



OPINION 6 DELHI SINKS IN CESSPOOL OF GOVERNMENT APATHY

WORLD 9 'CHINA BEHIND 2021 CYBERATTACK ON GOVT AGENCY'

MONEY 10 STOCK MARKETS RISE FOR 4TH DAY

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SINDHU STORMS INTO OLYMPICS SINGLES PRE-QUARTERFINALS 11 SPORTS

## CM refutes Shah's alert claim on Wayanad tragedy



Rescue operation underway following landslides triggered by heavy rain in the hilly areas of Wayanad district, on Wednesday PTI

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI



Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday asserted that advance warnings on heavy rainfall in Kerala were issued to the State Government at least a week ahead of the deadly landslides in Wayanad that have left a trail of death and destruction. Meanwhile, the Kerala Government alleged the Central Government agencies like Meteorological Department, Geological Survey of India failed miserably in issuing early warnings about the rainfall and landslides that struck the Wayanad district. "On July 18, it was forecast that Kerala's western coast

would experience above-normal rainfall. On July 25, it was forecast that there would be heavy rain. On July 23 itself, eight teams of the NDRF were sent to the region," Shah said. He informed Parliament that the Centre had sent eight teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) on July 23 to assist the Kerala Government in the

eventuality of any disaster. "When the landslides struck Wayanad, the NDRF teams got the green signal from the Collector and relief operations were launched immediately," the Home Minister said. Shah said about six years ago, experts from IIT-Delhi had suggested relocating people from the landslide-affected areas, but their advice was not heeded to. Even as the death toll in Tuesday's massive landslides crossed the 200 mark by Wednesday evening, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, reacted to Shah's statement. "This is not the time for blame game. There are 91 people undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the district while 240 persons are

missing. My Government has put 8,107 people in 82 relief camps in the district. The Meteorological Department had not issued any red alert about the rainfall or landslides. The red alert was issued by the GSI at 6 am on Tuesday hours after the landslide at Mundakkai. The landslides occurred at 2 am and 4.30 am on Tuesday. The Central Water Commission, which is the agency responsible for issuing flood warning, did not issue any such warning," alleged Vijayan. He said though the Central agencies had forecast 404 mm rainfall for a period of 48 hours, the region recorded 572 mm rainfall during the period.

Continued on Page 8

## Crackdown on coaching centres mooted in Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After the tragic death of three IAS aspirants by drowning in the basement of Rau's IAS study centre in Old Rajinder Nagar area, the Delhi Government is planning to relocate coaching centres in Narela and Rohini and develop it as an education hub. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has formed a high-level committee headed by Chief Secretary to address issues related to the regulation of coaching centres. The committee will prepare an action plan for shifting coaching institutes from various places to well-planned areas. Amid the IAS aspirants' protest for fourth day in a row against civic authorities and 'coaching mafia' near the Rau's coaching centre, braving scorching heat with their Mains exams less than one and a half months away, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Additional Commissioner Tariq Thomas on Wednesday admitted the civic body's responsibility in the death of three students, stating that there are serious structural issues, which need to be addressed. Interacting with the protesting students at UPSC coaching hub in old Rajinder Nagar, the senior civic body official said there can be no



A police personnel interacts with students during a protest over the deaths of three civil services aspirants due to drowning at a coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar area, in New Delhi, on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

excuses for the incident and the agency should have done its duty better. Students who started their indefinite hunger strike on Tuesday ended it on Wednesday morning after their meeting with Thomas. Saxena has directed the Delhi Police Commissioner for cracking down on coaching institutes which take exorbitant rentals in cash transactions to evade tax. Besides, the Lieutenant Governor has directed that a portal be established, with Aadhar based log-in credentials of all coaching institutes in the city and the enrolled students. This would help create a transparent database which would help the Government in shaping the policy framework from time to time.

Continued on Page 8



## Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh killed in Iran

AP ■ BEIRUT

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed by a pre-dawn airstrike in the Iranian capital on Wednesday, Iran and the militant group said, blaming Israel for a shock assassination that risks escalating the conflict even as the US and other nations were scrambling to prevent an all-out regional war. Iran's supreme leader vowed revenge against Israel. There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has pledged to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's October 7 attack on southern Israel. The strike came just after Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iran's new president in Tehran — and only hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital Beirut. The assassination of Hamas' top political leader was potentially explosive amid the region's volatile, intertwined conflicts — because of its target, its timing and the decision to carry it out in Tehran. Detailed report on Page 9

## Students' safety guidelines issued

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government issued guidelines for safety and security of school students in the aftermath of the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre flooding incident, which claimed the lives of three UPSC aspirants. According to the guidelines issued by the Directorate of Education (DoE), the schools — both private and government run — have to follow the provisions of Master Plan for Delhi, 2021 regarding use of basement in public buildings. Continued on Page 8

## Khedkar's IAS career over

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Wednesday cancelled a trainee Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Puja Manorama Dilip Khedkar's candidature in the 2022 Civil Services Examination (CSE) and barred her from appearing for any future examinations of the commission, after finding she had violated rules by appearing for the exam more times than what was allowed.

It said her provisional candidature for the CSE-2022 (Civil Services Examination-2022) has been "cancelled" and she has also been "debarred permanently" from all future UPSC examinations or selections. The UPSC had issued Khedkar a show-cause notice on July 18 for "fraudulently availing attempts beyond the permissible limit provided for in the Examination Rules by faking her identity". She was asked to submit her response to the notice by July 25, but she asked for further time till August 4. The UPSC allowed her till

## UPSC gets new chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday appointed former Health Secretary Preeti Sudan chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission after Manoj Soni resigned from the UPSC's top post early this month, according to an official order. Sudan, currently a member of the UPSC, will take charge on Thursday. A 1983-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre, Sudan has served in various capacities.

3.30 pm on July 30 to make her submissions. According to a statement, the UPSC said it has examined the available records carefully and found her guilty of acting in contravention of the provisions of the CSE-2022 Rules. It said the 34-year-old was told to submit her response to the notice by July 25, but she requested for time till August 4. The UPSC granted her time till July 30 and made it clear that it was the "final opportunity" and "no further extension in time" would be allowed. She was also told that if no response is received by the deadline, UPSC would take action. "Despite extension in time allowed to her, she failed to submit her explanation within the prescribed time," the panel has said in the statement. "The UPSC has examined the available records carefully and found her guilty of acting in contravention of the provisions of the CSE-2022 Rules. Her provisional candidature for the CSE-2022 has been cancelled and she has also been debarred permanently from all the future Examinations/Selections of the UPSC," it said.



## Remove 18% GST on life, medical insurance: Gadkari to FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has requested Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to withdraw the 18 per cent goods and services tax (GST) on life and medical insurance premiums. In his letter to the Finance Minister, Gadkari raised concerns of the Nagpur Division Life Insurance Corporation Employees Union, which had submitted to him a memorandum regarding the issues of the insurance industry. Referring to the memo, the Minister said, "Levying GST on life insurance premiums amounts to levying tax on the

uncertainties of life. The Union feels that the person who covers the risk of life's uncertainties to give protection to the family should not be levied tax on the premium to purchase cover against this risk." Further, he said the main issue raised by the Union is related to the withdrawal of GST on life and medical insurance premiums. Both life insurance and medical insurance premiums are subject to an 18 per cent GST. "In view of the above, you are requested to consider the suggestion of withdrawal of GST on life and medical insurance premium on priority as it becomes cumbersome for senior citizens as per rules with due verification," he said.

## Caste jibe rocks Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi arrives for the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting, at the Parliament House in New Delhi, on Wednesday PTI

Ruling party BJP and Opposition members engaged in a verbal duel on Wednesday leading to adjournments of Parliament over the BJP MP Anurag Thakur's remarks a day earlier in the Lok Sabha during his attack on Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi when the former stated "whose caste is not known talks about caste census". While Congress has moved a Privilege Motion against Thakur and the Prime Minister claiming that Narendra Modi encouraged a "serious breach of parliamentary privilege" by sharing Thakur's speech on social media, Opposition MPs slammed Thakur's speech as an insult to Dalits, Adivasis and OBCs. As the row erupted in Parliament, the Congress said the Gandhi family's caste is martyrdom but the BJP-RSS will never understand that. Upon protests from the Opposition benches, the Chair, Jagadambika Pal, assured MPs that the comments will be expunged, he said. The BJP flayed the Congress for escalating the caste row and said what's wrong in asking the

Leader of Opposition's caste when he can ask about the castes of others, including the Government officials, judges and even journalists. In the same vein, however, the ruling party clarified that Anurag did not ask about Rahul's caste while speaking on the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha and wondered why the Leader of Opposition took an offence and called it an insult to him when none of the other members raised any objection to the former Union Minister's remarks. Congress MP Charanjit Singh Channi submitted a notice to move a Privilege Motion against Modi for having posted

on social media a video that allegedly contained portions of remarks made by Anurag that were expunged from the proceedings of the House by the Chair. Channi, a Dalit MP of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, submitted a notice to Speaker Om Birla seeking to move a Privilege Motion under Rule 222 of the Rules of Procedure against the Prime Minister. Samajwadi Party MP Dharmendra Yadav said his party has been saying BJP people have no place in their hearts for SCs, STs, OBCs and Muslims. RJD's Manoj Jha said Thakur had given proof of his feudal mindset.

## Rain brings Delhi, NCR to a halt

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI



A woman being assisted by a police official while wading through a waterlogged road during rain near Pusa Road area, in New Delhi, on Wednesday PTI

Sudden rain brought the National Capital and adjoining regions, including Noida and Ghaziabad, to a standstill on Wednesday evening with water woes, traffic congestion and major power cuts albeit there was respite for the residents who had been reeling for days from the muggy and sweltering weather due to high humid levels in the city. While several areas suffered power cuts, loadshedding, at least 10 flights were diverted from the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport between 7.30 pm and 8 pm. The city has been put on a red alert and the National Flash Flood Guidance Bulletin has included Delhi in its list of 'areas of concern'.

Due to the moderate to heavy rain lashing whole of Delhi and its adjoining areas of Noida, Gurugram and Ghaziabad, commuters witnessed traffic snarls on large stretches of road while

going back to their homes from work due to waterlogging in several places including Chirag Delhi, Saket, Sainik Farms, Qutub Minar metro station, Chatta Rail Chowk, Minto

Bridge, ITO, Janpath, Karol Bagh, Gaffar Market, Nauroji Nagar, Pant Marg, Nigam Bodh Ghat, Connaught Place and Mayur Vihar. Rain on Saturday evening led to flooding in the basement of the Rau's coaching centre which claimed the life of three IAS aspirants, rain on Wednesday caused waterlogging yet again outside the institute. Local MLA Durgesh Pathak reached the site to make sure that the water is pumped out of the low-lying area. Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena also took to social media and said, "Have cautioned all officers to remain alert in light of the ongoing heavy downpour in Delhi. Apart from ensuring minimum inconvenience to people,

they are advised to specifically address issues at sites prone to waterlogging, including coaching centres." The Delhi Traffic Police issued an advisory to the commuters in a series of social media post, "Traffic is affected in the carriageway from Moolchand towards Chirag Delhi due to water logging at Chirag Delhi. Kindly plan your journey accordingly," it said. It also advised to plan one's journey keeping in mind the waterlogging at places, including Railway Under Bridge, Ram Bagh Road, Azad Market, and Anuvrat Marg. Residents in several parts of the city also witnessed power cuts including Sainik Farms, Patel Chowk, Kalkaji and Laxmi Nagar among others. Continued on Page 8

## Lord Shiva devotees



Kanwariyas or Lord Shiva devotees carry holy water during the 'Kanwar Yatra' in the month of 'Shravan', in New Delhi, on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer



# Undertrials found resting in chambers of their counsel

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
About 40 undertrials were allegedly found resting in the chambers of their counsel and they did not report to the in-charge assigned for their counting in the court where they had for hearing of their cases in the civil and sessions court in Wazirganj on Wednesday. The irregularity surfaced after the office-bearers of the Central Bara Association (CBA) conducted a surprise check and raised an alarm, and informed the chief judicial magistrate, joint director prosecution and other officials about it around 6 pm on Wednesday. CBA vice-president Ashutosh

Singh Chauhan said the bara association got a complaint from fellow advocates about the irregularities. "We were told by fellow advocates that the jail inmates coming to court for appearing in hearings go to the chambers of their counsel/advocate where they take rest and sometimes they are seen operating laptops and computers in the chamber of their counsel," Chauhan said. He said the Central Bara Association had complained about it to the joint director prosecution and other officials concerned in the past but no action was taken. "Around 5:30 pm, I along

with CBA president Arvind Kuswaha, general secretary Amresh Pal Singh and a few others went to the chambers (of the counsel) where the jail inmates were found resting. To our surprise, around 40 undertrials were found in different chambers of their counsel and had not reported to the in-charge of the lock-up at the court," Chauhan said. He said the office-bearers immediately called the JD prosecution prosecution and CJM and informed them about the irregularities. "The CJM and the JD prosecution prosecution along with other officials reached the scene. The policemen who

were assigned the task to escort the jail inmates fled the scene. The register keeping record of the arrival of jail inmates was taken into custody and officials were asked to provide other details about the inmates," Chauhan said. He said he hoped an action would be initiated this time. Sources said the police provided the facilities to the jail inmates brought to the court for hearing after taking money. "The inmates are brought to court in the morning but they are not put at the lock-up at the court. They in fact are allowed to take rest in the chambers of their counsel for money," the sources said.

# Govt to set up 33 IMLCs along e-ways

**Lucknow (PNS):** The Uttar Pradesh government, with the aim of accelerating industrial development, has initiated the process to establish 33 Integrated Manufacturing and Logistics Clusters (IMLCs) along expressways across 30 districts of the state. The districts earmarked for the construction of these IMLCs, covering a total area of 6,149.30 hectares, include key locations such as Meerut, Hapur, Amroha, Sambhal, Budaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Prayagraj and Prayagraj, all connected by the Ganga Expressway. Similarly, the process of construction of IMLCs in Chitrakoot in the form of an industrial corridor, as well as a node for the Defence Industrial Corridor, is proposed alongside the Bundelkhand Expressway.

The IMLCs in Banda, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Jalaun and Auraiya are also proposed near Bundelkhand Expressway. Furthermore, IMLCs are also proposed near the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, Gorakhpur Link Expressway and Purvanchal Expressway. To facilitate these developments, various reports will be compiled to complete the environmental and other clearance processes. The Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) has initiated this process. According to the plan formulated by the state government, the 33 Integrated Manufacturing and Logistics Clusters to be established across 30 districts will be situated along five major expressways. These include the Ganga Expressway, Bundelkhand Expressway,

Agra-Lucknow Expressway, Gorakhpur Link Expressway, and Purvanchal Expressway. Out of these, additional land allotments for the Defence Industrial Corridor will be made in Agra and Aligarh along the Agra-Lucknow Expressway. Industrial corridors will also be established as IMLC in Firozabad, Etawah and Kannauj. Additionally, a land node for the Defence Industrial Corridor is proposed in Kanpur along with the construction of an industrial corridor. The plan includes developing an industrial corridor on 62.93 hectares in Gorakhpur along the Gorakhpur Link Expressway, and additional industrial corridors in 143.63 hectares and 230.84 hectares in Ambedkar Nagar. For the Purvanchal Expressway, the development of industrial

corridors under IMLC is proposed in 90 hectares in Lucknow, 246.30 hectares in Barabanki, 148.68 hectares in Amethi, 338.99 hectares in Sultanganj and 415.21 hectares in Ghazipur. Since environmental and forest clearances are required for all scheduled projects, the UPEIDA has initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a consultant agency. Once the selection process is complete, the agency will be assigned the task of preparing and compiling various reports related to the IMLC project within 120 days. The agency will need to conduct surveys in all designated areas and form a team comprising environmental specialists, socio-economic experts, and forest-ecology and biodiversity professionals to complete the necessary assessments.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE

1. Smt. Sudha Dwivedi w/o Late Jagdish Prasad Dwivedi had misplaced the sale deed dated 19/02/1999, Book No. 1, Zild No 151 Pg No 139 to 150 at Serial No 1325, whose area is 448 sqft. Lease Deed dated 19/02/1999, Book No. 1 Zild No 2152 on Pages No 125 to 138 at Serial No 1324 whose area was 448 sqft situated at LDA Colony Kanpur road Lucknow-226012. And have also misplaced Allotment and Possession Letter which was issued from LDA at that time. In Case of any dispute report to JANA SMALL FINANCE BANK and to the Advocate (Vishal Yadav) Mob- No. 9415164653. Chamber Add-101/148, Barrow, Khandak, Model House, Lucknow within seven days from the publication of this Notice.

### AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 09-08-2024 अपराह्न 12:00 बजे राज्य कृषि उत्पादन मण्डी परिसर, उ०प्र०, किसान मण्डी बवन, विन्ती खाण्ड, गोतीनगर, लखनऊ में निम्नोक्त वाहन क्रमशः यूपी. ३२-डीएल-९९४४ (लटा सपारी), यूपी. ३२-डी.आर.-९४१०, यूपी. ३२-ई.वाई.-८००५, यूपी. ३२-ई.वाई.-०४८४ (अम्बेसर कारो), यूपी. ३२-सी.डब्ल्यू-४०१८ (जिप्सी) की नीलामी होगी, जिसमें प्रतिभाग करने हेतु बिलीटराओं को जमावती धनराशि रु० १०,०००/- प्रति वाहन का बैंकड्राफ्ट वरिष्ठ लेखाधिकारी, मण्डी परिसर, लखनऊ के नाम, फर्म के बैंक जी. एस. टी. पंजीकरण, आधार/पैनकार्ड के साथ जमा करना आवश्यक होगा। आई०पी० सिंह एडव० सन्स

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
It is to inform to all that Mr Satyaveer Singh has applied for loan in Punjab National Bank Branch Bharthana. In this proposal the property being taken by bank situated at land no 1331 bharthana dehati kshetra was purchased by Shri Satyaveer Singh from Shri Kishan Kumar Agarwal S/O Shri Panna Lal Agarwal However name of the father of Shri Kishan Kumar Agrawal mutated as Munna Lal Agrawal in Revenue Records. If any person who is aggrieved who the same may contact at Punjab National Bank branch Bharthana along with their documents within 15 days of this publication so that bank can take necessary action, after which bank would be free to take decision on its own. Branch Manager PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK Bharthana

### NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Be informed that my client Aditya Biria Finance Limited intends to provide a loan facility to M/s Spice Factory 2.0 in which the property being a plot situated at house no. 100, Mohanlal Colony, 595/KN-1302, admeasuring 2710 sq.fts. built on Plot Nos 32 & 33 being portion of Kharsa No. 1302, mini situated at Village: Kurangabad Kharsa, Ward: Raji Buzurg, District: Lucknow owned by Smt. Jagriti Sinha, wife of Sri Sanjay Sinha is offered as security the total land whereof admeasuring 6460 sq.fts. purchased by her through a sale-deed dated 23.08.2008 vide document No 9489 duly registered at the office of Sub-Registrar-I, Lucknow from its ex owner Sri Sharuddin Khan son of Sri Chand Khan and last two pages of said original sale-deed are allegedly missing. Further said Smt. Jagriti Sinha has already sold 1203 sq.fts. to Sri Shiv Kumar Singh Bhadauria through a sale-deed dated 25.10.2011 vide document No.15553, 1120 sq.fts. to Sri Anurag Prajapati through a sale-deed dated 15.02.2013 vide document No.2670 and 1200 sq.fts. to Mohammad Ali son of Sri Waheed Ali through a sale-deed dated 20.04.2013 vide document No.6904 all duly registered at the office of Sub-Registrar, Lucknow out of original area of the plot admeasuring 6460 sq.fts. If any person or institution has any interest, concern or title over said property, he/she may contact me within 7 days with concerned evidence. If no objection/claim is lodged with me within said period, my client shall provide loan to its said customer against mortgage of said property and it shall have its first charge over said property. Tarun Prakash Srivastava, Advocate, Chamber: Room No. 110-111, Citi Hotel, B.N. Road, Lalbagh, Lucknow-226001, Mob: 9335914262

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
I Vinod Kumar Gupta, Director Natraj Productions and Media Pvt. Ltd. inform that, basement store of my house got flooded due to heavy rain on 01/07/24 where kept company's account books got completely damaged due to getting wet. I will be unable to show up in any legal department office.!

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
I am Abhishek Chaudhary s/o Mr. R. K. Chaudhary, res. Of 306, manas heights, manas enclave, indira nagar, lucknow, my 10th/1999, Sherwood Academy) & 12th/2002, Dabble College) Marksheet & Certificate got lost in Lucknow (ICSE) Index no. T/695/077 & B/8805/161.

# Rs 2.5 lakh looted from collection agent

**Lucknow (PNS):** The police have found footage of the car-borne miscreants who had looted Rs 2.5 lakh from a collection agent of the owners of liquor shops in Mohanlalganj late in night on Tuesday. As per the footage, the miscreants had first hit the agent's bike by the car and when he fell down they snatched his bag full of money and escaped. As per reports, Pankaj Jaiswal of Sitapur road, Bhithuali, is assigned the task of collecting money from liquor shops of his employer. Pankaj told the police that he had gone to Mohanlalganj on his bike on Tuesday to collect money from the liquor shops and was returning home at around 11 pm after collecting Rs 2 lakh from five liquor shops in Sisendi and Bhagukhedha. Near Gopal Kheda bridge, a car hit his bike from behind and when he fell on the road along with the bike, three miscreants in the car got down and looted his bag full of money and fled away. He said the robbers were trailing him for a long distance and struck him on finding him in a lone stretch of the road. According to Pankaj, he had gone out to collect cash from the shops in Nyay Bihar Colony at around 7 pm. After that, he collected money from Bahru Desi liquor shop located in Mohanlalganj,

English/beer liquor shop from Dhuddhuri pond, beer shop from Bhagukhedha and English liquor shop from Sisendi. "The total collection was around Rs 2.5 lakh. I was carrying the cash and was going home on my bike at around 10:30 pm. Near the BCC Heights turn, a white Swift car hit me from behind. As I fell on the road, three youths got down and took me to the side of the road and beat me up and snatched away the bag full of money," he narrated the sequence of the incident. On receiving information about the incident, ADCP (South) Shashank Singh, ACP Radharaman Singh and Inspector Mohanlalganj Alok Rao arrived with a police force. The police got Pankaj treated at CHC in Mohanlalganj. The police also started checking in the area.

**RAPE BID**  
Finding a girl all alone while she was returning home from the field, a youth attempted to rape her in Mohanlalganj. The girl somehow freed herself and ran towards her home. On reaching home she complained about the miscreant and the family called the police. The accused got a whiff of a police complaint and the accused's brother threatened the family of the girl. The victim's family later complained to the ACP.

**HARASSED BY ROWDY YOUTHS, WOMAN FALLS FROM MOTORCYCLE**  
A woman riding pillion on a motorcycle with a member of her family fell in water when a group of youths enjoying rain in the waterlogged area near Ambedkar Park (close to a prominent hotel) splashed water in Gombi Nagar area. In a video which went viral, a man and woman riding a motorcycle are seen passing the road near the hotel. As they moved ahead on the water-logged road, some youths started shouting and splashing water on the man and the woman. When the man riding the motorcycle did not stop,

the youths encircled the couple and kept splashing water on the woman due to which she fell from the bike. Two youths have been arrested by police in this connection. **STUDENT BEATEN UP**  
A former student of Amity University was beaten up by junior students in Chinhat police station area. The student suffered a serious head injury. He had gone to the college to get his degree. During this, junior students attacked him due to an old rivalry. The police have registered a case and are searching for the accused. The injured student Anubhav Singh of Sector-I LDA is a LLB pass out from Amity College and on Tuesday, he had gone to the college to collect his degree. During this time, Nikhil Yadav, Vishwajeet, Aman Yadav, Suresh Tripathi, Manas Mishra, Rishikesh Pandey along with four other people attacked him with sticks and sharp weapons at the gate number-3 of the college. Anubhav suffered serious head injuries in the fight. The police were informed about the fight and the victim was rushed to a hospital where he is under treatment. Anubhav Singh got six stitches on his head during the treatment. The miscreants also broke the glass of the car during the fight and threatened him with dire consequences.

# UP to double waste mgtm capacity, says minister

**Lucknow (PNS):** As solid and liquid waste management continues to emerge as a formidable challenge amid the ongoing expansion of cities, the Uttar Pradesh government is gearing up to almost double waste management capacity from 15,000 MT to 27,000 MT per day. The state is also constructing parks using the waste material under the 'Waste to Wonder' scheme. Urban Development Minister AK Sharma, on Wednesday, said in the UP assembly that the state had achieved a commendable position in garbage management. He said that the state's air quality was significantly better than that of other cities across the country. Every day, Uttar Pradesh generates 20,000 MT of solid waste, of which 15,000 MT are currently being processed, he said, adding that the state government planned to nearly double this capacity to 27,000 MT per day by adding an additional 12,000 MT per day waste processing capacity. Presently, there are 933 material recovery facility (MRF) centres in the state, with 711 operational and actively processing solid waste, he added. Sharma further highlighted that the UP government is not only processing solid waste but also using it to construct roads. The roads of the new high court and police headquarters in Lucknow have been built using processed urban waste, he pointed out. "Every day, garbage is collected from homes and processed at material recovery facility centres using electromagnetic and air pressure techniques. The processed material is utilised in three main ways: it is provided as reusable plastic material to private vendors, used in road construction, and employed in the creation of 'Waste to Wonder Parks', he said. He pointed out that one notable example was the 'UP Darshan Park' in Lucknow, built on five acres, which stands as an excellent example of innovative waste management. Additionally, other cities such as Agra, Gorakhpur, and Mirzapur have also seen the development of Happiness Parks and Waste to Wonder Parks, he added.

the student to a private hospital where his condition is said to be critical. On Tuesday, Ramesh Sharma's son Ansh, a resident of Jabarauli village of Mohanlalganj, took leave from school due to some illness and came home to take rest. Meanwhile, he got an electric shock after he inadvertently touched a fan. His mother, who reached home then by stroke of luck, called the neighbours and got the fan removed and took Ansh to CHC from where he was referred to the district hospital. Currently, the family has admitted the child to a private hospital where he is undergoing treatment in a critical condition.

# Permission granted for 7 new medical colleges

## Classes to begin this session

**Lucknow (PNS):** In a significant accomplishment for the Yogi Adityanath government, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has approved the launch of MBBS programmes in seven new medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh for the 2024-25 academic session. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has discussed with Union Health Minister JP Nadda the recognition of 13 new medical colleges in the state. Following these discussions, the National Medical Commission has issued Letters of Permission for seven government medical colleges for the 2024-25 academic session.

At the same time, the remaining six medical colleges will appeal to the NMC again, and if all goes as planned, they are likely to receive their Letters of Permission soon. In addition, approval has been granted to increase the number of seats in various medical colleges across the state, including those run under government, private, and PPP models. Following this, the Medical Education department has begun preparations for counseling to accommodate 10,500 MBBS seats in the current academic session. Director General of Medical Education Kinjal Singh said, "For the academic session 2024-25, Letters of Permission have been issued for the autonomous state medical colleges in Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Kushinagar, Pilibhit, Sultanpur, Kanpur

Dehat and Lalitpur. Counseling will be conducted for 600 MBBS seats across these seven medical colleges. Additionally, the government medical colleges in Agra and Meerut have had their seat counts increased by 72 and 50, respectively, bringing the total to 200 seats at Agra medical college and 150 seats at Meerut medical college." According to DGM Kinjal Singh, the PPP-mode medical colleges in Shamli, Maharajganj and Sambhal have also received Letters of Permission for 150, 150, and 50 MBBS seats respectively, for the 2024-25 session. "Similarly, a new medical college in Gorakhpur, a private institution, has been granted Letter of Permission for 50 MBBS seats for this academic session. GS Medical College in Hapur has also been allowed to increase its MBBS seats

by 100, bringing the total to 250 seats," he added. In the previous academic session, there were 3,828 MBBS seats available for counseling in government medical colleges. For the 2024-25 session, this number has increased by 722, totaling 4,550 seats. The private sector, which previously had 5,450 MBBS seats, now has 5,600 following a 150-seat increase. Additionally, 350 seats will be available for counseling in three new PPP-mode medical colleges. In total, counseling will be conducted for 10,500 MBBS seats across government, private and PPP-mode medical colleges in the state. The director general also mentioned that an appeal will be made to the National Medical Commission to secure approval for the remaining government medical colleges.

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**Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar**  
**Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/55/2024**  
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:

Sr. No.	Item	Quantity
1	Supply/ Printing of 40 Pages OMR Answer Books	16 Lac
2	Supply / Printing of 20 Pages Answer Book	50,000

Closing date & time: 21-08-2024 at 5:00 p.m.  
For details log onto: [www.eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://www.eproc.punjab.gov.in)  
Note: Any corrigendum (s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.  
NA/12/24480/2023/36216 Dated CHD - 7/31/2024

**APPENDIX IV-A**  
**Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(B) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Sammaan Capital Limited ("SCL") [formerly known as Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. ("IHFL")] [CIN : L65922DL2005PLC136029] and Indiabulls Asset Reconstruction Company Limited [CIN : U6710MH2006PLC305312] acting as a Trustee of Indiabulls ARC-XXI Trust (both SCL and IARCL are jointly and severally referred to as "Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 20.08.2024 from 04.00 P.M. to 05.00 P.M., for recovery of the following amounts due to SCL and IARCL :  
**DUES OF SAMMAAN CAPITAL LIMITED (formerly known as Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd.):**

S. No.	Loan Account Number	Outstanding Amounts (in Rs.) as on 25.07.2024
1.	HHLBRL00372187	Rs. 95,68,261/- (Rupees Ninety Five Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Sixty One only)

**DUES OF INDIABULLS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED :**

S. No.	Loan Account Number	Outstanding Amounts (in Rs.) as on 25.07.2024
1.	M002XXXI-01 (Old Loan Account No. HLABPRL00372197)	Rs. 1,81,90,914/- (Rupees One Crore Eighty One Lakh Ninety Thousand Nine Hundred Fourteen only)

The Loan Account No. HLABPRL00372197, along with all right(s), title(s), interest(s), underlying security(ies), pledge(s) and / or guarantee(s) including the Immovable Property, has been assigned by Sammaan Capital Limited ("SCL") [formerly known as Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. ("IHFL")] to and in favour of Indiabulls Asset Reconstruction Company Limited ("IARCL") vide Assignment Agreement dated 21.08.2023, and the same has been renumbered by IARCL and bears new Loan Account No. M002XXXI-01. Consequently, IARCL has also become a Secured Creditor for the said assigned Loan Account. IARCL has given its consent to SCL to issue this Notice of Sale.  
The amounts mentioned in both the tables given above are pending towards the respective Loan Accounts of SCL and IARCL, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 25.07.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement(s) and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 26.07.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges, due to the Secured Creditor from NEHA RASTOGI (PROPRIETOR, M/S SHREE GOLDS), VIVEK RASTOGI and NISHANT AGARWAL.  
The Reserve Price for the immovable Property will be Rs. 2,60,00,000/- (Rupees Two Crore Sixty Lakh only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 26,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Six Lakh only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### सूचना

मेरी हाईस्कूल की मार्कशीट में त्रुटिबश मेरे पिता का नाम Habibur Rahman एवं माता का नाम Shabana दर्ज है, जबकि मेरे पिता का सही नाम Habibur Rahman Siddiqui एवं माता का सही नाम Shabana Khatoon है। शशीकर रमान पुत्र हबीबुर्रहमान सिद्दीकी नि.- 135, विशाल विहार, दुबंगा, पोस्ट बरानकला, लखनऊ।

# Demonstration in Hardoi after advocate's murder

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
The sensational murder of Kanishka Mehrotra, a well-known district and sessions court advocate in Hardoi, led to large-scale protest by the lawyers community which blocked the Hardoi-Lucknow road near Cinema Chauraha on Wednesday. Mehrotra was killed by two unidentified men who visited his house as clients and escaped after killing him on Tuesday night. The agitated advocates demanded immediate arrest of the assailants. After staging a demonstration outside the office of the superintendent of police, the advocates marched to Cinema Chauraha, raising slogans. By blocking the road, they stopped traffic going to Lucknow, Collectorate, Bada Chauraha, Dharamshala Road. The advocates demanded a death penalty for the killers. On receiving the information, Circle Officer (City) Ankit Mishra, City Kotwali Inspector Sanjay Pandey and LIU Inspector Shreesh Sharma reached the spot with a heavy police force. They tried to pacify the protesting advocates. The protesting advocates said that the incident is highly condemnable and the killers should be arrested and hanged.

They demanded the implementation of the Advocates Protection Act. After blocking the road for about 20 minutes, the advocates left on their own and reached the Collectorate. They raised slogans in the Collectorate premises outside the office of District Magistrate Mangala Prasad. Superintendent of Police Neeraj Kumar Joudan said that police teams were investigating the murder and all efforts were being made to identify and arrest the killers soon. Meanwhile, sources said that with the help of the CCTV footage, police had detained four persons, including Samajwadi Party leader Veere Yadav along with Shikhar Gupta, Suryabhan Singh and Nipendra Tripathi and they were being interrogated. So far the police have failed to establish the motive or identify who visited the victim's house to kill him. Sources said that the cops were also probing the murder from the property dispute angle. Mehrotra was living in a house for the last 40 years on rent. The value of the property is presently over Rs 5 crore and the landlord was trying to get his house vacated but Mehrotra had got a stay from the court.

# Minister Nandi's son, daughter-in-law injured in road mishap

**Lucknow (PNS):** The son and daughter-in-law of Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi were injured when their Mercedes car met with an accident near Kannauj. According to reports, the car of Nandi's son Abhishek crashed into the road divider on Agra-Lucknow Expressway near Kannauj on Tuesday night. Abhishek and his wife Krishnaika had a narrow escape in this horrific accident but both were injured. Krishnaika suffered a serious injury on her nose. After the accident, both were admitted to a hospital in Kannauj, from where they were referred to Lucknow after initial treatment. Both are undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Gombi Nagar Extension. They were coming to Lucknow by Agra-Lucknow Expressway when their car went out of control and crashed into the road divider. According to information, the minister's son was driving the Mercedes car. The collision was so severe that the luxury Mercedes car was badly damaged. Abhishek and Krishnaika were married 18 days ago on July 11 in Srinagar. The reception was organised on July 20 in Prayagraj. Meanwhile, three people were killed and another was critically injured after their car collided with a mini truck late at night in Mathurapur area of Bareilly district, an official said on Wednesday. According to Superintendent of Police of Bareilly, Rahul Bhati, three youths travelling in a car died on the spot while another was seriously injured after their vehicle collided with a DCM truck late at night on Tuesday in Mathurapur area under the CB Ganj police station of Bareilly. He said police admitted the injured to district hospital where they were undergoing treatment.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
**RESIDENTIAL PLOT BEARING NUMBER 12A, PART OF BUNGALOW NUMBER 13A, ADMEASURING 201.50 SQUARE METERS, SITUATED AT CIVIL LINES, TEHSIL AND DISTRICT BAREILLY, BAREILLY - 243001, UTTAR PRADESH, WHICH IS BOUNDDED AS FOLLOWS :-**  
EAST : ROAD 16 FEET 9 INCH WIDE, THEREAFTER HOUSE OF SUDHA AGARWAL AND RUPALI,  
WEST : LAND F FOREST DEPARTMENT,  
NORTH : HOUSE OF SANJAY GUPTA & OTHERS,  
SOUTH : ROAD 17 FEET 8 INCH WIDE, THEREAFTER HOUSE OF ASHOK JI AND HOUSE OF GANDHI

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. [www.sammaancapital.com](http://www.sammaancapital.com); Contact No : 0124 - 6910910, +91 7065451024; E-mail id : [auctionhelpline@sammaancapital.com](mailto:auctionhelpline@sammaancapital.com). For bidding, log on to [www.auctionfocus.in](http://www.auctionfocus.in).

Date : 27.07.2024  
Place : BAREILLY (Formerly known as INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LTD.)

Sd/-  
AUTHORIZED OFFICER  
SAMMAAN CAPITAL LIMITED



# Heavy rain leaves several city areas waterlogged



(From Left to right) A UP Vidhan Sabha staffer clears rainwater from the flooded premises of the UP Assembly and waterlogged areas after downpour in Lucknow on Wednesday.

Pioneer/PTI

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The heavy rainfall on Wednesday afternoon flooded parts of the UP Vidhan Bhavan building where the monsoon session of the state assembly is now on. The two-hour spell of rain led to waterlogging in several parts of the state capital, including around the Vidhan Bhavan. There was flooding in the corridor and some rooms on the ground

floor. Staff used buckets and mops to clear away the water. The situation triggered some caustic comments from the opposition. "The state assembly needs the budget the most. If this is the condition after a single spell of heavy rain, then the rest of the state is at the mercy of God," Samajwadi Party general secretary and MLA Shivpal Singh Yadav said sharing a video of the flooded Vidhan Bhavan building on X. The chambers where the state legislative assembly and the leg-

islative councils hold their sessions were not affected. Hazratganj Chowk in the heart of Lucknow was among the areas affected in the flooding. Waterlogging did not spare even the Lucknow Municipal Corporation head office area. A video shared on WhatsApp showed the waterlogged ground floor of the LMC head office and the problems faced by the employees as they waded through the water. An official confirmed that electricity was shut down in the office till the water drained out to avoid any

mishap. Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh said the LMC head office building was old and had drainage issues and this was a problem which they often faced. "It is because of this reason that we are changing our building and getting a new building constructed for the LMC," he said. Regarding waterlogging in other areas, Singh said the downpour left many areas waterlogged but everything reverted to normal within an hour.

He said that they received complaints of waterlogging from areas in front of Vidhan Bhavan and between Vidhan Bhavan and Raj Bhawan, in front of Taj Hotel, Narhi, Ashiyana, Chhannilal crossing and Mahanagar. "We used pumps to clear the water wherever it was required and drains were checked where waterlogging had taken place," he said. Commuters had to face problems in Hazratganj area due to rain, the assembly session and schools giving over. A regular

commuter said that he was caught in a traffic snarl in front of the Vidhan Bhavan for two hours. The deputy commissioner of police (traffic) said that he deployed additional police force in the Hazratganj area and personally attended Bandariya Bagh crossing to ensure smooth flow of traffic. "Due to heavy rain and waterlogging, the traffic police kept a constant watch on the main intersections and crossroads by continuously monitoring videos and smooth traffic oper-

ation was ensured with the help of additional police force, Racer Mobile and local police station. On receiving information about traffic pressure at any place, the traffic control room immediately coordinated with Racer Mobile and local police and normalised the traffic. Despite heavy rain, the traffic policemen made every effort by standing in the rain and ensured smooth operation of traffic" he said. Meanwhile, the city received 52 mm rainfall.

Senior scientist at the Met department, Mohammed Danish, said that till now Lucknow had a rain deficit of 41 per cent and it would be covered by the rainfall on Wednesday. He said that the city received good rain because the monsoon troughline was passing through the central Uttar Pradesh and there was good interaction between the westerlies and the easterlies. The forecast is of good rainfall on Thursday in Lucknow and entire Uttar Pradesh.

## Pension accounts of eight lakh govt employees opened since 2017: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said that since his government assumed office in 2017, pension accounts for approximately eight lakh state government employees had been opened in Uttar Pradesh. In response to a question on the New Pension Scheme (NPS) in the UP Legislative Council on Wednesday, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted the significant strides made by his administration in this regard. "The NPS was originally implemented in 2005 during the tenure of the Samajwadi Party government led by Mulayam Singh Yadav. Despite the Bahujan Samaj Party being in power from 2007 to 2012 and the SP from 2012 to 2017, not a single pension account was opened for employees during those periods," the chief minister said. He added that in 2018, upon discovering issues with the pension accounts, his administration formed a committee chaired by the then finance secretary. The committee also included relevant experts and held discussions with employees' organisations, addressing concerns that affected about eight lakh employees, he added. The chief minister explained that the committee found it essential for the government to increase its contribution slightly to provide 50 per cent of the employee's last drawn salary as pension. Assessments indicated that if both the government and



employees deposited money on time and connected their contributions to a scheme, employees could receive approximately 60 per cent of their money as pension after retirement, he added. "To address this, the government's share in the pension scheme was increased from 10 per cent to 14 per cent. The accounts of all employees were opened, and the contributions from 2005 to 2017, which had not been deposited due to the lack of accounts, were also credited," Yogi pointed out. He informed the House that approximately 70,000 employees, who were in the final

stages of appointment when the NPS was implemented in 2005, have been retained under the Old Pension Scheme, with many of these employees being teachers. Chief Minister Yogi also addressed concerns about the NPS funds being deposited in private banks, stating that these complaints have been taken seriously. He assured that actions have been taken to rectify this, and efforts are underway to ensure the return of these funds. He emphasised that it is a priority for the government to ensure that money from any government scheme is deposited only in nationalised banks.

Earlier, the chief minister congratulated Lal Bihari Yadav on becoming the leader of the opposition in the Legislative Council. He quipped, "I hope you always remain the leader of the opposition." He highlighted the diverse representation in the Upper House, where members come from various societies, including local bodies, teacher constituencies, graduate voters, and nominations by the governor. He affirmed the government's commitment to respecting the sentiments of the members and adhering to any necessary guidelines received from the chair.

## UP assembly passes SCR, Nazul property bills

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh assembly passed two significant bills: the Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region (SCR) Bill and the Uttar Pradesh Nazul Property Bill, 2024 on Wednesday. Both bills were earlier promulgated as ordinance by the government as the state assembly was not in session. The Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region (SCR) Bill aims to establish a State Capital Region (NCR). This initiative will encompass Lucknow and its neighbouring districts - Unnao, Hardoi, Sitapur, Rae Bareilly, and Barabanki - fostering organised and accelerated development in these areas. The Nazul Property Bill, 2024 seeks to protect Nazul land, mandating its use for public purposes rather than transferring full ownership to private individuals or institutions. The Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region and Other Regional Development Authorities (Formation) Bill, 2024 aims to establish the Uttar Pradesh State Capital Regional Development Authority and other regional development authorities. The state government is not proposed to be burdened with expenditures for its formation. The State Capital Region will encompass 27,860 square kilometres across six districts, facilitating rapid development and improving amenities for residents, similar to the National Capital Region. The Regional Development Authority will collaborate with

**The Nazul Property Bill, 2024 seeks to protect Nazul land, mandating its use for public purposes rather than transferring full ownership to private individuals or institutions.**

relevant development authorities, corporations, local bodies and various government departments to create a comprehensive regional plan. This plan will focus on promoting overall development and implementing quality infra-

structure projects. Both private and public sector infrastructure projects and public facilities within the region will be developed according to the area's needs. This planned regional development will boost employment across various sectors, including housing, infrastructure, transport, and industry. Under the Uttar Pradesh Nazul Property Bill, 2024, Nazul lands in the state will no longer be converted into private ownership. Any court proceedings or applications requesting the transfer of full ownership of Nazul land to private individuals or institutions will be cancelled and automatically rejected. In case, payments have been made in anticipation of such ownership

changes, the amounts will be refunded with interest calculated at the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) set by the State Bank of India from the date of deposit. The government may choose to extend the leases of current leaseholders of Nazul land, provided they are in good standing, regularly paying rent, and have not violated lease terms. Alternatively, the government may decide to terminate these leases. Once the lease period expires, the land will be free of all encumbrances and will automatically revert to the state government. Under this law, Nazul land will be reserved and used exclusively for public purposes.

## AIMPLB delegation meets Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has demanded withdrawal of a government order that directs the shifting of all students in unrecognised madrasas to state-run schools. A delegation of the AIMPLB met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday and submitted its demand. The delegation lodged an objection to the notice issued by the state government to 8,449 madrasas in Uttar Pradesh on the basis of which the district administration is ordering these institutions to admit children studying there to schools for basic education. The AIMPLB leaders and clerics termed the order issued by then chief secretary Durga Shanker Mishra on June 26 as against the Constitution, which has given minorities the right to establish and run edu-

cational institutions of their choice. Similarly, madrasas and Vedic pathshalas have also been exempted from the Right to Education Act, 2009. The AIMPLB also expressed strong objection to the letter issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to the chief secretary of the state on June 7. Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali, who is Imam of Aishbagh eidgah, was present in the meeting at the chief minister's official residence. He said that the delegation was led by the AIMPLB general secretary Maulana Fazlur Rahman Mujaddidi. "The chief minister has assured that he will look into the matter," Farangi Mahali said. The then Uttar Pradesh chief secretary Durga Shanker Mishra, in an order dated June 26 and issued to all the

district magistrates of the state, cited a letter from the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) dated June 7 that directed that all non-Muslim students studying in the government-funded madrasas be admitted to schools of the Basic Education Council to provide them with formal education. In the letter, it was also said all the children studying in all such madrasas of the state, which were not recognised by the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Council, should also be given admission in council schools. Committees should be formed at the district level by the district magistrates to implement the entire process, the letter stated. UP has approximately 25,000 madrasas. Of these, 16,000 are government-recognised, including 560 government-aided madrasas.

## Govt shifts eight IPS officers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another late night reshuffle in the police force, eight IPS officers have been transferred by the state government. According to an official communiqué released on Wednesday morning, Santosh Mishra has been posted as the district police chief of Kushinagar. Abhishek Yadav will be the Superintendent of Police, Railway, in Prayagraj. Uday Shankar Singh has been posted as Superintendent of Police, Training and Security, in Lucknow while Dhawal Jaiswal has been given the charge of Superintendent of Police of Fatehpur. Shubham Patel has been posted as Superintendent of

Police, Intelligence Headquarters, Lucknow. Shradha Narendra Pandey has been made Commandant of 38th battalion PAC Aligarh. Vivek Chand Yadav has been posted as DCP in Prayagraj. Ajay Kumar has been made the commandant of 32nd Battalion PAC. Meanwhile, four senior IPS officers along with 14 officers of the Provincial Police Service (PPS) cadre of Uttar Pradesh retired on Wednesday. Those who retired included ADG, Special Investigation, Tanuja Shrivastava; ADG, Training Directorate, Sunil Kumar Gupta; SP Railway Ashtabhuja Prasad Singh and SP, Women and Child Welfare, Ruchita Chaudhary.

**बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda** Regional Office, Kanpur Dehat Region: 118/330, 2nd Floor, Gumti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur-12

**DEMAND NOTICE** Branch : Rania, Kanpur Dehat

Here by this is to inform that under named borrower has not repaid principal and interest thereon of the loan. Therefore the loan become NPA on below Dated. A notice under section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 was issued at last known address, which was returned undelivered. Therefore we again inform to under named borrower/ Guarantor by this public notice to repay the loan amount due including interest and other expenses as mentioned in this notice within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice otherwise bank will take action u/section 13(4) of the SARFAESI Act 2002.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets, that after publication of public auction/inviting quotation/tender/private treaty your right to redeem the secured assets will not be available.

**Name and Address of Borrower / Guarantor and Security agreement with brief description of securities/N.P.A. Date & Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice**

**Borrower :** M/s Sri Om Rice Udyog, Address : Plot No. 89, Rania Industrial Estate, Rania, Kanpur Dehat. **Partner :** Shri Anil Kumar Gupta & Shri Yogesh Kumar Gupta, Both S/o Shri Om Prakash Gupta, Both R/o : Village Rania, Post-Rania, Kanpur Dehat and also at 128/322, H-2 Block, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur. **Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice :** Rs. 37,09,541.77 + Intt. + Others Charges

**Property :** Land and Building Situated at Plot No. 89, Rania Industrial Estate, Rania, Kanpur Dehat in the name of Shri Anil Kumar Gupta & Shri Yogesh Kumar Gupta, Both S/o Shri Om Prakash Gupta, Area : 1196.42 Sq. Mtr. **Bounded-North :** Plot No. 90 & Road, **South :** Agriculture Land, **East :** Plot No. 108, **West :** Plot No. 88. **N.P.A. Date :** 29-04-2024 **Demand Notice Date :** 18-05-2024

Date : 01-08-2024 Place : Kanpur Dehat Authorised Officer

**इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank** Zonal Office Lucknow, New Building, 2nd Floor, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001, Ph. 0522-2286272, 2287283, Fax: 0522-2288033, E-mail id: zolucknow@indianbank.co.in

**DEMAND NOTICE**

**NOTICE U/S 13 (2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002**

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank) Issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 to the Borrower's/Guarantor's herein below mentioned, Consequently upon the dispatch of such Notices through Post And returned Bank undelivered from the Borrower's/Guarantor's addresses. Through this Publication they are hereby called upon to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of publication of said notice failing which the bank will take the possession of the immovable and movable property will sell it through the process in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/Date of Demand Notice	Outstanding Amount/ Date of NPA	Description of the Property
<b>Branch : Aminabad Park</b>			
1.	Prabha Rawat w/o Late Yogesh Rawat (co-Borrower and Guarantor), Add-1: C-4424, Rajajipuram, Lucknow 226017 Add-2: H.No. 543/213/01, build on part of khasra no 14, 17 and 22, Shekhpur Habibpur, Saadatganj, Lucknow 2. To 'the estate of the deceased Late Yogesh Rawat [deceased Borrower] represented by legal heirs viz. A. Akshat Rawat B. Prabha Rawat	Rs. 6,83,935/- as on 19.07.2024 + interest & other charges	Mortgaged Assets: All part and parcel of H.No. 543/213/01 on part of khasra no 14, 17 and 22, Vill Shekhpur Habibpur, Ward Saadatganj, Lucknow <b>Boundaries:</b> East: Plot Mubeen, West: Remaining part of seller, North: 14 ft wide road, South: House of Niyaz Ahmad
Date: 01.08.2024		Place: Lucknow	INDIAN BANK (erstwhile Allahabad Bank)



## Kanungo, lekhpal caught taking bribe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A kanungo and a lekhpal were caught red-handed accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 at the Sarsaul Chakbandi office of Narval Tehsil under Maharajpur police station area on Wednesday morning. On the complaint of two brothers, the anti-corruption team raided the spot and arrested the kanungo and lekhpal with the bribe of ₹10,000. They had allegedly been demanding ₹30,000 from both the brothers for the past three months for cutting a chak (piece) of 3.50 bighas from their land as

per Chakbandi rules. The brothers apprised the anti-corruption team which caught the kanungo and lekhpal red-handed accepting the bribe on Wednesday morning. The team took them to the Maharajpur police station for quizzing. Kanungo Vinod Gautam and lekhpal Suraj Singh are posted in Sarsaul Chakbandi office of Maharajpur. Farmer brothers Naval Kishore Shukla and Nand Kishore Shukla of Tikarbhau, Narval, said presently the chakbandi of land was going on in the village. Both the brothers own about 21 bighas of land. As per chakban-

di rules, a 'chak' (piece) of about 3.50 bighas was to be cut from the total 21 bighas of land. Complainants alleged that lekhpal was not cutting the chak from their land for the past three months. The brothers apprised the anti-corruption team about the incident which under a set plan, raided the spot on Wednesday morning and arrested them. As per plan, Naval Kishore Shukla talked to lekhpal on Tuesday evening on phone when the latter asked the former to visit the Sarsaul Chakbandi office with the cash on Wednesday morning. Around 9.30 am immediately after the kanungo and lekhpal collected the cash of ₹10,000, they were arrested by the anti-corruption team. The team took them to the Maharajpur police station to lodge a FIR against them.

In another incident a youth committed suicide by consuming poisonous substance in a hostel room in Tulsī Vihar under Rawatpur police station area on Tuesday night. When his condition started deteriorating, his colleagues took him to the LLR (Hallet) hospital where he died during treatment.

## Incessant rain provides relief from heat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Incessant rain lashed Sangam city since Wednesday morning. As a result the weather became pleasant. For many days, people were getting troubled by the scorching sun and humidity. People got relief from heat. The rain that started in the morning continued till 12 noon. Due to which the temperature dropped by 2 degrees below normal. The maximum temperature was recorded at 33 degrees Celsius. Along with the city, there was good rain in rural areas as well. Farmers also heaved a sigh of relief due to the rain. However, many areas of the city were flooded with rain water. Waterlogging occurred in many areas, including Niranjn



Police personnel outside a waterlogged police station after heavy rain in Prayagraj on Wednesday

Dot Bridge, Nakhaskohna, Beniganj, in front of Prayagraj Junction. The weather became pleasant due to heavy rain. The minimum temperature went down to 27 degrees Celsius.

Due to the heavy rain, the market also wore a deserted look till noon. The Meteorological department has predicted rain for several days in Prayagraj and its surrounding areas. **LIGHTNING STRIKES:** Two people died in separate incidents of lightning strikes on Tuesday. Munna, (22) of Karenda in Maharajganj, was preparing for competitive exams by living in a rented room in Rajapur here. When it started raining heavily on Tuesday evening, he went to the roof when he was hit by lightning. On hearing a loud sound, other students living in the room below reached the roof and found Munna writhing in pain. His friends immediately took him to the Beli Hospital by an ambu-

lance where doctors declared him dead. In another incident Sarita Devi (40) of Chafri village of Nawabganj died after being struck by lightning. Police was informed in both the cases. Nawabganj Inspector Dharmendra Dubey said he had received the information about a woman died due to lightning. On the other hand, a student died due to snake bite in Basgit village under Uttaraon police station. Jang Bahadu, supports his family by working as a labourer. His daughter Nita was a student of class VIII. She was sleeping on Tuesday night when she was bitten by a krait snake. After a while she started feeling uneasy and woke up. They rushed her to a hospital but it was too late.

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C-517/24

76155/12/3207/2023/36243 Dated CHD :- 7/31/2024

## Missing youth found dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth, missing for the past two days, was found dead under mysterious circumstances along the highway in Naubasta police area on Tuesday evening. From the cellphone recovered from his possession, police informed the kin of the deceased and sent the body for autopsy. A litigation for divorce from his wife was pending in the court for the past three years. Aditya Kumar of Gopal Nagar, Naubasta, was employed in a 'dona pattal' manufacturing unit. His family comprises father Anil Kumar, mother Munni Devi and sister Ananya Gautam. Elder sister Rashmi had already been married. Uncle Sunil Kumar Gautam said Aditya was married to Anita Verma of Naubasta three years ago who, immediately after the marriage, had started living separately. After few days, a case for divorce was filed in the court which is still pending. Around 2.30 am on Monday night on a phone call, Aditya went out of home without telling anything. On Tuesday evening, police informed about the recovery of Aditya's body along the highway. There were marks of injury on his face. Naubasta inspector said on receipt of complaint, an FIR will be lodged and action will be taken against the guilty. Injury marks appeared to have been caused due to a mishap. However, on receipt of autopsy report, exact cause of his death will be ascertained, he said.

## Lamhi Mahotsav-2024 inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

This 'Cultural Capital of India' produced a number of great literateurs including 'Katha Samrat' Munshi Premchand and on the occasion of birth anniversary of this great novelist and story writer, his birthplace at Lamhi on Varanasi-Azamgarh highway witnessed cultural and literary activities throughout the day, when Lamhi Mahotsav-2024 was inaugurated under the joint auspices of Culture Department, Uttar Pradesh Govt and district administration. In the evening, Munshi Premchand Memorial and ancestral house were decorated with 'Deepanjali' by lighting 5,100 lamps. Munshi Premchand through his writings, depicted the true social pictures of contemporary society in India in first half of 20th century, as almost a century ago, Charles Dickens did in Europe. The Lamhi Mahotsav was inaugurated by the guests and coordinator of the festival Amit Dwivedi at the Munshi Premchand Smarak Sthal (memorial site) by lighting the lamp and garlanding the statue of Premchand. In the beginning, the coordinator welcomed the guests and then the scholars of Hindi literature were honoured by giving Premchand's souvenir 'angavastram' and bouquet.



Those who were honoured were Dayanidhi Mishra, Prof Sadanand Shahi, Prof Vashisth Anoop, Prof Preeti Jaiswal, Prof Anurag Kumar and Director of Doordarshan Rajesh Kumar Gautam. After that Prof Sadanand Shahi threw light on the stories of Premchand and said that his creations are beyond time. Then 'Premchand Path' magazine was released. After that, the cultural programme began with puppetry show at Ramlila Maidan. Then Navrachana Convent School students presented 'Mantra' drama followed by presentation of folk song by Pramod Vishwakarma, staging of play Mantra by students of Sun Valley Public School, Budi Kaki by Sunbeam Academy, Panchpurneshwar by Sunbeam Women's College, Aahuti by a group, Hinsa Paramo Dharma by Prerna Kala Manch, Beti Ka Dhan by Yatharth Creation Society and Mrityak Bhoj by Little Moon Academy. Thereafter Vishnu Yadav pre-

sented folk songs while Seema Patel sang Kajri. The programme was conducted by Dr Sujit Choubey and Meenakshi. On the occasion Prof Ram Sudhar, Dr Durga Prasad Srivastava, Suresh Dubey, Dr Harendra Narayan Singh, local corporator Gyan Chand Patel, Rajiv Gaur, Anand Kumar Pal, Abhishek Singh, Shaji Khan, Manoj Kumar, Shailesh Singh and a large number of villagers enjoyed the festival and paid their tribute to Premchand. Meanwhile, the birth anniversary of Premchand was celebrated with great enthusiasm at BLW Inter College. The coordinator and senior lecturer of the school Dharm Veer Singh inaugurated the programme by garlanding the picture of Munshi Premchand. Music teacher Kajol Valmiki filled the atmosphere with new energy by presenting a soulful rendition of Ganesh Vandana. Snehi Verma, a class VII student, remembered Munshi Premchand through a self-composed poem. The class XI students Kumari Rashi Patel and Saumya Mishra threw light on the personality of Munshi Premchand and Ashvi Yadav presented Munshi's story 'Budhi Kaki' in her own way and emotionally presented the feelings and problems of the elderly. Continuing the programme, Hindi teacher Karuna Singh gave important lessons to

the children through the story 'Idgah'. Hindi lecturers, Rakesh Chaudhary and Shalini Upadhyay, presented their views about Premchand and talked about learning from him step by step. Senior Physics lecturer Sukesji Anand talked about children learning in life through the stories 'Budhi Kaki' and 'Idgah'. Children paid emotional tribute to Premchand through the stories read in the curriculum, Idgah, Do Bailon Ki Katha, Mantra, Namak Ka Daroga etc. The coordinator of the school paid emotional tribute to Premchand by remembering his various stories — Gulli Danda, Prerana, Panch Parmeshwar, Bade Ghar Ki Beti etc and strongly urged the children to read about Munshi Premchand, put status and share stories through their Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp. In the end the Principal of the school, Ashok Kumar Maheshwari, while mentioning the journey from Dhanpat Rai to Nawab Rai and becoming a literary figure by the name of Munshi Premchand, offered emotional tributes in a unique way. Geography lecturer Vikas Kumar Pandey conducted the programme by discussing Premchand's first story 'Duniya Ka Sabse Anmol Ratan' and highlighting his love for the country.

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NA/12/24483/2023/36219 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

## Youva Utsav organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To increase awareness about HIV/AIDS, Youva Utsav (Youth Festival) was organised at Sanatan Dharma Inter College, Nai Sadak here on Tuesday under the direction of Uttar Pradesh AIDS Control Society, Lucknow. On the occasion Red Ribbon Quiz and Red Run Marathon were organised among various school and college level children under the guidance of Dr Piyush Rai, District HIV/AIDS Control and Tuberculosis Officer and Nodal Officer of Disha Cluster, Varanasi Division. The theme of the programme was 'Kadame Samajdari Ka - Vada Zimmedari Ka' (Step of Understanding - Promise of Responsibility). On the occasion the chief guest of the programme, Dr Piyush Rai said that the youth needs to be cautious about HIV infection. "If one wants to get a tattoo, use a new needle and only then gets the tattoo done. Only the youth is capable of stopping the rate of spread of HIV infection", he said, discussing in detail about the means and prevention of HIV infection. While presiding over the programme, Principal of Sanatan Dharma Inter College Vijayi Ram said that such programmes need to be done on a wide scale and the students need to leave their hesitation and talk about HIV/AIDS. In the women's category of the Red Run Marathon competition, Preeti Maurya got first place, Vaishali finished second and Aanchal was placed third. All three participants are first year graduate students of Harischandra PG College. In the men's category, Saurabh Singh got first place, followed by Ajay Vishwakarma and Suraj Yadav and all three students are also first year graduate students of Harischandra PG College.

## Renovated PICU ward inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Director of Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) Prof SN Shankhwar inaugurated the renovated work of 44 beds equipped with modern facilities in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) ward here on Tuesday. In this Center of Excellence (CoE) PICU ward, all the beds of ICU and HDU have facilities like ventilators, dialysis, CRRT, echo-cardiography, ECG, X-ray and in future facilities like bronchoscopy and EEG will be added. Prof Shankhwar also observed the work done under the ECRP-II project and inspected the department. "Due to the renovation work and modern facilities done under ECRP-II, there has been a 13 per cent (pc) decrease in death and 4 per cent in the leave against medical advice (LAMA) rate in the last one year and PG students have got the opportunity of critical care training", said Prof Shankhwar. Under the ECRP II project of the central government, there was a resolution to build 540 42-bedded Paediatric Care Units, 196 32-bedded Paediatric Care Units and CoE for Paediatric Critical Care units in the entire state. The Uttar Pradesh government had approved a 42-bedded Paediatric Care Unit and CoE



in the Department of Paediatrics, IMS-BHU in 2022. The renovation work was completed under the guidance of the nodal officer and Head of Paediatric department Prof Sunil Kumar Rao. Prof Rao informed that the first Paediatric Tele ICU Centre of the state is running smoothly in the Paediatrics department of IMS-BHU since last one year. It has been established under the Hub and Spoke model. In this the department's PICU is the hub and the spokes have been established in the district hospitals of eastern Uttar Pradesh (Varanasi, Chandauli, Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Azamgarh, Mau, Jaunpur, and Medical Colleges of Ghazipur, Azamgarh and Deoria. Tele ICU Consultation is being given to children suffering from serious diseases from the centre. This platform is also used for education and training in which doctors of SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura and students of Azamgarh Medical College get benefit.

Dean (Academic), IMS-BHU, Prof Ashok Kumar conducted tele ICU consultation and said that this important facility will prove to be effective for the sick children of eastern UP. "With the facility of Tele ICU, 52 pc of sick newborns, 12 pc of children suffering from respiratory diseases and 10 pc of children suffering from meningitis were treated. This facility will prove to be effective for critical children", said Prof Ashok Kumar. According to the department head, tele ICU is the first established facility in the state, in the last one year 360 consultations have been done, 52 pc of this facility was used to know the disease of children, 47 pc for treatment planning and 11 pc for referral. "The efforts of the expert panel of the Department of Paediatrics (Dr Sunil Kumar Rao, Dr Ankur Singh, Dr Abhishek Abhinay and Dr Anil Kumar Saroj), resident doctors and spoke coordinator were commendable", he added. On the occasion the IMS-BHU Director and Dean presented the Transcranial Doppler Ultrasound Machine to Prof Vinita Gupta, in charge of Paediatric Hematology Oncology Unit. Prof Rajneeti Prasad, Dr Priyanka Agarwal, Dr Divya Singh and senior residents, junior residents, nursing officer and others were also present in the programme.

## Thieves decamp with cash, jewellery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Miscreants made off with jewellery and cash worth lakhs from the house of a retired IG late Arvind Kumar Upadhyay in the Georgetown police station area of the city. On finding the house vacant, the thieves searched all the rooms, including the cupboard, locker and uprooted the window grill and took away ₹50,000 in cash, diamond, gold and silver jewellery. The theft came to light in the morning. Forensic and dog squad teams reached the spot and investigated the matter. The thieves are being searched on the basis of CCTV footage. The family of late Arvind Kumar Upadhyay resides at LIC Colony in Tagore Town under Georgetown police station area. Arvind Kumar had retired from the Police department as IG. He had died while undergoing treatment during Corona. His wife Vinodani Upadhyay and engineer son lived in the house. These days the son had gone out of the city. His wife Vinodani Upadhyay lives alone in the bungalow-like house. On Tuesday, she went to the house of her medical officer daughter living in Allahpur for Rudrabhishek and stayed there overnight. She did not come home on Tuesday. On finding the moment opportune the thieves broke the window grill and decamped with the valuables from the house. They stole ₹50,000 in cash, diamonds, gold and silver necklaces, bracelets, chains, jhumkas, earrings, rings, anklets etc. The thieves stole about a 100 silver coins which were bought during Diwali. SHO George Town Rajeev Sonker said that a case against unidentified persons has been filed and a search is on to trace the thieves through the CCTV footages. Valuable worth lakhs, including cash, are said to have been taken away by the miscreants, he added.

## Four-yr-old boy's body found buried in animal enclosure

KANPUR (PNS): A four-year old boy missing for the past two days was found buried in the animal enclosure of a relative in the Sajeti police station area on Wednesday. On getting information police along with forensic team and sniffer dog squad rushed to the spot and carried out a probe. Sanjay Nishad of Birbal Akbarpur, Sajeti, said when his son Sahil (4) was playing in front the house two days ago, he suddenly went missing. On failing to trace him, the kin had lodged a complaint with the police which had visited the village

and probed the issue. On Wednesday afternoon police recovered the body buried in the animal enclosure of their relative Brijpal. Kin accused him, his son Ramesh and other family members of killing the boy and burying the body. SO Brij Mohan also rushed to the spot and took the accused into custody. The accused were being quizzed at the police station. He said forensic team and sniffer dog squad were also pressed into service for working out the murder case. Further action will be initiated on receipt of the complaint, he said.

**PLANTED:** The members of Manav Uthhan Sewa Samiti planted as many as 51 saplings at the Nanarao Park on Wednesday. The drive was inaugurated by the president of Kanpur Vyapar Mandal Sunil Bajaj, Sadhvi Chandan Bai, incharge of Shri Hans Mandir and Pragna Bai. Sadhvi Chandan Bai said the nature was changing its course. It is a matter of great concern. Shailendra Pal, Manish Mauraya, Ramasrey Porwal, Rakesh Prajapati, Sushil Porwal, Amit Yadav and Laxmi Narain Sharma were present.

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2.	For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy <b>For backlit glow sign board, double sided glow sign board, non lit flex board, flex change, flex banner, wall painting/ shop painting, vehicle painting, umbrella, A-type standing flex board and vinyl stickers.</b> b) Allotment of civil Hospital Bataila Milk Bar on rent. c) Hiring of:- i. Car (Swift Dzire or its equivalent) ii. Diesel Car (05 Seater Bolero camper or its equivalent)	01 year 02 year 01 year 01 year
3.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy <b>Purchase of polypropylene bottles cap. 180ml with caps.</b> b) Hiring of Vehicles (3.0 MT, 6.0 MT, 9.0 MT and 15.0 MT) for supplying of Milk Products in the Punjab and other states. c) Hiring of vehicle for supply of fresh Milk and Milk Products at Local Army 02 (Tray capacity 250) and Beas route (Tray Capacity 200)	Annual 01No. 02 No's
4.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy <b>Sale of the unserviceable material on Annual Rate Contract basis.</b> b) Supply of:- i. Veterinary medicines. ii. Single Phase Dairy Barn Ventilation fan with motors. c) Hiring of:- i. Insulated vehicles for supply of packed milk and fresh milk products in Ludhiana city and adjoining towns. ii. Passenger vehicles Innova crystal for Verka Ludhiana Dairy without driver for minimum running of 2000 kms per month on lump sum basis. d) Outsourcing of milk Booth/ Milk Bar at:- i. Park back side Main Shopping Centre Sector 32 A Chandigarh Road, Ludhiana. ii. Macchiwara. iii. Kamalpura	Annual Annual One time purchase 200 No's 01 year with extension upto one year 01 No. 03 years
5.	For Verka Faridkot Dairy <b>Hiring of:-</b> a) Insulated road milk tanker for transportation of milk from MCC's to various Milk Plants in Punjab etc. on rate contract. b) Pick up or its equivalent vehicle for lifting the milk from MPCs/DF to MCC at Route 5,25,27,62 & 81. c) Insulated road milk tanker for transportation of milk from BMC's to various milk chilling Centres/ Milk plants in Punjab etc. on rate contract. d) Diesel Cars for procurement, Marketing & AI Activities in the field. i. Bolero Jeep ii. Swift Dzire or its equivalent	Cap.10000 Kg- 06 No's Cap.15000 Kg- 02 No's Cap.20000 Kg- 02 No's Cap.10000 Kg-02 No's 01 No. 02 No's
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NA/12/24488/2023/36228 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)



# Budget balances growth, livelihood, cooperative federalism: FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Union Budget strikes a fine balance between growth, employment, and fiscal consolidation, and promotes cooperative federalism. Replying to the discussion on the Union Budget 2024-25 and Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Budget in Rajya Sabha, the Minister said the Government is on track to achieve the pre-announced fiscal deficit target of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. In her reply, Sitharaman also talked about high inflation during the UPA rule while highlighting the measures taken by the Modi Government on price front. Sitharaman, also a Former Defence Minister, said the Agrievor Scheme to recruit people in the age group of 17.5 to 21 years, is aimed at keeping the armed forces fit, young and battle-ready. The Minister, who presented her seventh Union Budget, also said the economic document proposes unflinching support for cooperative federalism. "I would like to underline that our unflinching commitment



to cooperative federalism. The total resources proposed to be transferred to the States in 2024-25 are estimated at ₹22.91 lakh crore. This actually entails an increase of ₹ 2.49 lakh crore over 2023-24," the Minister said. She said capital expenditure is pegged at ₹ 11.11 lakh crore. "This is the biggest ever allocation for Capital expenditure and it shows increase of about 17 per cent over the RE and provisional actuals of the FY 2023-24,"

she said, adding that during the Congress-led UPA era, the capex allocation was ₹ 13.19 lakh crore between 2004-05 to 2013-14. "Whereas during our tenure from 2014 to 2024, the allocation for capex has been ₹ 43.82 lakh crore from 2014-15 to 2023-24," she said. On criticism that she only referred to two States in her Budget speech and ignored the rest, Sitharaman said the Budget is for all States, in past also, including the UPA era,

the names of all States were not mentioned. She emphasised that if a State has not been mentioned in the speech, it does not mean there is no allocation for it. Several Opposition members had raised issues related to the devolution of taxes to States. To this, Sitharaman it is wrong to calculate devolution based on gross tax receipts, and then claim that the Centre is devolving less than what is suggested by the Finance Commission. The Finance Minister highlighted that for agriculture and allied sectors the Budget has allocated ₹ 1.52 lakh crore, which is ₹8,000 crore more than the previous year. For comparison, in 2013-14, the last year of Congress-led UPA, only ₹ 30,000 crore was allocated for agriculture. She also took on Congress leader and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram for misleading statement regarding appointment of DGPs in States. Sitharaman countered Chidambaram's contention by asserting that the scheme "is a very reformative step to enhance the capabilities and battle readiness of our armed forces".

# Rescue operations continue in landslides-ravaged Wayanad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Military personnel on Wednesday intensified search and rescue operations in Kerala's Wayanad district, where landslides have claimed more than 167 lives, with the Army saying that it has recovered around 70 bodies and rescued nearly 1,000 people so far. Extremely heavy rain triggered the landslides in the hilly areas of Wayanad early Tuesday, leaving at least 167 people dead and more than 200 injured. Four columns from the Defence Security Corps (DSC) Centre, Kannur, and 122 TA Battalion are conducting combined rescue operations along with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State rescue teams, a senior army official said. Around 70 bodies have been recovered by the Army so far and approximately 1,000 people have been rescued, the official said. Two Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) columns, including two medical teams, were airlifted from Trivandrum to Kozhikode by AN32 and C-130 aircraft. They arrived at Kozhikode airport late Tuesday night and stayed overnight, the army said. Movement of fuel and other administrative stores is



planned by road, the officials said. Brig Arjun Seagan, Commandant of the PARA Regiment Training Centre, arrived with his team late Tuesday night. They conducted a reconnaissance of a potential bridge site and established a control centre for coordinating the Army's HADR efforts, supported by the commandant of the DSC Centre, they said. Heavy engineering equipment and rescue dog teams were airlifted and disaster relief teams were dispatched by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on Tuesday. The State Government has requested the deployment of a 690-ft Bailey bridge. Currently, up to 330 feet of the bridge is being moved from the Madras Engineer Group Centre, Bengaluru, by road. The

remaining parts are being airlifted from Delhi Cantonment, the Army had said late on Tuesday. The Indian Army is coordinating closely with state authorities to ensure swift and effective relief efforts, the officials said. "Construction of a bridge on the Meepadi-Chooralmala Road will commence, including the induction of certain earthmoving equipment to the other side of the stream utilising air effort," the army said on Wednesday. A navy spokesperson here said that on a request from the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), the Kochi-based Southern Naval Command (SNC) dispatched a disaster relief team comprising 68 personnel from INS Zamorin at Ezhimala to the landslide-

hit site on Tuesday. The rescue team comprising skilled personnel along with a medical team and necessary equipment reached the site at 10 pm on Tuesday. Additional teams have been kept on standby for deployment at short notice and will be mobilised as required, he said. An advanced light helicopter (ALH) detachment in search and rescue (SAR) configuration was deployed from Kochi to Calicut at 7.30 am on Wednesday to augment the rescue efforts, the spokesperson said. The adverse weather conditions due to incessant rains pose challenges in the area. All-out efforts are underway to provide immediate relief and support to the local populace impacted by the disaster, the official said.

# SC confirms staying premature release of Gawli

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

So ja beta, nahi toh Gabbar aa Sjayega." Quoting the oft-remembered dialogue from the blockbuster "Sholay", the Supreme Court on Wednesday "confirmed" its earlier order staying the premature release of gangster-turned-politician Arun Gawli who is serving life imprisonment in a murder case. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Dipankar Datta made absolute its June 3 order staying the operation of the April 5 order of the Bombay High Court's Nagpur bench and posted the appeals for hearing on November 20. The High Court had directed State authorities to consider Gawli's application for premature release under the 2006 remission policy. "We are not inclined to grant any interim relief. The interim stay granted by us is confirmed. Post the appeals for hearing on November 20," the bench said. At the outset, senior advocate Raja Thakare, appearing for the Maharashtra Government, submitted that Gawli has over 46 cases, including around 10 cases of murder, against him. The apex court asked the senior lawyer whether Gawli had done anything in last five to eight years. Thakare replied that the gangster has been behind bars for over 17 years. Asking whether Gawli is reformed or not, the bench asked, "How society will know that when he is behind the bars? He is 72 years old." Challenging the High Court order, Thakare said there is a requirement under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act



(MCOCA) for convicts to undergo imprisonment for at least 40 years for remission. This is as per the policy of 2015. Senior advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, appearing for Gawli, said other co-accused had been given bail in the matter and the Bombay High Court was right in granting premature release. "The State Government has changed its remission policy (in 2015) but your lordships have held that the policy will apply which was applicable when he was convicted. The 2006 policy will apply since he was convicted in 2009. This policy allows remission on account of age and infirmity," she said. At this juncture, the bench observed, "But madam you should know that not everybody is Arun Gawli. In the movie 'Sholay', there is an iconic dialogue, 'So ja beta, nahi toh Gabbar aa jayega. This can be a case here'." Elaborating on Gawli's health condition, Ramakrishnan told the court that he is suffering from heart disease and has a lung defect. To this, the counsel for the Maharashtra Government said this was so because of continuous smoking for 40 years.

# Public mood in party's favour, caution needed against complacency: Sonia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday said the "mahaul (public mood)" is in the party's favour but cautioned against complacency and over confidence after the goodwill generated for it in the Lok Sabha elections. Noting that elections will be held in four States, the longest serving Congress's former President said leaders to sustain the momentum and goodwill that had been generated for the party in the Lok Sabha elections. Assembly polls in Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand as well as Jammu and Kashmir are scheduled this year. "We must not become complacent and over confident. The 'mahaul' does favour us, but we have to work unitedly with a sense of purpose. I dare say that if we perform well, reflecting the



trend that we witnessed in the Lok Sabha elections, national politics will undergo a transformation," Sonia said at the CPP meet in Parliament. During the general body meeting of the CPP in Central Hall, Samvidhan Sadan, a resolution authorising Sonia Gandhi to appoint other office-bearers of the CPP was also passed. Sonia claimed that the Modi Government had not drawn the right lessons from "their significant decline" in the Lok

Sabha elections and alleged that it was persisting with its policy of "dividing communities and spreading an atmosphere of fear and animosity". "Fortunately, the Supreme Court intervened at the right time," she said in an apparent reference to the stay on the orders passed by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Government asking eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display the name of owners. But this can only be a temporary respite. Look at how the rules have been suddenly changed to permit the bureaucracy to participate in the activities of the RSS. It calls itself a cultural organisation but the whole world knows that it is the BJP's political and ideological base," she said. She also slammed the Union Budget, saying that the pressing demands of farmers and youth in particular, have been totally ignored.

# Northeast reports 196 landslides from April to July: Minister in LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The northeastern region has reported 196 landslides from April-July this year, accounting for one-third of the total 592 landslides recorded since 2017, according to data shared in Parliament on Wednesday. In response to a question by BJP MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, Union Earth Sciences Minister Jitendra Singh told the Lok Sabha that the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has collected data on 592 landslides that occurred between April 2017 and July 2024 in different northeastern States, impacting lives and infrastructure. He said the analysis of the data shows a "mixed trend with periodic ups and downs" in the occurrences of landslides.

"To infer conclusively about the exact nature of the trend of landslide incidents, long-range (at least 20 years of) data with exact date of occurrence is required," the minister said. According to the data presented in Parliament, the northeastern region reported 28 landslides in 2017-18; 49 in 2018-19; 45 in 2019-20; 65 in 2020-21; 78 in 2021-22; 102 in 2022-23; 29 in 2023-24; and 196 in 2024-25 so far. According to the landslide atlas released by the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) National Remote Sensing Centre last year, the Northwest Himalayas account for 66.5 per cent of the landslides in India, followed by the Northeast Himalayas (18.8 per cent) and the Western Ghats (14.7 per cent).



# Railways have sanctioned 9,784 bridges for repairs: Vaishnaw

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed the Lok Sabha in a written reply on Wednesday that the Indian Railways sanctioned 9,784 railway bridges for repairs, strengthening, rehabilitation or rebuilding. Vaishnaw responded to questions raised by nine MPs on whether the Government has identified old railway bridges in Maharashtra which are in dilapidated conditions and the details of the repair work undertaken in the last three years. These members were concerned about the status of collapse of railway bridges in the last three years and the number of persons killed and injured as a result of that. They also wanted to know the steps taken by the Government to repair all the old railway bridges across the country. "There is a well established system of inspection of railway bridges on Indian Railways. All the railway bridges are inspected twice a year, one before the onset of monsoon and one detailed inspection after the monsoon," Vaishnaw said.

# Govt's helpline got 1.94L child pornography complaints: Min

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over 76.02 lakh women had sought helpline assistance till May 31 on Government's helpline number while about 1.94 lakh complaints regarding child pornography and rape or gang rape had been registered on the Government's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) till April 30, Union Minister Annapurna Devi said on Wednesday in Parliament. In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, the Women and Child Development Minister said since its inception, the NCRP has received over 16.18 crore

visitors. "As of April 30, 2024, approximately 1.94 lakh complaints regarding child pornography and rape or gang rape have been reported," she said. Till March 31, more than 69.05 lakh cyber tipline reports had been shared with the relevant States and union territories, she said. According to the Minister, the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) is operational in all 36 States and Union Territories and had handled more than 36.29 crore calls till April 30, with more than 14.36 lakh downloads of the '112 India'



mobile app. The integration of the Women's Helpline (WHL-181) with ERSS is functional in 35 States and Union Territories. Monitoring centres for the

Vehicle Tracking Platform (VTP) have been commissioned in 11 States and union territories, enhancing the tracking and safety of public transport, Devi said. An AI-based Facial Recognition System (FRS) has been integrated with video surveillance systems at seven major railway stations for a pilot project, the Minister said.

# Blind's brain connectivity patterns boost non-visual senses: Neuroscientists

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ever wondered what enables the blind to develop and refine a "sixth sense"? A groundbreaking study led by Georgetown University neuroscientists has shed light on this remarkable phenomenon, revealing that individuals with blindness exhibit distinctive brain connectivity patterns that enhance their non-visual senses, such as spatial awareness, sound localisation, and tactile perception. The study demonstrated that brain regions typically associated with sight in sighted individuals are

repurposed in the blind to strengthen these other senses. This reorganisation allows the blind to develop extraordinary abilities to navigate and interpret their environment through alternative sensory inputs. By mapping these unique brain connectivity patterns, researchers aim to advance our understanding of sensory adaptation and brain plasticity. Led by postdoctoral researcher Dr Lenia Amaral and Assistant Professor Dr Ella Striemi-Amit, the study provides insight into individual differences in brain

organisation. "We don't see this level of variation in the visual cortex connectivity among individuals who can see," said Dr Striemi-Amit, who heads the Sensory and Motor Plasticity Lab at Georgetown. "The connectivity pattern in people born blind is more distinct across individuals, like a fingerprint, and remains stable over time." The study involved a small sample of individuals born blind who underwent repeated functional MRI scans over two years. Researchers used neuroimaging techniques to



analyse neural connectivity and found that the visual

cortex in these individuals exhibited remarkable stability

in its connectivity patterns, regardless of the task.

"Our study found that these patterns did not change significantly based on the task-whether participants were localising sounds, identifying shapes, or resting," explained Dr Amaral. "Instead, the connectivity patterns were unique to each individual and remained stable over the two-year period." Dr Striemi-Amit emphasised that these findings highlight the brain's plasticity and its ability to develop in diverse ways, especially in the absence of sight. "Our findings suggest that experiences after birth shape

the diverse ways our brains can develop, potentially even for different uses of the visual cortex among those born blind," she said. The implications of this discovery are significant. It suggests that personalised approaches to rehabilitation and sight restoration could be developed based on an individual's specific brain connectivity profile, potentially optimising sensory and cognitive functions for those with visual impairments. The study is published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Halwa politics

Rahul Gandhi raises the issue of the caste census in Parliament using halwa as a metaphor

It all began when Leader of the Opposition of Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi used the traditional 'halwa' preparation ceremony following the budget presentation to question the involvement of marginalised community members in the budget process. He extended the metaphor by noting that only high caste people are involved in making the halwa who distribute it to the elite sections of population. It did not go down well with the treasury benches and the pandemonium followed. Parliament has been engulfed in chaos over the contentious issue of a caste census for long. This debate not only stirred up intense discussions but also led to a significant clash between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former Union Minister Anurag Thakur. Prime Minister Modi backed Thakur. He took to Twitter saying, "this speech by my young and energetic colleague Shri Anurag Thakur is a must-hear. A perfect mix of facts and humour, exposing the dirty politics of the INDI Alliance." Thakur had hit back at Gandhi over his speech in the Lok Sabha saying people who do not know their caste are asking for caste census. The demand for a caste census has been a long-standing issue taken up by the INDIA bloc. Proponents argue that it is crucial for understanding the socio-economic conditions of various castes and for formulating targeted welfare policies.



India has a complex caste system that significantly impacts social and economic dynamics. A caste census would help identify disparities and enable the Government to address them more effectively. Indeed, a comprehensive caste census would provide detailed data on the socio-economic status of different castes, which is vital for creating effective policies and programs aimed at uplifting marginalised communities. Many marginalised communities continue to face discrimination and lack of opportunities. A caste census could highlight these issues and pave the way for targeted interventions to promote social justice. The Opposition, particularly the Congress party, has been vocal in advocating for it. Rahul Gandhi has emerged as a leading voice, arguing that a caste census is necessary for ensuring social justice and equitable development. He contends that without accurate data, the government cannot effectively address the needs of marginalised communities. On the other hand, Anurag Thakur has taken a firm stance against the opposition's demand. Thakur argues that the government is already implementing numerous schemes aimed at social upliftment and that a caste census may lead to further division within society. Thakur accused the opposition of playing divisive politics and undermining the Government's efforts to promote inclusive development. As the pandemonium in Parliament continues, the issue of caste census remains unresolved. The caste census can be a turning point in deciding Government's approach to welfare. The issue should not die in the din of Parliament.

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### PICTALK



Children play at fountains near Lal Chowk on a rainy day in Srinagar

## Budget prioritises applied research but neglects basic science

Promoting applied research at the cost of fundamental sciences, like physics and ecology, could jeopardise scientific progress and innovation

The recent budget emphasises operationalising the Anusandhan National Research Fund (ANRF) for research and prototype development and increasing private participation in generating funds for research. Though these are commendable, the government should consider a few academic and research community apprehensions. One main concern is the declining trend among researchers and policymakers towards supporting basic science research. Basic science, sometimes called fundamental or pure science, is driven by curiosity and the quest for understanding the underlying principles governing the natural world without immediate concern for practical applications. Discoveries made through basic research often lay the groundwork for subsequent advancements. For instance, a theoretical endeavour to understand atomic and subatomic particles and quantum mechanics initially led to the development of tech-



nologies such as semiconductors and MRI machines. This expansion of knowledge is not merely an academic exercise; it creates a foundation upon which applied sciences can build. We need good physics, chemistry, mathematics, and biology researchers to do this. Unfortunately, our teachers fail to convey the application of basic research to the student community. Natural calamities are recurring in every part of our country. Still, we haven't deliberated with our researchers working in the field of ecology, climate studies or the environment. Biodiversity and the environment are the lifelines of our planet, and we need good researchers to study them in the future. Unfortunately, research in

systematics, ecology, etc., hardly gets the attention of our policymakers. We hardly have a national institution whose mandate is systematics or ecology, though these are part of many institutions as a division. Researching with sophisticated instruments in the lab is comparatively easier than researchers in the field. Why should a researcher spend years in a forest studying wildlife? They are real scientists who are providing yeoman service to the nation. Unfortunately, they are not getting enough recognition or acceptance from our policymakers or society. Because of this, many good researchers passionate about fundamental science research are moving towards more lucrative areas. This will create a cavity in our future scientific knowledge base. Policymakers should understand that the success we have received in space research or health care in recent times is because of the strength of the fundamental science we have built over the peri-

od. We need to create an environment where basic science education and research are promoted. For this, the government should allot part of the budget for ANRF exclusively for basic science research. The huge financial investment required for basic science and the uncertainty of results may deter private entities from funding such endeavours. But if we neglect basic science in the long run, our science will suffer badly. The stagnation of basic science can lead to a lack of new theories and principles, which hinders the development of innovative technologies and solutions. The government should prioritise basic science research in policy documents and provide necessary support to researchers working in the field. We can address emerging challenges only if we have a robust basic science workforce.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

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# Delhi sinks in cesspool of Government apathy



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Recent tragedies, such as the flooding of a coaching institute basement that claimed three young lives, highlight Delhi's mismanagement



Historical writings many times create a perspective of adulation for some of the most undeserving characters. Take the instance of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughal dynasty, whose rule started in Shahjahanabad and ended at Palam. He was extended by the British for his connivance with the rebellious soldiers and died in Myanmar. His 'tragedy' is best known by the lines which he penned himself before he died. He wrote, 'kitna hai badnasib zafar dafn ke lie do gaz zamin bhi na mili ku-e-yar m?' (How unfortunate is Zafar! For his burial; Not even two yards of land were to be had, in the land of his beloved.). In the popular culture, it's seldom recalled that he was a worthless leader, incapable of administering, always cribbing and too preoccupied with palace conspiracies. Nearly 150 years later, we in Delhi have a government which is as Zafaresque in its bearing as the Mughal rule in 1857. The day leaders from INDIA block converged in the national Capital in the support of incarcerated chief minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal, the same evening his party ruled Delhi government and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)

presided over a catastrophe in the flooded basement of a coaching institute in the heart of the national Capital. Nobody among those supposed to be in charge of the city administration seems to be mourning the loss of three young lives. They in typical Zafaresque style are busy blaming one and all possible. Kejriwal's regents in the Delhi government have done their bit. Minister Atishi Marlena has said that she has ordered a magisterial enquiry, which you can bet would have no clear finding to present. Her colleague Saurabh Bhardwaj has claimed that though he holds meetings with the officials nobody listens to him. Not to leave behind, city's Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena too has joined the charade blaming the city government and the MCD for not taking the necessary initiative to prevent such a tragedy. In the midst of all this, our modern-day Zafar aka Arvind Kejriwal would be busy penning another sob story in his prison cell about his persecution and alleged continuous loss of weight. How do you expect the MCD to be functional when you have a Mayor

KEJRIWAL'S REGENTS IN THE DELHI GOVERNMENT HAVE DONE THEIR BIT. MINISTER ATISHI MARLENA HAS SAID THAT SHE HAS ORDERED A MAGISTERIAL ENQUIRY, WHICH YOU CAN BET WOULD HAVE NO CLEAR FINDING TO PRESENT

who is unauthorisedly occupying the chair much beyond her term expired? Shelly Oberoi is a beneficiary of the political crisis engulfing Delhi. The Lieutenant Governor scuttled the election of the new Mayor because the file did not have a note by the Chief Minister, who could not put his pen on the file as he was in jail. That was the technical reason but the political reason was that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not want to have an embarrassment ahead of the Lok Sabha elections losing the Mayoral polls. Now that the polls are over and the BJP has won all the seven Lok Sabha seats in the national Capital, the Lieutenant Governor could have gathered sufficient wisdom to allow an election and have somebody head the municipal body who was authorised to do so. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi works through various committees, including the one responsible for keeping the drains in the city clean. Ever since the AAP came to power in MCD in 2022 with a thin majority, the slugfest between AAP and BJP has ensured that most of these powerful committees have remained non-functional.

When such a stalemate has swamped the Civic Centre, the headquarters of the MCD, how does one expect the city to have civic governance? During the last Lok Sabha polls earlier this year, the campaign in the city was cantankerous focusing mostly on mudslinging. It was a campaign where the issues about Delhi were all lost in the bitter cacophony. No wonder even after the polls issues of Delhi remain unaddressed. There is no indication that it will be addressed anytime soon. While Kejriwal continues to play a Zafar albeit his rule does not extend beyond his cell in Tihar Jail, the Centre through its representative is in the role of Nero, the Roman emperor who once famously said, "I have only to appear and sing to have peace once more in Gaul." Delhi has been sans governance for several years and will take several years to bring it back on the rails. The Centre should realise that it cannot continue to play Nero but intervene and save it from the kind of destruction that Rome faced. (The writer is an author and president, the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NEED FOR RAILWAY SAFETY AUTHORITY

Madam — There is an urgent need to establish a railway safety authority as a statutory body with powers to frame safety standards, conduct audits, enforce accountability, and investigate accidents. Improved communication and coordination among railway boards, zonal railways, divisions, and production units are essential. Increased funding for track renewal, bridge repair, signaling upgrades, and coach refurbishment is crucial. Advanced safety systems like Anti-Collision Devices (ACDs), Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), and Automatic Train Control (ATC) should be installed to ensure passenger safety and reduce accidents.

The recent derailment of the Howrah-CSMT Express, resulting in two deaths and 20 injuries, underscores the need for these measures. Learning from Japan's Shinkansen, which has maintained a perfect safety record with advanced systems, could be highly beneficial.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

### TRAGIC LOSS OF LIVES OF IAS ASPIRANT

Madam—The tragic loss of three civil services aspirants who drowned in a rain-flooded basement of a coaching centre in Delhi is heart-wrenching. This incident highlights the apathy and connivance of officials who turned a blind eye to urban planning violations. The coaching centre flouted all safety norms, using its basement as a library despite regulations. The city's drainage system, clogged due to rampant illegal constructions, exacerbated the situation. A thorough investigation is necessary to fix responsibility. Both state and central governments must learn from this tragedy, review the status of urban bodies, and strictly enforce norms to prevent such violations. It is deplorable that the negligence of authorities and the greed of the coaching centre led to such a loss.

### Manu Bhaker's historic Olympic win



Kudos to India's shooting ace Manu Bhaker for making history by becoming the first Indian post-independence to win two medals in a single Olympics. Bhaker and her partner Sarabjot Singh secured bronze in the 10M Air Pistol Mixed Team event, defeating the Koreans 16-10.

This added to Bhaker's earlier bronze in the Women's Individual 10M Air Pistol event, making her the first Indian since Norman Pritchard

in 1900 to achieve such a feat. Congratulations to the Indian shooting pair for winning the country's second bronze medal at the Olympics. Bhaker's composure amidst the hype is commendable, and she stands as an inspiration for every Indian youth with her dedication and love for the sport. In closing, Manu Bhaker's remarkable achievements at the Olympics have etched her name in history and brought immense pride to India. Her success, alongside Sarabjot Singh, in securing bronze medals in both individual and mixed team events showcases their exceptional talent and teamwork. Bhaker's unwavering dedication and resilience serve as an inspiration to young athletes across the nation. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to both Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh for their outstanding performances and wish them continued success in their future endeavors.

Bidyut Kumar | Faridabad

Worse still is the blame game between Delhi's state and central governments, which overshadows the tragedy.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

### CRICKET HAS CHANGED

Madam — Apropos the article, "The evolution of cricket and umpiring", published on July 22, 2024, this is my response. Cricket has undergone metamorphosis of change and it has become more and more a technology-driven sport like most of the modern day sports. The advent of ODIs and followed by T20Is, including of course the IPL, have all attracted millions of fans across the globe and have taken the game to its highest pedestal. English counties propelled the sport in the late 19th century, and it was around this time cricket went international, with the US and Canada playing each other first, followed by Australia's tour of England, which led to the creation of The Ashes. Perhaps, this period formed the basis of the worldwide status cricket now has. Throughout the 20th and

21st century, cricket retained its core rules, but later became a much more skill-based sport. On top of this, the technological advancements made across the sporting world meant that cricket was changing for players, officials and as well the spectators. 'Ball tracking' is one of the key technological innovations in the game, which not only meant better analysis of a bowler's technique, but also the ability to better read LBWs by tracking the ball's path trajectory. Living at a time where T20 internationals have become the most popular of all the three formats, cricket has seen a big surge in viewership. No wonder, being the game's super power, India's recent T20 world cup win at Barbados will only take the game to its extraordinary heights like never before. It is one sport that is liked by every Indian and binds India like no other sport.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

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## FIRST COLUMN

## FROM HURT TO HEALING

By understanding our desires and analysing our actions, we can find ways to heal ourselves



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Nobody can hurt me without my permission, said Mahatma Gandhi, however, the truth is that most of us hurt each other in our relationships and we do it because we just want to do it. There is no larger reason for it, but it's something that just happens. According to psychologists, most people hurt someone because they want something they think they can't have, or have something they don't want. If we closely observe ourselves, then we would find that most of us are in one of the above two conditions, and we don't know what to do about it, hence we think that the only method of getting what we want is to hurt someone. So, is this the only way out? Is it the right method to follow? We all know it's wrong because it creates a lot of pain on both sides, so why do we do it?

Simply because we don't understand how to have that thing that we badly want or get rid of that thing that we do not need without hurting. There may be numerous reasons for us to hurt people, however the most common of them is 'unfulfilled expectations' which we all experience in our various relationships. Take for example, we just met someone and have fallen in love with him/her. Now before there is any kind of exchange of feelings, we just start dreaming about things that are totally out of context.

After a lot of pursuing, chasing and pushing, when we finally fail to get the desired reply from the other end, we start feeling miserable and then start blaming the person by saying things like 'You



hurt me', 'You broke my heart' etc. We should sit aside in a quiet corner and ask ourselves whether our expectations right from the beginning were realistic. Did the opposite person give us any inclination to believe so that he/she also feels the same as we are feeling? Were feelings of love mutual on both sides? When it was time to understand what he/she was saying, we were building love castles in the air, when it was time to give some space to the opposite person, we were suffocating the person with our forced love & affection. Is this the right kind of behaviour?

Remember! Any kind of one-sided relationship is extremely painful and maleficent because it makes you feel like a spare part in someone else's life as if you aren't as important to them as they are to you. Hence to prevent oneself from such pain and agony, it is best to have clear communication with the person whom you have feelings for. It doesn't matter what kind of a relationship you are in, but you have got to communicate your feelings because when we open the door of a dialogue, we open our hearts.

So always express yourself because carrying the burden of unspoken words can take a toll on you. It's 100 times better to say what you genuinely feel rather than repeating 'I love you' 100 times. However, it's so unfortunate that most of us prefer to bleed from within and stick to our 'no expressing' stubbornness. A wise person would thus always think about these reasons when being hurt rather than wasting time on 'Why me?'

So c'mon don't give up so easily because life is too short for such mundane things, just forget what hurt you but never forget what it taught you. Learn your lessons and move on.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

## Reforming the personal income tax regime



UTTAM GUPTA

In the Budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister has made the 'new regime' of personal income tax more appealing, while continuing to rationalise the capital gains tax structure



In the Union Budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has endeavoured to make the 'new regime' of personal income tax (PIT) a bit more attractive besides continuing the process of 'rationalising' and 'simplifying' the structure of capital gains tax (CGT) that was started in her budget for FY 2023-24. Sitharaman had introduced the new PIT regime in the Budget for 2020-21. Even while retaining a 5 per cent tax for annual income in the Rs 250,001-Rs 500,000 range (as under the old regime before 2020-21), on income higher than Rs 500,000, the government levied: 10 per cent on Rs 500,001-Rs 750,000; 15 per cent on Rs 750,001-Rs 1,000,000; 20 per cent on Rs 1,000,001-Rs 1,250,000; 25 per cent on Rs 1,250,001-Rs 1,500,000. For income above Rs 1,500,000, the 30 per cent tax continued. Unlike the old regime where persons could claim annual exemptions and deductions on long-term investments up to a maximum of Rs 375,000, none was allowed under the new regime.

However, individuals were given the choice to go either for the new regime or continue with the old regime. In the Budget for 2023-24, she altered the tax new structure to provide for nil tax on income up to Rs 300,000; 5 per cent tax on income in the Rs 300,001-Rs 600,000 bracket; 10 per cent in the Rs 600,001-Rs 900,000 bracket; 15 per cent in Rs 900,001-Rs 1,200,000; 20 per cent in Rs 1,200,001-1,500,000; and 30 per cent on above Rs 1,500,000. Besides, salaried persons and pensioners can also claim a standard deduction of Rs 50,000. This was much better than the 2020-21 package. Under it, a person with an annual income of say Rs 1,500,000 needs to pay Rs 140,000 as tax when compared to Rs 150,000 payable under the old regime albeit with tax breaks. Besides, the former left the person with cash-in-hand of Rs 1,360,000 against only Rs 975,000 under the old regime (after paying tax Rs 150,000 and investment Rs 375,000). Furthermore, under the new (modified) regime a salaried person won't have to pay any tax on annual income up to Rs 750,000. In the Budget for 2024-25, the FM has further tweaked the slabs to provide

for nil tax on income up to Rs 300,000; 5 per cent tax on income in the Rs 300,001- Rs 700,000 bracket; 10 per cent in the Rs 700,001-Rs 1,000,000 brackets; 15 per cent in Rs 1,000,001- Rs 1,200,000; 20 per cent in Rs 1,200,001-1,500,000; and 30 per cent on above Rs 1,500,000. Besides, salaried persons and pensioners can now claim a standard deduction of Rs 75,000. For a person with an annual income of Rs 1,500,000, these changes will yield an incremental savings of Rs 15,000 over the tax payable as per the 2023-24 budget. She will need to pay only Rs 125,000 as tax. Moreover, a salaried person won't have to pay any tax on annual income up to Rs 825,000 up from Rs 750,000 earlier. Already, nearly two-thirds of those filing IT returns have shifted to the new tax regime.

The additional sweetener from the 2024-25 budget will incentivize more persons to shift. Coming to CGT, the subsisting tax rates varied widely depending on the asset such as equity shares, bonds, physical assets, listed or unlisted, holding period, etc. This was prone to arbitrage/misuse, evasion and protracted litigation. Last year, the government began the process of reforming it. In the Finance Bill, 2023 passed by the Lok Sabha on March 24, 2023, it amended to change the tax treatment of capital gains from non-equity or debt mutual funds (DMF). DMF is a scheme that invests in fixed-income instruments, such as corporate and government bonds, corporate debt securities, money market instruments etc. that offer capital appreciation.

Earlier, any capital gain on redemption of units in a debt fund held for three years or longer was treated as long-term capital gain (LTCG) and taxed at a flat 20 per cent with the

benefit of indexation (it adjusts the cost of a person's investment to account for inflation, effectively reducing her capital gains and in turn, her tax liability). Any capital gain on redemption of units before three years was treated as short-term capital gain (STCG) and taxed at an individual's income tax (albeit personal) slab rate.

The amendment dispensed with this distinction in the case of 'Specified mutual funds' (SMFs) which essentially refer to mutual funds where not more than 35 per cent of their total proceeds are invested in equity shares of domestic companies. As a result, gains arising from SMFs irrespective of the period for which the units are held by investors are deemed STCGs and hence, liable to tax at the rate applicable to the slab in which their total income falls.

The new tax treatment effective from April 1, 2023, also applied to exchange-traded funds (ETFs), gold funds, outbound mutual funds equity funds etc. In the budget for 2024-25, the FM has gone for a major overhaul of the CGT regime. For all categories of assets - financial or physical, listed or unlisted - except debt and non-equity MFs and unlisted bonds, long-term capital gains (LTCG) will attract tax at a uniform rate of 12.5 per cent. The holding period for deciding long-term is 24 months except in the case of stocks, equity mutual funds and REITs/InvITs where the threshold is 12 months. In the case of debt and non-equity MFs and unlisted bonds, the gains will be taxed at the applicable slab rate. For assets held for less than 24 months, short-term capital gains (STCG) will be taxed at the applicable slab rate. However, in the case of stocks, equity mutual funds, listed bonds and REITs/InvITs, the STCG will be taxed at 20 per cent. This is up from

15 per cent levied earlier. Pertinently, for these instruments, even the LTCG tax of 12.5 per cent is higher than the 10 per cent levied earlier. Three broad messages emanate from these changes.

First, these reward long-term investors who will now pay LTCG of 12.5 per cent down from 20 per cent or the applicable slab rate (generally 39 per cent) earlier depending on the asset class. A higher annual exemption limit of Rs 125,000 (up from the existing Rs 100,000) from LTCG from stocks and equity MFs is an added sweetener. Second, while reducing the LTCG tax rate, FM has taken away the benefit of indexation.

This way she has plugged a major source of revenue loss in the real estate sector whereby developers could drastically reduce the tax outgo by taking advantage of indexation. However, owners of old houses acquired before 2001 (ancestral property) have been spared as they will continue to get indexation benefits. Third, investors looking for short-term gains pay more as the STCG tax rate on stocks and equity mutual funds now is 20 per cent up from 15 per cent earlier.

These persons being mostly rich persons/high net-worth individuals with surplus funds, Sitharaman's endeavour to collect more tax from them is fully justified. The new CGT regime is undoubtedly a big improvement. However, the government should aim at a structure where irrespective of the asset class, listed or unlisted and the holding period, the capital gains arising therefrom are an addition to her income in the relevant year. Therefore, tax should be levied at the rate applicable to the slab his total income falls in (all sources put together).

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



IN CASES WHERE THE STRATEGIC SALE IS MOOTED, THE GOVT FACES A BIGGER CHALLENGE AS APART FROM A FAVOURABLE MARKET, IT NEEDS BIDDERS WITH DEEP POCKETS

## The OTT platforms are redefining star power and entertainment

These platforms not only showcase diverse stories and talents but also help actors reach a global audience and achieve instant stardom

In today's rapidly changing entertainment landscape, Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have emerged as a powerful force in redefining how we consume content and perceive celebrity status. These platforms have not only revolutionized the way stories are told but also introduced a new breed of superstars, offering actors opportunities to gain recognition and connect with audiences on a global scale that rivals traditional commercial movie stardom. The accessibility of content through platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ has disrupted the established order in both Hollywood and Bollywood. Unlike conventional cinema, where fame often dictated success, OTT platforms prioritize diverse



CHAITANYA KUMAR PRASAD

storytelling and talent. This shift has empowered actors who were previously relegated to supporting roles or lesser-known projects to take center stage and achieve instant fame. For instance, actors like Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Pankaj Tripathi, Vijay Varma, and Jaideep Ahlawat in India, along with Phoebe Waller-Bridge in the West, have risen to stardom through standout performances on OTT platforms.

These digital stages provide a unique opportunity for actors to connect with audiences worldwide, transcending borders and cultural boundaries. OTT platforms have also given rise to a new form of celebrity influence, one that values performance, quality, and character relatability over traditional box office metrics. The popularity of these stars is rooted in their ability to connect with audiences through captivating stories and authentic performances. This evolution has opened doors for exploring a wide range of genres and unconventional characters, allowing actors to showcase their versatility and depth. By stepping beyond the typical main character archetypes, actors now have the opportunity to por-

tray complex roles that not only highlight their talent but also solidify their star status and diversify their portfolios. What sets OTT stars apart is their relatability and authenticity, which enhances their appeal. Unlike traditional movie icons who are often seen as larger-than-life figures, OTT stars are perceived as more down-to-earth and relatable. This relatability translates into strong brand value, as audiences feel a deeper connection to these actors and their on-screen personas. OTT platforms also serve as a hub for brand collaborations, where actors endorse products that align with their on-screen personas. This integration of content and commerce has opened up new avenues for revenue generation for actors,



while also boosting their brand image. Additionally, OTT platforms have the distinct advantage of reaching a larger and more diverse audience, further enhancing their appeal. The influence of OTT platforms is also evident in how they have breathed new life into theatrical releases. There is now a 'reverse osmosis'

effect where movies that may have had limited box office runs or regional appeal find broader audiences and renewed popularity when released on streaming services. Moreover, the allure of OTT platforms has attracted big stars and celebrated directors to create original content specifically for streaming audiences. Renowned filmmakers and top-tier actors, who traditionally dominated the theatrical space, are now embracing the creative freedom and diverse storytelling opportunities offered by OTT platforms. High-profile projects like Martin Scorsese's 'The Irishman' on Netflix and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Heeramandi' are prime examples of this shift. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

when theaters were shut down, OTT platforms not only sustained the entertainment industry but also thrived as the sole infotainment channel for audiences.

The era of DVD rentals and brick-and-mortar video stores has given way to the convenience of streaming services, which offer a vast library of movies and TV shows at the click of a button. Streaming platforms have emerged as launchpads for movies and series that gain immense popularity, often surpassing traditional cinema. Shows like 'Stranger Things,' 'Money Heist,' and 'Sacred Games' have garnered cult followings, turning their actors into global sensations. The viral nature of streaming content, combined with its global accessibil-

ity, can catapult relatively unknown actors and smaller productions into the limelight, achieving a level of fame that rivals big-budget blockbusters. OTT platforms also cater to niche audiences by offering content that may not have widespread commercial appeal but resonates deeply with specific viewer groups. This has allowed for a variety of stories and genres to thrive, from indie films to experimental series. By tapping into these niche markets, OTT platforms have redefined the concept of a 'hit,' allowing for diverse forms of success that go beyond traditional box office.

(The writer is former Addl. DG DFF & Festival Director IFFI. Views are personal. Inputs: Zoya Ahmad, Vaishnavi Srinivasan)



# Delhi tragedy: High Court slams AAP Govt freebies policies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday criticized the Delhi government's "freebie" policies in the aftermath of the recent basement flooding in city's Rajendra Nagar area wherein three civil services aspirants lost their lives. A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said because of the "freebie culture", the government has no money to upgrade the infrastructure, particularly the city's drainage system, in face of the exploding population of the city. The high court hinted at asking a central agency to probe the incident and directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) commissioner, deputy commissioner of police concerned and the investigating officer of the case to appear before it on Friday. "You are permitting multi-storey buildings but there is no proper drain. Your civic authorities are bankrupt. If you don't have money to pay salaries, how will you upgrade infrastructure? You want freebie culture. You're not collecting any money, so you're not spending any money," the ACJ orally



Police personnel guard IAS coaching institute in Old Rajinder Nagar, where three students died due to drowning, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Rajan Dimri/Pioneer

remarked during the hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking a "high-level" probe into the three deaths. He continued, "We ask MCD to carry out projects. Any project above Rs 5 crore they say will be approved by Standing Committee. But there is no Committee. Yesterday, one plan they said has to go to Cabinet. What's the next date of cabinet meeting, nobody knows! You have to decide on this freebie culture. There is a population of 3.3 crore people in this city whereas it was planned for 6-7

lakh people. How do you plan to accommodate so many people without upgrading infra?" The bench opined, "Multiple institutions are working together in Delhi, which is a beautiful strategy because no one agency is ever responsible. You just shift blame onto one another and no one takes accountability." The bench expressed dismay and identified multiple issues, including unauthorized infrastructure operations and financial constraints preventing the civic bodies from improving

infrastructure. The bench said a "strange probe" was going on with Delhi Police taking action against a man who drove a car outside the coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar here but not acting against MCD officials. "Have they lost it? What is Delhi Police doing? What are its officials doing? This is a cover up or what? Has some official been held accountable for the incident till now? We are telling you, once the responsibility is fixed on officials, no such incident will ever happen in future," the bench said. It also directed the authorities to remove all encroachments on drains in the Rajinder Nagar area by Friday. "This is such a serious incident. There is infrastructure failure in the city at a large scale," the bench said, adding that the situation is absolutely chaotic at the ground level and wondered if these civic authorities even exist at the ground level. The court said the construction of multi-storey buildings was being allowed but there was no proper drainage. The court further opined, "There is a disconnect between what people need and what they are being provided."

# Anger in Bengal Congress after chief Adhir removal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There is considerable discontent in the Bengal Pradesh Congress over the "unceremonious shove" given to the State party president Adhir Chowdhury. While according to the political grapevine Rajya Sabha member Pradip Bhattacharya may succeed Chowdhury no one is sure whether the transfer of the baton could be smooth and without protest. After five consecutive terms Chowdhury lost his Behrampur parliamentary seat to Trinamool Congress' Yusuf Pathan in the recently held Lok Sabha elections apparently making it easier for the top Congress leadership to sacrifice him in order to mollify coddle Banerjee. This, amid allegations from the PCC that the TMC and the BJP joined hands to create a thoroughly communally charged atmosphere to defeat Chowdhury who had been creating problems for the Chief Minister. In fact she had vowed to defeat Chowdhury from Behrampur. Referring to Chowdhury's removal a PCC leader said, "it is very difficult to find a replacement of Adhir Chowdhury ... The Congress



cannot afford to lose a leader like his temperament and stature ... There will be a void without Adhir Chowdhury as the state president. He was the last man standing against both the TMC and the BJP. He took the pressure from the national leadership but did not budge from his anti-TMC stand." Another PCC member considered to be straight talker said, "there is no problem in changing the PCC president but we want a fighter like Adhir Chowdhury who got only humiliation in return of his tireless contribution to the party ... it is during his tenure that after many decades the PCC looked like a united, fighting group ... we don't want a president or a unit that foot-licks Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee." True, the Bengal Congress is vertically divided between pro and anti-Mamata Banerjee Bhattacharya factions with the latter half far out-numbering the former. Numerically,

Incidentally Chowdhury had himself expressed a veiled dissatisfaction over his dismissal from the post saying he got to know about his removal only in the meeting. "I was aware that the meeting had been called under my presidency and I was still the PCC president but during the meeting, Ghulam Ali Mir said, 'the former president is also here.' ... it was at the time, I got to know I had become former president," he said. Senior party leader Deepa Dasmunshi said that the situation was tricky in Bengal which was witnessing a polarized atmosphere as never before. "There is a predicament," she said adding how both the Congress and the TMC were the part of the INDIA alliance in Delhi but were opposite each other in Bengal. "The fact is we are against the TMC and the BJP in Bengal but in Delhi Congress and the TMC are parts of INDIA alliance ... it is also that the situation in Bengal is unprecedented as the atmosphere is communally polarized ... so things will have to be reevaluated and organization strengthened," she said not dwelling on whether Chowdhury's removal was good for the party.

# Villages in South Goa oppose Sunburn fest for promoting drug culture

PTI ■ PANAJI

Several villages in South Goa district have passed resolutions against the Electronic Dance Music (EDM) Sunburn Festival, which is likely to be held by the end of this year, alleging that it promotes drug culture. The stakeholders of the tourism industry, however, came out in support of the festival, saying that such events generate revenue for the state. Seven villages in South Goa — Chicalim, Carmona, Nuvem, Varca, Sarzora, Chinchinim and Camorlim — during their Gram Sabha meetings held on Sunday decided to oppose the Sunburn Festival 2024. These villages passed the resolutions, in which they decided not to give permission for the festival, claiming that it fuels drug culture in the State. The resolution mentioned that the Sunburn Festival should not be held in Goa as it is a "hub for sale of drugs and also results in several problems for locals including traffic congestion".

# Karnataka Gov seeks response from CM on MUDA 'scam'

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot has sought a "response" from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to allegations relating to the distribution of sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority, including to his wife Parvathi, sources in the Congress government said on Wednesday. The move comes after a delegation of BJP Legislators met the Governor on July 25 and submitted to him a memorandum seeking transfer of the MUDA case to CBI for a probe and resignation of the Chief Minister. "Since a memorandum is submitted, it is imperative for the Governor to seek a reply from the Chief Minister. Accordingly, the Governor has asked the Chief Minister to respond to it," sources in Raj Bhavan said. Referring to the Governor's action, Home Minister G Parameshwara said there is reason to believe that it was politically motivated. "He (Gehlot) has been given some Constitutional powers. He should function within its framework. It will give rise to doubts if he crosses the threshold. There are



suspicions that politics is happening," Parameshwara told reporters in the district headquarters town of Bagalkote. "The Governor has moved further to issue a show cause notice. We will have to consider it as politically motivated," he added. Karnataka Information Technology and Biotechnology Minister Priyank Kharge alleged that the Governor is being "misused" by the BJP. "You have seen Governors in Tamil Nadu, earlier in Maharashtra and West Bengal. In some places these Governors are misusing their Constitutional position. Even the Supreme Court has made its observations. Several articles have also appeared on how the Governors are interfering in the functioning

of the Government exceeding their limits," Kharge told reporters. "It appears, here too, the same thing is happening. Already we have said that I-T (Income Tax Department) and ED (the Enforcement Directorate) are being used. Isn't it that they (BJP) are using them (Governors)," the Minister said. According to him, there are no instances of the Governor immediately asking for a reply soon after a memorandum is submitted. "During the Ballari mining scam there were strong evidences for the Governor to act but in MUDA case there is nothing," he said. "The BJP has got a standard operating procedure to let the I-T, ED loose (on its opponents) and misusing the Governors," Kharge alleged.

# Zika virus testing can now be done at AIIMS Rajkot

PTI ■ RAJKOT

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Gujarat's Rajkot has been recognised as a facility for the screening of Zika virus, cutting down on the need for swab samples to be sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) at Pune in adjoining Maharashtra, an official said on Wednesday. "Our centre has been recognised for the screening of Zika virus (by Indian Council of Medical Research). We have received kits from the NIV, and are going to begin the tests very soon," said Ashwini Agarwal, professor and head of the department of microbiology at

AIIMS Rajkot. He said the new testing centre at AIIMS will become operational from next week. Agarwal informed that the central government has also sanctioned a biosafety laboratory at AIIMS Rajkot that deals with highly infectious and pathogenic organisms. "BSL 3 (biosafety level 3) lab has been sanctioned, and its construction will begin next month," he said. After the centre for Zika virus testing at AIIMS Rajkot becomes operational, results of samples of suspected cases will be known within 24 hours. When samples from Gujarat were sent to the Pune-based



NIV, it took from one week to up to a month for confirmation. "The centre will make the test results of suspected Zika virus patients known within 24 hours. Samples collected for surveillance purpose will take some time," he said.

The Zika virus disease is transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, which is also known to transmit infections like dengue and chikungunya. The virus was first identified in Uganda in 1947. Thirteen cases of Zika virus — three from Karnataka and 10 from Maharashtra — were reported till July 22 this year, Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel had said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. In 2023, the country had witnessed 23 cases of Zika virus, while two infections were seen in 2022 and 234 in 2021. Gujarat had last reported three cases of the disease in 2017. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated Gujarat's first AIIMS at Rajkot on February 25 this year. Spread across 201 acres, Rajkot AIIMS is a world-class hospital with 720 beds, including the ICU. The multispecialty medical facility was built at a cost of Rs 1,195 crore.

# Crackdown on coaching...

From Page 1

"The committee will comprise five to six representatives of coaching institutes, students and officials of the departments concerned. This committee will comprehensively address all the issues related to regulation, exorbitant rental by landlords, fire clearances, desilting of drains and other immediate needs of the students to create a conducive educational environment fulfilling all parameters. The Committee shall prepare long term and short term action plan for gradually shifting the coaching institutes from various locations to a well planned area," said Ashish Kundra, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor. The Chief Secretary shall take up the matter of formulation of guidelines/regulatory framework for coaching institutes/tuition classes, in line with the guidelines framed by the Education Ministry, in the larger interest of students. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will facilitate site visits for representatives of coaching institutes at identified locations in Narela and Rohini, as a first step for establishment of an education hub that would accommodate all coaching institutes. Any coaching institute running library or teaching

facility in the basement would be sealed immediately. It was agreed that as a short term measure, the institutes, especially the larger ones would assist the students by providing them spaces as reading rooms on other floors of their buildings. According to Raj Niwas, the federation of coaching institutes agreed to offer a fair compensation to the bereaved families of the three deceased students. They also offered to give a discount in the fee in the current academic session to enrolled students who have suffered mental agony and disruption in studies. The Raj Niwas officials said the panel will comprehensively address all issues related to regulation, exorbitant rentals, fire clearances, desilting of drains and other immediate needs of students. "Commissioner MCD may convene a meeting of the Fire department to clarify the regulatory framework of fire clearances and building by-laws. Police Commissioner to also ensure sensitization program for all beat constables, local SHOs, so as to provide sympathetic and proactive support to the students as and when required," they said. At the meeting student representatives shared their plight arising out of the stranglehold of property brokers, who overcharged

rentals. They highlighted the prevalence of a cash economy in settling the rentals and other payments. They also highlighted that institutions that taught ethics as a subject, were themselves guilty of unethical practices. Even electricity tariff being charged by landlords was as high as Rs 24 per unit, which was well beyond residential tariffs. Cramped accommodation and teaching facilities were handed down even in the face of exorbitant fee being charged. They also raised the issue of non-existence of any Grievance Redressal Mechanism for students and lack of basic facilities within the coaching institutes and the difficulty in securing refunds. According to officials during the open exchange, different stakeholders brought out their own perspectives and suggestions for an enduring solution to the problem, in the short as well as long term. "At one level, the absence of regulatory clarity was highlighted, with multiple agencies being responsible for different activities. Diverse sets of rules under various agencies have created layers of compliances. The need for clarity in relation to fire safety norms was also underscored. Absence of civic infrastructure—especially drainage was highlighted," officials added.

# CM: Reach out to investors who gave up on Andhra

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday directed officials to reach out to industrialists and investors who had forged agreements with the state but later abandoned them due to alleged mishandling by the erstwhile YSRCP government. The Chief Minister highlighted that he himself will step in to woo them back if needed during a review of the Department of Industries today, which delved on the deals signed in the past 10 years. "Negotiate with the industrialists who turned their backs on the state even after forging agreements with it due to the policies of the YSRCP government. If needed, I will personally talk to them," Naidu said in an official press release. According to the CM, the erstwhile TDP government between 2014 and

2019 had signed agreements worth Rs 16 lakh crore and alleged that the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government had later driven them away with its policies. Officials informed the CM that land pooling for industrial needs was allegedly diverted for other purposes during the YSRCP regime, which included setting aside 1,382 acres of land for welfare house sites. The TDP chief underscored that 14,125 acres of land was made available through 64 industrial parks between 2014 and 2019 and observed that only 31 such parks were made available by the YSRCP government. Noting that this kind of discouraging developments dampened the spirit of investors, Naidu exhorted that there is a new need to instill confidence in industrialists. Instructing officials to speed up work in the projects which have



already taken off, the CM called for the completion of projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore within this year to enable the employment of over 1.3

lakh people. Further, he directed officials to come up with five new policies on industries, MSMEs, food processing, electronics, IT and cloud and textiles within the next 100 days. Naidu emphasised that the policies should be good enough to attract investments with a conducive environment. Moreover, he also directed officials to design policies to turn the southern state into a green hydrogen and green energy hub. Similarly, he called for the drafting of proposals to create four new industrial clusters and procure Central Government approvals, adding that the clusters could come up at Kuppam, Mulapeta, Chilamathuru and Donakonda or Pamuru. Naidu also deliberated on the Rs 11,542 crore bulk drug park at Nakkapalli, Rs 60,000 crore NTPC green hydrogen hub and others.

# CM refutes Shah's alert...

From Page 1

The Landslide Warning System of the Geological Survey of India was totally silent about the landslides that would strike the district, alleged the chief minister. Kerala goes by the reports received by the various central agencies and the State had made all arrangements in synch with the warnings and forecasts received by it. Meanwhile rescue and relief teams drawn from Indian Army, Indian Navy and Coast Guard assisted by IAF are leaving no stones unturned to save life and property in Mundakkai and other areas devastated by landslides and downpour. At the time of going to Press, the district of Wayanad experienced heavy downfall and environmentalists warn about possibilities of more landslides. John Peruvanthanam, environmental activist stated that the chief minister's charge that Central agencies did not issue timely warnings should be taken with a pinch

of salt. "All of us were reading about the warnings issued by the meteorological departments for days but what has happened is that the State administration did not take it seriously," said John. Jayan, a 40 Plus looking laborer working in a plantation at Chooralmala near Mundakkai told reporters that 11 members from his wife's family were missing. "We identified the body of a child that was recovered from Chaliyar river in Nilambur in Malappuram district as one of my relative's. We have only got three dead bodies so far and the remaining are still missing," Jayan, yet to recover from Tuesday morning's landslides, told reporters. He said most of the houses in Chooralmala were washed off by the gushing boulders "thrown" out because of the landslides. The Chief Minister asked the people to donate cash to the chief minister's relief fund and not to send the same to any other agencies. He also

asked the people not to send any materials to the landslide affected areas. In Parliament, Congress and BJP members indulged in a war of words in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday during a Calling Attention Motion on Wayanad landslides issue. BJP MP Tejaswi Surya attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has represented Wayanad, alleging that he never raised the issue of landslides in his constituency. His remarks led to protests by Congress members forcing Speaker Om Birla to briefly adjourn the proceedings. When the House resumed proceedings, Congress MP KC Venugopal asserted that as Wayanad MP, Rahul Gandhi had raised the issue of eco-sensitive Wayanad on several occasions. He claimed that Surya was trying to sabotage the debate and he will have to apologise for making "false claims" about the Congress leader. "House records will prove that Rahul Gandhi has raised the issue several times," Venugopal said.

# Rain brings Delhi, NCR...

From Page 1

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) earlier stated that the clouds have converged over Delhi from all four sectors resulting in widespread light and moderate rainfall with isolated intense to very intense spell of three to five centimeter per hour. IMD advised people to avoid going to areas that face water logging problem often, check for traffic congestion on your route and be updated with weather warning. "Moderate to intense spell of rain over parts of Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas very likely to cause slippery roads, low visibility, disruption in traffic and localised water logging in low lying areas," the met department said. Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius. On Tuesday, Delhi recorded its highest maximum temperature for the month this year, with the mercury settling at 39.3 degrees Celsius, five notches above normal.

# Students' safety...

From Page 1

The school authorities have to ensure all necessary steps at their level to avoid water logging in and around the school premises. The guidelines mandated that the principals should ensure the basements, if any in school buildings, shall be used only for permissible activities as per provisions of the Master Plan and as per the sanctioned plan. "All gates of the school buildings shall be functional and opened for entry and exit. The access to the basement shall be properly marked and clearly indicated in the school evacuation plan. All the corridors shall be free from obstructions at all times and smooth passage be ensured," said the circular. School corridors and staircases shall be regularly checked for water accumulation and requisite necessary action to be taken, it said. "Electrical wirings and fittings, including appliances shall be checked.



# Hamas leader Haniyeh killed in alleged Israeli strike

AP ■ BEIRUT



Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed by a predawn airstrike in the Iranian capital Wednesday, Iran and the militant group said, blaming Israel for a shock assassination that risks escalating the conflict even as the US and other nations were scrambling to prevent an all-out regional war. Iran's supreme leader vowed revenge against Israel.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has pledged to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's October 7 attack on southern Israel. The strike came just after Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iran's new president in Tehran — and only hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital Beirut. The assassination of Hamas' top political leader was potentially explosive amid the region's volatile, intertwined conflicts — because of its target, its timing and the decision to carry it out in Tehran. Most dangerous was the potential to push Iran and Israel into direct confrontation if Iran retaliates.

"We consider his revenge as our duty," Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a statement on his official website. He said Israel had "prepared a harsh punishment for itself" by killing "a dear guest in our home."

Bitter regional rivals, Israel and Iran risked plunging into war earlier this year when Israel hit Iran's embassy in Damascus in April. Iran retaliated and Israel countered in an unprecedented exchange of strikes on each other's soil, but international efforts succeed-

ed in containing that cycle before it spun out of control. Haniyeh's killing could also prompt Hamas to pull out of negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage release deal in the 10-month-old war in Gaza, which US mediators had said were making progress. And it could inflame already heightening tensions between Israel and Hezbollah — which international diplomats were trying to contain after a weekend rocket attack that killed 12 young people in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Tuesday evening, Israel carried out a rare strike in the Lebanese capital that it said killed a top Hezbollah commander allegedly behind the rocket strike. Hezbollah, which denied any role in the Golan strike, said Wednesday that it was still searching for the body of Fouad Shukur in the rubble of the building that was hit in a Beirut suburb, killing two women and two children, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. There was no immediate reaction from the White House to the killing of Haniyeh. A key question was whether Israel told its top ally

the US ahead of time about the strike.

Asked about Haniyeh's killing during a visit to Singapore, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "This is something we were not aware of or involved in."

Speaking to Channel News Asia, Blinken said he would not speculate about the impact on cease-fire efforts. "But I can tell you that the imperative of getting a cease-fire, the importance that that has for everyone, remains."

In Manila, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said he still had hopes for a diplomatic solution on the Israeli-Lebanon border. "I don't think that war is inevitable," he said. "I maintain that. I think there's always room and opportunity for diplomacy, and I'd like to see parties pursue those opportunities."

But international diplomats trying to defuse tensions were alarmed. One Western diplomat, whose country has worked to prevent an Israeli-Hezbollah escalation, said the double strikes in Beirut and Tehran have "almost killed" hopes for a Gaza cease-fire and could push the Middle East into a "devastating regional war." The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation.

An Israeli military spokesman declined to comment. Israel often doesn't comment on assassinations carried out by its Mossad intelligence agency or strikes on other countries. In a statement by his office, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel doesn't want war after its strike on the Hezbollah commander in Beirut, "but we are preparing for all possibilities." He did not mention the Haniyeh killing.

The killing of Haniyeh abroad comes as Israel has not had a clear success in killing the group's top leadership in Gaza, who are believed to be primarily responsible for planning the October 7 attack, after nearly 10 months of fighting in the enclave.

Earlier this month, Israel carried out a strike in Gaza targeting the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, killing at least 90 Palestinians living in nearby tents, according to Gaza health authorities. Israel said it believed Deif was killed, but neither it nor Hamas has confirmed his death.

More elusive has been Hamas' top leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, believed to be the mastermind of Hamas' brutal surprise assault into southern Israel, during which militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted 250 others.

Haniyeh left the Gaza Strip in 2019 and had lived in exile in Qatar. Israel has targeted Hamas figures in Lebanon and Syria during the war — but going after Haniyeh in Iran was vastly more sensitive. But Israel has operated there in the past: It is suspected of running a yearslong assassination campaign against Iranian nuclear scientists. In 2020, a top Iranian military nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was killed by a remote-controlled machine gun while traveling in a car outside Tehran. During Haniyeh's last hours in Iran — a close ally of Hamas — he was smiling and clapping at the inauguration ceremony of the new President Masoud Pezeshkian. AP photos showed him seated alongside leaders from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group and Hezbollah, and Iranian media showed him and Pezeshkian

## China flays Haniyeh killings; warns of deeper chaos

Beijing (PTI): Strongly condemning the assassination of the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, China — which brokered a unity deal between various Palestine groups last week — on Wednesday warned that the killing could plunge the region into deeper chaos.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here that Beijing strongly opposed the assassination of Haniyeh, whose Hamas group took part in the unity talks along with 14 Palestine factions in Beijing sponsored by China. Haniyeh, Hamas' supreme leader, was killed in an airstrike in Tehran early Wednesday. He was in exile and was on Israel's hit list after the militant group launched a surprise attack on Israel on October 7 last year. "China has always advocated resolving regional disputes through

negotiation and dialogue," Lin said, adding that China was "deeply concerned" that the incident could lead to further turmoil in the region. He also reiterated China's call for a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Gaza to avoid further escalation of the conflict. Last week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry which coordinated the dialogue among 14 rival factions, said the declaration was a first step to promote a "comprehensive, durable and sustainable ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip battered by Israeli bombing. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who met the leaders' factions, said the signing of the agreement was "an important, historic moment in the Palestinian cause." He had also said that under the deal the rival groups had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern post-war Gaza.

## 'Palestinians detained by Israeli authorities faced torture'

Geneva (AP): The UN human rights office issued a report Wednesday saying Palestinians detained by Israeli authorities since the October 7 attacks faced waterboarding, sleep deprivation, electric shocks, the release of dogs, and other forms of torture and mistreatment.

The report said Israel's prison service held more than 9,400 "security detainees" as of the end of June, and some have been held in secret without access to lawyers or respect for their legal rights. A summary of the report, based on interviews with former detainees and other sources, decried a "staggering" number of detainees — including men, women, children, journalists and human rights defenders — and said such practices raise concerns about arbitrary detention.

"The testimonies gathered by my office and other entities indicate a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees, amongst other acts, in flagrant violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law," said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk in a statement. Findings in the report, one of the most extensive of its kind, could be used by International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutors who are looking into crimes committed in connection with Hamas' October 7 attacks and Israel's blistering ongoing military campaign in Gaza.

## Sudan's military says its top commander survived drone strike that killed five

AP ■ CAIRO

Sudan's military said its top commander, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, survived a drone attack on a military graduation ceremony that killed five people in the country's east. The military said in a statement Wednesday that the attack by two drones took place in Gebelit, a town in eastern Sudan, after the ceremony was concluded. Military chief Burhan, who was attending, was not hurt, according to Lt. Col. Hassan Ibrahim, from the military spokesman's office.

Sudan has been torn by war for more than a year between the military and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid

Support Forces. With fighting in the capital, Khartoum, the military leadership largely operates out of eastern Sudan near the Red Sea Coast. Videos posted by Al Araby TV shows multiple people running along a dusty road at the time of the drone attack, while other footage showed people at the graduation ceremony apparently looking to the sky as the drone strike hit.

The assassination attempt comes nearly a week after Sudan's paramilitary leader said that he plans to attend cease-fire talks in Switzerland next month arranged by the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, head of the Rapid

Support Forces fighting Sudan's army, emphasized at the time that the talks would become "a major step" toward peace and stability in Sudan and create a new state based on "justice, equality and federal rule." The Sudanese Foreign Ministry on Tuesday responded to the U.S. invitation to the talks in Geneva, saying the military-controlled Sudanese government is prepared to take part but said that any negotiation before implementing the Jeddah Declaration "wouldn't be acceptable to the Sudanese people." The Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect Civilians passed last year meant to end the conflict, but neither side commit-

ted to its objectives. Representatives from the Sudanese Army and the RSF, led by Mohamed Hamadan Dagalo, engaged in revived talks brokered by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in Jeddah, focusing on the delivery of humanitarian aid, achieving ceasefires and paving the way toward a permanent cessation of aggression, among other objectives. In its Tuesday statement, the Sudanese Foreign Ministry accused the RSF of being the only party that attacks cities, villages and civilians. The military-controlled Sudanese government demanded sanctions to be imposed on "rebels to stop their continuous aggression, end their siege on cities, and open roads."

## Mosque targeted, around 40 police officers injured at UK stabbing site

PTI ■ LONDON

A far-right mob targeted a mosque in north-west England that saw three young girls fatally stabbed during a peaceful vigil in their memory and around 40 police officers suffered injuries in the disorder. According to reports, misinformation being spread on social media about the ethnicity and religion of the 17-year-old male suspect in police custody led to the rioting at the mosque in Southport on Tuesday night. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who had earlier visited the site of Monday's brutal stabbing attack on a dance

studio on Hart Street, condemned the mobs for hijacking the vigil and insulting the grieving community with their actions. "The people of Southport are reeling after the horror inflicted on them yesterday. They deserve our support and our respect," said Starmer.

"Those who have hijacked the vigil for the victims with violence and thuggery have insulted the community as it grieves. They will feel the full force of the law," he said. Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Bebe King, 6, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, were named as the victims of the fatal stabbing. Eight others were seriously injured, five of

whom remain in critical condition in hospital. Merseyside Police have said it was currently not treating the incident as terror-related. "There has been much speculation and hypothesis around the status of a 17-year-old male who is currently in police custody and some individuals are using this to bring violence and disorder to our streets. We have already said that the person arrested was born in the UK and speculation helps nobody at this time," said Alex Goss, Assistant Chief Constable of the force.

The police said 22 of its officers sustained serious injuries, including fractures, lacerations, a suspected broken nose and concussion. The rioters set cars belonging to members of the public alight, threw bricks at the local mosque and damaged a local convenience store, and set large refuse bins on fire.

As a result, strict legal orders have been enforced in the area designed to minimise serious violence and giving additional powers to officers to tackle anti-social behaviour. "Sadly, offenders have destroyed garden walls so they could use the bricks to attack our officers and have set cars belonging to the public on fire, and damaged cars parked in the Mosque car park."

## About 8 in 10 Democrats satisfied with Harris after Biden drops out: Poll

Washington (AP): Vice President Kamala Harris appears to have energized Democrats in the early days of her candidacy, with the surge in warm feelings extending across multiple groups, including some key Democratic constituencies that had been especially tepid about President Joe Biden, a new poll shows.

About 8 in 10 Democrats say they would be somewhat or very satisfied if Harris became the Democratic nominee for president, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which was conducted after Biden withdrew from the race.

In a separate AP-NORC poll, taken before Biden dropped out but after his debate against former President Donald Trump, only about 4 in 10 Democrats said they were somewhat or very satisfied that he was the Democratic Party's likely nominee for president.

The rapidly changing views among Democrats in such a short time span underscore how swiftly the party — from rank-and-file voters to elected officials — has coalesced behind Harris as its standard-bearer, motivated by the fresh face at the top of the ticket and newfound confidence in the party's prospects against Trump in November. Gary Hines, a Democrat from Philadelphia, said he wasn't particularly impressed by Harris' first presidential bid but now, she's shown "she's up to the task, can do the work, has proven that she's running a strong campaign so far and maybe on a bigger level, she's somebody



that can beat Donald Trump." All those factors have ignited an enthusiasm in Hines that wasn't there when Biden was still in the race, he said.

"I really want to go out and maybe knock on doors, which I would've never done," said Hines, 68. "It's jazzed me up quite a bit." Americans are also more likely to say that Harris would make a good president than they were earlier in July, a shift that was primarily driven by Democrats. They still see a tough contest looming, though: A majority of U.S. adults, 56%, say that if Trump and Harris are their parties' nominees for the general election in November, Trump is more likely to win. Lauren Schulman, a Democrat from Pompano Beach, Florida, said she admires Biden and what he has accomplished during his presidency. But she said with him at the top of the ticket, "I have just been so terrified that we were going to lose."

## 'China behind 2021 cyberattack on govt agency'

AP ■ BERLIN

An investigation has determined that "Chinese state actors" were responsible for a 2021 cyberattack on Germany's national office for cartography, officials in Berlin said on Wednesday. The Chinese ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Ministry for a protest for the first time in decades.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Sebastian Fischer said the German government has "reliable information from our intelligence services" about the source of the attack on the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy, which he said was carried out

"for the purpose of espionage." "This serious cyberattack on a federal agency shows how big the danger is from Chinese cyberattacks and spying," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement. "We call on China to refrain from and prevent such cyberattacks. These cyberattacks threaten the digital sovereignty of Germany and Europe." Fischer declined to elaborate on who exactly in China was responsible. He said a Chinese ambassador was last summoned to the German Foreign Ministry in 1989 after the Tiananmen Square crackdown. Germany's attribution of the cyberattack is the latest case to reflect increasing ten-

sions between Berlin and Beijing about potential security risks posed by China. In April, three people were arrested in Germany on suspicion of spying for China and arranging to transfer information on technology with potential military uses. And an assistant to a prominent German far-right lawmaker in the European Parliament was arrested on suspicion of spying for China. Three weeks ago, Germany said it will bar the use of critical components made by Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE in core parts of the country's 5G networks in two steps starting in 2026. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government last year drew up a

strategy for relations with China that refers to a "systemic rivalry" with the Asian power and a need to reduce risks of economic dependency, but highlights Berlin's desire to work with Beijing on challenges such as climate change and maintain trade ties. The strategy drew criticism from Beijing. In the 2021 case, the Interior Ministry said that part of the cartography agency's network was compromised but further malware wasn't found. It said the attacker was successfully kicked out of the network, and the agency — which provides official geodata for Germany — undertook a series of measures to improve its IT security.

## Carter Center unable to verify Venezuela poll results, blasts officials



Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, left, and opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez hold up vote tally sheets from the top of a truck during a protest against the official presidential election results declaring President Nicolas Maduro the winner in Caracas, Venezuela, on Tuesday two days after the election. AP/PTI

AP ■ CARACAS

The Carter Center said it was unable to verify the results of Venezuela's presidential election, blaming authorities for a "complete lack of transparency" in declaring Nicolas Maduro the winner without providing any individual polling tallies. The statement Tuesday night by the Atlanta-based group is perhaps the harshest rebuke yet of Venezuela's chaotic election process because it comes from one of just a handful of outside groups invited by the Maduro government to observe the vote.

"The electoral authority's failure to announce disaggregated results by polling station constitutes a serious breach of electoral principles," the Carter Center said. The group, which had a technical mission of 17 experts spread out in four cities across Venezuela, added that the election did not meet

international standards and "cannot be considered democratic."

The Carter Center's harsh criticism capped a second long day of protests against the results by opponents of Maduro who said their candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, trounced the incumbent by a more than two-to-one margin.

Maduro's government hasn't taken lightly to the criticism and ratcheted up their attacks on their opponents Tuesday, with some allies suggesting the opposition's most influential leader and a presidential candidate be arrested.

A day after Maduro was declared the winner by a National Electoral Council that is loyal to him and the ruling party, the attacks, which were aired on national television, followed the opposition's surprise release of detailed voting data that it said shows that Edmundo Gonzalez won by a landslide.

## Storm disrupts high-speed trains from Paris

Paris (AP): A local storm on Wednesday interrupted all high-speed train traffic connecting Paris to the southeast of the country as well as Switzerland in both directions, France's rail company said, leaving thousands of travellers stranded amid the Olympics and departures for summer vacation. The SNCF said all the fast trains leaving from and arriving at the Gare de Lyon train station in the French capital were immobilised due to a tree that fell on the tracks and was hit by a train in Burgundy. Regular-speed trains use separate tracks and haven't been affected. Authorities cut the power off the track, but initial observations showed the matter won't be fixed quickly, the SNCF said, adding that all on that line were being brought back to a station in order to help people.

## 'US-Mexico border arrests expected to drop by 30%'

San Diego (AP): United States-Mexico border arrests have plummeted about 30 per cent in July to a new low for Joe Biden's presidency, US authorities said, raising prospects that a temporary ban on asylum may be lifted soon.

The US Border Patrol is expected to arrest migrants about 57,000 times during the month, down from 83,536 arrests in June, the previous low mark of Biden's presidency, according to two US Customs and Border Protection officials who spoke to The Associated Press on Wednesday on the condition of anonymity because the figures had not been released publicly. It would be the lowest monthly tally since 40,507 arrests in September 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic slowed movement across borders in many countries, including to the United States.

Even before Biden's Democratic administration invoked powers to suspend asylum on June 5, border arrests had fallen by about half from a record-high of 250,000 in December amid increased Mexican enforcement. Since June 5, arrests have fallen by half again, helping the White House fend off attacks by former President Donald Trump and other

Republicans that Democrats, including Vice President Kamala Harris, have allowed the border to spiral out of control. The asylum halt would end if daily arrests drop below 1,500 over a seven-day average, a scenario that Customs and Border Protection officials are preparing for with arrests now hovering 1,600 to 1,700 day. The halt would be reinstated if arrests reach a seven-day daily average of 2,500, a threshold of "emergency border circumstances" that was immediately met when the restrictions took effect in June. Immigrant advocacy groups are challenging the asylum measures in court. Under the halt, US authorities deny a chance at asylum to anyone who crosses the border illegally.

Unaccompanied children are exempt, and others may seek asylum-like forms of protection that allow them to stay in the United States with a higher bar and fewer benefits, like the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Asked to comment on July numbers, the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday referred to a statement last week that arrests had dropped 55 per cent since asylum restrictions took effect.



# Stock markets rise for 4th day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by nearly 286 points to close at a record high while Nifty settled above 24,950 level on Wednesday, extending their winning run to the fourth day on gains in metal, power and select auto shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex settled higher by 285.94 points or 0.35 per cent at 81,741.34 — its all-time closing high — with 20 of its components advancing and 10 ending lower. The index opened higher and jumped 372.64 points or 0.45 per cent to hit an intra-day high of 81,828.04.

The NSE Nifty rose 93.85 points or 0.38 per cent to close at an all-time high of 24,951.15. During the day, it surged 127.3 points or 0.51 per cent to hit a high of 24,969.35.

"The domestic market is attempting to cross above the psychological threshold of 25,000, as subdued Q1FY25 earnings and stretched valuations are curbing the challenge, while positive global trends and sector rotation are supporting the



traction," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Positive global sentiment driven by expectations of an easing interest rate cycle by the US Fed and the RBI in the medium term, owing to benign inflation, ignited the rally, he added.

As expected, the BoJ raised its interest rate while all eyes are on US Fed policy to be announced later in the evening.

Among the Sensex stocks, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, Maruti Suzuki India, NTPC, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Bharti Airtel, ITC and Tech Mahindra were the major

gainers.

Maruti Suzuki rose by 2.28 per cent as the auto major reported a 47 per cent jump in its net profit for the June quarter. Reliance Industries, Tata Motors, Infosys, Mahindra and Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and Axis Bank were the laggards.

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities, said Nifty ended comfortably in the green ahead of the FOMC outcome, closing just shy of the psychological 25,000 mark, signifying the bulls' continued strength on Dalal Street.

Investors now await key data releases and the FOMC outcome, with expectations

set on Jerome Powell's commentary, Tapse said.

The US Federal Reserve (Fed) will announce its fifth interest rate decision for this year later in the night, after a two-day meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). From this meeting, the Fed might offer hints about a possible rate cut in September.

"Indian shares began Wednesday on a positive note, buoyed by strong cues from other Asian markets amid expectations for additional stimulus measures from Beijing to support its ailing economy," Avdhut Bagkar Technical and Derivatives Analyst at StoxBox, said.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped to a life-time peak of Rs 462.38 lakh crore (USD 5.52 trillion) on Wednesday helped by a four-day rally in benchmark indices, making investors richer by Rs 5.45 lakh crore.

At the market close, the BSE smallcap gauge fell 0.14 per cent to in the broader market. However, BSE MidCap gauge jumped 0.86 per cent. During the day, both the indices hit their all-time high level.

# India's smartphone shipments dip 2% in Q2 2024 as heatwave, slower demand take toll

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's smartphone shipments fell two per cent year-on-year in June quarter, hurt by the heatwave and slower demand, as per a report by global research firm Counterpoint that showed Xiaomi reclaimed top spot in volume share and Samsung led in value terms.

Notably, 5G smartphones captured their highest-ever share of 77 per cent in the overall shipments, according to Counterpoint's Monthly India Smartphone Tracker.

Another key takeaway was that India's smartphone market hit its highest ever Q2 value, driven by the ongoing trend of premiumisation.

"India's smartphone shipments fell 2 per cent YoY in Q2 2024 (April-June)," it said.

The decline was influenced by a heatwave, a seasonal slump, and slower demand from Q1 2024.

"In response, OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) hosted sales



events in Q2 to clear inventory, leading to a reduced sell-in and a period of degrowth," it said.

On the market's volume dynamics, Senior Research Analyst Shilpi Jain explained that heatwave conditions in various regions led to lower footfalls in offline channels and delayed smartphone purchases as consumers prioritised appliances like air-conditioners and refrigerators.

This reduced demand led to

an inventory build-up. However, summer sales at online channels, good harvest and aggressive promotions towards the end of the quarter provided relief to OEMs, helping close the quarter on a better note than at the beginning.

"During the quarter, Xiaomi reclaimed the top spot with a 23 per cent YoY growth in its shipments, driven by a streamlined and focused portfolio that spans from the entry-level to affordable

premium segments," Counterpoint said.

Xiaomi reclaimed the top spot with an 18.9 per cent shipment share, and Vivo followed closely with 18.8 per cent share.

On value dynamics, Research Analyst Shubham Singh said: "In Q2 2024, India's smartphone market achieved its highest ever Q2 value, driven by the ongoing trend of premiumisation."

Consumers continued to upgrade to higher-value smartphones, supported by better trade-in values and easy financing schemes.

This resulted in a 24 per cent YoY growth in the ultra-premium (over Rs 45,000) segment.

Samsung led the market in terms of value with a 25 per cent share, followed by vivo and Apple.

"Meanwhile, Apple ranked third in value terms. But it is expected to rebound in the next quarter, driven by the recent price cuts across the entire range of iPhones," Singh said.

# Toyota to set up manufacturing plant in Maharashtra; likely to invest ₹20 K crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automaker Toyota Kirloskar Motor on Wednesday said it will set up a new manufacturing plant in Maharashtra at an investment of around Rs 20,000 crore.

The company has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Maharashtra government to examine the setting up of a greenfield manufacturing facility at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) said in a statement.

Headquartered in Karnataka, TKM already has two manufacturing units located at Bidadi near Bengaluru.

In Karnataka, the automaker, including its group companies, has invested more than Rs 16,000 crore and created close to 86,000 jobs in the entire value chain, it said.

Toyota's cumulative export contributions also stand at around Rs 32,000 crore thus representing the company's export focus, it added.

"Today's MoU signing



marks a pivotal point as we stride into the next phase of growth in the country enabling us to contribute to enriching lives with qualitative mobility solutions locally and globally," TKM Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Masakazu Yoshimura said.

The proposed investment, once finalised, is expected to be made over a multi-year period, potentially contributing to substantial job creation and economic growth in the region.

In a social media post on

X, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis shared the investment figure of Rs 20,000 crore for the plant.

"Transforming Maharashtra! Reaffirming its commitment to India; Toyota Kirloskar Motors is set to launch a Green Field Manufacturing Facility in Maharashtra!" he posted.

TKM currently has an installed production capacity of 3.42 lakh vehicles at its two Bidadi units.

# Encora expands strategic partnership with Cloud Software Group

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Encora has announced plans to expand its strategic relationship with Cloud Software Group to include extended product engineering and support.

The pact includes product development and engineering services under a managed services model, supporting the evolving needs of global businesses of Cloud Software Group (CSG), a release said on Wednesday.

As part of the existing partnership, Encora has established and operates a "TIBCO" Center of Excellence (CoE) and Academy in India. The centre employs over 350 engineers across technologies, contributing to the development, quality assurance, and support for the TIBCO platform and other key products.

"With the intent to build on the existing strategic relationship, Encora and Cloud Software Group have expanded the scope of engagement to include



extended product engineering and support," according to the release.

While Cloud Software Group provides enterprise with mission-critical software, the Santa Clara, California-headquartered Encora is a technology modernisation and innovation partner to enterprise companies.

Encora's portfolio includes digital engineering services, including product engineering and development, cloud services, quality engineering, data and analytics, digital experience, cybersecurity, and Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Model (LLM) Engineering, among others.

# SoftBank-backed Unicommerce to float IPO on August 6

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SoftBank-backed SaaS platform Unicommerce eSolutions Ltd will launch its Initial Public Offering (IPO) on August 6.

The initial share sale will conclude on August 8 and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on August 5, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP).

The issue is entirely an Offer For Sale (OFS) aggregating up to 2.56 crore equity shares by the selling shareholders.

Since the IPO is completely an OFS, the entire proceeds will go to the selling shareholders.

Under the OFS, SB Investment Holdings (UK) Ltd, an affiliate of Japan's SoftBank, will offload 1.61 crore shares and promoter AceVector Limited (formerly known as Snapdeal Limited) will sell up to 94.38 lakh shares.

Founded in 2012, Unicommerce eSolutions is India's leading e-commerce enablement Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform. The company's suite of SaaS solutions enables end-to-end management of e-commerce



operations for brands, retailers, marketplaces and logistics service providers.

It serves a large and growing base of clients in India including Lenskart, FabIndia, Zivame, TCNS, Mamaearth, Emami, Sugar, BoAt, Portronics, Pharmeasy, Cello, Urban Company, Mensa, Shiprocket, Xpressbees.

In February, Unicommerce had said it is expanding its overseas operations by onboarding more clients.

It is already serving 46 clients in Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia and is now expanding these operations by adding more clients.

According to a Redseer Report, the Total Addressable Market (TAM) for players in

the eCommerce enablement SaaS in the transaction processing or nerve centre layer was estimated at about USD 1.2 billion in 2023. This growth is driven by the increasing market potential for core products in this layer, an opportunity to broaden the product portfolio, and international expansion prospects in SEA and the Middle East.

Specifically, in India, the TAM for core products in the transaction processing layer was approximately USD 260 million in 2023.

IIIFL Securities and CLSA India are the book-running lead managers to the issue. Shares are proposed to be listed on BSE and the National Stock Exchange.

# Rupee closes 1 paisa higher at 83.72 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day higher by 1 paisa at 83.72 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by month-end Dollar demand from importers.

Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows and overnight surge in crude oil prices weighed on the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic currency opened 1 paisa higher than the previous day's close.

It slipped to 83.75 during the day and settled for the day 1 paisa higher at 83.72 (provisional) against US dollar. On Tuesday, the rupee closed flat at 83.73 against the American currency.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on month-end dollar demand from importers and oil marketing companies (OMCs). However, a positive tone in the domestic markets and weak US dollar may support the rupee at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. Any fresh intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may also support the rupee, he said.

"Investors may watch out for the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting outcome on Wednesday and



Bank of England's monetary policy on Thursday. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.50 to Rs 84," he said.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 285.94 points to hit an all-time high of 81,741.34, while Nifty rallied 93.85 points to a record 24,951.15.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.36 per cent to 104.17.

"The US dollar fell on Wednesday after the Bank of Japan raised interest rates by 15 bps to 0.25 per cent from 0.1 per cent, leading to a sharp surge in the yen. Other Asian currencies, too, appreciated on weakness in the US dollar," Choudhary said. Brent crude — the global oil benchmark — went up 2.26 per cent to USD 80.41 per barrel in futures trade.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, offloaded shares worth Rs 5,598.64 crore, according to exchange data.

# Omaxe may challenge Sebi order barring firm, chairman, MD from securities market for 2 yrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Omaxe will consider challenging market regulator Sebi's order that barred the company, its Chairman Rohtas Goel, Managing Director Mohit Goel and three others from the securities market for two years for misrepresentation in the company's financial statements.

The Sebi order had a negative impact on the company's share prices. The stock of the company on Wednesday declined 4.99 per cent to Rs 152.20 apiece -- its lower circuit limit -- on the BSE.

It fell 5 per cent to hit the lower circuit limit of Rs 154.19 per piece on the NSE.

Asked about the Sebi order and its future course of action, the Omaxe spokesperson said, "The company has not received any order from Sebi. Once received, the content will be verified and appropriate remedy available under the law, including filing of appeal will be contemplated."

"As per news articles, it appears more in the nature of accounting interpretations, which were duly explained through documentation, market practice and case laws. Rest we will be filing our response to stock exchanges within the stipulated time frame, on receipt of order," the spokesperson added.

In its 126-page final order, Sebi has also restrained three others -- Sudhangshu S Biswal, Arun Kumar Pandey,



and Vimal Gupta — from the securities markets.

Additionally, these five persons have been prohibited from holding any position as Director or Key Managerial Person of any other listed company for a period of two years."

Apart from these, the regulator has levied a fine totalling Rs 47 lakh on 16 entities, including these six. The penalties range from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 7 lakh need to be paid within 45 days.

Sebi said these entities have "acted in concert in order to execute a fraudulent scheme that they tried to portray as normal transactions for the benefit of the company although it was experiencing loss, while also trying to portray these as merely lending activities, thereby trying to maintain the price of the scrip of Omaxe for a period of three years."

The company misrepresented the financial statements during 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 through its various items -- revenue, debtors, advances, and expenses.

"By the act of large-scale

misrepresentation/misstatement/manipulation in financial statements by Omaxe, the scrip price was directly or indirectly manipulated to maintain the value of the collateral kept by the promoter against the loan," Sebi noted.

Furthermore, the fraud was never disclosed to shareholders of Omaxe, which misled them to remain invested in its shares or deal in its securities. Also misrepresentation of the books and accounts of Omaxe misled the investors in the securities market, it added.

Accordingly, Sebi has barred six entities, including Omaxe, Rohtas Goel, Mohit Goel, and three others from "accessing the securities market and further prohibited from buying, selling or otherwise dealing in securities, directly or indirectly, or being associated with the securities market in any manner, whatsoever, for a period of two years."

The order came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) received a complaint against Omaxe alleging that the company conducted fraudulent transactions, diverted/siphoned of funds, misrepresented the financial statements, inflated turnover among others.

As these allegations were serious in nature, the matter was taken up for further examination by Sebi, including a forensic audit into the affairs of Omaxe.

# Key jute sector issues feature at advisory committee meeting

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Indian Jute Mills Association highlighted several pressing issues at the 32nd Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting in New Delhi, including the challenges faced by the sector due to declining demand for jute bags, officials said.

Key stakeholders such as representatives from the sugar and plastic industry bodies participated in the meeting on Tuesday.

The SAC makes recommendations to the Union government on the mandatory use of jute packaging materials, and packaging norms for essential commodities such as foodgrains and sugar.

The Jute Commissioner's Office (JCO) stressed upon the need for supporting the sector, the IJMA officials said.

An estimated 40 million farmers and 3.5 lakh jute mill workers are dependent on the industry.

The representatives of sugar industry bodies raised concerns about the pricing and quality of jute bags, urging the government to fix rates for sugar jute bags.

"They also noted the reluctance by major buyers like some beverage giants to use jute bags, despite environmental benefits," said industry sources present at the meeting.

The non-compliance with government notifications by the sugar industry was also a



cause for concern, they said.

Plastic industry representatives sought the removal of "discouraging language" about plastic bags in the Jute Packaging Materials Act (JPMA), the sources said.

"The jute industry is operating at 55 per cent capacity, affecting over 50,000 workers. The demand for jute bags is projected to drop to 30 lakh bales for 2024-25," IJMA Deputy Chairman Rishav Kajaria said.

The IJMA also urged the SAC for immediate government intervention in enforcing 100 per cent reservation norms in foodgrain and sugar packaging in 2024-25.

Other key issues discussed at the meeting include revising policies on the use of used jute gunny bags, addressing financial constraints due to the GeM portal pricing cap, initiating investigation into subsidised jute imports, and ensuring strict compliance with labour laws and wage agreements, the officials said.

The jute industry contributes over Rs 12,000 crore to the rural economy, but is faced with challenges as raw jute prices fall below MSP levels, they added.

# Gold rises ₹350; Silver jumps ₹1,100

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 350 to Rs 71,950 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, taking cues from domestic demand and global trends.

In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at Rs 71,600 per 10 grams.

Silver prices jumped Rs 1,100 to Rs 85,600 per kilogram on Wednesday. It had closed at Rs 84,500 per kg in the previous trade, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also increased by Rs 350 to Rs 71,600 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 71,250 per 10 grams.

The commodity market experts suggested that the gold demand in the Indian markets remains high, driven by the recent import duty cuts and the upcoming festive season.

"Participation in gold has been on an increasing trend. The prices of the yellow metal may further firm up correction as some participation continues to increase. We believe that prices of gold will increase from its current prices," Chintan Mehta, CEO of Abans Holdings, said.

Globally, Comex gold is trading higher at USD 2,465.50 per ounce, up by USD 13.60 per ounce from the previous close. "Comex gold extended gains following a 1 per cent gain yesterday, holding well above USD 2,400 per ounce buoyed primarily by safe-haven buying in response to the recent airstrike in Beirut by Israel," Kaynat Chainwala, at Kotak Securities, said.



# Sindhu storms into Olympics women's singles pre-quarterfinals

PTI ■ PARIS



against He Bingjiao mostly. I hope I take this confidence and go forward. It's not going to be easy, especially in the next coming rounds, so I have

to be prepared and be 100%," Sindhu said after the match. The Indian ace has previously won a silver medal in the 2016 Rio Games and a bronze in

the Tokyo edition. "I think it's one match at a time and obviously I want that medal and I feel really happy when people say that

we want a hat-trick from you, we want that medal from you. "But at the same time, it comes with a lot of responsibilities, a lot of pressure but it's important for me to just stay calm and just keep going and just one match at a time because yeah, you can't expect easy wins, you have to fight hard to earn it."

Just like in her first match, Sindhu did not have to toil much, as the gulf in class between the two players was evident. The Estonian, ranked 73rd in the world as against the 13th position of the Indian, was completely out of sorts in the first game which Sindhu pocketed in 14 minutes. The 27-year-old Kuuba gave a fight in the second game,

making a lot of retrievals, but Sindhu was just too good for her. Kuuba took a 2-0 lead but Sindhu quickly seized the initiative and levelled the score. But Kuuba did not throw in the towel and engaged the Indian in longer rallies.

There was one rare moment when Sindhu was stretched to the maximum near the net and Kuuba smashed the shuttle beyond the reach of the Indian.

But the vastly experienced Sindhu was in her elements soon after.

Two cross-court smashes gave Sindhu a 15-6 lead and from there on, it was all over for the Estonian, who saved two match points before surrendering.

## Sen stuns Christie to enter men's singles pre-quarterfinals

PTI ■ PARIS



India's Lakshya Sen progressed to the pre-quarterfinals of the Olympics men's singles badminton competition with a stunning straight-game win over Indonesia's world number 4 Jonatan Christie in the final group match here on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old from Almor, a 2021 world championships bronze medalist, displayed great maturity and tactical acumen to outwit Christie, the reigning All England and Asian champion, 21-18 21-12 in what turned out to be a lop-sided contest.

Sen is likely to face compatriot HS Prannoy in the pre-quarterfinals. Prannoy will face Vietnam's Le Duc Phat later in the day. Sen had defeated Kevin Cordan, a Tokyo Olympics semifinalist, in the opening Group L match on Sunday which was "deleted" after his Guatemalan opponent pulled out due to a left elbow injury.

A gold medalist at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Sen beat Julien Carraggi of Belgium before facing Christie.

The only time the Indian had defeated Christie was four years ago at the Badminton Asia Team Championships and came into this match with a dismal 1-4 head-to-head record.

However, Sen rose to the occasion on Wednesday and showed great maturity as he went about his business. He tried to keep the shuttle flat and target the weak forehand of Christie, who looked to slow down the rallies and used his cross

court shots at the corners to trouble the Indian, albeit without much success.

In the first game, Christie opened up a 5-0 lead and soon moved to 8-2. However, Sen regrouped quickly, kept the shuttle flat and waited for his opponent to make mistakes.

It worked as he moved to 7-8 before a thunderous forehand smash earned the Indian a slim one-point advantage.

Sen engaged Christie in fast and flat exchanges to move to 14-12, and the latter slowed down the pace with a gruelling rally, which he won with a push at the backline.

The Indonesian drew parity at 16-16 with a precise cross-court smash, which a diving Sen couldn't reach and soon eked out a two-point lead at 18-16. A straight smash from Sen was followed by a wide smash from Christie, and it was 18-18.

A perfect flat push and then an incredible behind-the-back return in the middle of the next rally gave Sen game point and he converted it easily to earn the bragging rights.

## Olympics bet against climate change with Seine swimming

AP ■ PARIS

With plans for athletes to swim the Seine River through the heart of Paris, Olympic organisers essentially bet against climate change's extreme weather. For several days it appeared they would lose - by ditching the swimming portion of triathlon races.

It wasn't until early Wednesday, after the men's race had been postponed a day and test events called off, that organizers announced the most recent tests showed the water met standards to allow swimming.

Some scientists and engineers said organizers were taking a huge gamble at a time when heavy rains have increased with human-caused climate change, especially in Europe. The rains run off from the urban environment and contribute to higher bacteria levels in the city's famed river.

"They just gambled, flipped the coin and hope for a dry season and it turned out to be the rainiest in the last 30 years," said Metin Duran, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Villanova University who has researched stormwater management.

Organisers "had worked through most of the scenarios related to computer hacking and physical threats without fully assessing the implications of extreme events associated with climate," said University of Arizona climate scientist Kathy Jacobs, who directs the Center for Climate Adaptation Science and Solutions. "It's definitely time to take climate threats seriously."

If any city could be expected to be mindful of the challenges of climate change, it's Paris. It's where the most significant climate agreement in history was struck almost a decade ago - to try to limit Earth's warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.

## Quarters berth sealed, Indian men's hockey team set for first real test against Belgium

PTI ■ PARIS

Assured of a quarterfinal berth, India will aim for consistency when they take on reigning champions Belgium in their tough penultimate Pool B match of the Olympic Games here on Thursday. The Red Lions are leading Pool B with three wins from as many matches, while the Indians are a rung below in the second place with two wins and a draw.

Mighty Australia are placed third with seven points from two wins and a loss. Argentina have also qualified for the quarterfinals with four points from three games, which includes a win, a draw and a

loss. New Zealand and Ireland are out of the race after suffering three consecutive losses. Only the top four can make the last-eight stage cut. The Indians started their campaign on a shaky note with a close 3-2 win over New Zealand and then scored a last-minute goal to salvage a draw against former champions Argentina.

But against Ireland, it was a completely different performance from the Indians, at least in the first two quarters. They dominated the possession with one-touch play to score two goals in the first quarter which proved vital in the end. India skipper Harmanpreet



Singh once again rose to the occasion, first converting a penalty stroke and then finding the net from a set piece in the second quarter to hand his side the win. The Indian mid-field, led by veteran and four-time

upfront by keeping the pressure on the opposition defence.

Against Ireland on Tuesday, India opted for one-to-one short passes to build their attacks, instead of going for aerial balls.

Right-back Jarmanpreet Singh has been a revelation in the tournament so far and was omnipresent, be it in defence or creating chances from flanks.

Another player who deserves credit is Amit Rohidas, who produced a rock solid performance at the back. He defended the penalty corners brilliantly being the first rusher and from one-on-one situations.

## At 55, Georgian shooter shows up at record 10th straight Olympics to fulfil father's last wish

PTI ■ CHATEAURoux (FRANCE)

Nino Salukvadze had all but decided to bid adieu to her pistol after nine Olympic appearances, which yielded three medals, until she lost her father, whose "last wish" pushed her to compete in an unprecedented 10th Games.

The 55-year-old, who was Georgia's flagbearer at the opening ceremony, became the first woman and only the second athlete overall after Equestrian show jumper Ian Millar to compete in a 10th consecutive Summer Games. Her first two Olympic medals, a gold and silver in 25m pistol and 10m air pistol, came in the 1988 Games in Seoul where she represented the USSR before she completed the set with a bronze for Georgia 20 years later in Beijing.

Salukvadze said she found the resolve to give it another shot here here when she recalled her father Vakhtang Salukvadze's words, which to her, seemed like a final wish.

"He never asked me for anything, so I think maybe it was his last wish," said the veteran, who will be



competing in the 25m pistol qualifications on Friday. Stuningly, she stills holds the junior world record in this event. She touched that landmark in 1989 and it has only been equalled by India's Manu Bhaker, who is putting on quite a show here with bronze medals in 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team events.

While the 22-year-old Bhaker is relling in her newfound stardom and rise in stature, Salukvadze is enjoying her swansong. Battling issues with her right eye, the veteran is certain that she is in the middle of her Olympic farewell.

"After Tokyo I thought I had finished, but my father, who

was my coach - he died this year - told me, 'Maybe you will cry (if you don't carry on). It is only three years, not four years (since Tokyo 2020),' she recalled.

"I thought 'Ok, I will try'. He was a very good coach because our sport is very psychological. Now it is a competition with my mind."

Salukvadze is a role model back home and also a perfect ambassador of global sports fraternity. During the Beijing Games, she made quite a statement by giving a friendly peck to Russian silver-medallist Natalia Paderina on the podium despite their countries being at war with each other.

Besides her father's wish, Salukvadze wanted to be present at the Paris Olympics to also push for gender equality.

"When I was told I had a quota place representing Georgia, I wanted to take this pistol and throw it into the air. Only one man has ever done this before - a horse rider from Canada - so maybe this is good for women's equality," she said.

## Defending champion US women fall to Germany in pool play in 3x3 basketball

AP ■ PARIS

The defending champion U.S. Women lost to Germany 17-13 on Tuesday in the opening game of pool play in 3x3 basketball at the Paris Olympics.

Hailey Van Lith led the U.S. With six points. But she was struggling after the game, and she said she believes the heat exacerbated an illness she already was dealing with.

"I think I actually have a cold," she said. "I think it was from the rain in the opening ceremony. So, I think it's a combination of that, but I'll be fine. I played through it in the NCAA Tournament, so there's nothing that's going to take me out." Sonja Greinacher had five points and six rebounds for Germany. Marie Reichert added five points.

The U.S. Raced out to a 5-0 lead, but Germany scored the next six points, including three from Elisa Mevius.

Van Lith made a layup before dishing to Dearica Hamby for another basket to cut Germany's advantage to 11-10 with about three minutes to go.



Greinacher made a 2-point shot for Germany before another basket by Van Lith got the U.S. Within one again with about 90 seconds remaining. This time, Germany scored the next four points on two each from Greinacher and Reichert. "It obviously gives us a lot of self-confidence going forward," Greinacher said.

Cierra Burdick was disappointed in the team's Olympic opener, but she said it isn't surprising that they still haven't been playing together that long. Hamby replaced Cameron Brink on the team this summer after Brink sustained a knee injury.

Katherine Plouffe sealed it when she made a basket before hitting a 2-pointer to give Canada 22 points with 1:22 left on the clock.

Wilson led Australia with six points and six rebounds. SPAIN 18, AZERBAIJAN 16Gracia Alonso and Vega Gimeno scored five points each as Spain outlasted Azerbaijan.

Spain trailed by one before scoring the next eight points to make it 14-7 with less than three minutes to go.

Azerbaijan responded with a 4-0 run to get within three with about 1:30 remaining. Spain took advantage of a turnover to score the next three points, capped by a 2-pointer from Gimeno, to push the lead to 17-11.

Azerbaijan closed to 17-14 on a free throw by Dina Ulyanova with six seconds left, but Gimeno added a free throw for Spain.

Tiffany Hayes made a pair of free throws for Azerbaijan to cut the lead to two with one second left. But the clock ran out before Azerbaijan could do anything else.

## Simone and Team USA earn redemption by powering to gold in women's gymnastics

PTI ■ PARIS

Simone Biles, Jordan Chiles and Sunisa Lee spent the night before perhaps the biggest gymnastics meet of their lives restless.

There was a tension in the air. They'd all been in the Olympic spotlight before, experiences that left them with medals but also the kind of scars - be they physical, psychological or both - that heal but never really go away. And here they were in Paris, the leaders of a star-laden U.S. Team everyone expected to finish atop the medal stand, and something wasn't right.

In a different time, in a different era, it might have festered. Might have followed them onto the floor at Bercy Arena and into the history books, too.

This is not a different time. This is not a different era. This is now. So the oldest team the U.S. Has ever sent to the Olympics, including a trio

that has spent their respective careers breaking barriers about what a female gymnast can and can't do, what they can and can't be, did something they never used to do.

They talked, with Biles - three years removed from a Tokyo Games that dragged the conversation around mental health and sports kicking and screaming into the light - right in the middle of it.

"I think there was a little bit of struggle," she said. "So it was really needed."

By the time they walked onto the floor for the Olympic final, the tension was gone, largely replaced with joy.

And not soon after, gold. The self-described "Redemption Tour," the moniker given to a team filled with women who wanted to return to the Games for deeply personal reasons, ended with Biles and the Americans where they have almost always been since she burst onto the scene 11 years



ago: on top of the podium, the rest of the world looking up. Eight years after winning gold in Rio with a team that called Aly Raisman grandma because she was all of 22, Biles - now 27 and married - was back again with Jade Carey (24), Chiles (23), Lee (21) and teenager Hezly Rivera at her side.

"We don't have to be put in the box anymore," Biles said about a group that has dubbed itself "The Golden Girls." No, they don't. With Biles at her show-stopping best, the Americans' total of 171.296 was well clear of Italy and Brazil and the exclamation point of a yearlong run in which Biles has cemented her legacy as

the greatest ever in her sport, and among the best in the history of the Olympics.

"She's the greatest of all greats," said Chiles, who now has gold to go with the team silver she, Lee and Biles earned in Tokyo, when Biles removed herself from the team final to protect herself. Chiles, who seemed like a longshot to make it this

spring after injuries piled up, was pretty good in her own right. She began the night by drilling her double-twisting Yurchenko vault, sending the Americans on a four-apparatus stop on their "Tour" that felt equal parts coronation and celebration.

By the time Biles, the left calf that bothered her during qualifying heavily taped, stepped onto the floor for the final event - a floor exercise set to music by Taylor Swift and Beyonce - it was over.

She joked she knew she simply needed to stay on her feet to win. She did more than that, providing an exclamation point on the U.S.'s third gold in its last four trips to the Games. The Americans remain peerless (if not flawless, this is gymnastics after all) when at their best.

And over two hours in front of a crowd that included everyone from tennis great Serena Williams to actor Natalie Portman, Biles left

little doubt about anything. Her status as the sport's greatest of all time. Her ability to move past the "twisties" that derailed her in Japan. Her spot in the pantheon of the U.S. Olympic movement.

She now has a staggering 38 medals in major international competitions. Eight of those have come under the Olympic rings, moving her past Shannon Miller for the most by an American gymnast.

Yet her return wasn't so much about winning. That's never really been the point anyway, just a byproduct of her unparalleled excellence. It was about a joy she had lost somewhere along the way.

It seems to have returned. She leaned into the crowd that roared at every flip, every leap and, yes, every twist. With her husband - on break from NFL training camp - waving an American flag while sitting next to her parents, Biles did what she has done so well for so long save for a couple of difficult days in Japan during

a pandemic: she dominated. Biles met with her therapist in the morning to put her in the right mindset. There was brief - very brief - moment of trepidation as she raced down the vault runway, the event that began to spin out of control in Tokyo.

Only this time, she essentially stuck her Cheng vault, the one that sends her spinning through the air in a fraction of a second.

Afterward, she exhaled. "I was like Yes, please no flashbacks or anything," Biles said. "But I did feel a lot of relief. And as soon as I landed I was like 'Oh yeah, we're going to do this.'"

Yes they were. Just like always. The only real drama centered on who would finish next to the Americans on the medal stand.

Italy, which was a surprising second to the U.S. During qualifying, returned to the podium for the first time since 1928 by holding off Brazil for silver.



# Gambhir praises India's tenacity but calls for further improvement on turning pitches

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Head coach Gautam Gambhir praised India for pulling off a tenacious Super Over win in the low-scoring third T20I against Sri Lanka for a series whitewash, but called for consistent improvement on pitches assisting sharp turn. In a contest delayed by an hour due to rain here on Tuesday, India struggled against both spin and pace on a fresh pitch to make a mere 137/9. But the Suryakumar Yadav-led side showed doggedness in the second half despite Sri Lanka's domination to force the contest into a Super Over, restricting the hosts to 137/8 from 129/4 after 18 overs, and eventually winning the match to seal a 3-0 win. "Guys, congratulations on a great series win. Congratulations to Surya as well, outstanding captaincy and with the bat as well. I asked for something before the start of the game and you absolutely delivered it. This is what happens when you keep fighting, (and when) you don't give up," Gambhir told the team in a dressing room chat shared by



BCCI on X. "These kind of games happen and the only way these key games can happen (in favour) is when we keep fighting on every delivery and for every run and this was the example." Gambhir, however, urged the team to keep working on improving collectively on turning tracks which posed a

different challenge to the batting group in particular. "We keep getting better, we keep improving our skills as well because we still need to get better on playing on wickets like these, because we might end up getting these kind of wickets (in future). So we should first assess the situation and conditions

really quickly and what is the par score as well," he said. Gambhir urged players, who are not a part of the three-match ODI series starting on Friday, to enjoy their break but at the same time, keep working on their fitness. "Some of the guys will not be a part of the 50-overs format will have a longer break, so

make sure when you come back for the Bangladesh series...You can take a break. You absolutely deserve it, but more importantly, keep your skills and especially the fitness levels high." "You don't want to come for that series thinking that 'okay, I can just turn up, probably deliver for the team. So make sure that from the fitness point of view, the fitness levels are right up there," he said. Hardik Pandya praised Shubman Gill and Riyan Parag for their gritty 54-run stand which pulled India out of trouble. "In batting first, we were challenged, the conditions were difficult, but after losing those early wickets, Shubman and Riyan, the way they batter and created the partnership was brilliant," he said. "When you speak about situational awareness, at that point of time what both of you did was very, very important. That gives us a platform to at least reach to a decent total (to which) our bowlers can make sure and bowl at the right areas," he said. Pandya praised Washington

Sundar (25 off 18 balls) and Ravi Bishnoi (8) for their respective contributions highlighting the importance of runs from lower order batters. "I always emphasise on the fact that the lower order has to come and chip in, and Washy and those eight runs by Bishi (Ravi Bishnoi) was very important," he said. Pandya also praised Suryakumar for his inspired bowling changes, with the India skipper bringing on Rinku Singh (1-0-3-2) for the penultimate over and himself for the last over (1-0-5-2) which turned the game on its head. "As Gauti bhai mentioned, Surya, well done in making sure that the way you rotate the bowlers, showing faith in the bowlers which you gave (the ball to) in the last couple of overs that was brilliant and as a bowling group, obviously, it was fantastic," he said. "When you win games like this, eventually it kind of takes us forward. We are taking it step-by-step, but this was definitely a right step going forward for the future and well done to all the guys who are playing ODIs, kill it, continue," Pandya added.

## Italy wins gold in women's team epee fencing to disappoint passionate French crowd again

AP ■ PARIS

The fans atencing are among the loudest and most passionate at the Paris Olympics, especially when France is challenging for a gold medal. They usually leave disappointed. Italy overcame a passionate "Marseillaise"-singing crowd at the Grand Palais to hand France its fourth fencing silver medal of the Games in the women's team epee Tuesday. Alberta Santuccio got the winning touch for Italy in overtime against France's Auriane Mallo-Breton to complete a hard-fought 30-29 win for gold. It was the second time that Mallo-Breton lost a Paris Olympic final by a single point after a 13-12 loss to Hong Kong's Vivian Kong Man Wai in the individual epee Saturday. French fencers are 0-3 in finals against non-French opponents at the 2024 Olympics, with those losses coming in epee events. The host nation's only gold came when Manon Apithy-Brunet beat her teammate Sara Balzer in the women's saber final on Monday. "If you look at the (epee) finals, of course we seem to be losing, but we're in the finals

all the same," Mallo-Breton said Tuesday through an interpreter. "I think that in the teams, there are possibilities to go and get some wonderful medals, and we hope that the other (French) teams will be able to go and do that, so we're going to be supporting them." Team fencing involves squad members fencing one-on-one in a rotating sequence that means everyone gets to face each opponent once. Despite the overtime loss, Mallo-Breton was still France's standout in the final with a combined record of 14-10 against all opponents. Italy has one gold, one silver and one bronze medal so far in fencing. Five more team events remain. Polish fencer Aleksandra Jarecka was shaking on the floor with emotion after winning her team bronze. Jarecka tied the score with less than three seconds to go and then won the tiebreaker point for a 32-31 overtime win against China. Just before that was an unexpected twist when an apparent glitch with the scoring system seemed to give Poland an extra point in the last minute, only to take it away.

## Swiatek remains on course for another title

AP ■ PARIS

For almost five full games at the Paris Olympics, No. 1-ranked Iga Swiatek's high-bouncing topspin shots were being sent back over the net by No. 52 Wang Xiyu of China with crushing baseline groundstrokes of her own. Wang even held a break point that would have given her a 3-2 lead in the opening set. Then Swiatek restored the expected order on Court Philippe Chatrier - the site of her four French Open titles - and won four straight games to close out the first set along the way to advancing to the quarterfinals with a 6-2, 6-4 victory amid stifling conditions on Tuesday. "It's never about only one player," Swiatek said. "I was aware that she can play great tennis. And I accepted that some points she can really take advantage. But I wanted to really be intense and push in the right moments. Also be patient and not slow down. So I think my intensity worked and in important moments I was the one that was more solid." In part because of Swiatek's dominance on the red clay at Roland Garros, where the Olympic tennis tournament is being held, the 23-year-old from Poland is favored to add a gold medal to her growing collection of big titles.



Swiatek's quarterfinal opponent will be eighth-seeded American Danielle Collins, who eliminated Camila Osorio of Colombia 6-0, 4-6, 6-3. Second-ranked Coco Gauff was left fuming over a perceived missed officiating decision in a 7-6 (7), 6-2 loss to Donna Vekic of Croatia. Angelique Kerber, the 36-year-old German who has won three Grand Slam titles and used to be ranked No. 1, beat 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez of Canada 6-4, 6-3 to become the oldest women's quarterfinalist since tennis returned to the Olympics in 1988. Kerber has said the Paris Games will be the final tournament of her career. Anna Karolina Schmiedlova of Slovakia eliminated Jasmine Paolini - the Italian who was the runner-up at the French Open and Wimbledon this year - 7-5, 3-6, 7-5. Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine rallied past seventh-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4.

## It's amazing leadership from big hearted Suryakumar: Washington Sundar

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Suryakumar Yadav's ability to stake risks at crucial junctures of the game like using Rinku Singh in the penultimate over and himself in the final one won India the third and final T20I against Sri Lanka, said all-rounder Washington Sundar. In a low scoring match on Tuesday, India pulled off a stunning win with Suryakumar making some interesting bowling changes towards the end of Sri Lankan

innings. Chasing 138, Sri Lanka were cruising towards a comfortable win when they needed 12 runs from the last two overs with six wickets in hand, but Suryakumar introduced Rinku Singh in the penultimate over who returned 1-0-3-2, and brought himself on in the final over to take a couple of more wickets and stun Sri Lanka. In the Super Over, Sri Lanka lost two wickets in just four balls as India knocked off the target of three runs on the first ball itself with Suryakumar



hitting a four to seal a series clean sweep. "Honestly, it's amazing of him, amazing of his leadership skills to be honest because (with) 12 balls (left and) 12 (runs) to win and for him to bring Rinku (on), especially when Kushal Perera is batting, and Rinku got him out and Surya (then) himself came in the last over and won the game for us," Sundar told the media after the match. "We all know he has a big heart when he goes out there to bat but also he has a big heart in terms of leadership

as well. All the credits to him and (it was) amazing of him." Sundar said it was Suryakumar who kept on insisting that India must take wickets in the middle overs to maintain pressure on Sri Lanka, even though the hosts remained in command during the run chase. "Surya kept telling us that one or two wickets in between game would definitely change and obviously in these kind of games, low scoring games, even run-a-ball would put a lot of pressure on the batsmen

because they need to get the job done especially when the wicket has something for the bowler," he said. "He kept saying that (with) one or two wickets in the middle, especially in the middle overs between 11 to 15, (we) will definitely be in the game and exactly that's what happened. "I hope the audience enjoyed the game because you won't see such games every now and then but to be a part of this kind of a game and to be a part of this game honestly feels great," he added.

## Daniel of Ireland wins Olympic gold and also hopes to pick up some new YouTube followers

AP ■ NANTERRE, FRANCE

Daniel Wiffen won Ireland's first Olympic gold medal in the pool in 28 years. That was thrilling enough as he wiped away tears standing on the podium, the Irish flag draped over his shoulders. Perhaps just as importantly, the 23-year-old Irishman is sure to pick up some new followers on his YouTube channel - a pitch he made when asked how people can learn more about a swimmer who is largely unknown outside his country. "People should watch," Wiffen said after winning the 800-meter freestyle on Tuesday night. "I blog every week - show you exactly what an Olympic champion does day-in, day-out in the pool." Get ready for a flood of fans, Daniel. Wearing round glasses and



looking studious, Wiffen cried as the Irish anthem played in La Defense Arena. He may not look the part of an Olympic champion, but his performance in the pool says otherwise. Wiffen will be back later in the Paris Games, hoping to win another gold on Sunday in the 1,500 meters - the final day of competition in the pool. "I don't normally cry, so I really

hope nobody is going to see that," Wiffen said. "But it did come out of me, and it's obviously just a special moment. I've never heard that national anthem from an Olympics before." Wiffen surged past Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri on the final lap, looking as fresh as he did at the beginning of the grueling race. He won in 7 minutes, 38.19 seconds, overpowering defending Olympic champion Bobby Finke (7:38.75) of the United States and Paltrinieri (7:39.38). Mona McSharry won bronze for Ireland's first medal of these Games on the previous night in the 100 breaststroke. "I was dying the last 20 meters," Wiffen said. "I'm not sure if you saw that, because my arms are in absolutely so much pain. But I knew that the crowd is gonna

carry me in, and that's exactly what happened. Then I saw the red light on the block, and that was it." Until these Olympics, Ireland's swimming history was essentially confined to Michelle Smith de Bruin, who surprisingly claimed three golds and a bronze at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics amid suspicions she was doping. She later received a drug ban that essentially ended her career, but she kept her medals. Wiffen was not asked about Smith de Bruin as he huddled with reporters, primarily Irish who were not looking to spoil a special night. "To be honest - it's going to sound really weird to say - I've dreamt of this moment so many times in my head, I've gone over it so many different ways of how it was going to happen," he said.

## France, Germany, Canada clinch Olympic basketball quarterfinal berths

AP ■ VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, FRANCE

France's miracle last-second comeback at the Paris Games got even better a few hours later, when the host nation clinched a spot in the quarterfinals and a trip to Paris for the knockout round next week. Also now officially in the Olympic quarterfinals: Germany and Canada. And on Wednesday, the winner of the U.S.-South Sudan game also will have a spot in the quarterfinals all wrapped up. The field for the medal round began taking shape Tuesday, especially after reigning World Cup champion Germany pulled away from a halftime tie and beat Brazil 86-73 in the final game of the evening. That victory came just after France got a four-point play from Matthew Strazel to tie the game late in

regulation and beat Japan 94-90 in overtime behind 18 points from Victor Wembanyama. Those results left France and Germany atop Group B at 2-0 and ensured of the top two spots in the group over Brazil and Japan, both of whom are 0-2. Canada's win over Australia earlier Tuesday also pushed it to 2-0 and now assured of no worse than a wild-card spot in the quarterfinals. "I just heard that," Germany forward Franz Wagner said about clinching the spot in the quarterfinals. "Honestly, I didn't know. It's good." There are three different groups of four teams in the Olympic tournament; the top two finishers in each group make the quarterfinals, and the final two spots in the next round go to the best third-place teams in group play.

# Kaylee still rules Olympic backstroke

AP ■ NANTERRE, FRANCE

When it's time to race, Kaylee McKeown is sure hard to beat. American Regan Smith came into the women's 100-meter backstroke at the Paris Olympics with the world record and no shortage of confidence. At the turn Tuesday night, it was Smith in the lead with McKeown right on her heels. By the time they reached the other end of the pool, it was the Aussie lunging there first. McKeown still rules the backstroke. "She is an absolutely incredible racer and she knows what to do when it matters," Smith said. Smith, who broke McKeown's world mark with a time of 57.13 seconds at the U.S. Trials

last month, led at the turn but couldn't hold off the hard-charging Aussie, who defended the title she won in Tokyo three years ago. McKeown surged to the front about halfway through the return lap and reached for the wall in 57.33, winning by a relatively comfortable margin over Smith's finish of 57.66. "The nerves were definitely there but I just reminded myself it's a pool in a different venue, and I train every single day of my life," McKeown said. The U.S. Also grabbed the bronze as Katharine Berkoff touched third in 57.98, capturing her first Olympic medal and following in the footsteps of her father, David Berkoff, who won four medals - two of them gold - in Seoul and Barcelona. Smith reached over the lane

to congratulate McKeown, but this one had to sting. The 22-year-old Minnesota native appeared to be in top form and primed to win her first gold medal. Instead, it was McKeown capturing her fourth gold overall. She swept the backstroke events in Tokyo and also claimed a relay gold. "It's one race at a time," McKeown said. "I've checked off three boxes so far and there's a few more to go." American swimmers are getting used to silver It was a night of silvers for the Americans, who took the runner-up spots in all three of the finals. Bobby Finke came up short in defense of his Olympic title in the men's 800 freestyle, relegated to silver by Ireland's



Daniel Wiffen. The Americans also finished second in the men's 4x200 freestyle behind Britain, which captured its second straight gold in that event. Through four days at La Defense Arena, the U.S. Has a bunch of medals - 15 in all - but only two of them are gold.

Seven silvers and six bronzes round out the tally. Irish win first swimming gold since 1996 Wiffen won Ireland's first gold medal in swimming since scandal-plagued Michelle Smith finished first in three events at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Wiffen surged past Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri on the final lap, looking as fresh as he did at the beginning of the grueling race. Actually, he was in excruciating pain. "I was dying the last 20 meters," Wiffen said. "I'm not sure if you saw that, because my arms are in absolutely so much pain. But I knew that the crowd is gonna carry me in, and that's exactly what happened. Then I saw the red light on the block, and that was it." Wiffen won in 7 minutes, 38.19 seconds, climbing on the lane ropes to hold one finger skyward. Finke also came on strong late in what was essentially a three-man race, also passing Paltrinieri to take

the silver in 7:38.75. The bronze went to the Italian, who posted a time of 7:39.38. It was another dazzling performance by an Irish swimmer, on the heels of Mona McSharry grabbing a bronze in the 100 breaststroke the previous night. Until these Olympics, the country's swimming history was essentially confined to Smith, who surprisingly claimed three golds and a bronze in 1996 amid suspicions she was doping. She later received a doping ban that essentially ended her career, but she kept her medals. British men defend their relay title The British men defended their title in the 4x-200 freestyle relay, holding off the United States and Australia.

The team of James Guy, Tom Dean, Matthew Richards and Duncan Scott -- the same foursome that captured gold in Tokyo three years ago -- finished in 6:59.43. The only difference from the last Olympics was Dean took the leadoff, with Guy going second. It was good enough for another gold, Britain's first swimming victory of the Paris Games. Luke Hobson, Carson Foster, Drew Kibler and Kieran Smith gained a bit of redemption for the Americans with a silver medal in 7:00.78, making up for a disappointing fourth-place showing at the last Olympics. Maximilian Giuliani, Flynn Southam, Elijah Winnington and Thomas Neill earned the bronze for Australia in 7:01.98.

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