 'keep' them in a perpetual zone of con-

flict. This brings us to a preparation for working towards democratic strengthening and consolidation of institutional structures in consonance with the reality of Jammu and Kashmir as the Government of India wants to see it after the abrogation of Article 370. Needless to say, all those developmental questions that are normally addressed in any State or Union Territory of India need to be addressed, foremost being economic egalitarianism.

The Congress Party must keep its mouth shut and let the present govt. led by the Prime Minister Modi do its work in Jammu and Kashmir with the infrastructure and development, as



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari would have it. The Congress has through the years mutilated all the Federal aspects of the Constitution of India to politically force a Centralised hegemony. The present Govt. does not intend to treat Kashmir as a communal cauldron and a battleground for Hindutva

and rightly so, therefore it is building infrastructure there. The whole idea of the abrogation of Art. 370 would bear fruit if religious and ethnic exclusiveness were not exploited negatively but used towards international trade and commerce in the best cultural parlance. In the same breath I would say that the Muslim majority

could suggest itself to confine its international commitments to religious brotherhood and political proximities within the respectful questioning bounds and press freedom, this press freedom not being an absolute right but subject to the upholding of the Sovereignty and Integrity of India and its Dignity as envisaged in the Constitution of India.

As far as the question of 'Kashmiriyat' is concerned, nobody is stopping or stalling this journey as long as it is within the legitimacy of the Constitutional provisions and the artistic license that it provides. And there may be questions of class and caste here that cannot be ignored if we are

to sound and purport real. We will never forget the Indian Army, the soldiers who never fail us in the treacherous terrains of Jammu Kashmir, Ladhak & Siachen in the said region.

We give them the space in our hearts for they do not hide behind any 'political' discourses and tricks and are the first agency of the Social Contract that a Nation State is based on. Their relentless invincibility and risk-taking bravado have no given path to tread but every day is a new challenge. Let all our actions as envisioned in the above paras be a tribute to the soldiers of the Indian Army and it is on us to do our duty now and here.

(The writer is a lawyer; views are personal)

Children at risk of dying in famine-hit Darfur

AP ■ CAIRO

Malnourished children in a famine-hit camp for war-displaced people in Sudan's western region of Darfur are at risk of dying, an aid group said Sunday, because it was forced to ration malnutrition treatment due to a blockade imposed by a notorious paramilitary group. Doctors Without Borders said the Rapid Support Forces, which have besieged al-Fasher city as part of its war against the Sudanese military, have blocked three trucks carrying lifesaving medical supplies, including therapeutic food, for the city and the nearby Zamzam camp where famine was confirmed last week. Sudan plunged into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the RSF developed into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, before spreading across the northeastern African country. Darfur saw some of the worst and most devastating bouts of fighting in



the war. The conflict has killed thousands of people and pushed many into starvation. It created the world's largest displacement crisis with more than 10 million people forced to flee their homes since April 2023, according to the U.N. Migration agency. Over 2 mil-

lion of those fled to neighboring countries. International experts in the Famine Review Committee confirmed Thursday that starvation at Zamzam camp, where up to 600,000 people shelter, has grown into full famine. International experts use set criteria to confirm the exist-

ence of famines. A famine is declared in an area when one in five people or households severely lack food and face starvation and destitution that would ultimately lead to critical levels of acute malnutrition and death. In Zamzam camp, which has swelled with the arrival of new displaced people, many children are in critical condition, Doctors Without Borders said, adding that the malnutrition ward at its field hospital in the camp is overcrowded with a 126% bed occupancy rate. The group said RSF fighters have blocked the trucks in the town of Kabkabiya for over a month, adding that it was forced to limit the number of children receiving therapeutic food in the overcrowded camp as its stock of medicine covers only two weeks. "Deliberately obstructing or delaying humanitarian cargo is putting the lives of thousands of children at-risk as they are cut-off from receiving lifesaving treatment," it said on social media platform X. There was no immediate comment from the RSF. The RSF has imposed a siege on el-Fasher in its monthslong attempt to take it from the military and its allied rebel groups. The city, the provincial capital of North Darfur, is the last stronghold for the military in the war-torn Darfur region.

Indian student charged for falsifying records

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A 19-year-old Indian student, who was arrested and charged with falsifying records to gain admission in a US university, will have to return to India under a plea deal entered into with American authorities. Aryan Anand had submitted fake and falsified documents to secure admission into Lehigh University, a private research university in Pennsylvania for the 2023-2024 academic year. A report in the Lehigh University's student newspaper 'The Brown and White', said last month that a police investigation had found that Anand had falsified admission and financial aid documents. He had even "faked his father's death" as part of the conspiracy to obtain admission and scholarship, it said. Anand was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Jordan Knisley on June 12, with a bail of USD 25,000. He pleaded guilty to one count of forgery. As part of the plea deal, he was sentenced to one to three months in Northampton County Prison, "which amounted to a time-served sentence", lehighvalleylive.com quoted defence attorney Molly Heidorn as saying.

Further investigation by the Lehigh police identified Anand as the author of the post, which has since been deleted but in which he had outlined his scheme. Anand had indicated that he "created a fake email address in the format of principal@schoolname.com for his application, submitted a death certificate for his father to acquire additional hardship financial aid, falsified tax documentation, altered his secondary school year 1-3 transcripts and created a false 'Senior School Certificate Examination' to show success in his final year of secondary school", the report said. Anand said it was "all for the purpose of securing admission and financial aid to attend a university in the United States." The criminal complaint filed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 30 accused Anand of violating the statutes of forgery, tampering with records or identification, theft by deception and theft of services. "Metadata revealed the death certificate and tax documents were altered using the 'iLovePDF' website, and the academic documents were modified using Adobe Photoshop," according to the criminal complaint.

As part of the deal, Anand is required to return to India and Lehigh chose not to seek restitution of about USD 85,000. He was released to the custody of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. According to a release issued by the office of Northampton County's district attorney Stephen Baratta, Anand had created a fake email address impersonating a school principal, the report in lehighvalleylive.com said. The release had said that Anand's father is alive and in India. Anand's forgery came to light after a post he shared on the social media site Reddit titled 'I have built my life and career on lies' prompted the investigation into his case. In that anonymous post, he had laid out the details of his fraudulent scheme. The Brown and White report said that the investigation began when a Reddit monitor notified Lehigh's Admissions Department of the post on April 26. "The criminal complaint revealed the thread was authored by someone with the username 'u/transportationOK4728', and 'the creator was following only one University group of Reddit and that University was Lehigh University', the report said.

11 killed due to torrential rains in northwest Pakistan



PTI ■ PESHAWAR

At least 11 people died in the last 24 hours due to torrential monsoon rains that caused flash floods and roof collapses in northwest Pakistan on Sunday, authorities said. At least seven deaths were reported from Tank and Karak districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan. Three people died when the roof of their house collapsed due to heavy rains in Tank dis-

trict, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority said. It added that four people died after they were swept away in Karak district. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed grief and sorrow over the deaths and announced compensation for the families hit by the rains. Gandapur also directed the respective district administrations to provide the best possible assistance and relief to the people affected by the rains.

Four years after the Beirut port blast, many decry stalled justice as regional tensions spike

AP ■ BEIRUT

Four years ago, Helen Ata got a call from someone she didn't know telling her that a massive explosion at the Beirut port had caused her building to collapse. Her brothers were trapped under the rubble. One of them, Issam, survived, with a permanent disability in his right leg. Her twin brother Abdo, whom she calls her "other half," died. "We will never feel safe again," she told The Associated Press, sitting next to a portrait of Abdo. The port blast anniversary Sunday comes as the region braces for retaliation after an Israeli strike killed a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut and an explosion in Tehran, widely blamed on Israel, killed top Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. For many, the fears of a new escalation come as wounds of the port explosion four years ago remain raw. On August 4, 2020, hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate



detonated in a Beirut Port warehouse. The gigantic blast tore through the Lebanese capital, killing at least 218 people, according to an AP count, wounded more than 6,000 others, and devastated large swathes of Beirut, causing billions of dollars in damages. The blast stunned the nation and a probe by a maverick investigative judge into the explosion shook the country's ruling elite, rife with corruption and mismanagement. However, years of obstructions by top officials to dodge accountability and stall the probe have hampered hopes for justice. "Four years later, there is not a

single detainee," Ata said. "There is a crime, and there are accused, but there are no criminals." Judge Tarek Bitar is the second investigator to lead the probe into the port blast. He has charged over a dozen senior political, security, port and security officials. Most of the families of the victims rallying for justice have backed him, but senior officials have repeatedly refused to show up for questioning since the start of the investigation. Karim Nammour, a lawyer with the Lebanese watchdog group Legal Agenda, said the case has rattled officials because it exposed the dangers of the "criminal incompetence" of how they have run the country for decades. Lebanon's political leadership has accused Bitar, without providing evidence, of being biased in his investigation, and some even demanded his removal while filing legal complaints against him that have stalled the investigation for years.

Imran says 'army should apologise'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has refused to apologise for the May 9 riots that erupted after his arrest last year and claimed that it was the Army that owed him an apology since he was "abducted" by the paramilitary rangers on the day of the violence. Khan, 71, was on May 9, 2023, arrested by the Pakistan Rangers from the Islamabad High Court premises during his appearance in a corruption case. His arrest sparked countrywide protests and riots by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf supporters who damaged civilian as well as military installations across the country. Army spokesman Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif on May 7 this year said any dialogue with the PTI could happen if the party apologised for its "politics of anarchy". The statement was followed by calls from different quarters that Khan founded PTI to apologise for the "Black Day" violence. Khan during a media talk on Saturday at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi when asked whether he would tender an apology for the May 9 violence, said he had no reason to apologise, further adding that he was arrested by the rangers headed by a serving major general from the premises of the Islamabad High Court, the Dawn newspaper reported. The former premier, who over the past few weeks has repeatedly expressed his willingness to talk to the army and not with the government, reiterating his position, said he would only hold talks with the "real authority" as negotiations with the government were "a futile exercise". He alleged that talks with the government would be counterproductive as there is an unannounced martial law in the field. The cricketer-turned-politician also added that talks with "people in the power corridors"

would be within the ambit of the Constitution. Dawn further reported that responding to a question that senior politician and his ally Mahmood Khan Achakzai has declined to become the focal point for proposed talks with the establishment, Khan said the senior leader had been nominated to negotiate with political parties. Earlier this week, the former premier said his party was ready for talks with the military establishment but laid down preconditions: the return of his party's "stolen mandate", the release of all detained party workers, and the holding of transparent elections. Khan also urged the military to nominate their representatives for talks. Talking about his prison woes, the former prime minister said he twice suffered from food poisoning as he had no refrigerator in his cell to preserve the food properly. Referring to the new Toshakhana reference in which he and his wife Bushra Bibi are the accused, Khan said the case was a "clear violation of the National Accountability Ordinance". He claimed still having in his possession the Graff watch, which he is accused of selling in the NAB reference. Khan said he had moved his valuable possessions to a safer location following a raid at his Banigala residence in March last year. He warned of legal proceedings against the NAB chairman, interior minister and those officers who implicated him in "false cases". Earlier, the accountability court adjourned till August 7 the proceedings in the 190 million pounds Al-Qadir Trust corruption case. Since Khan's counsel was unavailable, the cross-examination of investigation officer Mian Umar could not be completed. The PTI leader's legal team in an application before Judge Nasir Javed Rana requested that Khan be allowed to call his children.

Flood damage: Putin offers disaster aid to N Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

Russian President Vladimir Putin offered humanitarian assistance to help North Korea cope with damages from recent floods, both countries said, in another sign of expanding relations between the two nations. In a message to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Saturday, Putin "extended deep sympathy and support" and conveyed his willingness to provide immediate disaster aid to help North Korea recover from the floods, the North's official Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday. Russia's state news agency Tass carried a similar report, saying that Putin told Kim in the message: "You can always count on our assistance and support." Ties between North Korea and Russia have been improving significantly amid widespread

outside beliefs that North Korea has supplied conventional weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine in return for military and economic assistance. During a meeting in Pyongyang in June, Kim and Putin signed a pact stipulating mutual military assistance if either country is attacked, in what was considered the two countries' biggest defence deal since the end of the Cold War. Kim expressed his gratitude to Putin over the offer for aid, saying he "could deeply feel the special emotion towards a genuine friend in the most difficult period." But Kim said North Korea has established its own rehabilitation plans and will ask for Russian assistance later if it is needed, according to KCNA. Heavy rains in North Korea's northwestern region on July 27 flooded 4,100 houses, 7,410 acres of agricultural fields and numerous other public build-

ings, roads and railways, according to KCNA. The scale of casualties isn't known. KCNA recently quoted Kim as saying the flood caused a "casualty that cannot be allowed" but didn't elaborate. On Thursday, rival South Korea also offered humanitarian support to North Korea. Observers say North Korea will likely ignore or turn down the South Korean proposal, as animosities between the two countries are at one of their highest points in years. During a Friday visit to a military unit involved in operations to evacuate residents stranded by the floods, Kim called South Korea "scum" as he lambasted what he called "rubbish" South Korean media for allegedly tarnishing the North's image by exaggerating the death tolls from the floods. Kim didn't mention South Korea's offer to provide aid.

Albanians vote for new mayor of Greek town

Qeparo (AP)

Albanians in the southwestern town of Himara are to vote Sunday for a new mayor after their previous choice, a member of the country's ethnic Greek minority, was stripped of his title, convicted and imprisoned on vote-buying charges in what he and neighboring Greece have claimed was a politically motivated case. Voting started on Sunday with less than 7% of about 23,000 voters casting their ballots in the first two hours, according to the Central Election Commission, the country's governing election body. The process is normal and without any problems so far, it said. Some minor technical issues in some polling stations, with the election documentation, management or voters' identity cards have been reported by local media. Media also has reported that at least four buses have come from neighboring Greece with locally registered voters. Both rival

candidates have invested in bringing Albanian immigrants back to cast their ballots, a normal move in every election in the tiny Balkan country. The case against Fredis Beleris, a dual Albanian-Greek national who was elected to the European Parliament with Greece's governing conservative party in June, has strained relations between Tirana and Athens, with Greece threatening to hold up Albania's bid to join the European Union. Beleris, 51, was arrested two days before the May 14, 2023, municipal elections in Himara, a town populated by ethnic Greeks on what has been dubbed the Albanian Riviera, a coastal region with burgeoning tourist development that has been rife with property disputes. He was charged and ultimately convicted of offering about 40,000 Albanian leks (360 euros, \$390) to buy eight votes, and is serving a two-year prison sentence.

Intelligence and the Defence Ministry, the statement said. Meanwhile, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said that a woman was killed in a Ukrainian drone strike on an apartment building in the town of Shebekino early Sunday. Ukrainian drones also damaged several other buildings in the town, he said. Gladkov said eight civilians have been wounded in the region by Ukrainian shelling and dozens of drone strikes since the previous day. In the span of a month, Russia has experienced a surge in the tempo of Ukrainian drone barages and long-range attacks, targeting Russian military infrastructure, including airfields and oil depots. Analysts say such an intensification is needed if Ukraine is to degrade Russian capabilities.

Debby moving towards Florida with hurricane warnings

AP ■ MIAMI

A tropical depression strengthened into Tropical Storm Debby north of Cuba on Saturday and was predicted to become a hurricane as it moves through the Gulf of Mexico on a collision course with the Florida coast. The National Hurricane Centre said in an update posted at 5 am Sunday that Debby was located about 195 miles (315 kilometers) south-southwest of Tampa, Florida, and about 255 miles (410 kilometers) south-southwest of Cedar Key, Florida. The storm was moving north-northwest at 13 mph (20 kph) with maximum sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph). The storm was strengthening over the southeastern Gulf and expected to be a hurricane before making landfall in the Big Bend region of Florida, the hurricane centre said. Wind and thunderstorms have spread over a broad area includ-

ing southern Florida, the Florida Keys and the Bahamas. A hurricane warning and tropical storm warnings were in effect for sections of Florida's coast and a tropical storm watch was added for coastal Georgia in the latest advisory. Debby is likely to bring drenching rain and coastal flooding to much of Florida's Gulf Coast by Sunday night and predictions show the system could come ashore as a hurricane Monday and cross over northern Florida into the Atlantic Ocean. Forecasters warn it also could drop heavy rains over north Florida and the Atlantic coasts of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina early next week. Debby is the fourth named storm of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season after Tropical Storm Alberto, Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Chris, all of which formed in June. The National Hurricane Center in Miami predicted the system

will strengthen as it curves off the southwest Florida coast, where the water has been extremely warm. Intensification was expected to proceed more quickly later on Sunday. A hurricane warning was issued for parts of the Big Bend and the Florida Panhandle, while tropical storm warnings were posted for Florida's West Coast, the southern Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas. A tropical storm watch extended farther west into the Panhandle. A warning means storm conditions are expected within 36 hours, while a watch means they are possible within 48 hours. Tropical storms and hurricanes can trigger river flooding and overwhelm drainage systems and canals. Forecasters warned of 6 to 12 inches (150mm to 300 mm) of rain and up to 18 inches (450 mm) in isolated areas, which could create "locally considerable"

flash and urban flooding. Forecasters also warned of moderate flooding for some rivers along Florida's West Coast. Some of the heaviest rains could actually come next week along the Atlantic Coast from Jacksonville, Florida, through coastal regions of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The storm is expected to slow down after making landfall. "We could see a stall or a meandering motion around coastal portions of the southeastern United States," National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said in a Saturday briefing. "So that's going to exacerbate not just the rainfall risk, but also the potential for storm surge and some strong winds." Flat Florida is prone to flooding even on sunny days, and the storm was predicted to bring a surge of 2 to 4 feet (0.6 to 1.2 metres) along most of the

Gulf Coast, including Tampa Bay, with a storm tide of up to 7 feet (2.1 metres) north of there in the sparsely populated Big Bend region. Forecasters warned of "a danger of life-threatening storm surge inundation" in a region that includes Hernando Beach, Crystal River, Steinhatchee and Cedar Key. Officials in Citrus and Levy counties ordered a mandatory evacuation of coastal areas, while those in Hernando, Manatee, Pasco and Taylor counties called for voluntary evacuations. Shelters opened in those and some other counties. Citrus County Sheriff Mike Prendergast estimated 21,000 people live in his county's evacuation zone. Officials rescued 73 people from storm surge flooding during last year's Hurricane Idalia. Prendergast said by phone that he hopes not to have a repeat with Debbie. "After the storm surge does come in, we simply don't have

enough first responders in our agency and among the other first responders in the county to go in and rescue everybody that might need to be rescued," he said. Governor Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency for 61 of Florida's 67 counties, with the National Guard activating 3,000 guard members. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp made his own emergency proclamation on Saturday. The White House said federal and Florida officials were in touch and FEMA "pre-positioned" resources including water and food. In Tampa alone, officials gave out more than 30,000 sandbags to barricade against flooding. "We've got our stormwater drains cleared out. We've got our generators all checked and full. We're doing everything that we need to be prepared to face a tropical storm," Tampa Mayor Jane Castor said.

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RBI likely to keep interest rate unchanged at 6.5%, say experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to keep the key interest rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent on Thursday, and wait for more macroeconomic data before taking a call on rate cut in line with expectations, experts said.

The US Federal Reserve has decided to maintain a status quo on its interest rate for now and indicated there could be monetary policy easing in the coming months. Amid persisting inflationary pressures, RBI will be closely tracking the US monetary policy trajectory before changing its stance on interest rate, which has remained unchanged since February 2023, experts opined.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated interest rate of 6.5 per cent (repo rate).

The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is



scheduled for August 6 to 8. Das will announce the decision of the rate-setting panel on August 8 (Thursday). The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at same level in its last seven bi-monthly monetary policy reviews.

"We do expect a status-quo position to be adopted by RBI in the forthcoming credit policy. Inflation remains high even today at 5.1 per cent and

while this will come down numerically in the coming months, it will be more due to the base effect," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

He further said growth is on the stable path which means that the present interest rate situation does not militate against business.

"The RBI would rather wait and be sure that inflation is on the downward path on a durable basis before taking any action. While we do not expect any change in GDP

forecast, there is a possibility of new guidance on inflation numbers," Sabnavis said.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said that high growth in FY2024, combined with the inflation of 4.9 per cent in first quarter of the current fiscal are unlikely to shift the voting pattern of the four members who voted for a status quo in the June 2024 meeting towards a change in stance or rate cut in the August 2024 meeting itself.

"If the food inflation outlook turns favourable on the back of a normal distribution of rains in the second half of the monsoon season, and in the absence of global or domestic shocks, a stance change is possible in October 2024. This could be followed by a 25 bps rate cut each in December 2024 and February 2025, with an extended pause thereafter," she said.

Last month, Governor Das had said the question of change of stance on interest rate is quite premature given the gap between current inflation and 4 per cent target.

India seeks duty concession on cars, machinery, commercial vehicles in FTA with Sri Lanka

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is seeking customs duty concession on a number of goods including cars, commercial vehicles and machinery from Sri Lanka under a comprehensive free trade agreement (FTA), talks for which are underway, an official said.

India has also sought easier visa norms to further facilitate entry of professionals from here, the official said. The 14th round of talks between senior officials of India and Sri Lanka was concluded recently in Colombo.

Issues which came up for the talks included rules of origin, goods, services, and technical barriers for trade. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has sought removal of a quota on apparel exports to India. The island nation is also asking for duty concessions on tea and certain agricultural commodities.

The official said that as elections are announced in Sri Lanka, the next round of negotiations between the two countries will be held after that.

The two nations have already implemented a free trade agreement in goods and now



they are negotiating to expand the pact by including more goods and services.

The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) came into force in March 2000. It enhanced economic relations between the two countries by reducing tariffs on a wide range of goods.

Since the original ISFTA focused solely on goods, both countries have been negotiating for several years to expand it into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which would include services, investment, and other areas of economic cooperation.

Under the current FTA, India allowed limited imports of garments from Sri Lanka at a 50 per cent tariff (or customs

duty) concession for up to 8 million pieces annually, with a requirement that 6 million of these pieces use Indian fabric. Additionally, India offered a 50 per cent tariff concession on up to 15 million kg of tea from Sri Lanka each year.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that Sri Lanka may be seeking removal of the quota on garments, especially considering that India has allowed duty-free imports of garments from Bangladesh under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

"However agreeing to this request may not be easy for India as allowing duty free imports has led to a significant increase in

garment imports from Bangladesh, growing from USD 144.25 million in FY2014 to USD 739.06 million in FY2024, a cumulative growth of 412.34 per cent," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Sri Lanka has placed items like automobiles and electrical goods on its negative list, restricting their import. Since the implementation of the ISFTA, trade between the two countries has experienced fair growth. India's exports to Sri Lanka increased from USD 499.3 million in FY2000 to USD 4.17 billion in 2023-24, a cumulative growth of 735.2 per cent. Meanwhile, imports grew from USD 44.3 million to USD 1.4 billion over the same period.

In the last fiscal, India's key exports to Sri Lanka included petroleum products (USD 704 million), cotton (USD 260 million), pharmaceuticals (USD 255 million), refined sugar (USD 206 million), fabric (USD 223 million), machinery (USD 171 million), pepper (USD 90.9 million), car and motorcycle parts (USD 79.3 million), onions (USD 63.4 million), and pulses (USD 32 million).

FPIs invest ₹32,365 cr in equities in July on continued policy reforms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors infused Rs 32,365 crore into Indian equities in July on the back of expectation of continued policy reforms and sustained economic growth and better-than-expected earnings season.

However, they pulled Rs 1,027 crore from equities in the first two trading sessions of this month (August 1-2), data with the depositories showed. There has been a mixed trend with respect to FPI flows following the budget announcement on increase in capital gains tax on equity investments.

Going forward, developments in the US economy and markets will set the trend for FPI in August, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

"Weaker-than-expected employment data along with slowing economy has made it certain that the US Fed is expected to cut rates in September. The more important question here is the extent of cut. Currently, there is strong commentary getting built for maybe a 50 basis points rate cut in interest



rates," Vaibhav Porwal, Co-founder of Dezerv, said.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have made a net inflow of Rs 32,365 crore in equities in July. This came following an inflow Rs 26,565 crore in June driven by political stability and the sharp rebound in markets.

Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

The resurgence in FPI investment can be attributed to sustained economic

growth, government's focus on infrastructure development, better-than-expected earnings season that has improved corporate India's balance sheet, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Additionally, upward revisions in India's GDP forecast by IMF and ADB, and a slowdown in China, also works in India's favour, he added.

Apart from equities, FPIs invested Rs 22,363 crore in the debt market in July. This has pushed the debt tally to Rs 94,628 crore this year so far.

Mcap of eight of top-10 most valued firms slump ₹1.28 lakh cr; TCS, Infosys biggest laggards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued firms together lost Rs 1,28,913.5 crore in market valuation last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards, amid weak trend in equities.

The valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 37,971.83 crore to Rs 15,49,626.88 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys tanked Rs 23,811.88 crore to Rs 7,56,250.47 crore.

ITC's mcap dropped by Rs 16,619.51 crore to Rs 6,11,423.11 crore and that of State Bank of India slumped by Rs 13,431.54 crore to Rs 7,56,717.85 crore.

The valuation of Reliance Industries Limited declined by Rs 13,125.49 crore to Rs 20,28,695.57 crore.

Bharti Airtel's market valuation went lower by Rs 11,821.5 crore to Rs 8,50,389.88 crore and that of ICICI Bank diminished by Rs 7,843.75 crore to Rs 8,42,176.78 crore. The valuation of Hindustan Unilever dipped by Rs 4,288



crore to Rs 6,32,862.41 crore. However, the mcap of HDFC Bank jumped Rs 32,759.37 crore to Rs 12,63,601.40 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) soared Rs 1,075.25 crore to Rs 7,47,677.98 crore.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined by 350.77 points or 0.43 per cent.

In the ranking of the most valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one rank followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

Spending on outbound tourism to rise 11% annually to reach USD 55 bn in 2034: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spending on outbound tourism is expected to grow from USD 18.82 billion in 2024 to USD 55.39 billion in 2034, a report said.

The 'Navigating Horizons' report jointly prepared by Nangia NXT and Ficci said packaged tours still dominate the outbound market in India, with a share of 39.20 per cent in 2024, as there is a preference for choosing pre-planned tour packages from travel service providers due to greater convenience and customisation.

The report said that availability of Indian or vegetarian food options as well as awareness about niche tourism will help increase the number and frequency of Indians engaging in foreign travel in the coming years. The market has already seen robust growth with rising disposable incomes, an expanding middle class, systemic ease and flexibility in obtaining visas, and a desire for international experiences.

"Countries like Egypt, Azerbaijan and Georgia, among others, known for their rich history, cultural



heritage, natural beauty and unique topographies, are attracting more and more Indians to venture abroad. Such destinations are often more affordable as well," the report said.

With a rising urban and young population, the inclination towards exploring international destinations is expected to continue to grow. Demographic trends thus are likely to support growth in outbound tourism in the near future, it added.

"India's outbound tourism market is showing stellar growth and is projected to reach USD 18.82 billion in 2024. There have also been

measurable benefits to allied industries such as aviation and hospitality. The growth in the industry is bolstered by increased consumer spending, visa reforms, social media visibility and commercial marketing efforts," said Suraj Nangia, Head (Government and Public Sector Advisory), Nangia NXT.

With the Indian outbound market expected to grow at a CAGR of 11.4 per cent and reach USD 55.39 billion by 2034, the outlook is positive with coordinated efforts by all stakeholders propelling the industry forward, Nangia added.

After record profits, State-owned fuel retailers see profit slump in Q1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After reporting record profits, state-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), BPCL and HPCL posted up to 90 per cent slump in their June quarter earnings as margins fell and they booked under-recovery on the sale of domestic cooking gas LPG at government-controlled rates.

IOC, the nation's largest oil firm, reported 81 per cent drop in standalone net profit in April-June - the first quarter of current 2024-25 fiscal year - to Rs 2,643.18 crore as opposed to a profit of Rs 13,750.44 crore a year back, according to a company filing. Net profit also declined sequentially, when compared to an earning of Rs 11,570.82 crore in March quarter.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) posted 90 per cent drop in profit to Rs 633.94 crore as compared to an earning of Rs 6,765.50 crore in April-June 2023 and Rs 2,709.31 crore in the preceding March quarter. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) net profit dropped to Rs 2,841.55 crore in April-June from Rs 10,644.30 crore a year back and Rs 4,789.57 crore in January-March, its filing showed.



holding petrol and diesel prices despite a drop in cost. The price freeze was justified in the name of recovering losses they had suffered in the previous year when they did not raise retail prices despite a surge in cost.

The gains arising from the price freeze were eroded with petrol and diesel prices being cut by Rs 2 per litre each just before general elections and a fall in refining margins.

Also, the three had uncompensated LPG subsidy - IOC booking under-recovery of Rs 5,156.23 crore in April-June, BPCL Rs 2,015.10 crore and HPCL Rs 2,443.71 crore, according to the filings.

As per an order of the oil ministry, when market determined price (MDP) of LPG cylinders is less than its effective cost to customer (ECC), oil marketing companies (OMCs) have to

retain the difference in a separate buffer account for future adjustment. However, as on June 30, 2024, the three firms had a net negative buffer as the retail selling price was less than MDP.

The three retailers IOC, BPCL and HPCL had reported record profits totalling about Rs 81,000 crore in FY24 (2023-24), which was far more than their annual earnings of Rs 39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis years. This is because they resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that they needed to recoup losses incurred in the year, when they kept rates lower than cost.

IOC in 2023-24 posted a standalone net profit of Rs

39,618.84 crore compared to Rs 8,241.82 crore in 2022-23. While the company could argue that FY23 was impacted by the oil crisis, the FY24 earnings are higher than even the pre-crisis years - Rs 24,184 crore net profit in 2021-22 and Rs 21,836 crore in 2020-21.

BPCL posted a net profit of Rs 26,673.50 crore in FY24, higher than Rs 1,870.10 crore earnings in 2022-23 and Rs 8,788.73 crore in FY22.

HPCL's 2023-24 profit of Rs 14,693.83 crore is compared with a Rs 8,974.03 crore loss in FY23 and a profit of Rs 6,382.63 crore in 2021-22, according to the filings.

The losses in FY23 had led to the finance minister announcing Rs 30,000 crore equity infusion in the three firms. Mid-way through the year, that support was halved to Rs 15,000 crore. The support was to happen by way of equity infusion via a rights issue.

But after the record profits of 2023-24, the equity infusion plan has now been scrapped. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on February 1 last year, while presenting the annual Budget for the 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024), announced an equity infusion of Rs 30,000 crore in IOC, BPCL and HPCL to support the three state-owned firm's energy transition plans.

Rise in construction activities to propel India's cement demand by 7-8% in FY25: UltraTech

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Demand for cement is projected to grow 7-8 per cent in the current financial year, helped by an increase in construction activities throughout the country, UltraTech Cement said in its latest annual report.

To meet this increased demand, the cement industry is expected to add 35 - 40 million tonne capacity in the next fiscal, with 60-65 per cent concentrated in the eastern and southern regions, said the Aditya Birla group flagship firm.

Besides, this demand surge will translate into an increase in capacity utilisation of the industry to 72 per cent in FY25, which was around 68 per cent in FY23.

"In FY 2024-25, cement demand is projected to grow 7-8 per cent driven by an increase in construction activities throughout the country, spread across the infrastructure and housing sectors," said UltraTech.

There has been a "concerted focus" on the integrated and coordinated planning and implementation of infrastructure projects, adhering to the principles of PM Gati Shakti. Priority has been given to allocating expenditure towards vital sectors and additionally, the effectiveness of cash management has been enhanced through the timely release of resources



with the significant strengthening of brand equity in the marketplace, positions your company to harness these long-term growth opportunities effectively," he said adding UltraTech's growth trajectory mirrors India's growth story.

UltraTech is aggressively expanding its capacity and Birla said "our growth momentum has accelerated, enabling us to be at the forefront of India's infrastructure development."

While mentioning the capacity of UltraTech, Birla said its "scale and capacity footprint is unparalleled" which will further enable it "to service India's growing demand for cement across the country."

Last month, UltraTech announced acquiring a majority stake in South-based India Cements Ltd (ICL) and also over Rs 3,000 crore open offer to acquire 26 per cent shares of the company.

In FY24, UltraTech recorded net sales of Rs 69,810 crore and crossed the historic milestone of 150 MTPA (million tonne per annum) capacity.

"From the first cement unit that we commissioned in the early 1980s with one MTPA capacity to now the world's third largest cement company, outside of China, UltraTech's journey has been marked by scorching growth, ambitious bets and flawless execution," said Birla.

Zomato collected ₹ 83 cr in platform fee from customers till March

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food delivery aggregator Zomato, which began charging platform fee on orders from last August, collected Rs 83 crore through the new levy till March, the company's annual report has revealed.

Platform fee has been cited as one of the three key factors driving Zomato's Adjusted Revenue, which grew 27 per cent year-on-year to Rs 7,792 crore in FY24.

"Adjusted Revenue as a percentage of GOV (gross order value), continued to increase primarily due to increase in restaurant commission take-rates, improvement in ad monetization and introduction of platform fee from Q2FY24 onwards," the report stated.

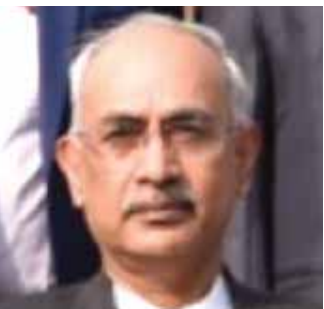
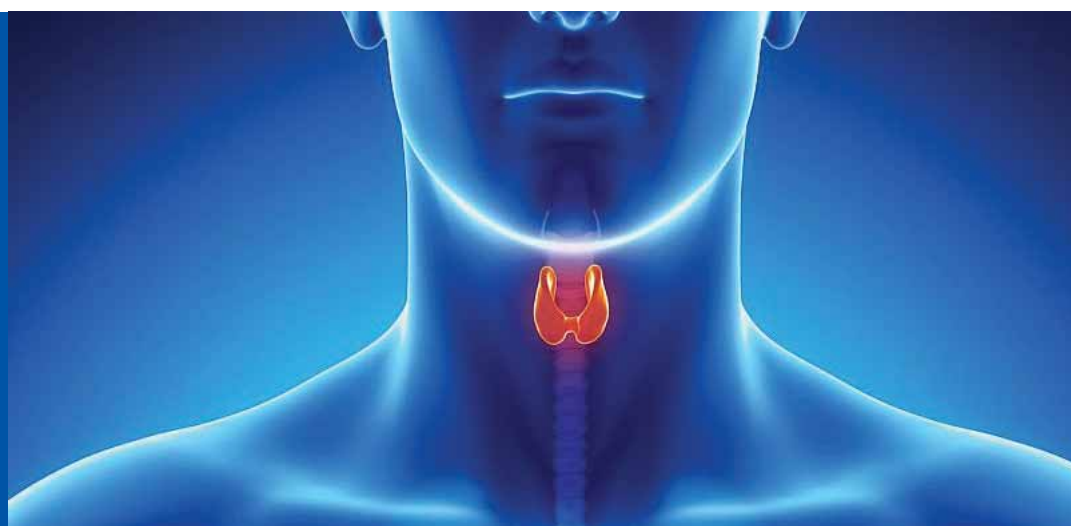
All of these factors more than compensated for the reduction in customer delivery charge per order due to the free delivery benefit available on Gold orders, it added.

Interestingly, most late night orders in the last fiscal year came from Delhi NCR, while most breakfast orders came from Bengaluru, Zomato shared in the report.

The food delivery aggregator began levying platform fee at Rs 2 per order last August, which has gradually been increased to Rs 6 now in key markets.

GOITRE

BENIGN GROWTH WITH POTENTIAL RISKS



DR SUNIL CHUMBER
 Professor and Head

Characterised by multiple growths in the thyroid gland, multinodular Goitre (MNG) is typically benign but carries a small cancer risk. Factors like family history and nodule features influence cancer risk, necessitating timely imaging and, blood investigations among others. In this second part of the series, **ARCHANA JYOTI** speaks with the team of AIIMS Delhi's Surgical Disciplines Department headed by **DR SUNIL CHUMBER** to get more insight into this

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS OF CANCER IN MNG

Are All Nodules Dangerous?

Not all thyroid nodules are harmful. In fact, most nodules in a multinodular goitre are benign, meaning they are not cancerous. However, there is a small chance that some nodules can be malignant (cancerous). Understanding this risk is crucial for proper monitoring and treatment. **Potential Complications of MNG:** While MNG itself is usually not life-threatening, it can cause several complications, including:

- **Compression Symptoms:** As the goitre grows, it can press against the windpipe (trachea) and esophagus (food pipe), leading to difficulty breathing and swallowing. This pressure can also cause a noticeable swelling in the neck.

- **Thyroid Dysfunction:** MNG can sometimes lead to hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid), where the gland produces too much thyroid hormone, causing symptoms like weight loss, rapid heartbeat, and nervousness. Less commonly, it can cause hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid), resulting in fatigue, weight gain, and depression.
- **Cancer Risk:** Although rare, some nodules in a multinodular goitre can become cancerous. Detecting these malignant nodules early is vital for



DR ANKITA SINGH
 Assistant Professor

effective treatment. **RECOGNISING RISK IN MNG** Several factors can increase the risk of thyroid cancer in



DR AJAY MOHAN
 Senior Resident

individuals with MNG: **Family History:** A family history of thyroid cancer or genetic conditions that predispose to cancer increases the risk.

Radiation Exposure: Previous exposure to radiation, particularly in childhood, can raise the likelihood of developing thyroid cancer. **Nodule Characteristics:** Nodules that are large, rapidly growing, or have certain features seen on ultrasound (such as irregular edges or microcalcifications) may be more suspicious for cancer.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND FOLLOW-UP

Regular check-ups and appropriate diagnostic tests are crucial for managing the risk of cancer in MNG. If you have a MNG, your doctor may recommend:

- **Periodic Ultrasound Exams:** To monitor nodule size and characteristics.
- **Thyroid Function Tests:** To ensure your thyroid is working properly.
- **Prompt Biopsy of Suspicious Nodules:** Early detection is key to successful treatment. While the majority of MNG are benign, it is important to be aware of the potential risks and complications, including the small chance of cancer. Regular check-ups, appropriate diagnostic tests, and timely treatment are key to managing this condition effectively. If you have a multinodular goitre or notice any unusual symptoms, consult your doctor for personalised advice and care. Staying informed and vigilant can help ensure the best possible outcomes.



RML Doctors Set New Benchmark in Plastic Surgery Arena

In a departure from traditional celebrations such as routine seminars and conferences, doctors at the central government-run Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital in Delhi embarked on a marathon of surgical prowess to mark World Plastic Surgery Day on July 15. The hospital's medical team, led by The Burn and Plastic Surgery Department, set out to demonstrate their expertise in an unprecedented 24-hour surgical session. From 9 am on July 15 to 9 am on July 16, a dedicated team of 17 surgeons tirelessly operated across 24 operating theatres, tackling a spectrum of complex cases ranging from congenital anomalies to severe trauma-induced deformities. Among their patients were individuals as young as two years old to adults up to 47 years of age, each requiring specialised care and surgical intervention. Of the two minors (two years of age) bardach's palatal repair and contracture release with skin grafting were done. The oldest male, a 47-year-old patient underwent lymphangioma excision plastic surgery. Dr. Ajay Shukla, Medical Superintendent of RML Hospital, said the initiative aimed to address postponed surgeries and urgent cases. He highlighted the department's commitment to maximising the number of procedures performed, ensuring that patients in need received timely care. Among the day's notable achievements was the successful hand transplantation, a feat requiring intricate precision and coordination of bones, tendons, muscles, blood vessels, and nerves, said Dr. MK Jha, the Additional Director at the Hospital. The surgical marathon also addressed severe facial injuries, correcting not only functional impairments but also restoring essential aspects of patients' appearance and self-esteem. Dr. Samik Bhattacharya, Head of the Department of Burns, Plastic, Maxillofacial, and Microvascular Surgery, underscored the significance of procedures like eyebrow corrections,



DR AJAY SHUKLA
 Medical Superintendent of RML Hospital, Delhi

The department's initiative was aimed to prioritise postponed surgeries and urgent cases, underscoring its commitment to timely treatment and increasing the number of procedures conducted

crucial for facial symmetry and expression. The marathon session also catered trauma-induced deformities, burns requiring skin grafts, and congenital anomalies such as cleft lip and palate. Dr. Sharma, a seasoned Professor within the department, emphasised the transformative impact of these surgeries, not only improving physical health but also enhancing overall quality of life for their patients. Dr. Neeraj Banerjee, head of Anesthesia, and the team headed by Dr. Rupesh conducted the OT as a mission. Dr. Banerjee said, that reconstructive surgery aims to restore the appearance and function of body parts affected by illness, injury, cancer, tumors, developmental issues, or congenital defects. Commenting on the unique approach, Dr. VK Tiwari, a renowned Plastic Surgeon and former Medical Superintendent of RML Hospital, currently serving as Dean of Hindu Rao College in Delhi, said such initiatives will give idea to more hospitals which will ultimately benefit the needy. "These surgeries often involve more complexity and longer healing times compared to cosmetic treatments," he said.



BLOOD INVESTIGATIONS

Blood investigations in multinodular goitre form an important part of evaluation. It helps understand the cause of the goitre and the status of thyroid hormone production - increased, normal or decreased. It includes the following:

- TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) - usually remains normal but can be reduced in toxic MNG (increased secretion of thyroxine by thyroid gland) and increased if MNG is associated with hypothyroidism (decreased thyroxine secretion)
 - Free T4
 - Free T3
- Both usually remain normal, increased in toxic goitre, can be decreased in goitres with hypothyroidism.



DR CATHERINE HALAM
 Senior Resident

investigate the functional status of a patient with a simple diffuse goitre or multinodular goitre may differ depending on the geographic areas of the world. Although serum thyroglobulin correlates with the iodine status and the size of the enlarged thyroid gland, it has little or no value in diagnosis of goitre.



DR KAMAL KATARIA
 Additional professor

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In treating a condition like MNG, doctors often rely on different imaging methods to get a clear picture of what's happening in the thyroid gland. Here's a breakdown of the main ones used:

- **Ultrasound (US):** This is the first imaging investigation to be done in anyone with MNG. It gives a black and white picture of the thyroid gland and allows your doctor to see the size and number of nodules, and even their makeup - whether they're solid, fluid-filled, or a mix of both. Ultrasound images also help identify suspicious features in the nodules that might indicate cancer risk.
- **Computed Tomography (CT):** CT scans provide more detailed images than ultrasound, but is not required for all cases of MNG. Your doctor will ask for this only if required like if the goiter is large, or pressing on other organs, and if cancer is suspected. In these situations, CT scans provide a closer look at the thyroid and nearby

IMAGING MODALITIES



DR. DEVENDER
 Assistant Professor

structures to help plan treatment. **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** This is another way to get detailed images of the thyroid and surrounding areas. Again, it is not performed for all patients and has similar indications as for CT scan and is especially useful when doctors suspect the goiter is growing into other tissues, or if a patient is allergic to dye used in CT scans. **Thyroid Scintigraphy:** This is a different type of scan in which a special kind of dye ("radioactive tracer") is



DR AAYUSH NAGPAL
 Junior Resident

used to take images of the thyroid. It shows if nodules are "hot" or "cold", which is, whether they are actively working - to produce thyroxine (hot), or not (cold). Hot nodules usually aren't cancerous, but cold ones might need further checking. Each imaging method has its pros and cons, but your doctor often will use a mix of them to get the full picture of what's going on with the thyroid. This helps them make the best decisions about treatment and keep an eye out for any potential problems. (To be concluded)

Plastic Surgery: Transforming Lives and Confidence

DR SANJAY PARASHAR and DR KRITI LOHIA delve into the various benefits of plastic surgery, emphasising its role in improving physical appearance, correcting congenital deformities, boosting self-esteem, and fostering mental well-being for individuals facing personal challenges

Plastic surgery is a subspecialty that focuses on the restoration, reconstruction, or enhancement of the human body and it has evolved significantly over the years. It comprises two broad specialties- Aesthetic surgery, which was once primarily associated with celebrities for beauty enhancements, and Reconstructive surgery, which encompasses a wide range of procedures that significantly impact an individual's life.

ENHANCING PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

One of the most immediate benefits of plastic surgery is the enhancement of physical appearance. Procedures such as rhinoplasty (nose reshaping), breast

augmentation, liposuction, and hair transplantation significantly alter not only a person's looks but also help align their external appearance with their inner self-image. This alignment is like a bullet train to a substantial boost in self-esteem. When individuals feel happy about their appearance, they most definitely experience increased self-confidence, which positively influences various aspects of not only their own lives, from personal relationships to professional endeavors but also a trickle-down effect on people in their circles. For instance, a person who has spent the majority of their life feeling self-conscious about a prominent nasal hump or unbalanced breasts



DR SANJAY PARASHAR

may find that correcting these issues through plastic surgery eliminates a significant source of insecurity. Other skin issues like vitiligo, acne, scars, burns, moles, warts, cysts, mulberry birthmarks, dark spots, etc can be handled through minimally invasive aesthetic dermatology and improve the looks significantly. These procedures become the first step towards their newfound



DR KRITI LOHIA

confidence, which encourages them to engage more freely in social situations, pursue career opportunities with greater vigor, and generally approach life with a more positive outlook. **CORRECTING CONGENITAL DEFORMITIES** Plastic surgery also has a profound impact on individuals who are born

with congenital deformities such as cleft lip and palate, craniosynostosis (premature fusion of skull bones), and syndactyly (webbed fingers) that are effectively treated through reconstructive surgery. These congenital issues affect not only their physical appearance but also lead to functional impairments and social stigma. Cleft lip and palate, for example, are among the most common congenital deformities, affecting approximately 1 in 700 babies worldwide. These conditions cause difficulties in feeding, speech, and hearing, and often result in social challenges due to visible facial differences. Reconstructive surgery corrects these deformities,

significantly improving an individual's quality of life or in this case, a child. When you look beyond just the physical benefits, children and adults who undergo successful corrective surgery, time and again report higher self-esteem and better social integration, as they no longer feel defined by their appearance. It is often argued that plastic surgery allowed them to redefine themselves. **ADDRESSING TRAUMATIC INJURIES** Traumatic injuries, such as those sustained in accidents or due to violence, can leave individuals with severe disfigurements that impact their physical and emotional well-being. Reconstructive

plastic surgery repairs damage caused by burns, fractures, and other traumatic injuries, restoring both function and appearance. Consider the case of a burn victim who has suffered extensive facial and body burns. These resulting scars can be physically debilitating and emotionally harrowing. Through skin grafts, tissue expansion, regenerative therapies, and other reconstructive techniques, plastic surgeons and trained dermatologists significantly reduce the appearance of these scars and improve the functionality of affected areas. The psychological impact of such transformations is both immense and priceless.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

The psychological benefits of plastic surgery extend beyond improved self-esteem. Individuals frequently report a reduction in their anxiety and depression following these procedures. This is particularly true for those who have lived with long-term dissatisfaction or emotional distress related to their appearance. By addressing their concerns, plastic surgery helps alleviate negative emotions and promotes mental well-being. (Dr Sanjay Parashar is a well-known plastic surgeon in Dubai and Dr Kriti Lohia is an Aesthetic Dermatologist and Dermato-surgeon. They are co-founders of 'Aesthetics redefined by Cocoon', Gurgaon)

JULIEN SHOCKS SHA'CARRI, WINS WOMEN'S 100 METRE GOLD, BRINGS 1ST OLYMPIC MEDAL TO SAINT LUCIA

AP ■ SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE

Sha'Carri Richardson's comeback story hit a brick wall when Julien Alfred romped in the rain to the 100-meter title in 10.72 seconds to bring the first-ever Olympic medal to her island country of Saint Lucia.

Racing one lane to the left of Richardson, and with water from a fast-moving storm puddling on the purple track in the Stade de France, Alfred got off to a fantastic start, then powered through the rain and beat Richardson by .15 seconds - about three body lengths on Saturday. It was the biggest margin in the women's Olympic 100 since 2008.

Richardson' training partner, American Melissa Jefferson,



finished third in 10.92 seconds. All week long, the field seemed to be clearing for Richardson, the reigning world champion who was making her Olympic debut after a positive test for marijuana cost her a chance to race three years ago in Tokyo. When Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce abruptly withdrew from the semifinal, which went off about 90 minutes before the gold-medal race, the entire Jamaican team that had swept the podium in Tokyo was out of the 100.

One island's loss is another's gain. The strongest contender left was Alfred, who hails from the Eastern Caribbean island with a population of around

180,000. She was the only Olympic entrant besides Richardson to break 10.8 this year - and when she and Richardson lined up next to each other in the semifinals, it was a preview of things to come.

Alfred won that race by .05, then lined up next to Richardson again for the final and tripled that margin. One of the most anticipated races of the Olympic track meet was never a contest.

Alfred had two steps on the entire field at the 40-meter mark, while Richardson, whose starts have been an issue at times this summer, labored to get to full speed.

The American, her arms pumping wide in Lane 7, looked to be making up a bit of ground when Alfred leaned

BADMINTON AT OLYMPICS Sen falls to Axelsen in semis, to play bronze-medal playoff

PTI ■ PARIS

India's dream of a first-ever Olympic gold in badminton will remain unfulfilled after Lakshya Sen suffered a straight-game defeat to reigning Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen in the men's singles semifinals at the Paris Games here on Sunday.

The 22-year-old from Almor, a 2021 World Championships bronze medal, squandered a three-point advantage in the first game and a 7-0 lead in the second to surrender 20-22 14-21 to the two-time world champion Axelsen in a 54-minute semifinal clash.

Sen will have another chance to become the first Indian male shuttler to win an Olympic medal when he meets Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia in the bronze medal playoff. India have never won a Olympic gold medal in bad-



minton with PV Sindhu claiming a silver and bronze at the Rio and Tokyo Olympics and Saina Nehwal securing a bronze in London Games.



Lovlina outwitted in QF; India's boxing campaign ends

PTI ■ PARIS

India's boxing campaign at the ongoing Olympics came to a medal-less end after Tokyo edition bronze-winner Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) bowed out following a hard-fought quarterfinal loss to China's Li Qian in the women's competition here on Sunday.

Borgohain, the reigning world champion in the category, went down 1-4 to the Tokyo Games silver-winning 34-year-old in a messy contest during which both the boxers were repeatedly cautioned for clinching and holding.

The 26-year-old's loss ended India's boxing campaign in the Olympics after Nishant Dev was ousted from the men's 71kg quarterfinals on Saturday night, also a close contest.

A six-strong boxing contingent, comprising four women and two men, was representing the country in the Games. Out of these, four had crashed out in the preliminary stage itself.

It was a pacy start to the proceedings as Borgohain and Qian quickly got into a tangle.

However, none of the boxers seemed willing to launch the first attack.

The holding and clinching started pretty early in the bout and the referee had to repeatedly step in to separate the two old foes.

Qian seemed determined while Borgohain came across the more animated of the two early on. The Chinese connected some clean combination punches and a left hook towards the end of the first round. She was particularly impressive before she took a 3-2 lead in the contest.

The second round didn't start any different but Qian was more purposeful in her approach. Her right straights were on target while Borgohain was cautioned twice for excessive holding.

It was once again 3-2 in favour of Qian but with a different set of judges scoring in her favour this time, she only had a slender one-point lead on one card, while the remaining four were tied.

The holding and clinching continued in the third round too and both the women seemed a bit drained.

However, Qian showed great presence of mind throughout to keep Borgohain at a distance. Borgohain was not up to it when it came to controlling the pace of the bout and repeatedly took hits on counter-attacks.

The Assamese had fought Qian in the Asian Games final last year and gone down 0-5. She later beat Qian in the semifinals of the world championship semifinal in 2023.

But more recently, she was bested by the veteran in a pre-Olympic tournament in Czechia in June.

Boxer Nishant's Olympic debut ends in heartbreak with quarterfinal loss

PTI ■ PARIS

Nishant Dev's maiden Olympic campaign ended in heartbreak after a devastating split verdict defeat to Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez in the men's 71kg quarterfinal here on Saturday.

Leading after the first round, the 23-year-old world championship bronze medallist Indian right hook on Nishant's face, that forced the referee to give the Indian a standing count, followed by a left in the dying minutes. But the Indian's dom-

inant display ensured he had the bragging rights. Nishant continued to unleash a range of punches, including a combination of hooks, while Alvarez too topped his game, connecting some vital blows. However, Nishant looked the stronger of the two as he picked the Mexican's shots.

But the judges favoured the Mexican 3-2 as Alvarez and Nishant entered the final three minutes by the narrowest of margins, leading on one card. Alvarez landed a combination of punches to start the final round on an aggressive note. The Mexican showed more urgency as he landed an uppercut. The Indian, on the other hand, looked completely spent and while he tried to throw punches he was slow.



Alvarez acknowledged that the bout was a tough one. "It was a tough bout, played with heart and mind. I hit on his body to open up for upper cuts. I had lost to him in 2021 world Championships. I have a lot of respect for him," Alvarez said.

"He is very technically sound boxer. My coaches asked me to play smart after I lost the first round."

Nishant is the fifth Indian boxer to exit the Olympic Games.

Katie Ledecky swims into history with 800 freestyle victory at Paris Olympics

AP ■ NANTERRE (FRANCE)

Katie Ledecky capped another stellar Olympics by becoming only the second swimmer to win an event at four straight Summer Games, holding off Ariarne Titmus to win the 800-meter freestyle Saturday night.

It was Ledecky's second gold medal in Paris and ninth of her remarkable career, which marked another milestone. She became only the sixth Olympian to reach that figure, joining swimmer Mark Spitz, track star Carl Lewis, Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina and Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi in a tie for second place.

Ukraine wins its first gold medal of Paris Olympics in women's team saber fencing

AP ■ PARIS

Ukraine has won its first gold medal of the Paris Olympics by defeating South Korea in the final of the women's team saber fencing on Saturday.

The Ukrainian team recovered from six points down to beat South Korea 45-42 on 22 points from individual bronze medalist Olga Kharlan. She came in for the final leg of the bout with her team at 40-37 down and went 8-2 to win.

Ukraine had two medals before Saturday's final; a silver in shooting from Serhiy Kulish and the bronze that Kharlan won Monday in women's saber. That was a particularly emotional moment for Kharlan, a year after she was disqualified



at the world championships for refusing to shake the hand of a Russian fencer, something which briefly put her Olympic qualification in jeopardy. It was an incident that highlighted the tension over whether to allow Russian athletes to keep competing following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Viktorija, a former UCF rower with epilepsy, wins Lithuania's first medal in Paris Olympics

AP ■ VAIRES-SUR-MARNE, FRANCE

A former University of Central Florida rower with epilepsy who won Lithuania's first medal at the Paris Olympics on Saturday hopes her achievement will help motivate others with the disorder.

Viktorija Senkute, who attended the Florida college from 2015-18, won the bronze medal in the women's singles class. It was also the first medal for any Baltic country at the 2024 Paris Games.

"This is insane, I still feel like I'm dreaming," Senkute said. "It's a very big day for Lithuania, for all Baltic countries and for UCF. Everybody from UCF was watching and cheering, everybody from Lithuania. This unites so many



countries, so many people." Senkute said she wants to use her Olympic success to help show that people with epilepsy can live their lives normally and compete at a high level.

"It means nothing to me. It's not a limitation at all," she said.

"People who have epilepsy are normal, regular people and they win Olympic medals. So I really hope that this will be a motivation for everyone who at some point people didn't believe in them. I kept doing what I want, what I love. And this being rowing. And this led to fulfilling my dreams."

The 28-year-old Senkute was diagnosed with epilepsy, which causes seizures, when she was 15 and has to take medication daily to keep it under control. "I take medication every morning and afternoon, but it's just routine discipline," she said.

"I'm just taking it with my vitamins, so I don't even notice. It's really a part of my life, but it gives no limitations."

UCF's rowing team won four American Athletic Conference championships while Senkute was on the team.

Won't retire until I get Olympic medal: Deepika

PTI ■ PARIS

She has flattered to deceive for four straight Olympics but multiple World Cup medal winning archer Deepika Kumari has vowed not to quit unless she ends up on podium which she feels could be Los Angeles in four years' time. For Deepika, it has always been a case of not being able to display enough temperament in pressure situation at the grandest stage.

"Obviously, I want to play more in the future and will continue my game," Deepika told PTI in an exclusive interaction at the India House here.

"I really want to win an Olympic

medal, and I won't quit until I achieve that. I'll train harder and come back strongly," added Deepika, who has won every international medal except for an Olympic yellow metal.

"Firstly, I will present myself more strongly. There are many things, like quick shooting, that I need to learn a bit more about, and it's very important to train myself accordingly. "What I learned from the Olympics is that late shooting doesn't work; you have no room to make big mistakes, so you have to control that. I will learn that from here," she said in hindsight.

Deepika, 30, appeared in her fourth consecutive Olympics in



Paris, making a remarkable comeback after becoming a mother for the first time in December 2022, when she gave birth to her daughter. After topping the national selection trials, Deepika went on to

win an individual gold at the Shanghai World Cup in April. Back at her favorite venue, where she had won multiple World Cup medals, Olympic pressure was evident as she had her worst ranking round ever at

the Games. She qualified for the main draw as the 23rd seed, ranking lower than fellow Indian debutants Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur. Her score of 658 was notably 36 points below that of Korean top seed and eventual gold medalist Lim Sihyeon.

She was the weakest link in the team event, as they succumbed to the Netherlands in their opening round match without much of a fight.

However, Deepika was not ready to give up as she made a splendid comeback in the individual category, working her way up to the quarterfinals with three tough wins.

Pitted against Korean archer Nam Suhyeon, whom she had defeated in the semifinal of the Shanghai World Cup, Deepika took a two-set lead but could not convert another, shooting into the 7-point red ring as the Korean teenager rallied to a 6-4 win.

Nam finished with a silver, losing to her more favored teammate Lim.

Looking back at the result, Deepika said: "I was not nervous. I was playing strongly, but one shot (the 7-point) really went wrong, and that was the reason I lost the match. Overall, it was a good experience."

Salukvadze, only woman to compete at 10 Olympics, says she's retiring. For good this time

AP ■ CHATEAUROUX, FRANCE

After 10 Olympics and 36 years, Nino Salukvadze says she's finally done.

The pistol shooter from Georgia has been ever-present at the Summer Olympics since Seoul in 1988, when she competed for what was still the Soviet Union. At the 2024 Paris Olympics, she became the first female athlete to compete at the Games 10 times.

In that time, the 55-year-old has seen the Games become bigger and more professionalized and says the competition

is tougher than ever.

Salukvadze considered retiring after her first Olympics, after she'd won gold and silver medals as a 19-year-old. She nearly walked away in the 1990s, when she struggled to support her family financially in newly independent Georgia. She announced her retirement after the Tokyo Games in 2021.

This time, though, she says she is done "for sure."

Coming to the Paris Olympics was about honoring her father, Vakhtang, who was also her coach. After the pandemic-

delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021, he talked her out of retirement for one last push.

"He was my mentor not only in sports, but also in life. He was a wise man," she told The Associated Press in the city of Chateauroux, near the Olympic shooting range, on Friday after her last competition.

"He never asked for anything in his life. We had the kind of relationship where we understood each other just with our eyes," Salukvadze said.

"If you quit sports, you can't come back. Just try," she recalled her father saying. "It



was the only favor he asked me for his whole life. I thought he perhaps wouldn't be able to ask

again. I gathered all my strength, for his sake." Salukvadze's father died earlier

this year at the age of 93, but he lived to see his daughter qualify for a spot for Georgia. From her 10 Olympics, Salukvadze has three medals: one gold, one silver and one bronze. In Paris, she placed 38th in the 10-meter air pistol event and 40th in the 25-meter pistol, meaning she didn't reach a televised final.

Salukvadze's last Olympic medal - and her first for an independent Georgia - was in Beijing in 2008. At the time, Georgia was at war with neighboring Russia. Salukvadze won bronze and embraced Russian

silver medalist Natalia Paderina on the podium in what was widely seen as a gesture for peace.

Salukvadze may not be totally done with the Olympics yet. She's a coach at her own shooting club back home in Georgia and is a vice president of the national Olympic committee.

Salukvadze's record 10th Olympic appearance was recognized by the International Olympic Committee.

"IOC President Thomas Bach has sent his congratulations to Nino Salukvadze in a letter and

we understand that the International Shooting Sport Federation is holding an event to honor this achievement," the IOC told the AP in an emailed statement.

Even after 36 years, nothing quite matches the feeling of winning an Olympic gold medal as a teenager back in 1988.

"When I won at the Olympics and stood on the podium, it was indescribable," she said. Even now, Salukvadze added, "I can evoke these feelings in myself in the same way, feel it just the same."