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MY FAVOURITE BOWLER IS BUMRAH: DHONI
12 SPORTS

North to South, Monsoon Mania ravages India

HIMACHAL / UTTARAKHAND

PNS ■ SHIMLA/DEHRADUN

Building collapsing in Kullu in Himachal Pradesh, roads being washed away, pilgrims being airlifted — these were the scenes in Uttarakhand and neighbouring Himalayan State of HP on Thursday morning as multiple cloudbursts led to rain wreaking havoc in these States.

At least 17 people were killed, 50 missing and hundreds are stranded in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh due to heavy rains and multiple cloudbursts and toll is likely to go up. More than 1,500 pilgrims stranded on the Kedarnath trek route, which is blocked at several places by boulders, have been shifted to safe places. Pilgrims are being rescued with the help of both helicopters and rescue teams consisting of the SDRF, NDRF, police and district administration.

According to officials, 425 pilgrims have been brought to safety by helicopter from Lincholi and Bhimbali while 1100 pilgrims have reached Sonprayag on foot from various places with the help of rescue teams. The pilgrims had got stranded beyond Bhimbali along Gaurikund-Kedarnath trek route when 20-25 metres of the stretch were washed out by heavy rain on Wednesday night, Disaster Management Secretary Vinod Kumar Suman said. While multiple cloudbursts caused severe damage with five people confirmed dead and more than 50 others reported missing in Mandi, Kullu and Shimla.

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SDRF personnel evacuate stranded people after cloudburst at Junglechatti near Lincholi, in Rudrapur district, on Thursday



Search and rescue operation underway following a cloudburst, in Rampur area of Shimla district, on Thursday

CAPITAL DELHI

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi turned into a floating city after a record-breaking downpour late on Wednesday, the highest single-day rainfall for July in 14 years, leading to prolonged traffic jams and 11 deaths in the Delhi-NCR areas. A woman and her three-year-old toddler who fell into an overflowing under-construction drain in east Delhi's Ghazipur were among the victims.

The weather station at Safdarjung recorded 108 millimetres of rainfall within a span of 24 hours. It caused major traffic congestion especially in Lutyen's Delhi.

The rain led to water leaking from the roof of the lobby of the newly inaugurated Parliament building. Waterlogging was seen around the premises of the new Parliament, particularly near the Makar Dwar of the Parliament. Several videos of the flooding went viral on social media.

Opposition leaders took swipe at the Narendra Modi Government over "water leakage" in a lobby of the new Parliament building and praised the "sturdy" old Parliament building for its better infrastructure during monsoon. In a statement Lok Sabha Secretariat said a minor water leak in the new Parliament building was due to displacement of an adhesive material used to fix glass domes over the lobby and corrective measures were taken immediately.

"During the heavy rain on Wednesday, the adhesive material used to fix the glass domes over the Lobby of the Building was slightly displaced, causing minor leakage of water in the Lobby," the Lok Sabha Secretariat said in a statement.

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WAYANAD

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Even as the South-West Monsoon's fury continued unabated in Wayanad district, the death toll in the massive landslides in Mundakkai settlement crossed 283 mark by 6 pm on Thursday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who inspected the flood-affected region, told mediapersons that the landslides and deluge which wreaked havoc

in Wayanad district should be declared as a national disaster. The non-stop rain in the district has affected the pace of the rescue operations as disaster response team members were finding it hard to wade through the slush, water and boulders. Though 283 bodies have been retrieved during the last three days of search and rescue operations, rescue workers are yet to make any breakthrough

regarding the dismembered human bodies recovered from the rivers and the landslide-affected regions. There is no information about 240 persons from Mundakkai missing after Tuesday's landslides. Engineers of the Indian Army have almost completed the laying of the Bailey bridge across the Chaliyar river to facilitate rescue operations.

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Rescue operation underway after landslides triggered by rain, in Wayanad district, Kerala on Thursday



SC vents its ire on Kejriwal aide Bibhav Kumar's conduct

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday came down heavily on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar who allegedly assaulted AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, saying "is this kind of goon supposed to work in the CM's residence?". "He (Bibhav Kumar) acted as if some goon had entered the official residence of CM," said the top court, adding that his entire argument before the High Court was that her allegations are concocted.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan posted Kumar's bail plea for next Wednesday and told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kumar, that the court was shocked with the details of the incident recorded by the Delhi High Court.

Kumar has challenged the July 12 order of the Delhi High Court denying him bail in the case and claimed that the allegations against him are false. He has also said his custody was no longer required as the probe was over.

The apex court also issued a notice to the Delhi Government on his plea. "Is CM residence a private bungalow? Is this kind of goon supposed to work in the CM's residence?" the bench asked Singhvi, who said there were non-serious injuries and the FIR was lodged three days after the May 13 incident.

In its scathing remarks, the bench also asked Singhvi what Maliwal calling the police helpline number 112 during the assault indicated.

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Apex court upholds quota within quota

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that sub-classification within the Scheduled Castes (SC) which form a socially heterogeneous class is permissible into different groups based on their inter se backwardness for extending the benefits of reservation.

The court also called for identification of creamy layer among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs) to take them out of the fold of affirmative action (reservation). The court clarified that while allowing sub-classification, the State cannot earmark 100 per cent reservation for a sub-class. Also, the State has to justify the sub-classification on the basis of empirical

data regarding the inadequacy of representation of the sub-class. A seven-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud held by a 6:1 majority that the further sub-classification of SCs and STs by States can be permitted to ensure the grant of quota to more backward castes inside these groups. This judgment overrules the 2004 decision in EV Chinnaiiah vs State of Andhra Pradesh, where a five-judge bench had held that sub-classification was not permissible, arguing that SC/STs form homogenous classes. The bench, which included Justices BR Gavai, Vikram Nath, Bela M Trivedi, Pankaj Mithal, Manoj Misra, and Satish Chandra Sharma, delivered six separate judgments.

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'Bullet train' approach to tackle molesters: Yogi

16 youths nabbed for harassing passersby after Wednesday rains; 3 senior police officers removed, chowki incharge, staff suspended for laxity

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took a strong stance on the recent molestation incident in Gomti Nagar, declaring that anyone threatening women's safety would face severe consequences. Addressing the state assembly on Thursday, he emphasised that the accused in the July 31 incident of molestation and harassment near Hotel Taj would not be treated leniently. "Women's safety is our top priority," CM Yogi stated. "The accused in the Gomti Nagar incident will face strict legal action, not 'Sadbhavana' but a 'bullet train' approach. Preparations for this are underway," he assured. Yogi Adityanath's comments

were made in response to the violent harassment that took place in a waterlogged underpass. He condemned the accused, Manoj Yadav and Mohammad Arbaaz, asserting that their actions would be met with the full force of law. Earlier on his instructions, DCP (East), ADGP (East), and Gomti Nagar ACP were removed from their posts with immediate effect for negligence. Additionally, the Gomti Nagar inspector, the incharge of Samta Mulak Chowki, and all policemen at the outpost have been suspended. In line with the Yogi government's zero-tolerance policy, the Lucknow police commissionerate has lodged cases against the offenders and arrested 16 suspects so far.

The government has removed DCP (East) Prabal Pratap Singh, ADGP Amit Kumawat, and Gomti Nagar ACP Anshu Jain from their positions. Gomti Nagar Inspector Deepak Kumar Pandey, Samta Mulak Chowki Incharge Rishi Vivek, Inspector Kapil Kumar, constables Dharamveer and Virendra Kumar have been suspended. Authorities have also been directed to arrest the remaining accused promptly. Lucknow Police Commissioner Amarendra Kumar Sengar reported that heavy rains on Wednesday led to waterlogging near the underpass in the Gomti Nagar area, close to the Taj Hotel. Following reports of unruly individuals harassing passersby in the waterlogged underpass, a formal complaint

was lodged against the accused in Gomti Nagar. The police have registered a report under sections 191 (2), 3 (5), 272, 285, and 74 (related to outraging a woman's modesty) of BNS 2023. Four separate teams have been established to apprehend the suspects.

Police Commissioner Amarendra Kumar Sengar stated that 16 individuals were arrested during the raids. Two of the accused, Pawan Yadav and Sunil Kumar, were apprehended late on Wednesday night based on CCTV footage, while Mohammed Arbaz and Viraj Sahu were arrested based on tips provided by the Pawan and Sunil. Other arrested were identified as Arjun Agrahari of

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Puja Khedkar denied anticipatory bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The decks are cleared for arrest of controversial dismissed trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar after a Delhi court on Thursday denied anticipatory bail to her. She has been accused of "misrepresenting and falsifying facts" in her Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

Civil Services Examination 2022 application. The denial of anticipatory bail comes with a day after the UPSC, which conducts the civil services examination, cancelled her provisional candidature of Khedkar and permanently debarred her from all the future exams/selections. Denying the anticipatory bail plea of Khedkar, Patiala House

Court Judge Devender Kumar Jangala asked the Delhi Police to find out whether an insider from the complainant (UPSC) helped the applicant (Puja Khedkar). The court also asked to widened the probe in the case and ordered the Delhi Police to investigate if other persons have availed benefits of quotas under OBC and PwD without entitlement.

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BSF woman wards off Bangla infiltrators all alone

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A woman personnel of the Border Security Force has successfully beaten back infiltration bid by an armed band of Bangladeshis fighting them single-handedly at the Ranaghat border out-post of the 68th battalion in Nadia district, sources in the paramilitary organisation said.

According to sources the lady official in charge of a CCTV control room on July 30 noticed some 14 people walking towards the Indian side of the border. She immediately rushed towards them and directed them to stop and return.

However, armed with knives and other lethal weapons they would not listen and charged at her. The valiant BSF



personnel fought back even as a fellow jawan threw a "stun grenade" from a distance to

frighten the intruders away. As the infiltrators continued to advance undeterred the

woman constable fired a single shot from her rifle scaring the infiltrators who then ran back

to their side, sources said, adding this was the third such infiltration bid that was foiled in the past one week. Referring to the issue Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said during Mamata Banerjee's rule infiltration had peaked and that the Trinamool Congress was aiding illegal infiltration to increase its vote base comprising the Rohingyas. "It is the same Mamata who protested valiantly against the Left Government for encouraging infiltrators... and now it is under her Government that the Rohingyas are infiltrating in large numbers and migrating to other parts of the country creating law and order problems," Adhikari earlier said.

Swapnil Kusale adds to India's medal collection at Olympics

PTI ■ CHATEAUX ROUX (FRANCE)

On an empty stomach and with his heart racing, Indian shooter Swapnil Kusale kept his composure to stage a remarkable comeback and help the country claim its first ever Olympic bronze in the 50m rifle 3 positions event here on Thursday.

Kusale shot an aggregate of 451.4 in the eight-shooter final to finish third after being placed sixth at one stage. It took the country's overall tally to three, all bronze in shooting, at the Paris Games. His medal comes following the stunning performance of Manu Bhaker, who clinched the women's 10m air pistol and mixed team



10m air pistol bronze alongside Sarabjot Singh. "I did not eat anything, was feeling the butterflies (in my stomach). Just had black tea and came here. The night before every match, I just pray to god," Kusale said after his unprecedented achievement.

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Supplementary budget to propel UP towards \$1-trn economy: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that the supplementary budget aims to propel Uttar Pradesh towards a \$1 trillion economy.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaks during the Monsoon session of the state Legislative Assembly at Vidhan Bhawan in Lucknow on Thursday.

domestic airports. Jewar Airport, soon to become the fifth international airport, is set to be one of the largest in Asia, significantly boosting the state's economy," Yogi said.

He emphasised that efforts are being made across all three areas of energy: generation, transmission, and distribution, with special attention from the government in each area.

inadequate electricity infrastructure—villages were without power, there were no industries, and tube well connections were not being provided.

'Not here to do politics, but serve public'

Lucknow (PNS): In a politically charged statement amid recent setbacks for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised his commitment to public service over personal ambition.

CM congratulates Swapnil Kusale

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended his heartfelt congratulations to Swapnil Kusale, who clinched a bronze medal in the men's

50m rifle 3 position event at the Paris Olympics 2024. He said this achievement is a source of national pride on the global stage.

and exceptional sportsmanship, stating, "This historic victory is the result of your tireless hard work and extraordinary sportsmanship. This victory is an inspiration for countless players of the country."

Uttar Pradesh has achieved revenue-surplus status: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Thursday that the state has achieved a revenue-surplus status and is now capable of meeting most of its needs independently.



roadmap for the next three to five years, focusing on major advancements in education, health, and skill development.

He noted that over the past seven years, additional irrigation potential of 22 lakh hectares of agricultural land has been created in the state.

'Khata-khat' scheme: Yogi takes dig at Cong, SP

Lucknow (PNS): Quoting a Panchatantra story where a thug cheated a poor farmer by calling his goat a dog, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a scathing attack on the opposition.

ter lauded PM Modi for his efforts to honour Dr BR Ambedkar, emphasising that no one has respected Baba Saheb as much as PM Modi.

'Funds arranged for education, sports, other initiatives'

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that every investment generates new employment and fosters development.

with Tata Consultancy to develop 150 ITIs into world-class skill development centres. These centres will offer 23 new-age courses designed to meet global market and industry demands.

ties and has established six new ones in these areas. These include the Maharaja Suheldev University in Azamgarh, Maharaja Mahendra Pratap Singh University in Aligarh, and Maa Shakambhari University in Saharanpur, all of which are now operational.

A medical university has been established in Lucknow, affiliating all medical colleges in the state and expanding its operations.

rapidly being constructed in Meerut. A sum of ₹100 crore has been allocated in the supplementary budget for stadiums in rural areas to boost sports.

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Table with 4 columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrowers & Guarantors, Amount Outstanding, Description of Property & Name of Owner, Date of Demand Notice. Includes details for Kotwa Sarak, District- Barabanki.

EC takes first step to hold polls in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a fresh indication that Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are imminent, the Election Commission (EC) has asked the Union Territory administration to transfer out officers posted in their home districts, an exercise it holds ahead of conducting elections. The commission has been following a consistent policy that officers directly connected with the conduct of elections in a poll-bound State or Union Territory are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for a considerably long period. It has issued similar directions to the Chief secretaries of Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand. It said the terms of the existing legislative Assemblies of Haryana, Jharkhand and Maharashtra were up to November 3, 2024; January 5, 2025; and November 26, 2024, respectively, and elections in these States were due in 2024. "Further, the election to the legislative Assembly of the



Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is also due in the near future," it noted on Wednesday. It is usual for the poll panel to issue instructions related to transfers of officers ahead of Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. Recently, it had ordered the updation of electoral rolls in Jammu and Kashmir and the three States. In June, it decided to accept applications seeking allotment of 'common symbols' from registered unrecognised parties in the Union Territory. Whenever Assembly elections are held in Jammu and Kashmir, they

will be the first since provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution were abrogated and the erstwhile State divided into two Union Territories in 2019. The electoral exercise in Jammu and Kashmir is usually spread over a month. Following a delimitation exercise, the number of Assembly seats has gone up from 83 to 90, excluding those allocated to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Last December, the Supreme Court directed the poll panel to hold Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir by September 30.

Be alert during House proceedings to ask suppl questions: Birla to MPs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Thursday asked members to be alert during House proceedings or else, he said, they will lose the opportunity to ask supplementary questions during the Question Hour. Birla said this after Shiromani Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal was unable to respond to the Speaker's call on time. During the Question Hour, a question posed by Badal related to Punjab was listed in the agenda for discussion. When Birla took Harsimrat Badal's name for a few times, she failed to respond in time as she was apparently busy talking to a fellow member. At this, the Speaker decided to move on to the next question. Soon after, the Shiromani Akali Dal MP responded and urged the Speaker to allow her to raise the issue. "I have called your name thrice. But you were busy in talking. You have to be alert when your question is listed. I want to tell all Honourable members that if you don't pay attention to the



proceedings, you will not get the chance to raise issues," Birla said. The Speaker also told members that if they want to ask any supplementary question of any listed question, they should submit their names to his office by 10.30 am of that particular day. "I will try to accommodate your request if it relates to your respective State. But that does not mean that you will certainly get the chance to ask any supplementary," he said. Birla, however, later allowed Badal to raise the relevant issue and ask the supplementary question. The first hour of the Lok Sabha proceedings, called the Question Hour, is reserved for MPs to ask any question of public importance. The member whose question is listed in the agenda is allowed to ask two supplementary questions.

India, Vietnam firm up action plan to expand strategic ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Vietnam on Thursday firm up a new action plan to expand their strategic ties, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that both sides will work towards a free and rules-based Indo-Pacific and that New Delhi supports development and not "expansionism". After his wide-ranging talks here with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Modi said, the agreed USD 300 million credit line for Vietnam, will strengthen the Southeast Asian nation's maritime security. Chinh arrived in Delhi on Tuesday night on a three-day visit that is aimed at further expanding the comprehensive strategic ties between the two countries. "We have adopted a new plan of action to further strengthen our comprehensive strategic cooperation," Modi said in his media Statement in presence of Chinh. Modi said both sides will continue cooperation for a free, open, rules-based and prosperous Indo-Pacific.



Vietnam is India's important partner in our Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision, he said. "We support development, not expansionism (Hum vistarbad nahi, vikasvad ka samarthan karte hai)," Modi said. The comments came amid growing global concerns over China's expansionist behaviour in the Indo-Pacific. Modi said various dimensions of India-Vietnam relations have both expanded and deepened in the last one decade. In the last 10 years, we have transformed our

relations into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, he said. "We held extensive talks on all aspects of mutual cooperation and initiated steps towards the framework of future cooperation," he said, adding the two countries have adopted a new plan of action to further strengthen comprehensive strategic cooperation. Modi said both sides have decided that cooperation will be strengthened on counter-terrorism and cyber security.



Lt Gen Sadhana: First woman to become DGMS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lt General Sadhana Saxena Nair on Thursday took charge as the Director General Medical Services (Army), becoming the first woman officer to be appointed to the post. She graduated from the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, with a distinguished academic record and was commissioned into the Army Medical Corps in December 1985, according to a Statement issued by the defence ministry. She assumed the office of the Director General Medical Services (Army) on Thursday, it said. "Prior to this, she was the first woman to hold the post of DG Hospital Services (Armed Forces) on promotion to the rank of Air Marshal," it said. Lt General Nair has become the first woman to be appointed as the Director General Medical Services (Army), the ministry said. She holds a post-graduate degree in family medicine, diplomas in maternal and child health and healthcare management, and has undergone a two-year training programme in medical informatics at AIIMS, New Delhi, the Statement said. She was trained in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear warfare with the Israeli Defence Forces and in military medical ethics with the Swiss Armed Forces in Spiez, it added. Lt Gen Nair is also the first woman Principal Medical Officer of Western Air Command, and Training Command, Indian Air Force (IAF). She was nominated as an expert member of Dr Kasturirangan Committee for drafting part of the medical education component of the National Education Policy, the Statement said. For her meritorious service, she has been awarded the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Air Command and Chief of the Air Staff Commendations as well as Vishisth Seva Medal by the President, it said.

New Bill promises to revolutionise disaster management

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024, introduced in Lok Sabha on Thursday, aims to strengthen the efficient working of the national and State disaster management authorities besides bringing more clarity and convergence among stakeholders working in the field of disaster management. The Bill also aims to provide statutory status to certain pre-Act organisations like the National Crisis Management Committee and the High Level Committee. Besides, it aims to strengthen the efficient working of the National Disaster Management Authority and State disaster management authorities, according to the Statement of objects and reasons of the Bill. The Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, who introduced the Bill, asserted that there is no interference in the rights of the States and disaster management is the first responsibility of the States. The Bill also provides to bring more clarity and convergence in the roles of authorities and committees working in the field of disaster management and to provide statutory status to certain pre-Act organisations like the



National Crisis Management Committee and the High Level Committee. The Bill also aims to empower the National Disaster Management Authority and State disaster management authorities to prepare the disaster plan at national and State level instead of the National Executive Committee and the State Executive Committee. It will provide for creation of disaster database at national and State level, to make provision for constitution of "Urban Disaster Management Authority" for State capital and large cities having Municipal Corporation and to make provision for constitution of "State Disaster Response Force" by the State Government. The original act, the Disaster Management Act, 2005, was

enacted to provide for the effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The main purpose of the act was to put in place necessary institutional mechanisms for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of disaster management plans, ensuring measures by various wings of Government for prevention of and mitigating the effects of disasters and for undertaking a holistic, coordinated and prompt response to any disaster or threatening disaster situation. For achieving the said purpose, certain authorities and committees were established at the national level, State level and district level. In addition, the act enumerated the measures to

be taken up by the ministries and departments of the Government of India and mandated that every ministry or department would carry out the nodal responsibilities in respect of disaster management. Due to the constant endeavour of the central Government for mainstreaming the disaster management in the development plans, aligning with the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, learnings from past disasters, and experience gained during the implementation of the Act, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 has been reviewed in consultation with all stakeholders including the State Governments, the Statement of objects and reasons of the Bill said. Some Opposition members, however, questioned the constitutionality of the measure. Opposing the Bill at the introduction stage, Manish Tewari (Cong) said none of the entries in List 1 or List 2 of the Constitution dealing with central and State subjects deal with the issue of disaster management. He suggested that the Government should amend the concurrent list to have a proper entry to cover the issue of disaster management. Tewari said the law's

legislative power should be properly defined. He said any law based on "derived legislative power" may not stand the test of constitutionality. He also noted that the rule making power of the Centre provided in the Bill encroaches the powers of the States. Saugata Ray (TMC) said the multiplicity of authorities will create confusion. The Bill was later introduced by a voice vote. Minister of State or Home Rai asserted that there is no interference in the rights of the States and disaster management is the first responsibility of the States. According to the Statement and objects and reasons of the Bill, the main purpose of the 2005 Act which the Bill seeks to amend was to put in place necessary institutional mechanisms for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of disaster management plans. For achieving its purpose, certain authorities and committees were set up at the national level, State level and district level. Seeking to mainstream disaster management in the development plans and learnings from past disasters, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 has been reviewed in consultation with all stakeholders, including State Governments.

Twelve more airports ready to implement DigiYatra facility



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Twelve more airports are ready to implement DigiYatra facility that will provide passengers seamless and contactless movement at various checkpoints through facial recognition system, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday. Naidu said 12 more airports are ready to implement DigiYatra, while 11 airports are preparing to have the facility. Currently, the DigiYatra facility is available at 15 airports of the country. Responding to supplementaries during the Question Hour, the Minister emphasised that the passenger data shared through DigiYatra App is not stored in any centralised system, saying the

Government is committed to protecting data privacy. While the DigiYatra app is slowly gaining traction, there have been concerns expressed in various quarters about privacy of passenger data. "The app facilitates the passengers to enroll their verifiable credentials using Aadhaar card number and to keep their personal information on their smartphones to ensure data privacy," the Minister said. Based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), DigiYatra provides for contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various checkpoints at airports in India. DigiYatra app has been downloaded by more than 43 lakh users, Naidu said, adding the scaling up of the facility will be done in a phased manner.

Rajnath urges personnel to enhance skills

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday here called upon the personnel of the Armed Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) Civilian Services to continue enhancing their skills in today's fast-changing times for efficient policy making and implementation and execution of reforms being undertaken in the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Addressing the 83rd AFHQ Civilian Services Day, he described the civil services as the steel frame of governance and commended the dedication and hard work of the AFHQ personnel in taking forward the ongoing works, including efforts to attain Aatmanirbharta, and contributing to the welfare of soldiers. "You are an important link between the Armed Forces and the rest of the civilian Government. There is a need to further strengthen your capabilities for enhanced efficiency," he said. Rajnath added that the three Services form a large part of the functioning in MoD and the AFHQ cadre ensures that the possibility of 'group-think', which results in poor decision-making, is negated in policy formulation.



"Unprecedented reforms have been undertaken in MoD in the last five years, and there has been tremendous progress in several areas. Our achievements have been recognised globally. This has happened due to team work. The Armed Forces and Civil Services should work together from Command Headquarters and Service Headquarters and MoD, both during peace and war. The foundation of AFHQ cadres was laid on August 01, 1942 by organising the then decentralised civilian posts/cadre operation as distinct entities under various Service Headquarters and Secretariat of Ministry of Defence and Finance (Defence) under the control of Chief Administrative Officer.

personnel to pay attention to the core values of honesty, discipline and uniformity. He was of the view that everyone deserves respect, irrespective of their position or rank, emphasising that ego must be shed and the personnel must work as a team. He called for learning from one another, which makes even hard work easy to accomplish. The AFHQ Day is celebrated on August one every year to recognise the role of the personnel who work shoulder-to-shoulder with the Service personnel, primarily in the three Integrated Service Headquarters; HQ, Integated Defence Staff and 24 Inter-Services Organisations of MoD. The aim is to foster spirit-de-corps of the civilian employees of AFHQ Cadres, who play the role of a bridge between Service Headquarters and MoD, both during peace and war. The foundation of AFHQ cadres was laid on August 01, 1942 by organising the then decentralised civilian posts/cadre operation as distinct entities under various Service Headquarters and Secretariat of Ministry of Defence and Finance (Defence) under the control of Chief Administrative Officer.



Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera assumes charge as Assam Rifles DG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lt General Vikas Lakhera on Thursday assumed charge as the new director general of the Assam Rifles, which is known as the "Sentinels" of the north-eastern region. He succeeds Lt General P C Nair who retired after four decades of service. Lt Gen Lakhera has varied professional experience in serving in the northeastern region. He was commissioned into the 4 Sikh Light Infantry in 1990. He is a post graduate from Defence Service Staff College, Wellington. He is an alumnus of the Higher Defence Management Course from College of Defence Management, Secunderabad and completed the prestigious National Defence Course from the Royal College of Defence Studies, London.

Influenza spreads, 132 fatalities in five months, reports NCDC

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the first five months of this year, India has seen a significant surge in influenza cases and deaths, with a total of 6,351 cases and 132 fatalities reported. Punjab topped the mortality list with 41 deaths followed by Gujarat with 27 and Haryana with 26. Case numbers are highest in Delhi (1,563), Gujarat (1,049), and Rajasthan (1,008), according to data from the National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC) under the Union Health Ministry. Last year, in Tamil Nadu alone, 3,544 influenza cases marked the highest number in 14 years. Health experts said that while temperate regions see seasonal flu primarily in winter, tropical areas like India experience two phases of influenza—summer and a longer winter phase. Since, the current year has already seen 80% of last year's total cases in just five months, it suggests that a potentially severe flu season is ahead. The incubation period, or the time from infection to illness, is about two days but ranges from one to four days. However, experts have attributed rise in numbers to higher investigations post-Covid-19 pandemic. Also,



this indicates that regions with immunocompromised populations, those with comorbidities, and the elderly are at higher risk of afflicting with influenza. Dr Deepak Kumar Das, Chief Medical Officer at the Delhi Government-run Hindu Rao Hospital, emphasised that individuals with low immunity or underlying health condition as well as those suffering from comorbidities are at a higher risk of contracting influenza. "Prevention steps are similar to those for Covid-19. People should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and wash their hands regularly. They should also avoid going to crowded places and must wear masks as a prevention measure," said Dr Das.

"Anti-viral medications can be used to treat influenza. Newer antiviral drugs are also available. Seasonal influenza vaccines are updated annually to match circulating strains. The 2024-25 influenza vaccine includes components targeting common strains of influenza A (H1N1, H3N2)." "Efforts are ongoing to improve vaccine effectiveness and develop universal influenza vaccines that offer broader protection," said Dr Rishikesh Dessai, Consultant Physician at the Department of Medicine, Sir Gangaram Hospital. "Also, the vaccine shot should be taken before the onset of influenza spread. Taking the vaccine during the influenza season will not help," said the doctors. Dr. Kartikeya Kohli, Senior Consultant of Internal Medicine at MASSH Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi, emphasised that influenza is a serious respiratory illness if ignored. "The symptoms of influenza include high fever, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat, cough, and a runny or stuffy nose. Vaccination remains the best preventive measure against influenza, helping to reduce the severity and incidence of the flu," Dr Kohli explained.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Squabbling overshadows tragedy

The Wayanad landslide tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of ignoring environmental warnings

In India, we've developed a bad habit of politicising everything, from festivities to tragedies, using every opportunity for one-upmanship against opponents. Indeed, the tragic landslide in Wayanad, Kerala, that claimed life of more than 170 people is being used as a slingshot to score brownie points. It has triggered a heated political exchange between State and Central Government leaders. The tragedy, which resulted in significant loss of life and property, has brought to the forefront the critical issue of disaster preparedness and environmental stewardship. Following the landslide, Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the State had received an early warning but failed to take necessary preventive measures. He criticised the State Government for the negligence, suggesting that more lives could have been saved with timely action. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan quickly refuted Shah's claims, asserting that the State Government had acted on all available warnings and had undertaken necessary measures to mitigate the impact.



Vijayan emphasised that the unprecedented intensity of the landslide was beyond what the early warnings had predicted and that the state's disaster response teams had worked tirelessly to manage the situation. This spat achieved nothing; neither relief for the people injured nor a plan of action to stop such incidents in the future. But yes, both the Central and State Governments gave themselves a clean chit, and that was the end of it. This incident highlights challenges in disaster management and the need for coordinated efforts between State and Central Governments. The

Wayanad tragedy has also opened a broader discussion on environmental conservation and the risks of taking nature for granted. The Kerala Government must take the blame for unrestricted development in the Western Ghats, one of the most fragile ecosystems in the country. Despite frequent disasters, the Kerala Government continues unsustainable activities in the name of development. The thick tree cover is gone due to changed land use. This has turned many perennial streams and rivers into seasonal ones and increased the risk of flooding in the monsoon season. The Wayanad landslide is a stark reminder of the consequences of ignoring environmental signals. Human activities such as deforestation and unplanned construction have exacerbated the vulnerability of regions like Wayanad to natural disasters. The Wayanad landslide underscores the importance of accountability and proactive measures in disaster management. More importantly, it highlights the critical need to respect and care for our environment. Forests, for instance, play a crucial role in stabilising soil and regulating water cycles. Deforestation disrupts ecosystems, making landslides more likely. The Wayanad tragedy is a call to action for governments, communities, and individuals to prioritise environmental conservation for our collective survival.

PICTALK



Asian Openbill storks perch on a tree, in Kolkata

The evolution of learning

Learning is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. It needs judgement, sensitivity, foresight and a strong will to absorb new ideas



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The real world can be tricky to negotiate. This is because a lot of early childhood learning needs substantive modification when it comes to real life. Illustratively, a child is taught many principles which are simply impracticable as he grows up. Typically, a child will be told never to do something without informing their parents, whereas in real life this is neither feasible nor practicable. The truth is, that childhood learning is about basics; one learns to modify or calibrate it as one goes along. It has to do with a child's mind and establishing certain principles that life experiences may define or modify. Consider the case of teaching a child about parallel lines. The child is taught that parallel lines are lines that never meet. That's good enough for his purposes. As one matures and gains a few years, the child transitioning into adulthood learns that parallel lines do meet, but they meet at 'infinity'. Similar examples can be cited elsewhere. However, more to the point is a simple proposition, namely that learning has to do with the capacity and capability of the learner. The same principle can undergo several modifications or even alterations. As one emerges into adulthood, one learns many other intricacies about life, and several of them can only be re-learned only through experience. Here is the need to sharpen a person's capacity for continuous learning and absorption. Typically, the adult, as he goes through life, meets different types of people, and there is a clear need to coexist with several others. One's judgment becomes a crucible for deciding what the truth is and where one has to steer clear or walk through it. This is what adult learning is about, and it is a lifelong necessity that is felt at each stage. Sometimes strange situations can occur, especially if one learns through aphorisms/proverbs/ folk sayings, and even the wisdom of

elders. An illustration of this could make the point clear. In Sanskrit, there is a saying "Satyam brooyat, priyam brooyat, na brooyat satyama priyam". "Broadly translated, it means, speak the truth, but speak it pleasantly. If a truth is bitter, it need not be spoken". Whether this is desirable or not is a moot point. What is more, is that other sayings can be found to be very different than the one quoted above. For example, there is another Sanskrit statement "Satyameva jayate" "A free translation into English would be that "truth alone triumphs". The two statements are clearly in two different contexts and mean two different things. There is an element of contradiction between the two. It is here that adult learning acquires a special veneer of its own. What that special something is any of experience and exposure. Some people who repeatedly emphasised in their childhood that they must always tell the truth get so much in the habit of only telling the truth that they become offensive in conversations. This is not because of their



AS ONE EMERGES INTO ADULTHOOD, ONE LEARNS MANY OTHER INTRICACIES ABOUT LIFE, AND SEVERAL OF THEM CAN ONLY BE RE-LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

ill intention, but their style itself became 'offensive'. Such offensive behaviour can have a heavy price. After all, tact is something that is not an optional extra, it is essential to life. Being tactful does not end up lying or being untruthful. It only trains a person to be sensitive to another person's feelings and sentiments.

It also raises the importance of recognizing that all inputs contribute to better and improved behaviour. Creating a situation in which everyone gains and a better environment is established is essential. If bluntness causes hurt rather than improvement, it could lead to deterioration of quality of life, which cannot be the objective of any action.

The obvious conclusion is that learning is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. It needs judgement sensitivity, and foresight. In the absence of any of the above relationships, they can become compromised. After all, if the relationship itself is lost, one might ask: what is the input about?

This issue is fundamental to the act of living. This is so because man is a gregarious animal, and the act of living

requires a collective experience. Learning therefore is a lifelong exercise requiring continuous involvement and the capability to evolve. External inputs to learning are of course critical, but internalization of the same is the core. Unfortunately, whereas much attention has been paid to teaching, an equal amount of attention is due to the ways of the learning process. There are indeed definite limits to the capacity to learn and methods of learning. This is something that needs to be more widely recognized than before, especially since it does not seem to be integrated into the larger theories of learning. Indeed, one needs to pay attention to also when and how a revision of the learning process becomes seminal.

To sum up, it is important to recognize the continuous nature of learning and one's central role in keeping that learning alive. A teacher can only help the process but cannot substitute a learner's learning.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ALL QUIET IN BANGLADESH

Madam — After the recent mind-boggling violence in Bangladesh, things seem to be stabilising for now. Hopefully, peace will not be compromised again, as Dhaka is an important neighbor for New Delhi. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's support for those who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh, led by her late father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is well known and reasonable. In the past, Hasina's firm and decisive action against the offenders of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War earned her praise, but her indecision and leniency towards extremism were criticized by moderates and liberals.

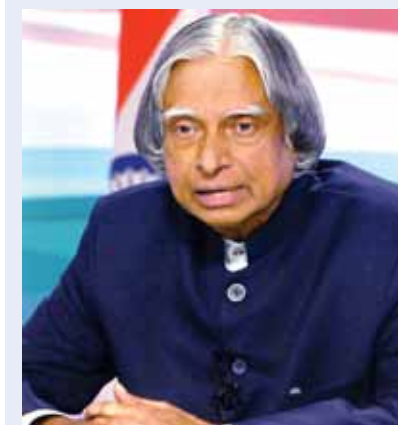
Her recent decision to reserve fifty-six percent of jobs for the descendants of the liberation movement was undoubtedly aimed at certain sections of the country's vote bank. Although the Bangladesh Supreme Court struck down the order and reduced the reservation to five percent, Hasina must be feeling the setback. Some short-sighted remarks by Hasina during the students' protests further fueled emotions. It's time for the longest-serving Prime Minister of Bangladesh to get her act together and display the statesmanship expected of her.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

THE LEGACY OF JRD TATA

Madam — The 29th of July 2024 marked 120 years since the birth of JRD Tata, fondly called Jeh by those close to him. Words cannot do justice to his modesty, philanthropy, achievements, awe-inspiring firsts, patriotism, and staunch belief in the three guiding tenets of Zoroastrianism: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, without professing either belief or disbelief in God. Jeh was India's first commercial pilot license holder and the first to fly a commercial plane from Karachi to Madras. He was also the first Indian businessman who refused to bribe politicians and the first to establish Asia's first cancer care hospital, the Tata Memorial Centre in

Remembering APJ Abdul Kalam



Throughout his life Abdul Kalam professed the scientific, academic as well as spiritual development of the students. He made

numerous speeches and wrote many books addressing the youth; which are listened and read even today by students even across the world. Choosing his birth day as the 'World's Student's Day' was an appropriate decision honoring his works as a scientist and the millions of youths that he inspired and still inspires through his works, achievements, speeches, lectures and books.

Students deserve better education standards and we hope it is time to inculcate the best education to students so that they may not wish to go to other countries for education purposes. He believed that students are the future of a nation and they can bring considerable change if well nurtured and educated. He professed education as the only weapon to fight back the demons of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition etc.

Anandambal Subbu | Mumbai

Bombay. Furthermore, he was a pioneer in advocating for workers' rights, introducing an eight-hour working day, free medical facilities, and more. As stated at the outset, it is impossible to fully capture the essence of JRD Tata, whose life itself was his message.

Tata passed away in Geneva, Switzerland, from a kidney infection on 29 November 1993, at the age of 89. A few days before his death, he remarked, "Comme c'est doux de mourir" ("How gentle it is to die"). Upon his death, the Indian Parliament was adjourned in his memory, an honor rarely given to those who are not members of parliament. He was buried at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Pages from JRD Tata's life ought to be made compulsory reading in our parliament and legislative assemblies. It might lead to some introspection and, perhaps, inspire some of our elected representatives to mend their ways. Politics in India being what it is, I know this is just daydreaming on my part.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

LACKADAISICAL APPROACH OF MCD

Madam — This refers to the editorial, Enough is enough (July 29) vide which the bitter truth was elaborated that the inaction of municipal authorities and the lack of accountability have resulted in yet another tragedy. The tragic death of three students at the illegal Rao IAS Coaching Centre in Old Rajendra Nagar area of Delhi is a shameful tale of gross and unpardonable negligence at the administrative level. This illegal business is flourishing with the connivance of MCD officials. The basement meant for commercial storage was illegally converted into a coaching centre. There was no emergency exit and no technical scientific arrangements for drainage. The issuance of NOC for building usage and security lapses reflected lackadaisical approach of the MCD officials. Harshest punitive measures must be taken against the people responsible.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Age and capability: Rethinking retirement and leadership

Why is it that in the corporate world, age is a barrier to employment, while in public service, older individuals often hold the highest offices?

In May 2020, close on the heels of the covid outbreak, my husband lost his job. It was an unexpected knock to take barely a month after he was awarded the best employee. The company that he was serving for the past many years attributed the pink slip to the pandemic, and following it, it was near impossible for him to find another job. In most cases, it seemed as if he was deemed over-age. In the traditional sense, it must be true that 58 years is the time to hang one's boots, but taking superannuation was far from his mind. His mental and physical abilities had not dimmed a wee bit and he had many more years of active work life left in him. But it was hard to convince a work culture that was transitioning to a younger demographic about his worthiness. He was soon forced to stop looking for a job and start something of his own. Three years on, it is a decision we don't regret taking. But there is one thing that I have not been able to decipher. If a company considers a person to be too old to seek employment at that age, what makes older doyens eligible to



seek fresh terms as heads of state? This question is more relevant now after John Biden was forced to step aside following doubts over his diminishing cognitive abilities on various platforms. Biden's dropping out in no way suggests that his opponent (who is younger by only three years) is more eligible to be the boss at the White House if age is a major criterion for holding responsible positions. Yet, in public service, it is par for the course for older men and women to push it till economic and social policies allow or they are naturally indisposed. Why is 80 a wholesome number to be at the helm of a state and 60 an age to retire for employees?

There is no doubt that the age gap between the highest and lowest denominators at a workplace has widened significantly. There are concerns about an agile, IT-driven young generation unable to work alongside an older brigade that follows old clunky ways. On this side things, it is still a huge challenge for those used to archaic practices of functioning to adopt digital modes overnight. But experience is something we still cannot discount. On the other hand, we also need a lot of young blood to keep our workplaces vibrant. People age differently. Their biological age may not be commensurate with their chronological age. In a

recent interview on CNN, Anthony Fauci, former chief medical advisor to the President of the United States looked and sounded many times more agile and vigorous at 81 than Biden does. My mother at 77 is much less healthy than a few other relations in their 90s. So to determine people's capabilities based on the number of summers they have seen is a faulty method. Our cognitive age and ability to handle the pressures of a job is something only we can gauge. It is for us to decide if we are fit to handle the responsibilities — be it to serve the nation, run a company or a household. John Biden must have eventually realised that cracks are showing up in his public image and faculties and that stepping aside is the most gracious thing to do, both for his self-esteem and for the sake of his country. Although it had to come after much persuasion, he made the call. Congratulations to him for being rational and accepting 'it is what it is'.

(The author is a Dubai-based author and columnist; views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA NAVIGATES DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE

Despite the US unease, India charts its own course; QUAD Tokyo conference is a case in point



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

In a balancing act of sorts, the Government of India is trying to address US and European concerns regarding PM Modi's meeting with President Putin last month, when many of the leaders were in a huddle in Washington for the NATO summit. President Putin went an extra step to welcome PM Modi in Moscow, signalling a strong message to the US, regarding the long-standing partnership with India. Senior officials in the US expressed deep concern with the optics involved in PM Modi's Moscow visit while reiterating that nothing significant was achieved. Russia bilateral is a tightrope, that India has managed to carefully tread on, despite its growing engagement with the US in the past decades. Therefore, this week's QUAD foreign minister's conference in Tokyo where External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his US counterpart Anthony Blinken was significant. The joint statement in unequivocal terms condemned Russia's action in Ukraine, perhaps for the first time joining in such a multilateral official communication. The joint statement read "We express our deepest concern over the war raging in Ukraine including its terrible and tragic humanitarian consequences. We reiterate the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in line with international law, consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity." PM Modi had also in his bilateral meetings with President Putin and public messages subsequently, mentioned the need for finding lasting solutions to the Ukraine crisis away from the battleground while condemning the attack by Russia killing nearly 41 persons including at a children's hospital. PM Modi said "Whether it is war, conflict or a terrorist attack, any person who believes in humanity, is pained when there is loss of lives. But even in that, when innocent children are killed, the heart bleeds and that pain is very terrifying." Ukraine President Zelensky has condemned PM Modi's visit to Russia. Government officials now indicate that the PM is likely to travel to Ukraine in August to balance the geopolitical dynamics and reset India and Europe's relationship. Meanwhile, the QUAD for-



eight ministers meeting continued to focus on the Gaza crisis, and its spillover in the Red Sea zone, impacting lives and raising freight costs. The foreign ministers jointly communicated "We urge all parties to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, as applicable. We welcome UNSC Resolution S/RES/2735 (2024) and strongly urge all parties concerned to work immediately and steadily toward the release of all hostages and an immediate ceasefire. We call on all parties to take every feasible step to protect the lives of civilians including aid workers, and facilitate the rapid transportation of humanitarian relief. We also encourage other countries, including those in the Indo-Pacific, to increase their efforts to address the dire humanitarian need on the ground. We underscore that the future recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip should be supported by the international community. We remain committed to a sovereign, viable and independent Palestinian state taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns as part of a two-state solution that enables both Israelis and Palestinians to live in a just, lasting, and secure peace." India would be the host for the QUAD leaders summit scheduled this year, however, the crucial US presidential elections in November would be a key determinant of the time. President Biden who has mostly shaped the Quad narrative in the past, would like to leave a lasting impression on this group of four.

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

Union budget prioritises employment and skilling



DINESH SOOD

To empower youth, the Government has announced three transformative schemes aimed at promoting skilling across various sectors



One of the top nine priorities of the Union Budget is employment and skilling. In line with this, three schemes have been announced to promote skilling. The first scheme involves increasing the maximum loan amount for high-end skilling courses under the revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme from Rs 1.5 lakhs to Rs 7.5 lakhs, with an interest rate of 1.5% per annum. This scheme is expected to empower the youth by providing easy access to advanced-level skill courses, potentially removing significant financial barriers for many deserving students and candidates to gain futuristic and in-demand industry skills, thus creating a future-ready and empowered workforce. Recognising the significant role played by non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions in the skill loan market, the Ministry of Skill Development and Employment (MSDE) has made pivotal modifications to the scheme. This includes the inclusion of NBFCs, Micro Finance Institutions, and Small Finance Banks to extend loans backed by a guarantee against default up to 75% of the loan disbursed through the instrument of collateral-free loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh to facilitate 25,000 aspirants every year. Without a vibrant skill loan market, many youths leave aspiring candidates without the necessary financial support to pursue their skill training. To ensure uninterrupted credit flow in the skilling sector and to provide low-income youths with access to affordable finance for specialized skill courses, the MSDE initially launched the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development in July 2015, resulting in below expectations. The low fund utilisation under the scheme over the past decade was due to the low ticket size of loans up to Rs 1.5 lakh, even as course costs and fees rose due to inflation, leaving many high-cost



THIS FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SCHEME, AIMING TO COVER ONE CRORE YOUTH IN 5 YEARS, HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A GAME CHANGER IN TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

courses out of the scheme. Secondly, private banks still need to be more willing to finance government-sponsored schemes. As of March 31, 2024, loans amounting to Rs 115.75 crore had been extended to just 10,077 borrowers over the past decade. However, the government's unwavering commitment to addressing this issue is evident in the new model skill loan scheme, which aims to meet the challenges of a highly skilled workforce emerging from paced technological changes. Relevant skills are in demand, and the cost of acquiring specialised skills is higher. Only 5% of the so-called skilled workforce is formally trained, creating a significant skill gap that needs to be urgently addressed. While 26.5 crore children enrol in school each year, by the time they reach higher education, their numbers have dwindled to 4.3 crores. To align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandate, an additional five crore children who pass school need to be included in higher education and to make skill training accessible to every individual, especially the large number of students from rural India. The Model Skill Loan Scheme is not just a solution but a necessary and urgent step in bridging this gap. The skill economy is increasingly market-led, integrating new-age learning into the skill development ecosystem. The youth from urban and semi-urban areas recognise the opportunities for skilling and livelihood improvement. An initiative like the Model Skill Loan Scheme opens doors to many skill courses in sectors such as healthcare,

beauty-wellness, IT, AI-data science, cloud applications, digital marketing, hospitality, animation, gaming, graphic designing, and drone technology. These courses, driven by changing industry dynamics, offer substantial placement opportunities and the potential for global mobility, providing a promising future for the youth and opening doors to international career prospects. The second scheme aimed at skilling 20 lakh youth over five years. The scheme, with a total outlay of Rs 60,000 crore, aims at fulfilling this objective by upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the hub and spoke arrangements with outcome orientation. It's an ambitious scheme that aims to make youth more employable by imparting industry-specific skills. The course content and design will be upgraded to reflect the skill needs of the industry. For instance, emerging IT sector needs could include cyber security or data analytics skills. The third scheme introduced in the Budget for Skilling Youth is a comprehensive scheme that provides the youth with internship opportunities in 500 top companies. This first-of-its-kind scheme, aiming to cover one crore youth in 5 years, has the potential to be a game changer in tackling youth unemployment. This internship scheme's innovative approach and potential impact make it a beacon of hope for young people's future employment, promising a significant reduction in youth unemployment rates. Moreover, landing an internship is difficult, leading to a vicious

cycle of frustration and disappointment. Students with professional degrees like MBA, engineering, etc., may still find landing jobs or internships easier after graduation. However, the scenario could be more precise for unemployable humanities graduates with no ready-made market-appropriate skill set. Thus, such a scheme providing young graduates across disciplines with internship opportunities at leading companies can be a game-changer if implemented properly and effectively. Perhaps, in the future, the government could consider widening the scope of this scheme by making it mandatory for companies above a specific size (the government could come up with a set of specifications to decide this) to take in a fixed number of interns every year and fund the training program through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. These funds are a company's initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on environmental and social well-being. Most importantly, the internship opportunities provided under this new scheme could significantly boost the employability quotient of youth. With concrete experience, they will be more likely to land a job. However, implementation, effectiveness, and accountability are crucial to fostering employable skill sets. (The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Network Member of India International Skill Centres; Views expressed are personal)

Transforming bone fracture treatment with the magnesium implants invention

This innovative solution promises to alleviate the long-term suffering of bone-fractured patients caused by traditional metal implants

An age-old adage "necessity is the mother of invention" still holds now. This aforementioned adage is duly proven by the fact that Nitin Pratap Varma Senior Scientist and highly esteemed research scholar from Dhanbad-based IIT-ISM and currently working as Senior Scientist for Shahjahanpur (UP) based company G Surgiwear Limited, felt the necessity of resorbable implant that could be fully absorbed in the bodies of accident victims as part of treating their fractured bones. Understanding this need of the hour, Varma held meetings with members-scientists of his research team. Many brainstorming ses-



GYAN BHADRA

sions with experiments ensued. Eventually, the team led by Varma zeroed in on the final product and invented the "magnesium implant" for the first time in the world. Shedding light on factual aspects of his invention, Varma says: "For many years, I have been observing the predicaments and troubles being suffered by bone-fractured patients due to inserted implants comprising plates and screws made

up of stainless steel and titanium metals. Since those plates and screws remained embedded in the body, patients had to undergo painful sufferings for a long period. To remove those metallic plates from the body, the patients have to undergo surgery which is physically tormenting as patients have to bear the brunt of risk aspects of surgery. And to add insult to injury, patients bear the huge expenses of surgery. Keeping in mind the troubles faced by patients, Varma convened a series of meetings with his fellow scientists and team members to discuss the use of plates made up of resorbable metals in place of stainless steel-made plates



After having a long discussion, we reached to the scientific conclusion that implant of resorbable metals gets fully absorbed in the body within 3-5 years of insertion. It is no hyperbole on my part if I say it vanishes into the

body. Thus through continuous research and experiments, we invented and zeroed in on magnesium implant due to its path-breaking resorbable quality in the human body. Patients do not feel any physical inconvenience

afterwards, Varma explains matter-of-factly. Analysing his bone treatment-related achievement in an in-depth manner, Varma explains that there are three kinds of metals that are resorbable and biologically safe: magnesium, zinc and iron. Undoubtedly, these metals have their pluses and minuses. Varma and his colleagues have been experimenting with resorbable metals to gain knowledge of their utilities and qualities. For this very purpose, the team of scientists also visited the Jamshedpur-based National Institute of Metallurgy institution to seek intricate technical knowledge of metals. Expressing optimism over the utility and quality of

magnesium implants, Varma avers that the invented product has reached the final stage; since the product has already been implanted in animals for testing its efficacy. Also, to be well-versed with different clinical parameters related to experimental procedures, the animals have been kept under observation for six months. Results from animal testing are very encouraging. After successfully experimenting with this product in animals, Varma has plans to test this product in human bodies. For this, he has decided to seek permission from the Drug Controller General of India. Having successfully tested this product in human bodies, it will be put in the

public domain, Varma explains. Eventually, it is no exaggeration to say that the invention of the magnesium implant is slated to bring revolutionary changes in the treatment of bone fractures and other bone diseases. This is more so because as per a research report, scores of scientists are engaged in experimental procedures of implants in laboratories the world over. And in this context, thousands of research papers have been inked and published. But to this date, those scientists have yet to make in-roads to reach the level of realistic utility of implants. (The writer is a freelancer; views expressed are personal)



GEETA CHANDRAN'S ARTISTIC LEGACY

Padma Shri awardee **GEETA CHANDRAN**, honored with the NRITYA CHOODAMANI, celebrates 50 years of transformative work in Bharatanatyam, underscoring her lasting impact on classical dance and cultural dialogue, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Congratulations on being conferred the NRITYA CHOODAMANI title. Reflecting on your 50-year journey in Bharatanatyam, how do you perceive this honour in the context of your career and contributions to classical dance?

Every award is a reminder that the work must continue. But, frankly, after a while, the awards truly cease to matter. One's perspective changes. What is truly exciting is that the body and the mind are so aligned that one can dance only for oneself. That is the most exciting frontier. Everything else feels superficial.

You have received numerous prestigious awards over your career, including the Padma Shri and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. How does the NRITYA CHOODAMANI title compare to these other honours in terms of its significance to you?

The Krishna Gana Sabha is an extremely prestigious dance forum in Chennai. An honour from that Sabha is very significant. In fact, for a Bharatanatyam dancer who has crafted my dance journey completely outside Chennai considered the mecca of Bharatanatyam, this is a nod from that citadel. So, I value it.

Your journey in Bharatanatyam began 50 years ago with your arangetram. Can you share some of the most pivotal moments and challenges you faced during these five decades?

Dance is probably the most fragile of artistic pursuits. That is because its instrument is the body and to keep that tuned constantly in pitch condition is an extremely arduous and daily task. Taming the body constantly for fifty years has been challenge Number 1. The next challenge has been to add layers to the knowledge gained from some of the most wonderful Gurus of those decades. And finally, the search for one's own artistic voice and to keep it sane without compromises has been a wonderful path of self-realization.

As the Founder-President of NATYA VRIKSHA, you have nurtured many young artists. How has your philosophy of holistic dance education evolved over the years and what core values do you emphasise in your teachings?

Dance as movement is only a fraction of my vision of dance. At Natya Vriksha, I have experimented with Bharatanatyam as a 'force multiplier' for the widest range of classical dance



issues that have engaged my focus: exploring linkages between body and mind; forging relationships between solo dancing, group dancing and choreography; actualising the connects between the artist and society; and using dance as a medium for expressing abstract notions of Joy, Beauty, Values, Aspirations, Mythology and Spirituality.

NATYA VRIKSHA's vision statement seeks to probe the continuing relevance of classical tradition in a world of changing values. It showcases the aesthetics of Bharatanatyam and its history, how the tenets of the dance can be employed as a means of communicating issues of contemporary concern, even while exploring linkages between history and continuity, between external body and internal mind-space, between yesterday and tomorrow, between artist and audience.....between roots and wings.

You are celebrated for your dynamic performances that promote societal dialogue and inclusivity. Could you elaborate on how you choose themes and choreograph pieces that transcend linguistic and cultural barriers?

My engagement with contemporary issues led me to create a unique

format which I call performance-dialogue through which I raise contemporary issues through my classical performances. Previous works like HER VOICE and IMAGINING PEACE raised issues of the meaninglessness of violence. KAIKEYI spoke about stigma and villainization. MYTHOLOGIES RETOLD addressed the issue of female foeticide. ANEKANTA highlighted the Indian Constitution's vision of an inclusive society. And GANDHI: WARP AND WEFT was a reminder of Gandhian values and choices. SIMHIKA: DAUGHTER OF THE FOREST highlighted the need for justice and rights for forest tribals. JAYATU BHARATAM celebrated 75 years of India's independence.

All these choreographies have articulated my conviction that dance can be a vehicle to build social bridges and erase social stigma, amplify gender issues and raise awareness on making sustainable environmental choices. I am currently absorbed with creating a new work that looks at new dimensions of women and conflict.

Preserving and promoting Bharatanatyam is a significant part of your legacy. What specific initiatives or projects have you

championed to ensure the art form's relevance and vibrancy in today's world?

At NATYA VRIKSHA, I aim to make youth aware of the immense potential of Bharatanatyam to become a live voyage of learning; make them comprehend the complex ; inter-linkages between the classical dance tradition and its strict grammar with other disciplines: Philosophy, Ritual, Religion, Myths, Ancient texts, Poetry, Literature, Art (Painting and Sculpture), Cultural Studies, Yoga, Handicrafts & Handlooms and Beauty & Aesthetics.

Towards this end, I have evolved a holistic method of transmitting classical dance; an approach that encompasses training students both in dance (theory and practice) and dance aesthetics. They are also made aware of the related fields of music, aharya (costuming & make-up), stage design and sound & light technologies. The aim is to use Bharatanatyam as a tool to wider knowledge, spiritual and physical empowerment

Balancing multiple roles as a dancer, choreographer, Carnatic vocalist and media personality is no small feat. How do you integrate these diverse aspects of your artistic identity into a cohesive whole?

There is no master plan; just efficient management of time to do all these things that I truly enjoy and that imbue my being with meaning.

Curating dance at the Serendipity Arts Festival must be a unique experience. How has this role influenced your perspective on contemporary and traditional art forms and how do you see them converging?

Serendipity has made me focus on young audiences and their expectations of performance. And what joy it is to see that GenZZZ can equally engage and enjoy the pristine classical and the contemporary and also the experimental. Curating that dizzy mix has brought me in touch with artists from across the spectrum all over India, South Asia and beyond.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind in the world of Bharatanatyam and classical dance, both through your performances and your work with students and the broader community?

I don't yearn for any legacy. The only legacy is constant sweat. If you can do that every single day of your life, you can become a dancer. Everyone else remains an amateur.

A New Path to Inspire

ADAH SHARMA makes her singing debut with a powerful rendition of the Shiv Tandav Stotram, showcasing a profound connection to both devotion and artistic expression. In a conversation with **TEAM VIVA**, Sharma reveals her intent to inspire others through her music.



Adah, your recent singing debut with the Shiv Tandav Stotram has captivated many. What inspired you to choose the Shiv Tandav Stotram for your singing debut?

As an actor I meet so many people who say they saw me do something and got inspired to do it themselves. So I thought this would be nice to inspire people. Also we made this version a version that has a lot of beats so you feel energised when you listen to it .

Can you describe the emotions you felt while chanting the Shiv Tandav Stotram live in a temple and how that experience influenced your recorded performance?

I had shared a version during the lockdown which I sang live in my home and then in a temple last year. Whenever I went for any public appearances people would ask me to chant it. So I thought it would be nice to do a studio recorded version. Chanting the Shiv tandav makes me feel focused, strong , energetic and the empowered feeling that all evil will be destroyed.

The video of your live chanting at an event went viral and received widespread acclaim and is trending on instagram since the release. How did that response impact you and did it motivate you to pursue more singing opportunities?

I did this especially for the audience so them enjoying it feels very special. I sing anyway, always. There's always music going on in my head. I've got singing offers before but I thought the first one should be something from me directly to the audience So I decided to release it on my own YouTube channel.

How do you balance your acting career with your newfound interest in singing and do you have plans to explore more musical projects in the future?

I like doing multiple things I enjoy. But I don't know how to plan for the future. I enjoy living in the present and working on becoming a better actor, dancer , singer everyday. I believe opportunities will come if they are meant to.

What was the most challenging part of performing the Shiv Tandav Stotram and how did you overcome those challenges?

For the video I wanted to stand in the middle

of the ocean on a rock. I practice meditation on one foot everyday to increase focus. On the day we decided to shoot it was very sunny and breezy and hot. So that was tough. But somehow the strength just came to push through and I didn't feel like it was a challenge.

How did you approach the task of capturing the essence and energy of the Shiv Tandav Stotram in both your live and recorded performances.

With honesty always, as I do everything in life. I don't know any other way.

Given the positive reception of your live chanting performance, do you plan to incorporate more live chanting or musical elements into your public appearances?

I haven't actually planned anything. We thought we would do a launch but I'm shooting for two big projects and the role in one of them I think is the toughest I've played. So even on days off in preparation. We just put the song out on YouTube and Instagram , no ads, no publicity. But in today's time I think the audience is the best PR.

What message or feeling do you hope to convey to your audience through your rendition of the Shiv Tandav Stotram and how do you feel it aligns with your overall artistic expression?

I am one of those very fortunate actors, I get the opportunity to play different roles because the audience accepts me in them. Just after the Kerala story where I played an innocent college girl I played an evil bar dancer in Sunflower season 2 and then I did Bastar where I was a soldier fighting for my country. My upcoming projects also have me being different people. On social media I am myself which is so different from all these characters . The audience doesn't allow me to get typecast. I'm very very lucky.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO ARTISTIC VISIONS

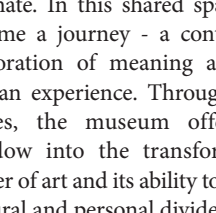
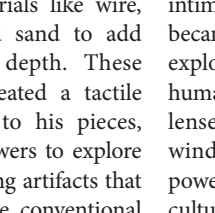
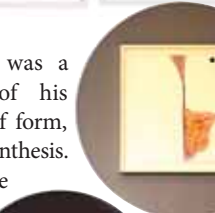
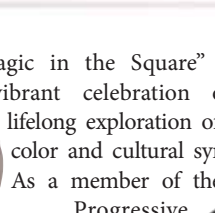
Experience the artistic vision and creative journey of Amitava and Mohan Samant. Their exhibitions remind us that art goes beyond just being a collection of works, it becomes a dialogue between the past, present and future, writes **TEAM VIVA**

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi has hosted two remarkable exhibitions that explore the creative journeys of Amitava and Mohan Samant. These exhibitions, titled "If We Knew the Point" and "Magic in the Square," provided a fascinating look into the world of Indian modern art through the eyes of two artists whose works are both unique and deeply interconnected. The museum presented over 150 works by Amitava and a diverse range of pieces by Mohan Samant, showcasing how each artist has contributed to shaping contemporary Indian art.

Amitava's "If We Knew the Point" was an introspective exploration of his internal landscape, brought to life through a variety of mediums and techniques. The exhibition title itself hinted at a philosophical journey, with the "point" referring to the elusive meaning or direction in life that Amitava seeks through his art. The collection revealed Amitava's versatility and his deep

engagement with materials, ranging from graphite, ink and watercolor to acrylics and burnt marks. His artworks resisted straightforward narratives, inviting viewers to interpret the complex themes and emotions embedded within each piece.

Central to Amitava's work was the color black, used not merely as a tone but as a gateway to deeper introspection. Black served as a canvas for exploring socio-political themes and reflected the tumultuous realities of contemporary society. In works like the "Heads" series, dense, totemic figures emerged from this blackness, their intricate patterns hinting at underlying chaos. Amitava's approach struck a balance between control and spontaneity, as he layered materials to create compositions that were



"Magic in the Square" was a vibrant celebration of his lifelong exploration of form, color and cultural synthesis. As a member of the Progressive

visually striking and intellectually engaging. Each piece invited viewers to lose themselves in the textures and layers, emphasising that art is more about experiencing than simply understanding. On the other hand, Mohan Samant's

embodied a fearless spirit of innovation that cut across traditional boundaries. His art reflected a harmonious blend of Eastern and Western influences, creating a unique visual language that defied categorisation.

Samant's works often drew from a wide array of cultural motifs, incorporating elements from Indian mythology, Egyptian hieroglyphs and Western modernist techniques. Samant's fascination with mythological and ancient themes was evident in his work, where the past and present converged to create symbols and narratives. His art was not just a visual experience but a sensory one, incorporating mixed media materials like wire, plastic toys and sand to add texture and depth. These elements created a tactile dimension to his pieces, inviting viewers to explore them as living artifacts that challenged the conventional boundaries of painting and sculpture.

The juxtaposition of Amitava and Mohan's exhibitions offered a unique dialogue between two generations of artists. While Amitava's work delved into introspection and emotional

complexity, Samant's art celebrated cultural synthesis and exploration. Together, these exhibitions provided a holistic view of the diverse trajectories of Indian art, highlighting the personal and cultural narratives that have shaped its evolution. As viewers navigated these exhibitions, they were encouraged to reflect on their interpretations and connections, making the experience both profound and intimate. In this shared space, art became a journey - a continuous exploration of meaning and the human experience. Through their lenses, the museum offered a window into the transformative power of art and its ability to bridge cultural and personal divides. At the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, these two exhibitions reminded us that art is more than just a collection of works; it is a conversation between the past, present and future, a tribute to the enduring power of creativity and the human spirit.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

