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12 SPORTS

TERRORISTS CRUSHED IN KASHMIR

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown against the local terrorists active in Kashmir valley, a joint team of security forces eliminated at least six of them in two separate encounters in the South Kashmir district of Kulgam in the last 24 hours. Two soldiers of the Indian Army, including one para commando, were martyred in the anti-terrorist operations. Both encounters broke out on Saturday when security forces launched CASO (Cordon & Search Operation) in the Modergam and Chinnigam villages following information about the presence of terrorists hiding in these two villages. The martyred soldiers have been identified as Lance Naik Pardeep Kumar, a para commando, and Sep Pravin Janjal Prabhakar. Senior administrative, police, and Army officers attended a sombre wreath-laying ceremony at BB Cantonment before the mortal remains of fallen soldiers were dispatched to their native places on Sunday. In Srinagar, Director General of Police, RR Swain, on Sunday told reporters that encounters have happened on two different encounter sites in the Kulgam district. Six terrorists have been neutralised in the ongoing operations. DGP maintained this is a big milestone for the security forces and these successes matter in strengthening the security



Security personnel stand guard during an encounter with terrorists in Kulgam PTI

environment... "People are coming together to end terrorism and the operations are gaining momentum. The current operation is still underway and has not reached its conclusion... We have received news of the involvement of local terrorists as well..." he said. The identities of the slain terrorists could not be ascertained immediately as the operation was still going on at one of the locations. So far the security forces have been claiming that the number of local terrorists active in the valley has come down and Pakistan is relying on foreign terrorists to keep the terror pot boiling. However, unconfirmed reports indicated the local terrorists killed in the operation joined the ranks of a pro-Pakistan terrorist outfit after the Abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. According to ground reports, the security forces blasted one of the hideouts to flush out the hiding terrorists in the Chinnigam village of Frisal while an encounter at another location of Modergam was still going on. After the Jammu region witnessed a sudden upsurge in the string of terror attacks in June 2024 the security grid in the Kashmir valley prevented large-scale terrorist violence by eliminating six terrorists in two back-to-back anti-terrorist operations. Of all the districts in the valley, the South Kashmir districts of Kulgam, Shopian, and Pulwama have witnessed the maximum number of incidents of terrorist violence this year. Since January 1, 2024, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed around two dozen incidents of terrorist violence in which 27 terrorists have been neutralised, 17 civilians lost their lives and 4 security personnel laid down their lives in the line of duty.

BMW runs amok in Mumbai, Porsche style

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a brazen hit-and-run incident, a high-end BMW car allegedly driven by the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena's deputy leader Rajesh Shah's inebriated son Mihir Shah knocked down a two-wheeler, killing a woman and injuring her husband at Worli in south-central Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday. The accused Mihir — who was behind the wheel at the time of the mishap — has gone absconding after the incident, while his father and driver Rajendra Singh Bijawat were detained by police for questioning immediately after the incident. The mishap took place at 5.30 am between Atria Mall and Worli along the Mumbai Coastal Road, when a two-wheeler occupied by two fishmongers — Kaveri and Pradik Nakva — was rammed into by a speeding BMW allegedly driven by Mihir from behind. Kaveri and Pradik were returning from the Sassoon Dock at Colaba in south Mumbai after purchasing fish stock at an auction, which they sell at a local market. After being hit by the speeding car, the two were thrown into the air and they crash-landed on the bonnet of the SUV. However, the speeding car fled from the spot. Kaveri (45) was immediately taken to a nearby hospital where she was declared dead before



A damaged BMW car that was involved in a hit-and-run case, parked on the premises of Worli police station, in Mumbai, on Sunday PTI

admission. Pradik sustained severe wounds. Police sources said Mihir consumed alcohol at a bar with some of his friends at Juhu in north-west Mumbai and later left for home. Enroute, he insisted that he would drive the vehicle and took over the wheel from the driver in a drunken state. The Worli police have registered a case under the various provisions of the newly-introduced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Motor Vehicles Act. The Worli police are securing the CCTV footage of the bar where Mihir and his friends consumed liquor. The police are also looking for the absconding Mihir. The investigators have, meanwhile, recovered the BMW car involved in the mishap from Bandra in north-west Mumbai. On his part, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde has ordered a thorough probe into the incident. "What has happened is unfortunate, very sad... Law will take its own course, everyone is equal before the law. I have spoken to the police and strict action will be taken against those found guilty," he said. In a related development, former Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and party chief Uddhav Thackeray's son Aaditya Thackeray, who is an MLA from Worli, demanded immediate action against the accused. Fisherman Pradik — who survived the mishap said, "It happened in front of me... the car rammed us. I saw him inside the car, driving... I asked him to stop, however, he fled the scene."



Bhole Baba to face Judicial Probe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh Government will speak to anyone required for its enquiry into the July 2 Hathras stampede, a probe panel member said on Sunday when asked if self-styled godman Bhole Baba will also be questioned. The commission will also issue a public notice soon, asking local people and witnesses of the tragic incident to share any evidence related to the stampede along with their statement, another member and chairperson of the panel retired Allahabad High Court judge Brijesh Kumar Shrivastava told reporters in Hathras. "The commission will speak to anyone required for the Hathras stampede probe," former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Bhavesh Kumar said when asked if the judicial panel will question the 'godman' as well. The three-member judicial commission, which includes former IAS officer Hemant Rao interacted on Sunday with locals in Hathras, besides officials and witnesses of the tragedy that claimed 121 lives.

Murder most foul in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Friday evening's gruesome murder of Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong in front of his house by six motorcycle-gangsters is reminiscent of the 1980s' crime thrillers featuring underworld dons as characters. "This is a tit for tat murder as the slain leader himself had underworld links," said a senior intelligence bureau official monitoring the case. Mayawati, the BSP supremo who flew down to Chennai on Sunday morning, said Dalits were not safe in Tamil Nadu. "There is no law and order worth its name in the State. The murder of Armstrong should be probed by the CBI as we do not trust the Tamil Nadu Police," said Mayawati after paying homage to Armstrong. She consoled the widow of Armstrong and was seen hugging and kissing the one-and-a-half-year-old daughter of the slain BSP leader. The girl had been named Savitri by Mayawati herself. Mayawati said those held by the police in connection with the murder are not the real culprits.



Slain Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong (l) and BSP supremo Mayawati

"The murder of a hardworking and dedicated BSP leader and State party chief outside his residence has deeply hurt me and my entire family. Armstrong was associated with the philosophy of Ambedkar and was a follower of Buddha, so when he decided to work in politics, he chose BSP. He strove for the growth of the BSP in Tamil Nadu," said Mayawati after laying a big wreath on the mortal remains of Armstrong. The Dalit activists in the State held the DMK Government responsible for the murder of Armstrong. It is an open secret that Armstrong never liked the

WB Police cross the line on Governor

PNS ■ KOLKATA/NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry has initiated disciplinary action against Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal and a DCP for allegedly maligning the office of the West Bengal Governor by promoting and spreading canards, a Central Government official said. The Union Ministry action came after Governor CV Ananda Bose submitted a report to it regarding Goyal and Kolkata Police Deputy Commissioner (DCP) Central Indira Mukherjee, alleging that they were "functioning in a manner which is completely unbecoming of a public servant," he said. Bose's report, submitted to the Home Minister in late June, highlighted issues such as Kolkata Police officers preventing victims of post-poll violence from meeting the Governor despite his permission. Copies of the letter were sent to the State Government on July 4.

JAGANNATH'S RATH ROLLS OUT



President Droupadi Murmu during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri on Sunday Pioneer photo

Mehsana Potatoes: Global foodies' first pick

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ AHMEDABAD

Just about 50-kilometre ahead of Gujarat's prosperous city of Ahmedabad lies the sleepy town of Mehsana. For decades this agriculture district has supplied across India various produce like wheat, jowar, mustard cotton, fennel, cumin, etc. But one crop that has attracted global attention recently is Mehsana's potato. So much so that Mehsana is now referred to as "India's potato capital". From global brands like Walmart, KFC, Taco Bell, Subway, McDonald's, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Lulu Group, The Pizza Company, Tesco to Indian companies like ITC, Godrej and Mother Dairy — all are making a beeline to Mehsana to source various potato specialities like french fries, patties, hash browns, cheese poppers and potato flakes.

Potato-lovers across the world — be it US, Japan, Europe, Middle East, South East Asia — all are savouring potato specialities being exported from Mehsana. And one company that has turned the tables on global giants to make India net exporter of potato specialties is HyFun Foods; and this has happened in less than a decade. Situated on the Ahmedabad-Mehsana highway, HyFun Foods is the brainchild of Hareesh Karamchandani, son of a potato-trader whose fascination with this staple food item of every Indian household began at a very early age. In 1962, the first generation of entrepreneurs started Asandas & Sons who began the trading of potatoes and onions while the second generation further expanded the business. It was in 2015, the third generation, led by Hareesh Karamchandani,



Managing Director and Group CEO, set up HyFun to produce a variety of potato delicacies. "It was a small start where we challenged a big multinational which has started its plant nearby. But soon we won the trust of big companies, in India and globally. And now here we are exporting our products to over 40 countries," Karamchandani told *The Pioneer*. Two things that led to

INDIA: FROM FRENCH FRIES IMPORTER TO EXPORTER

- INDIA IMPORTED 6,000 METRIC TONNES OF FRENCH FRIES IN 2007
- EXPORTED 5,000 METRIC TONNES OF FRENCH FRIES IN 2015
- FROZEN POTATOES EXPORT REACHED 67,770 METRIC TONNES IN FY 2022-23

up with an investment of over ₹1,000 crore will become operational soon. And our family of over 6,000 farmers is fast growing," he added. "Mehsana is already on the global map for its high-quality potato-based products and this story is going to get bigger and better. Big investors are coming to Mehsana to support our journey. We have already signed an MoU with global logistics giant Maersk which is setting up a new cold chain facility exclusively for us with an investment of over ₹110 crore. More and more fast-food players from India and abroad are approaching us for contract manufacturing. And it is just the beginning," said Karamchandani. The company is in process to launch new products — pizzas, kebabs, momos, processed vegetables etc — over the next few months, Since its inception in 2015,

HyFun Foods crossed ₹1,000 crore revenue in just seven years. Last fiscal it reported a turnover of ₹1,200 crore, 70 per cent of which came via exports, and it plans to cross ₹5,000 crore in next 3-4 years. By 2024 it also aims to have a network of 30,000 farmers spread across Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh with a focus on expanding potato procurement. Today the company procures around 3.5 lakh tonnes of potato every year, which is likely to cross 10 lakh tonnes by 2028. The company follows 'seed-to-shelf' business model, which starts with contract farming for seed multiplication of processing varieties of potatoes and procurement of crops through a buyback agreement prior to commencement of sowing by farmers at the predetermined prices.

Indian society has always been a nature worshipper

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Union Forest and Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav participated in a large-scale tree plantation program in the BSF Range area in Indore as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign. They planted saplings in memory of their mothers. Dr. Yadav planted a Banyan sapling in honor of his late mother, Smt. Leelabai Poonamchand ji Yadav. Similarly, Union Minister Yadav planted mango saplings in memory of his late mother, Santra Yadav. Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya also participated, planting a mango sapling in memory of his late mother, Smt. Adhyaya Devi Vijayvargiya.

Dr. Yadav emphasized the long-standing environmental significance of Indore and Ujjain, highlighting that Indore is the origin of seven rivers, including the Kshipra. Addressing a massive plantation programme in Indore, he noted that the city holds a unique identity both nationally and globally and aims to be the top city in cleanliness and greenery. In response to Prime Minister Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, saplings are being planted across the country. Dr. Yadav praised the efforts of the Union Forest and Environment Minister, which led to Madhya Pradesh acquiring leopards, a source of state pride. He remarked on India's tradition of nature worship, referencing Vedic beliefs that value the environmental importance of lakes, ponds and trees. Dr. Yadav reaffirmed Indore's commitment to becoming a green and clean city, with the entire community united in this effort. Union Forest and Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav highlighted the Prime Minister's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, which aims to plant 140 crore saplings across the country. He noted the recent extreme heat, with temperatures reaching 45 to 50 degrees, and discussed how human development and the construction of concrete cities have led to the destruction of the earth's greenery. Despite technological progress, nature provides essential resources such as food, water, and medicinal elements. Yadav emphasized the need to honor both our biological mothers and Mother Earth, who sustains us, by committing to a greener planet. He reminded everyone that the earth belongs to all living beings and urged

every citizen to plant trees under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign. He commended Madhya Pradesh's tree plantation efforts and praised Indore's initiative to become both a green and clean city. During the event, Union Minister Yadav and Chief Minister Yadav were honored with mementos, a Pagdi, and an Angavastra. Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya stated that Indore's green coverage will be significantly increased. He mentioned that, in addition to planting 51 lakh plants, special efforts will be made to ensure their conservation. Minister Vijayvargiya noted that various social organizations and institutions are taking responsibility for conserving these saplings. The campaign is being effectively implemented in Indore with active public participation. He expressed confidence that Indore will become the leading city in green coverage. On this occasion, Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silavat, Mayor Pushyamtara Bhargava, MP Shankar Lalwani, MLA Golu Shukla, Madhu Verma, Ramesh Mendola, District Panchayat President Reena Malviya, Krishna Murari Moghe, Gaurav Ranadive, Chintu Verma, etc. dignitaries were present. Divisional Commissioner Deepak Singh, Collector Ashish Singh, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shivam Verma, BSF IG CSWT B.S. Rawat, Inspector General Assistant Training Center BSF Ashwin Kumar Sharma along with officers and a large number of women and environment lovers were present in the program.



Union Minister for Forest, environment and climate change Bhupendra Yadav with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav offers prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Pioneer photo

'My Anganwadi is free of red and yellow sunflowers'

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

These days, different colors of sunflowers including red, green, and yellow can be seen in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. You might wonder whether we are talking about some hybrid variety of sunflower, but here the matter is completely different. A new initiative has been started to free Dindori district from malnutrition. The sunflower, which always gives the message of energy and positivity as it faces the sun, is visible in different colors on the walls of the Anganwadis and houses of the district. This has become a subject of curiosity among the common people. Besides, people's desire to have green sunflowers at home has also increased. Not only this, there is a

A new initiative has been started to free Dindori district from malnutrition

competition among the workers at Anganwadi centers to write 'My Anganwadi is free from red and yellow sunflowers' in their Anganwadi centers. People are becoming more and more curious to become familiar with this initiative of Anganwadi Centers and to know what these different colors of sunflowers mean. Let us understand this initiative. The three colors of Sunflower - red color symbolizes severely malnourished child, yellow color for moderately malnourished, and green sunflower means that none of the children regis-

tered in the Anganwadi center are malnourished or it can be said that all the children registered are healthy and safe. As soon as they see the word malnutrition-free, people go to Anganwadi to seek information about nutrition and malnutrition. The new initiative is attracting people from villages and towns to the Anganwadi center. People who used to shy away from going to the Anganwadi center, are now coming to the center out of curiosity to get information. This innovation is being done in Dindori under the Reva Project. Its main objective is to identify extremely severely malnourished and moderately malnourished children and bring them to normal living standards by changing the grades of the identified children. Apart from this, the aim is to

increase the self-confidence and enthusiasm of adolescent girls by providing them with an environment conducive to their hormonal development. Also, pregnant women have to be made aware of nutrition, health and vaccination, so that the child born is healthy. Apart from this, lactating mothers have to be motivated to pay attention to their health, nutrition, and breastfeeding of their children. In this campaign, activities like health camps, visits of malnourished children by officials to homes of malnourished children, identification of children, newly-couple meetings in Anganwadi centers, mother-in-law conferences, anemia camps, sickle cell camps, drug de-addiction, etc. are organized by the Reva project operators.

Incessant rains damage houses, roads in Gohad

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Several mud houses collapsed in the heavy rains which continued for over the past 24 hours in Gohad area of Bhand, roads were also damaged in several areas while water logging was witnessed in many places due to heavy and intermittent rains. Two and a half inches of rainfall was recorded in Seoni. At the same time, 1.7 inches of rain fell in Satna and 1.3 inches in Khajuraho. Rain occurred in many districts including Chhindwara, Jabalpur, Mandla, Naugاون, Malajkhand of Balaghat district, Betul, Dhar, Guna, Khargone. Senior meteorologist said, two tough lines are passing through Gwalior-Chambal and other parts of the state.

At the same time, a cyclonic circulation system is also active over Uttar Pradesh. Due to these, there is a strong system of thunderstorms and rain in the state. Many districts will receive heavy rains till July 11. It was raining in Gwalior since Sunday morning. Water filled in low-lying areas here. A road has collapsed in Bahodapur. A road collapsed after rain in Gwalior. Knee-deep water in lower settlements in Jaura of Morena. Due to heavy rain on Sunday morning in Jaura of Morena, the drains overflowed. Here, the lower settlements were filled with knee-deep water. The streets of the markets were filled with water. People say that the rainwater has flowed from 5 bigha area. They have to move around through dirty water. Many kutcha houses collapsed in Gohad of Bhand. Five people including a girl were injured due to the collapse of two kutcha houses in Brahmपुर. All have been admitted to the hospital. In the last 24 hours, Gwalior district received the highest rainfall of 1.96 inches. Rain occurred in many districts including Seoni, Mandla, Naugاون, Chhindwara, Khajuraho, Jabalpur, Betul, Khandwa, Shivpuri, Narmadapuram, Dhar, Bhopal, Guna. Similar weather will continue for the next 24 hours i.e. on Sunday as well. Heavy rain is expected especially in Gwalior, Bhand, Chhindwara, Pandhurna. Rain may also occur in other districts including Bhopal, Indore. Gwalior is experiencing light rain since morning. If we look at the picture of rain in Madhya Pradesh, so far an average of 7.5 inches of rain has occurred, which is equal to the average rainfall so far. 12% less water has fallen in the eastern part of the state and 12% more than the average in the districts of the western part. This figure may increase on Sunday. The districts which have received the most rainfall so far are Sheopurkalan, Bhand, Gwalior, Morena and Shivpuri. A record 146% more rainfall has occurred in Sheopurkalan. 11.5 inches of water has already fallen here. The least rainfall of 3.9 inches has occurred in Rewa. Umariya, Singrauli, Datia and Katni have also received less rainfall.



A general view of Madhya Pradesh BJP State working committee meeting, at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Blood donated without any expectations: Dr Manisha Shrivastava

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Transfusion Medicine Department of Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) honored voluntary blood donors and various organizations for their dedication to blood donation on Saturday. Additionally, an awareness program about sickle cell disease was organized. The event was attended by Dr. Manisha Shrivastava, the Director-in-Charge of BMHRC, Dr. Ruby Khan, Deputy Director of the MP State Blood Transfusion Council, a large number of voluntary blood donors, representatives from various organizations, and patients battling sickle cell-thalassemia and their families. During the event, speech



and slogan competitions were held, and the winners were honored. Addressing the attendees, Dr. Manisha Shrivastava emphasized the importance of being compassionate towards patients coming to the hospital and

serving them diligently. She praised the work of blood donors, stating that they donate blood selflessly and without any expectations, which makes their act even greater. She mentioned that the BMHRC blood bank has been operating continuously for the past 24 years and expressed pride that no needy person has ever had to struggle to get blood. There has never been a shortage of blood in the blood bank. Dr. Shrivastava also highlighted that sickle cell disease is preventable, and even those affected by it can lead a normal life with proper treatment. The Government of India and the Madhya Pradesh government are doing significant work to prevent and raise awareness about this disease. Dr. Ruby Khan congratulated the blood donors, stating that they are truly serving humanity. The blood donated by them can save the life of a pregnant woman or a thalassemia patient. In light of this great work, honoring blood donors is a small gesture. She urged people to ensure that before donating blood, they verify whether the blood bank is authorized, licensed, and how it uses the blood. She also emphasized that the blood bank should provide free blood to patients suffering from thalassemia and other blood disorders

Chief Minister garlands the statue of Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar in Indore

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Union Forest and Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav participated in the plantation programme organised in Indore under the resolution of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign. They first garlanded the statue of Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav and Union Minister Yadav also planted Rudraksha saplings on this occasion. On this occasion, Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat, Mayor Pushyamtara Bhargava, MLA Golu Shukla, Gaurav Randive, Chintu Verma and other public representatives were specially present. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that it is a matter of great pleasure for us that Prime Minister Modi has launched the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign for environmental protection. Under this campaign, 5.5 crore saplings are being planted in the entire state. It is a matter of pride

SISTec holds NPTEL awareness workshop

Bhopal: Sagar Institute of Science and Technology (SISTec) organized an NPTEL Awareness Workshop with IIT Madras at its Gandhinagar Campus. The workshop aimed to introduce participants to the NPTEL platform highlighting its extensive collection of high-quality online courses. The Computer Science & Engineering Department facilitated the workshop for students of SISTec on enrollment procedures, certification benefits and strategies for leveraging NPTEL resources for academic and professional growth. Expert speaker Prof. Shib Shankar Das, Senior Manager of the NPTEL & BS program at IIT Madras shared valuable insights. Over 155 faculty members from various institutions participated in the workshop to derive benefit from the NPTEL courses. A felicitation ceremony of 50 SISTec students and faculty members also marked the day with the Toppers, Elite Gold, Elite Silver, and Elite Badges. The workshop witnessed presence of Jyoti Deshmukh Group Director SISTec, D.K. Rajorija Principal SISTec Gandhi Nagar Campus, Manish Billore Principal SISTec-R, Swati Saxena, Vice Principal SISTec Gandhinagar and others.

Prestige to set up center of excellence for Quantum Computing

PNS ■ INDORE

Prestige Education Foundation, in partnership with AIC-Prestige Inspire Foundation, recently hosted an international roundtable conference on quantum computing titled "Opportunities & Technologies Beyond Visibility." The event drew global dignitaries, experts from the USA, Israel, Germany, and Italy, and key representatives from India's central and state governments. During the conference, three major Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were signed with key global companies to establish a Center of Excellence for Quantum Computing. This center will specialize in training, skills development, and education, as well as conducting cutting-edge technology projects. Dr. Davish Jain, Chairman of the Prestige Education Foundation and Chancellor of the Prestige University, stated, "Quantum computing is poised to transform the world, and at Prestige, we acknowledge both the opportunity and the challenge. We are establishing a Center of Excellence for Quantum Computing and other advanced technologies in collaboration with top international companies. This initiative will drive skill development and research, benefiting students and society." Andre Kinog, CEO of GQI USA, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership, stating, "We are pleased to partner with Prestige and are committed to bringing the benefits of quantum computing to India." Dr. Sanjeev Patni, CEO of AIC-Prestige Inspire Foundation, highlighted the event's significance, saying, "This conference is the first international conference in India on quantum computing. We at Prestige are keen to bring valuable knowledge to India and Indore." The "BEYOND VISIBILITY" conference provided a unique platform for attendees to gain a comprehensive understanding of quantum computing and its transformative potential. It was attended by scientists, researchers from the USA, Israel, and Italy, high-ranking officials, policymakers from India's central and state governments, including C-DAC, NITI Aayog, and MPSEDC, renowned industry leaders, and technology experts.



Women participate in a women's heritage car rally 'Aaghaaz-3' for safe environment and tourism, organised under the joint aegis of Begums of Bhopal and Raag Bhopali, in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

AIIMS Bhopal committed to promoting entrepreneurship

Bhopal: AIIMS Bhopal MBBS students Eeshan Pawar, Tithi Shah, and Divyansh Sharma have been selected for the prestigious BIRAC E-YUVA Fellowship scheme. The BIRAC E-YUVA (Encouraging Youth for Undertaking Innovative Research through Vibrant Acceleration) Fellowship is a highly esteemed program that nurtures young innovators in biotechnology. The selected students' project focuses on developing a magnetic probe to facilitate easy suturing in deep cavities and areas with poor visibility. This innovative tool aims to enhance surgical precision and efficiency, addressing a significant challenge in the medical field. The project was carried out under the mentorship of Dr. Kumar Madhavan, Associate Professor in the Department of Urology at AIIMS Bhopal. By providing opportunities like the BIRAC E-YUVA Fellowship, AIIMS Bhopal is empowering its students to become pioneers in medical innovation and contribute significantly to the healthcare industry.

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Proposal for development Madhya Pradesh passed in the meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the meeting of the extended State Working Committee of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a proposal was passed congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi on becoming the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time and with the victory in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in the state, a proposal was passed with the goal of developed Madhya Pradesh for developed India.

Former Minister and MLA Archana Chitnis, while talking to journalists after the passing of the proposal for Prime Minister Narendra Modi becoming the Prime Minister for the third time, said that it is a matter of pride for us that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the Prime Minister for the third time. Under the

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is touching new dimensions on the path of continuous development with the basic mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas' and will become Vishwa Guru by fulfilling the resolution of developed India by 2047.

MLA Harishankar Khatik said that development is taking place at a fast pace in the state under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. The first proposal was placed by State General Secretary and MP Ms. Kavita Patidar, which was supported by Union Minister of State Durgadas Uike and Deputy Chief Minister of the State Government Jagdish Devda. The second proposal was put forward by the State General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Ranveer Singh

Rawat and was supported by the Deputy Chief Minister of the State Government, Rajendra Shukla and MLA Brijendra Pratap Singh. MLA Archana Chitnis said that during the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress and its allies spread lies about the Constitution. Congress has amended the Constitution more than 90 times. The 2024 Lok Sabha has been an election of faith in policy, intention, integrity and decisions. The Congress and the INDI alliance had confusion, negativity and lies and we had the target of development, ideas, service along with big goals. After the removal of Article 370 in Kashmir, we gave a befitting reply to the opposition parties by voting wholeheartedly and breaking records. MLA Chitnis said that in many states, the Congress could not even open

its account and this time we have hoisted the party's flag in Kerala by winning one Lok Sabha seat there too. In many states, we managed to win all the Lok Sabha seats including the state and our vote percentage has also increased. Mrs. Chitnis said that in the coming five years, the tenure of Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi will take the country to the best position with happiness and prosperity. Addressing a press conference regarding the second proposal, the party's State General Secretary and MLA Mr. Harishankar Khatik said that the party got a historic victory in the state in the assembly and Lok Sabha elections. In the assembly elections, by getting 48.57 percent vote share, it won 163 seats by registering victory at about 61 percent booths in the state. In the Lok Sabha elections, it won 29 seats

by getting 59.57 percent votes. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, this time the budget has been presented with a 16 percent increase without imposing any tax. In 2003-04, the per capita income was only Rs. 13,465, which has now increased 11 times. In the coming time, the budget will increase further and the state will continue to move forward on the path of development.

MLA Harishankar Khatik said that according to the report released in January 2024, 2 crore 30 lakh people have come out of poverty in the state. With the aim of making agriculture a profitable business, a target has been set to irrigate one crore hectares of land by 2028. To promote research, gram research is being established in Ujjain and mustard research in Gwalior.



Union Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister for Forest, environment and climate change Bhupendra Yadav, Union Minister for Telecom Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda during BJP State working committee meeting, at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo



Artists perform during a dance drama '1855 Hool Kranti Siddhu, Kanhu' organised by Advivasi Seva Mandal at Shaheed Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Police arrest two, seize 13 kgs of Cannabis

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Crime branch Bhopal has arrested two ganja smugglers from Aero City Road Gandhi Nagar, 13.3 kg Cannabis worth Rs 2 lakh has been recovered from the possession of the accused. Both have admitted to bringing cannabis from Andhra Pradesh to Bhopal by road. Both used to sell the ganja brought from Andhra Pradesh to retailers at three times of the price. They reached Aero City Road waiting for customers and were caught by the police. Police have registered a case against both the accused under the NDPS Act. Additional DCP Crime Shelender Singh Chauhan said that on the basis of information

Both used to sell the ganja brought from Andhra Pradesh to retailers at three times of the price

received from the informer, two youths were surrounded in Gandhi Nagar under the Aero City Road bridge on Saturday night. Both were taken into custody and their bags were searched. In which packets of ganja kept in polythene were found. 13.300 kg ganja was found in about 14 packets. The accused have previous cases of crime registered against them. The accused have been identified as Faiz Mohammad (21) resident of H.No. 17, Street No. 21, Arif Nagar, Gautam Nagar and Sanjana Thakur (20) resident of village Jamni Tola, Tehsil Suhagpur, District Narmadapuram.

Both the accused have previous cases of assault and other criminal cases registered against them. The accused told during interrogation that they had reached Bhopal from Andhra Pradesh by road by boarding different buses. They were going to bring ganja from there at low prices and sell it to retail smugglers in Bhopal at higher prices. To avoid getting caught, they called the customers to Aero City Road to make delivery in isolation. However, they were caught before that.

Prime Minister congratulates CM, citizens

Bhopal: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and the citizens of Bhopal for setting a record by planting 12 Lakh saplings in a single day under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.

In his tweet, Prime Minister Modi praised this initiative by Dr. Yadav and the people of Bhopal, calling it a model for the entire country. He emphasized that such efforts play a crucial role in making the environment cleaner and more beautiful.

Yadav stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inspiration has always driven historic achievements through public participation and the collective resolve of the nation. From transforming the country's image through the cleanliness campaign to

combating COVID-19, India set a remarkable example to the world under Prime Minister Modi's leadership. Yadav expressed confidence that the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign will not only promote environmental protection but also strengthen the sacred spirit of honoring mothers.

He further added that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, Madhya Pradesh is committed to planting 5.5 crore saplings. It may be noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign on the occasion of World Environment Day. Yadav started this campaign in the state by planting saplings at Jamboree Ground, Bhopal on Saturday. A record 12 lakh saplings were planted in a day at 300 places in the capital Bhopal.

To strategize for the 2025 assembly polls, Delhi BJP holds executive panel meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP held its extended executive committee meeting at Jawahar Lal Nehru (JLN) stadium on Sunday to strategize for the 2025 assembly polls with over 2,000 participants and senior party leaders. The meeting was inaugurated by Union Minister Piyush Goyal by lighting the lamp and garlanding the pictures of Bharat Mata, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. On the executive meeting stage, the best-performing Mandal presidents and booth heads from the last Lok Sabha elections in Delhi's seven parliamentary constituencies were honoured, along with the Tridevs.

In his inaugural speech, Goyal congratulated the people of Delhi for winning all the seven seats. "This victory is not ordinary and Delhi's contribution is invaluable. The victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is only the vic-

tory of development work which has continuously served the country in the interest of the country. The Modi government has done many works through many programs and schemes and he went before the countrymen for the future vision to make a developed India and this victory confirms the same," he said. Attacking the AAP government, he claimed that no scheme of the central government including Ayushman Yojana is allowed to be implemented inside Delhi. "To bring BJP to power in the upcoming 2025 assembly elections, we will have to work hard from now onwards so that after the double engine government comes to power in Delhi, we will be able to carry out development work continuously," the Chief Speaker stated. An exhibition was held in the stadium premises showcasing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's achievements over the past 10 years and the struggles of Delhi's

workers over the past 18 months. The political proposal including Return Gift from the Public, Lack of Trust in Kejriwal Government, Government Drowned in Scams, Ayushman Bharat Scheme Not Implemented in Delhi, Water Board a Den of Corruption, Thirsty Public, Minister on Hunger Strike, Roads No Longer Walkable, the victim of public transport transparency, Misuse in the name of women's safety and Deaths due to pollution proposed by Bidhuri and seconded by MP Yogendra Chandolia, and supported by MPs Bansuri Swaraj and Praveen Khandelwal. After the discussion and coordination, MP Manoj Tiwari re-endorsed the political proposal.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that the people of Delhi have expressed their blessings by giving all the seven seats to the BJP and answered Kejriwal's corruption. Attacking

AAP and Congress alliance, he said, "This election was a coalition of two failed parties who fought together for their own selfish interests and hence their defeat matters. The people of Delhi have said that they are with the right and not with the corrupt. There is a government in Delhi which is only playing the game of bail from jail." Sachdeva alleged that Kejriwal shamed Delhi by building a luxurious bungalow worth more than 50 crores for himself during the Covid period. "The people of Delhi are yearning for every drop of water today. The Delhi government, which promised to provide water through taps, is a government sold to the tanker mafia. Apart from committing big scams in the Jal Board, the Delhi government has a long list of scams," he claimed, while appealing to his workers to work four times harder than they have done in the Lok Sabha to uproot the Kejriwal

government involved in corruption from Delhi. All the seven BJP MPs also shared their roadmap. Rajya Sabha BJP MP Dr. Sudhanshu Trivedi concluded the meeting and said, "In this election, the opposition's biggest weapon in Delhi was confusion, but the people of Delhi have seen so much confusion in the last 10 years that they are now capable of responding to it correctly." Taking a jibe at the opposition parties, he said, "The Congress needs to repeatedly look inside the AAP, which has switched off the Congress in Punjab, halved it in Gujarat, and wiped it out in Delhi, yet they have forgiven them." He said that those who pushed Delhi into the river of alcohol neither understood their performance nor received the sympathy of the public. "Therefore, the public message is clear that this time we will successfully win two-thirds of the seats in Delhi

with a long leap," he said. The General Secretary of the organization, Pawan Rana, discussed organizational matters and reviewed the tasks to be undertaken with the district front presidents. At the executive platform, the Mandal presidents who delivered the best results in the last parliamentary elections from all seven parliamentary constituencies of Delhi, as well as the best booth chiefs and Tridevs, were honored.

The BJP has not won an Assembly election in the national capital for over two decades, while the AAP has secured consecutive victories in 2015 and 2020 with significant majorities. Currently, the BJP holds eight seats in the 70-member Assembly, whereas the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP has 61 seats. Raaj Kumar Anand, the MLA from Patel Nagar, was disqualified after he quit AAP to contest the Lok Sabha election on a BSP ticket.

A group of people sprayed poison during religious event: lawyer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Self-styled godman Bhole Baba's lawyer AP Singh claimed on Sunday that the Hathras stampede occurred because a group of 15-16 people sprayed poison during the religious event. The lawyer claimed the group of conspirators fled the venue after triggering the stampede. He alleged that witnesses told him some people opened cans containing a poisonous substance in the crowd during the July 2 Hathras 'satsang', triggering the stampede. Addressing a press conference in Delhi, Singh also alleged a conspiracy, which he attributed to Bhole Baba's 'rising popularity', behind the stampede. The stampede after the 'satsang' of self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Saker Hari alias Bhole Baba in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras led 121 people, mostly women, dead. "Witnesses have reached out to me and said there were 15-16 people carrying cans of a poisonous substance that they opened in the crowd. I have seen post-mortem reports of those killed and it showed that they died of asphyxiation and not because of injuries," Singh claimed. Alleging a conspiracy behind the stampede, he said, "There were vehicles parked at the site to help the men escape. We have proof and we will submit it. This is the first time I am speaking about it." Singh

claimed the witnesses who reached out to him requested anonymity. "We will demand security for them." Preliminary probe reports say that the organisers had secured permission for the event with a maximum turnout of 80,000. However, over 2.5 lakh people attended the gathering. So far, nine people, including key accused Devprakash Madhukar, have been arrested in connection with the stampede. On Saturday, Suraj Pal Singh or 'Bhole Baba' broke his silence on the Hathras stampede and said those who created the chaos will not be spared. "I am deeply saddened by the incident of July 2. May God give us the strength to bear this pain. Please keep faith in the government and the administration. I have faith that those who created the chaos will not be spared. Through my lawyer AP Singh, I have requested the members of the committee to stand with the bereaved families and the injured and help them throughout their lives," the 'Baba' said. Hathras police said it was also probing into the suspected funding of the congregation by a political party and warned of the "strictest possible" action against it. Madhukar was the main organiser and fundraiser of the 'satsang' where more than 2.5 lakh people had gathered, much beyond the permitted limit of 80,000, officials had said.

Classmate molests BPEd student, blackmails

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The accused demanded Rs 50000 from her by threatening. Fed up with his harassment, the woman lodged a complaint

A 22-year-old Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) student was molested by her classmate, and accused also made morphed videos and photos with her and demanded Rs 50,000. The accused harassed the victim by threatening to make these photos and videos viral. Jehangirabad police have started investigation. The accused demanded Rs 50,000 from her by threatening. Fed up with his harassment, the woman lodged a complaint in the Jehangirabad police station. After investigation, the police have registered an FIR. The accused youth has been arrested. Jehangirabad police station TI Sanjay Singh Soni said that the

accused committed indecent acts with the victim. The accused took a photo of it secretly. For some time now, the accused started pressuring the girl to have a forced relationship. If she did not agree, he started threatening to make her personal photos and videos viral. On Saturday, the accused called the victim near the Indian Coffee House Police Headquarters on the pretext of talking. Here he talked obscenely to the girl. When the victim protested, he started threatening her by threatening to make the morphed video viral. Not only this, the accused put a condition in front of the victim that if she wanted to get rid of him, she would have to pay 50 thousand rupees. Troubled by this, the girl reached the police station and registered a case.

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Union Minister for Forest, environment and climate change Bhupendra and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav pay tributes to Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar during a plantation drive under 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign at Rajwada in Indore, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Fake call centre cheats people in multi-crore loan scam in Noida, 11 persons arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hundreds of people were duped in a multi crore loan scam which was operating from a fake call centre in Noida. Noida police have arrested 11 people, including nine women, for defrauding people in the name of loans and insurance policies from a call centre here. The Noida Police said that the gang, operating from a call centre on the fourth floor of a market in Sector 51, was busted on Friday in a joint operation by the Crime Response Team (CRT) and the local Sector

49 police station officials, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shakti Mohan Avasthy said. "The action on the bogus call centre was carried out based on local intelligence and confidential information. The accused were targeting people in Delhi NCR under the guise of offering loans and insurance policies. They had data of 10,000 people," Avasthy said. The call centre, run by two former life insurance policy agents, operated from the fourth floor of a building in Noida's Sector 51 market for over a year. Police said the gang lured people from outside Delhi-NCR by promising high returns on loans and insur-

ance policies. The scam's masterminds, Ashish and Jitendra, hired nine women to act as call centre executives who would call people and sell them these policies. The gang bought SIM cards through fake Aadhaar cards bought illegally. The police identified those arrested as key accused Ashish Kumar alias Amit and Jitendra Verma alias Abhishek. The nine women arrested are Nisha alias Sneha, Reju alias Divya, Lovely Yadav alias Sweta, Poonam alias Pooja, Aarti Kumari alias Ananya, Kajal Kumari alias Surti, Sarita alias Suman, Babita Patel alias Mahi, and Garima

Chauhan alias Sonia. The police have found a case against them lodged in Ranchi, Jharkhand also, Avasthy said. "The gang lured people from states outside NCR with promises of high returns through loans and insurance policies. These individuals (women) assist Ashish and Jitendra on a commission basis, receiving their share in cash," a police spokesperson said. The official further disclosed that they used a PNB bank account rented from a person named Arvind in Karnataka for Rs 10,000 per month, from which the key accused withdrew funds using the ATM card in their posses-

sion. Ashish maintained a black diary recording the financial transactions and shared the profits with his associates based on their contribution, the police spokesperson said. "Ashish and Jitendra started this fraudulent activity after working for SBI Life Insurance in 2019. They bought data of about 10,000 people from India Mart for Rs 2,500 and began calling people across India, defrauding them under the pretence of offering loans and insurance," the official said. "This scheme had been operational for over a year, generating crores of rupees, meticulously

recorded in the recovered diary," the official added. The accused were found using mobile phones with SIM cards obtained through fake Aadhaar cards, purchased from vendors willing to sell them for a higher price. These SIM cards were used to hide their identities while targeting unsuspecting victims outside the Delhi NCR, according to the police. An FIR has been lodged in the case under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the accused were sent to judicial custody after they were produced before a local magistrate's court, the police added.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY G2

Open Tender No.: JHS-RCNK-M-PAINT-24-25-05 Date: 05.07.2024

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tenders are invited by Chief Workshop Manager, Rail Coach Naveenikaran Karkhana, Jhansi from experienced or interested contractors on behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work-

Name of Work: Complete Internal & External Painting/Vinyl Wrapping along-with Scrapping, Cleaning and Painting of underframe of LHB Coaches as per Scope of Work.

Cost of work: Rs. 1,55,03,052.00-(Including 18 %GST) Bid Security: Rs. 2,27,500/-

Time of completion: Twenty-Four Months, Online tender closing date and time: 27.07.2024 at 11:00 Hrs., Detailed information about tender and tender format is available at website www.irps.gov.in 1183/24 (ADM)

North central railways www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in @northcentralrailway @CPRNCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY G2

Tender No.: JHS-ELG-W-18-2024-25 Date: 04.07.2024

TENDER NOTICE

For and on behalf of President of India, the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineering (Gen) North Central Railway, Jhansi invites open tenders through online (E-Tendering) for the following work:-

Description of work: Part-A : Jhansi division: Provision of remaining Minimum essential amenities & facilities for Divyangjan at Ghatampur station. Part-B : Jhansi division: Provision of remaining Minimum essential amenities & facilities for Divyangjan at Chitrakoot dham karvi station. Part-C: Jhansi division: Provision of remaining Minimum essential amenities & facilities for Divyangjan at Pokhayan station. Part-D : Jhansi division: Provision of remaining Minimum essential amenities & facilities for Divyangjan at Tikmaghar station. Part-E : Jhansi division: Provision of remaining Minimum essential amenities & facilities for Divyangjan at Harpalpur station.

Tender Value: ₹ 25,40,827/- only, Bid Security: ₹ 50,800/- only, Completion Period: 06 Months, Closing Date of Tender: 30.07.2024 (upto 15:00 Hrs.).

Tenderer will submit the tender online upto 30.07.2024 (upto 15:00 Hrs.), Complete details & for submission of tenders can be seen in Indian Railway website <http://www.irps.gov.in> 1175/24(A)

North central railways www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in @northcentralrailway @CPRNCR

Contest for Speaker's Post sign of thriving democracy: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOTA/BUNDI

An indication of a "live and thriving democracy" is how Om Birla described the rare election to the post of Lok Sabha speaker, which he won in a voice vote against opposition candidate K Suresh. The opposition had pushed for the poll by nominating Congress' Suresh against BJP's Birla, even as it did not press for a division of votes.

In an interview with PTI, Birla took a dim view of disruptions in the Lok Sabha during its first session after the formation of the new government and said there has to be a difference between debates in Parliament and those on streets.

On radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and terror funding case accused Engineer Rashid being elected to the House as Independents from Punjab's Khadoor Sahib and J-K's Baramulla while in jail, the Lok Sabha speaker said the two members have been chosen by the people.

"They have been chosen by the people and administered the oath as per the rules of procedure (of the Lok Sabha) and on orders of the courts," Birla told PTI while on a visit to his Kota parliamentary constituency in Rajasthan.



Asked about the rare election to the post of Lok Sabha speaker, Birla said, "These are signs of a live and thriving democracy." The previous election for the post took place in 1976. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha from June 24 to July 3 witnessed tumultuous scenes with opposition members trooping into the Well of the House and raising slogans throughout Prime Minister Narendra Modi's over two-hour reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Opposition INDIA bloc parties attacked the BJP-led NDA over

the NEET-UG paper leak row and the situation in Manipur among other issues. Both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha saw multiple adjournments. Birla said that "agreements and disagreements are part of democracy". "Diverse views are there. These should be there. The churning that happens due to diversity of views also helps the government in a constructive way. The government also gets to know the views of everyone. The more the views, the better," he said. "But one thing is clear that the people of the country also expect some difference

between the discussion in Parliament and the debates on the streets," the speaker said. Birla is the first speaker in 25 years to be re-elected as a Lok Sabha member for a second consecutive term.

Congress' Balram Jakhar completed two consecutive terms as the presiding officer of the House after being elected from Ferozpur (Punjab) and Sikar (Rajasthan).

Birla said he has been re-elected from the same parliamentary constituency for three consecutive terms. He added that it has been his endeavour as speaker to ensure that MPs get an opportunity to put forth their views. The House also had a sitting till midnight, Birla said.

The speaker said a stronger opposition in the House was an opportunity to articulate the views of the people in a structured manner.

"These are not challenges but an opportunity. The people expect a strong opposition to articulate its views in a proper manner, and the entire House be unanimous on matters of national interests," Birla said to a question on an increased number of opposition members with Congress' Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of the Opposition.

Soon, get a satellite image of your backyard with the click of mouse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Want a satellite picture of your backyard? It may soon be possible as Bengaluru-based space start-up Pixxel plans to unveil an online software suite to browse through images of earth captured by its satellites and also order customised pictures.

In an interaction with PTI editors here, Pixxel Space Chief Executive Officer and co-founder Awais Ahmed said the start-up's earth observation studio 'Aurora' was part of efforts to make space-based data accessible to the common person for a small fee.

Pixxel's earth observation studio is expected to go live later this year and make the hyperspectral images of the earth taken by its satellites and data analysis accessible to everyone. "It would be as simple as using Google Earth but pictures and satellite imagery would be much more advanced," Ahmed, the 26-year-old CEO, who is among the handful of entrepreneurs who are making a mark in the space sector which was opened to private players about four years ago, said.

Users of the Aurora suite can browse through the satellite images already available in the database or place a "tasking



order" for Pixxel's satellites going around the earth in the lower earth orbit.

"I want to order an image for say Chikmagalur in the next week or next two weeks, then it will go to our satellites and they will deliver it, as long as you can pay for it," Ahmed, who built the first satellite while still completing his masters in mathematics from BITS Pilani, said.

Pixxel has launched two satellites -- Shaktikanta and Anand -- later this year, the company's first set of commercial spacecraft that will deliver earth images to its clients who range from the Ministry of Agriculture in India and the National Reconnaissance Organisation of the US. The start-up also has

our website, Pixel.Space/Aurora to access images of the earth taken by our satellites," Ahmed said.

The two satellites -- Shaktikanta and Anand -- launched by Elon Musk's SpaceX and ISRO's PSLV respectively, were pathfinder spacecraft, demonstrating the company's capabilities to deliver on high quality hyper-spectral images.

Pixxel plans to launch six satellites -- Fireflies -- later this year, the company's first set of commercial spacecraft that will deliver earth images to its clients who range from the Ministry of Agriculture in India and the National Reconnaissance Organisation of the US. The start-up also has

plans to launch 18 more satellites next year, including a slightly heavier Honeybee spacecraft that will carry visible and shortwave infrared camera to increase the wavelength range of the satellite.

"The sensors on these satellites are equipped to provide hyper-spectral imagery of 250 plus bands in the 470-2500 nm range at a five-metre ground sampling distance," the company said. Ahmed said conventional satellites can capture images in visible and some infrared range.

"Hyperspectral is taking all of this light coming in the visible and infrared range, and splitting them into continuous, very minute lengths," he said. "If, for example, I'm looking at a plant with a normal camera, I can tell that's a plant and there's a leaf there. But if a hyperspectral camera is capturing that, it has broken it into so many different wavelengths that I can now see if there are signs of pest infestation there, or if it's irrigated well enough and so on," Ahmed said. "So that's, in a basic sense, you're going from three wavelengths from human eyes to about 300 wavelengths in hyperspectral, which is just enabling us to see way beyond human sight," Ahmed said.

Rahul vows to raise issue of loco pilots' rights in House

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday flagged the plight of loco pilots and asserted that the INDIA bloc will raise its voice in Parliament to improve their rights and working conditions. His remarks on social media came as he posted a video of his recent interaction with loco pilots at the New Delhi Railway Station.

"In Narendra Modi's government, the train of the life of loco pilots has been completely derailed," the former Congress chief said. He said loco pilots are forced to work 16 hours a day sitting in cabins boiling with heat.

"The people on whom millions of lives depend have no confidence in their own lives. Deprived of even basic facilities like urinals, loco pilots have no limit on working hours and neither do they get leaves. Due to which they are getting physically and mentally broken and are falling ill," Rahul Gandhi said in his post in Hindi.

In such a situation, making the loco pilots drive trains is putting their lives and that of the passengers at risk, he said. The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will raise its



voice in Parliament to improve the rights and working conditions of loco pilots, Rahul asserted. "By watching this small discussion, you can also feel their pain," he said as he shared the video of the interaction. In the video, the loco pilots complain to Gandhi about lack of rest, no leaves and "inhuman working conditions". All India Loco Running Staff Association's South Zone president on Saturday had loco drivers handed a memorandum to Gandhi, blaming poor working conditions for recent train accidents.

R Kumaresan, who played a crucial role in organising the interaction between the former Congress president and the loco pilots at the New Delhi Railway Station on Friday, said that they wanted to bring to Rahul Gandhi's attention "serious safety issues" faced by drivers and passengers in the

Railways. The train drivers' unions have also countered Railways' claim that Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the Delhi Division and were brought from outside.

On Friday, after the LoP visited the loco pilots' crew lobby at the New Delhi Railway Station, the chief public relation officer of Northern Railway under which the Delhi Division falls, said that it looked like Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the crew lobby of the New Delhi Railway Station. The group of loco pilots, complained of "inadequate rest due to understaffing", Rahul had assured them that he would raise their issues in Parliament. He had met around 50 loco pilots from all over India at the New Delhi Railway Station and they explained to him their issues, party sources had said.

Experts for focus on dialogue in helping children understand risks of vaping

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over the increasing prevalence of vaping among youngsters, actor-director Nandita Das too has joined 'Mothers Against Vaping', a collective of mothers dedicated to combating the rising issue of vaping among children and youth. Alongside other influential figures like Baichung Bhutia, Deepa Malik, Dutee Chand, Neha Dhupia, and Kushboo Sundar, Das is lending her support to raise awareness about the dangers of modern tobacco devices. According to those who think that e-cigarettes are better than conventional smoking, a large US study has said that vaping at any point in life has been linked to a 19 per cent increase in the risk of heart failure.

Expressing deep concern over the increasing prevalence of vaping among young people, Das highlighted the urgent need for collective action. "As a mother of a teenager, I worry for all children and hope that they don't fall prey to such harmful addictions. The issue demands our immediate personal and collective attention," she said. "Today's children are intelligent and exposed to a lot of information. They are also



vocal and rational. So we need to explain to them logically the dangers of such devices that may look attractive or 'cool'. They can see reason if we engage with them constructively and compassionately," Das said.

Das stressed the role of constructive and compassionate dialogue in helping children understand the risks associated with vaping, leveraging their intelligence and access to information. Though the Government has been proactive in banning e-cigarettes and has taken decisive action by prohibiting e-cigarettes and similar new-age gateway devices through the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA), 2019, there have been many cases of smuggling of these devices reported from several States.

Govt plans to double AB-PMJAY beneficiary base, insurance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is actively considering doubling the beneficiary base under its flagship Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme over the next three years, with all those aged above 70 years to be brought under its ambit to begin with, and also increase the insurance coverage to Rs 10 lakh per year.

The proposals, if given a go ahead, would entail an additional expenditure of Rs 12,076 crore per annum for the exchequer as per estimates prepared by the National Health Authority, official sources told PTI. "Discussions are happening to double the beneficiary base under the AB-PMJAY over the next three years, which, if implemented, will cover more than two-third population of the country with health cover, the sources said while noting that medical expenditure is one of the biggest reasons that push families to indebtedness.

"Deliberations are also underway over finalising a proposal to double the limit of the coverage amount from the existing Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh," they said. These proposals or some parts of it are expected to be announced in the Union



Budget to be presented later this month. In the interim Budget 2024, the government increased the allocation for the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which provides health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 12 crore families, to Rs 7,200 crore while Rs 646 crore was assigned for the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM). President Droupadi Murmu, in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament on June 27, had said all the elderly above 70 years of age will also be covered and get the benefit of free treatment under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana now. Those above 70 years of age add up to around 4-5 crore more beneficiaries being covered under the scheme, another source said.

The limit of Rs 5 lakh for AB-PMJAY was fixed in 2018. Doubling the cover amount is aimed to cater for inflation and provide relief to families in case of high-cost treatments such as

transplants, cancer etc. The NITI Aayog, in its report titled 'Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle' published in October 2021, suggested extending the scheme. It had stated that about 30 per cent of the population is devoid of health insurance, highlighting the gaps in the health insurance coverage across the Indian population.

The AB-PMJAY flagship scheme towards Universal Health Coverage, and state government extension schemes provide comprehensive hospitalisation cover to the bottom 50 per cent of the population. Around 20 per cent of the population is covered through social health insurance, and private voluntary health insurance primarily designed for high-income groups. The remaining 30 per cent of the population is devoid of health insurance, the actual uncovered population is higher due to existing coverage gaps in PMJAY and overlap between schemes. This uncovered population is termed as the missing middle, the report stated.

The missing middle is not a monolith - it contains multiple groups across all expenditure quintiles.

Modi looks forward to discussing new cooperation avenues with Austria

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of his visit to Austria, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday the shared values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law form the bedrock upon which the two countries will build an ever-closer partnership. Modi's remark came a day after Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer posted on 'X', "I very much look forward to welcoming Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, the world's largest democracy, next week in Vienna."

"This visit is a special honour as it marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in over 40 years and a significant milestone as we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations with India," he said. "We will have the opportunity to talk about further deepening our bilateral relationship and closer cooperation on the many geopolitical challenges," the Austrian chancellor said.

Responding to Nehammer, Modi said, "Thank you, Chancellor Karl Nehammer. It is indeed an honour to visit Austria to mark this historic



occasion. I look forward to our discussions on strengthening the bonds between our nations and exploring new avenues of cooperation."

"The shared values of democracy, freedom and rule of law form the bedrock upon which we will build an ever closer partnership," he said.

Modi will be travelling to Austria for his first visit on July 9 and 10, after his Moscow visit on July 8 and 9 at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin to hold the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit.

Showcasing India's cultural legacy in public spaces

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kuntal Dutta, a graduate from the Academy of Fine Arts in Howrah, West Bengal, known for his expertise in Alpona -- a traditional Bengali art often seen during auspicious occasions -- brings vibrant depictions of Goddess Durga to life. Similarly, Manoranjan Chitrakar, from a lineage of Pattachitra artists in Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, uses natural hues to weave stories of individuals amidst nature, capturing scenes like harvesting honey amidst wildlife.

The duo are among the over 150 visual artists from across India who have united under Union Culture Ministry's unique Project PARI (Public Art of India). The project has been particularly inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's deep appreciation for public art celebrating the "Celebration of life through six seasons of India" at Pragati Maidan's 1.6-km long tunnel in New Delhi during its inauguration two years ago.

The project aiming to showcase India's cultural legacy and the country's UNESCO heritage sites comes ahead of the 46th session of the World Heritage



Committee here to be held between 21-31 July. The initiative is being executed by Lalit Kala Akademi and National Gallery of Modern Art and aims to showcase India's cultural legacy and UNESCO heritage sites through diverse array of artworks including wall paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations themed around nature, ancient knowledge, and World Heritage Sites like Bimbetka. These artworks draw inspiration from rich cultural and traditional styles from across India such as Phad paintings from Rajasthan, Thangka from Sikkim and Ladakh, Pattachitra miniature painting from Himachal Pradesh, Gond art

from Madhya Pradesh, Tanjore paintings from Tamil Nadu, and more.

For instance, Phad painting is the forte of Gopal Joshi from Bhilwara, Rajasthan. His family's generations-long dedication to Phad painting helps him bring his expertise to enrich public spaces with cultural depth and narrative richness.

A traditional art form from the Northern State, the painting is appreciated for its intricate storytelling depicting the life and legends of Bhagwan Devnarayan on cloth canvases. Through Project PARI, Joshi's contributions help bring this rich artistic tradition to a broader audience, fostering a

deeper appreciation for Rajasthan's cultural tapestry and its enduring artistic expressions, said an official from the Culture Ministry.

The sculptures being created encompass a wide range of themes paying tribute to nature, ideas from the Natyashastra, Mahatma Gandhi, traditional Indian toys, hospitality, ancient knowledge, Naad (Primeval Sound), Harmony of life, and the divine tree Kalpataru.

The unique project seeks to bring forth public art that draws inspiration from millennia of artistic heritage (lok kala/lok sanskriti) while incorporating modern themes and techniques, the official said.

North India loses 450 cubic km of groundwater over two decades

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 450 cubic kilometres of groundwater was lost in northern India during 2002-2021 and climate change will further accelerate its depletion in the years to come, according to a new study. This is about 37 times the quantity of water the Indira Sagar dam -- India's largest reservoir -- can hold at full capacity, lead author Vimal Mishra, Vikram Sarabhai Chair Professor of Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar, said.

Using on-site observations, satellite data and models, researchers found that across north India, rainfall in the monsoon season (June to September) has reduced by 8.5 per cent during 1951-2021. Winters in the region have become warmer by 0.3 degrees Celsius over the same period, they found.

The team, comprising researchers from the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) in Hyderabad, said lesser rainfall during the monsoons and warming of winters will increase irrigation water demand and reduce groundwater recharge, further stressing the already depleting groundwater resource in north India. While a drier monsoon



leads to more reliance on groundwater to sustain crops during rainfall-deficit periods, warmer winters result in relatively drier soils, again requiring more irrigation -- something the researchers observed during the unusually warm winter of 2022, the fifth warmest for India since the India Meteorological Department started records in 1901.

"The accelerating trend of depleting groundwater is expected to continue as the planet warms because even though climate change causes more rainfall, most of it is projected to occur in the form of extreme events, which does not support groundwater replenishment," Mishra told PTI.

The shortage of rainfall in the monsoons followed by warming winters, both driven by climate change, is projected to cause a "substantial decline" by about 6-12 per cent in groundwater recharge.

Cong Govt in K'taka paralysed amid tussle for CM, Deputy CM posts: Karandlaje

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Accusing the Congress Government in Karnataka of being in deep slumber and mired in competition for Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister posts and internal rifts, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Sunday urged the CM Siddaramaiah and his administration to "wake up" and save the people. Highlighting health issues such as dengue cases, also deteriorating law and order situation, stalled infrastructure projects in the state and the city among others, the Member of Parliament from Bangalore North accused the Siddaramaiah government of having forgotten the people amid its internal rifts. "There are several issues in the city and the state, and there is no government here that responds to it. This government is in a deep



slumber. There is no use of telling anything to this government, it will be like pouring water on a rock," Karandlaje said. While speaking to reporters here, she said the only thing that is happening in this government is, competition as to who should become the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, and because of this competition and internal rift, the government that is there in Karnataka has forgotten the

people of the state. "The government has to wake up immediately before more lives are lost. Also the law and order situation has deteriorated, there are several rape, murder, daylight murder cases that are coming out, but there is a situation where there is no one to question. So I urge the government and the Chief Minister to wake up and protect people," she added. Noting that along with dengue, there are also reports about Zika virus cases in Karnataka, Karandlaje said people are getting admitted to hospitals and there are issues concerning the availability of medicines and their prices. Though the government has fixed a rate for dengue tests, no one is following it, she said, "there are reports about deaths due to dengue in Bengaluru, the government system has collapsed, the health department is in deep slumber." No work is getting completed, infrastructure projects have been stopped half-way without completion, leading to accumulation of water due to rains and generation of mosquitoes there, she said, "Bangalore water supply and sewerage board (BWSS) is not functioning efficiently, there are leakages in pipes which have also led to accumulation of water and sewage. Neither the government or its departments are looking into it."

TDP will regain past glory in Telangana soon, party restructure on cards: Naidu

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Thanking the people for protesting against his arrest in September last year, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday said the Telugu Desam Party will soon regain its past glory in Telangana also. Addressing TDP workers here, Naidu said the party was born in Telangana (four decades ago) and soon it will be restructured. TDP did not contest the Assembly polls in November 2023 and the Lok Sabha polls this year in Telangana for a variety of reasons. The party is currently headless after Kasani Gnaneshwar resigned as the state president before the Assembly polls last year. "TDP which was born for Telugu people should be in Telangana. I am asking you whether the party which was born on the land of Telangana should function or not (in the



state)? There were several people who worked for the party. We will restructure the party very soon (in Telangana)," Naidu said amid cheers by the party cadre. Asserting that he would work to bring the past glory to the party in Telangana, he said TDP will encourage youth and the educated in the state. On the meeting with his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy on Saturday, Naidu said though different parties are in power in AP

and here, when it comes to the interests of Telugu people, there is a need to work together. Chandrababu Naidu and Revanth Reddy met here on Saturday and decided to constitute committees of ministers and officials to address pending issues related to bifurcation of undivided Andhra in 2014. "Yesterday, we held discussions with the Telangana government. I am hoping that they will be taken forward in future also," he said. Recalling his contribution as a Chief Minister to the development of Hyderabad city two decades ago, the TDP supremo said now Telangana enjoys the top slot as far as per capita income is concerned and the gap between it and Andhra Pradesh was 33 per cent in 2014. He said he was able to reduce the gap to 27 per cent during his tenure as CM between 2014 and 2019. However, it again went up to 44 per cent during the YSR Congress regime. The Andhra CM claimed that several industries are expressing their willingness to invest in AP, but are apprehensive of the opposition YSRCP's "attitude." Despite several hurdles and problems he assured that he would take the responsibility for the development of Andhra Pradesh.

Many rivers touch danger levels in Bihar after heavy rain

PTI ■ PATNA

With heavy rain lashing various parts of Bihar in the last 24 hours, major rivers, including Kosi, Mahananda, Bagmati, Gandak, Kamla Balan and Kamla, were flowing above the danger level at many places, a bulletin issued by the Water Resources Department said on Sunday. The rivers were flowing above the danger mark at several places, while in some places they touched the warning levels, it said. The water level of Bagmati River has touched the danger mark at Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Sheohar, Aurai and Suppi and other adjoining areas. "The water level of Bagmati River, as recorded at 8 am on Sunday, in Sitamarhi and Suppi was 71.16 metres, which is 0.16 metre above the danger level. Likewise, Bagmati crossed the danger mark in Muzaffarpur, Sheohar, Aurai and Piprahi," the bulletin said. "In Gopalganj and Sidhwalia, Gandak River is flowing above the danger mark of



62.22 metre (till 8 am on Sunday). Similarly, Kamla Balan River touched the danger mark in Madhubani, Lakhnaur and Jhanjharpur. Kamla River is also flowing above the danger mark of 67.75 metre in certain areas of Madhubani and Jainagar," the bulletin said. While in Araria, Parman River is flowing above the danger mark of 47 metre, Mahananda crossed the danger mark in Purnea and Baisi, it said. Kosi and Lal Bakeya Rivers have already touched warning levels in Khagaria, Beldaur and Sitamarhi and its adjoining areas. No casualty has been reported yet and people have been

Coastal parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu warned of sea swells



PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The coastal areas of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are likely to experience the 'kallakkadal' phenomenon -- the sudden swell of the seas causing rough waves -- and high tides till 11.30 pm on Monday, according to the weather agency. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) on Sunday sounded an alert to fishermen and coastal residents in the area about the possible sea surge. INCOIS, the central agency that issues weather warnings for fishermen in the country, advised people to safely moor their fishing vessels in the harbour. It advised coastal people, living in accident-prone areas, to relocate to safer places in view of possible danger. It also suggested people completely avoid travelling to beaches and venturing into the sea considering the warning, a statement added.

BJP extends support to Thrissur Mayor who praised Suresh Gopi

PTI ■ THRISSUR

The BJP in Kerala on Sunday came out in support of Thrissur Corporation Mayor M K Varghese who has landed in trouble by praising Union Minister Suresh Gopi and said the party would stand by anyone who works for development irrespective of politics. The saffron party said it was a reality that Gopi, as union minister, has been carrying out things for the development of Thrissur and asked why the Mayor was being hunted down for telling the truth. "It is a reality that Suresh Gopi, as an union minister, is doing things for the development of Thrissur. Why the other political parties are getting annoyed when he told that reality?" BJP general secretary M T Ramesh told reporters here. Accusing political opponents of mixing politics in everything, he alleged they had some other hidden agenda.



"They might have some issues against the Mayor. There is no need to put that blame on Suresh Gopi," Ramesh said. If anybody works for development irrespective of politics, the BJP would be with them, the leader added. Ramesh's statement came amidst a raging political row kicked up by Varghese, Mayor of the Left Democratic Front (LDF)-ruled Thrissur Corporation, with his recent positive remarks about Suresh Gopi. Varghese had said that the actor-turned-politician has a vision for the development of Thrissur constituency and Kerala. The Mayor had also said that it was his responsibility as a people's representative to stand by a MP or Minister irrespective of his politics for development. However, he responded in the negative when reporters asked whether he would join the BJP. A Congress rebel, Varghese had become the Mayor of Thrissur with the backing of the CPI(M)-led LDF. Varghese had earlier come under attack from Left workers for allegedly supporting Gopi during the time of April 26 Lok Sabha polls.

Individuals to get Kunbi certificates on basis of kin's records: Minister on Maratha quota

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister Chandrakant Patil has said the "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of those whose records are traced as Kunbis will also get such certificates, amid some OBC leaders opposing such a move for Marathas. Talking to reporters on Saturday, Patil said both the communities (OBC and Marathas) must be made to understand that the notification on "sage soyare" will not hurt anyone's interest. The government will hold an all-party meeting to address the issue on Monday, he said. Activist Manoj Jarange, who suspended his indefinite fast last month, has been demanding implementation



of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" of Maratha community members. He has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. Kunbi, an agrarian group, is part of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Minister Patil said, "Those whose records are found (as Kunbis) will be given Kunbi certificates. The sage soyare

of those who get Kunbi certificate will also get (Kunbi) certificate." Last month, OBC activists Laxman hake and Navnath Waghmare held a hunger strike for 10 days, demanding the draft notification that gives Kunbi certificates to Marathas to avail quota benefits be scrapped. They have demanded that the OBC quota should not be diluted. The duo had launched the fast as a counter to Jarange's demand that Marathas should get reservation in the OBC category. Patil said Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CMs Ajit Pawar and Devendra Fadnis have been holding talks with representatives of both the communities.

There is a need not to die but live for the country: Amit Shah

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said there is a need not to die but live for the country as he lauded the Kadva Patidar community for their role in the development of Gujarat. He was speaking at an event after inaugurating a hostel complex for students in Ahmedabad in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. Shah also inaugurated a hospital in the city during the day. The hostel - Amin PJKP Vidyarthi Bhavan - has been built by the Kadva Patidar community and will accommodate students from all social groups, said its officials. Shah said today there is a need not to die for her country but to live for her.



"You may be a good IAS, IPS, CA, doctor, good citizen or housewife, but you need to work for the country," he said. The senior BJP leader said the Kadva Patidar community has contributed a lot to the development of Gujarat. "The development of Gujarat and Patidar community is parallel. Through its hard work, the Kadva Patidar community has made an important contribution to its development as well as the development of the state and the country," he said. "Today people are serving the country after studying in many institutions of Kadva Patidar community of north Gujarat," Shah said. Speaking on the occasion, Patel said that due to the 'Shala Praveshotsav' (school enrolment) and 'Kanya Kelavani Mahotsav' launched by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi as the then chief minister two decades ago, the education sector in the state has seen a lot of development. "It is very important to give good and quality education to children. Education is the foundation of development. The government is constantly striving to strengthen education to uplift the future of the country," the CM said. Shah also inaugurated the newly constructed multi-specialty SLIMS Hospital in Ahmedabad. "Built at a cost of over Rs 30 crore, the 8-storey hospital has state-of-the-art facilities like robotic surgery and cardiac care centre along with OPD facilities. I am confident that this hospital equipped with modern facilities will help in meeting the medical needs of the area," he tweeted.

Need to increase green cover to tackle soaring heat: Union Minister

PTI ■ INDORE

Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Sunday stressed the need to increase green cover to deal with soaring temperatures during summer. The union environment minister joined the ongoing campaign to plant 51 lakh saplings in Indore. Speaking on the occasion, Yadav said humans built concrete cities on the earth but destroyed greenery in the race for development. "This year, we have experienced temperatures soaring to 45 to 50 degrees Celsius in many parts of the country. In the race for



development, humans have built concrete cities on earth but destroyed the greenery," he said. The "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on World Environment Day on June 5 is about respecting Mother Earth. According to officials, the plantation drive in Indore will end on July 14.

50 moved to safer place after 80 get stuck at Goa waterfall

PTI ■ PANAJI

Around 50 people were rescued while 30 were still stuck at Pali waterfall in Goa's Sattari taluka on Sunday after the water level suddenly rose amid heavy downpours, an official said. Superintendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal said a rescue operation is currently underway at the waterfall with the help of personnel from Fire and Emergency Services. Being a Sunday, the waterfall witnessed a huge rush in the morning. One has to cross a river to access this scenic place. Amid heavy rains, the flow of



water at the waterfall suddenly increased, catching the monsoon revellers off guard. Meanwhile, the river also swelled up, trapping them, the official said. Kaushal said 50 people have been rescued so far. "Another 30 people were still stranded at the waterfall. The rescue operation is going on," he said.

Body of boy who fell into drain in Guwahati recovered

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The body of an eight-year-old boy who had fallen into a stormwater drain in Guwahati on Thursday, was recovered about 4 km downstream in Rajgarh area of the city, police said. The body was identified by his parents at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), where it was taken after being retrieved on Sunday. A post-mortem examination was conducted at the hospital, and DNA samples were collected for further testing. The body was brought to his home in Noonmati area of the



city in the afternoon. Abhinash Sarkar had slipped from his father's scooter and fallen into the open drain on Thursday evening, as they were returning home amid heavy downpour. Multiple agencies, including NDRF and SDRF, had launched a search operation, pressing into action different machinery and sniffer dogs. Abhinash's father Hiralal had also carried out a search operation by himself, wading through the drain, slush and garbage with a stick in his hand for the last three days, spending the first two nights under a mosquito net on the verandah of a shop near the site of the incident. A police officer said that the body was recovered around 9.30 am by rescue agencies in Rajgarh area, more than four km downstream from hilly Jyotinagar, where the boy had fallen into the drain. The parents initially identified the body on the basis of photographs shared with them, and later physically verified it at the GMCH morgue.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Liberals a the helm

With the Labour Party's victory in the UK, India can anticipate a more favourable stance and pro-India policies

After remaining out of power for more than a decade, the Labour Party led by Keir Starmer is back with a landslide victory in the recently held elections in the UK. Prime Minister Modi was among the first to congratulate Prime Minister Keir and both leaders agreed to work towards more vigour for FTA and strengthening the ties between the two countries. Indeed, it is a big shift in UK politics and many policies and initiatives would be at a stark departure from the previous dispensation. This shift holds great significance, given the Labour Party's decisive victory over the Conservatives in the recent general elections. This change in governance marks a new chapter in the UK's domestic and international policy. For countries like India, with deep historical, economic, and diplomatic ties to the UK, this transition could bring about notable changes. The evolving dynamics of UK-India relations under the new Liberal government could influence various sectors, including trade, education, technology, and immigration. The Labour Party's victory signifies a substantial shift in British politics. The Labour Party is known to be liberal, traditionally more progressive, inclusive and believes in sustainability and international cooperation. Their policies are expected to diverge from the Conservative approach, particularly in areas such as climate change, social justice, and economic reform.



Though Conservatives did not touch upon the UK's ties with India there can be a marked shift in the UK's policies in the months to come. The biggest change may come in the form of immigration laws. India has a sizable population in the UK and getting a Visa and residency status is always on the top agenda of the Indian community in the UK and back home. The next area where substantial change could be witnessed is the economic ties between the two countries. The Liberal Party's commitment to free trade and economic partnerships could enhance bilateral trade, potentially leading to a comprehensive UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA). It was the first thing that came up when Prime Minister Modi congratulated the new Prime Minister of the UK Keir Starmer. Indeed, for long, The UK and India have had robust trade relationship, with the UK being one of India's significant trading partners. Under the Conservative government, there were ongoing discussions about a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Labour Govt's more enthusiastic approach to global trade could accelerate these negotiations. A more collaborative and open approach to foreign policy may lead to deeper strategic ties, particularly in areas like defence, cybersecurity, and counter-terrorism. Greater involvement in global platforms like the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and climate forums, facilitating joint efforts on issues of mutual interest. Besides, India can look forward to the UK's support for India's aspirations for a greater role in international organisations, including a potential permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

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PICTALK



Locals cross a flooded area on a boat, in Balimuk village of Morigaon district

Hinduism and the perception of violence



PRAFULL GORADIA

Each religion's cultural and ethical framework is distinct. Dietary habits and historical contexts have influenced perceptions of violence across different religions



To specifically associate violence—as was done on the floor of the Lok Sabha on July 1, 2024—with Hinduism, showed that not all our leaders have had time to intimately know and understand the Indian ethos. This is understandable if one remembers that Indians can be Hindu, Muslim, Christian (duly baptized) and others. An argument between the honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the leader of the opposition reflected the differences, albeit in a rather acrimonious manner. As the Speaker explained, the Hindu goes to the extent of touching an elder's feet and not merely bending. On the other hand, Islam does not permit bending to anyone, except Allah the Merciful. A Christian is different and shakes hands to convey the warmth of his feelings. The scale of violence indulged in also varies from ethos to ethos. Christians are habituated to meat-eating, except on Fridays, when they do not go beyond a piece of fish. The Muslim also likes his meat without restrictions even on Fridays. This dietary preference might have been forced upon these communities because their origins began in the deserts of West Asia, where vegetation was (and continues to be) sparse. Even Europe, where Christianity flourished, could not easily grow crops during the winter. In the process, the world's consumption of animals is an estimated 100 million

killed a year, according to a database prepared by Poore and Nemecek in 2018. The Hindu, for the information of our leadership, largely grew up where vegetation has been plentiful. He could, therefore, choose to be anything from a strict vegetarian to an omnivore. However, he owes his vegetarianism to his belief in the transmigration of the soul, unlike the Christian who believes in a single life until Doomsday when God would send him to either heaven or hell depending on his performance on earth or even in the grave. The Hindu on the other hand believes that when his father, mother, relations, and near and dear ones depart from the world, it is only their bodies that perish; the soul is imperishable and enters new bodies to carry on with its respective new lives gained after rebirth. The Hindu would, therefore, be afraid that if he or she eats meat, it could be the product of the killing of some deceased relation, who might have been reborn as that particular animal or bird that was killed for his culinary pleasure. I too hesitate to eat meat whenever I imagine how I would feel if my progeny were to be killed for the pleasure of someone else's food. Pray, tell me, who is perpetrating more violence, the meat eater or the vegetarian?

“ THE HINDU WOULD, THEREFORE, BE AFRAID THAT IF HE OR SHE EATS MEAT, IT COULD BE THE PRODUCT OF THE KILLING OF SOME DECEASED RELATION, WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN REBORN AS THAT PARTICULAR ANIMAL OR BIRD THAT WAS KILLED FOR HIS CULINARY PLEASURE

Incidentally, I am a Hindu. The diet or food habits of an individual, if given to the consumption of meat, may also transfer to his social as well as professional conduct and behaviour. This question is well answered by the history of Europe. This continent, throughout its history, has fought 896 recorded wars. Europeans were fighting and killing each other as tribes, much before the Greek and Roman Empires came into existence. The Athens-Sparta wars, the Peloponnesian War, the expansionist wars of the Roman Empire, etc., are part of Europe's history and need not be retold here. But it is Europe's obsession with war and killing from Achilles to Putin (or Zelensky) that needs to be emphasized and reiterated. From sticks to stone hammers, bronze and later iron and steel, armour and edged weapons like the dagger sword and spear, Europe kept developing and improving the tools of killing. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the explosion of technological development and innovations. The age of iron, steel, coal and steam came to the world. Railways steamships, the telegraph and then the radio, automobiles, machine guns, tanks, airplanes and the submarine came into being. All this enabled European

nation-states to muster, equip, arm, transport and command more men than ever before in their history, with deadlier firepower and killing capacity. In the past 75 years alone, the invention of the atomic bomb, guided missile, the internet and cyber warfare have changed war and its dimensions like nothing else has. Our contention that Europe has been the land of war, war and more war is easily proved by the sheer number of human beings who have perished because of European wars. Even if we were to leave aside all its ancient and medieval wars, the two World Wars (together) alone consumed 130 million lives. Even a relatively small power like Italy under its dictator Benito Mussolini was ready to jump into wars of aggrandizement owing to delusions about its armed might. Those delusions occurred as a result of the phenomenon of "armed sausion": for quite some time Italy was believed to be the most formidable air power in Europe. Be that as it may, there is no denying that Europe, a meat-eating continent has been the land of war. To accuse Hindus of violence, therefore, is nothing but a moral travesty. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

Madam — The recent election results have highlighted a stark contrast between our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the outgoing Prime Minister of the UK, Rishi Sunak. Modi's victory, despite being well-funded and supported by the media, felt hollow as his party, the BJP, suffered a significant setback, losing 63 seats compared to the last Lok Sabha elections. Despite this, Modi remained publicly unshaken and did not express any remorse or responsibility for the disappointing outcome. The BJP's third consecutive term was celebrated as if it were a gold medal, despite being more akin to a silver. In contrast, Rishi Sunak demonstrated remarkable candor and humility following his party's defeat to Labour. He openly acknowledged his responsibility for the loss, saying, "I take responsibility for the loss... I am sorry." This display of accountability and character stands in stark contrast to Modi's approach. As Bill Courtney wisely noted, "The measure of a man's character is not determined by how he handles his wins, but how he handles his failures." By this standard, Rishi Sunak has demonstrated commendable character, and Modi could benefit from following his example by acknowledging the conditional nature of his victory. Avinash Godbole | Dewas

SPECULATION OVER GOVT'S STABILITY

Madam — In a significant and serious assertion, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav on Friday predicted the fall of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre by August, anticipating a split among its coalition partners and hinting that elections could be imminent. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP secured 240 seats, falling short of the 272 needed for a majority. Nevertheless, it formed the government with the support of allies such as the Bihar-based Janata Dal (U) and the Andhra Pradesh-based Telugu Desam Party, allowing Narendra Modi to begin his third consecutive term as Prime Minister. Notably, since the inception of

Give substantial compensation to victims



The victims of the Hathras tragedy, predominantly from impoverished backgrounds, have lost their loved ones, leaving them in profound grief and despair. They are in dire need of substantial compensation. Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, visited their homes and promised generous compensation, which has brought comfort to the bereaved families and gained the goodwill of the community. Such tragic incidents at religious gatherings have repeatedly occurred in the country, causing not only the loss of lives

but also devastating many families. The magnitude of their grief is immeasurable, and the aftermath ripples through entire communities, leaving them to grapple with both emotional and financial burdens. To prevent future occurrences, these gatherings require essential improvements, including the deployment of security forces, police, ambulances, and the installation of CCTV cameras, to manage the situation effectively before any problems arise. The government must take proactive steps to implement stringent safety protocols and infrastructure enhancements to prevent such incidents from happening again. This is not merely a matter of compensation but of ensuring that the lives and well-being of our citizens are protected and that no family has to endure such unimaginable loss in the future. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Modi's third term, several Opposition leaders have voiced concerns that the government may not endure beyond a few months. Lalu's recent statements have intensified such speculation, suggesting a potential political upheaval. Amidst this, there is a possibility that a strategic maneuver might be underway by Nitish Kumar and N. Chandrababu Naidu to destabilize the Modi government if their demands are not met. Both leaders, known for their political agility, may take drastic steps for their political survival, which could potentially lead to the government's collapse. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

JAILED MPS TAKE OATH

Madam — Jailed MPs Amritpal Singh and Engineer Rashid took their oaths as Lok Sabha members amidst stringent security measures by concerned authorities. Both MPs secured significant victories in their respective constituencies of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, marking a triumph of democracy in regions historically marred by unrest.

Under Article 101(4) of the Constitution, MPs must inform the Speaker in writing if unable to attend House proceedings post-oath, subject to scrutiny by the House Committee on Absence of Members. However, a Supreme Court ruling mandates immediate disqualification if an MP receives a prison sentence of two years or more, overturning prior provisions. The impact of Engineer Rashid's victory is pivotal in Kashmir's upcoming assembly elections, necessitating careful handling by the central government to maintain current peace, especially amidst ongoing Amarnath Yatra. Similarly, Amritpal Singh's electoral success in Punjab underscores the need for sensitive management amid recent incidents potentially affecting communal harmony. It is crucial for the central government to approach Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir with utmost delicacy and maturity in light of these developments. Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The art of listening in a fast-paced world

Prejudices create barriers and divide people; our lives are so frenetic that we lack the time to observe and listen to other voices

We had organised a literature festival a few months back. Almost all the writers spoke about the stories all around us waiting to be put on paper. This set me thinking. If the life of each of us is a palette of stories of different hues, why is it that we do not hear more of these experiences? Does it have something to do with a life that is increasingly running at such a frantic pace that we have no time to observe and listen? Or is it the divides that we carry within us - social, class, caste, age, gender, religion, ideologies, and many more? I have met many people in my life. If I was asked to place them in two distinct categories, I would not hesitate to categorise them as extroverts and introverts. The outspoken are the ones who attract attention. It is the ones shy in expressing sentiments in public, who are a revelation to me. It only needs a nudge for their unexpressed and hence unheard stories to come out. Their life experiences are a myriad of emotions. I remember my first holidays in the mountains.



The adjoining room was occupied by an old couple, who at that time may have been our grandparents' age. One morning, as we sat outside, my parents sipping their tea, the couple also came out. My father asked us to fetch the chairs placed nearby, respecting their old age, and slightly bent backs. Our efforts were brushed aside, "We can still carry our own chairs." Habits inculcated at a young age are difficult to break. I still get up to offer my seat to an older person. My paternal grandfather was hard of hearing. We children had to shout to make him understand. I did not realise that I had started screaming at anybody old, till the time I was told by my maternal

grandmother, "Why do you shout at us. Our hearing is perfectly normal." I now make a conscious effort not to speak loudly to an older person unless asked. My maternal grandfather was paralyzed on one side when he may have been 50. He was extremely slow, but insisted on wearing his clothes without anyone's help, also brushing aside my grandmother's efforts to do so, even if there was a time constraint when going out for a movie show. It is not that only the old want the young to respect their wish to be heard and treated with dignity and respect. I remember a cab driver who only needed a gentle query to tell me that he chose to drive a cab after he retired

to keep himself active and for the opportunity to talk to willing passengers, overriding the objections of his children who were now much better placed than he ever was. Or yet another cab driver, who was bursting to proudly tell anyone willing to listen to him that his daughter had cleared her CA examinations in the first attempt and had been offered a job with one of the Big 4. There are many more who only need a gentle prod to express their unheard stories if only there is someone around to give them time without being judgemental. Their silence is a plea to be encouraged to narrate a life story that many might deem to be common but is no less extraordinary than that of the most successful celebrity. It is also important to be a story-listener! In Bryant H McGill's words, "One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

PASSION IS THE CATALYST FOR A FULFILLING LIFE

By prioritising passion, individuals can infuse their lives with purpose and excitement



RACHNA LAKHPATI

Passion is the powerful force that propels individuals towards their desired objectives, igniting ambition and providing unwavering determination in the face of life's challenges and uncertainties. When someone discovers a pursuit they are truly passionate about, they experience a distinct and unstoppable energy that drives them towards it and motivates them to achieve success. Many individuals find themselves trapped in monotonous routines that weigh them down.

Rise and shine, head to the office, wrap up your tasks, and return to the comfort of your home, only to repeat the routine the following day. Engaging in the same routine day after day can lead to feelings of sadness and discontentment when there is a lack of enthusiasm for one's daily activities. Why bother doing something if it doesn't ignite your passion? I understand that not everyone has the opportunity to pursue their dream career.

Many individuals work tirelessly to establish stability in their lives, with some solely focused on providing for their basic needs. Even in such cases, it is important to prioritise and make time for activities that bring joy and fulfilment. Passion evokes a sense of joy, happiness, and deep satisfaction that emanates from within. Consider my acquaintance, for example. She's immersed in the corporate world, tackling one of those challenging jobs that will provide financial stability but won't ignite her passion. After a long day of work



and on weekends, she dedicates her time to what truly brings her joy: baking.

She radiates enthusiasm as she describes the new recipes she's experimenting with or the joy she feels when she witnesses someone savouring the results of her hard work. It gives her a unique sense of thrill and personal fulfilment that her corporate job fails to deliver. Her unwavering passion keeps her spirits high and provides her with a daily source of motivation, even during the most challenging moments at work.

There's no need to leave your job and venture into uncharted territory abruptly. It's something so small that it can fit into your current routine. Perhaps dedicating a few hours each week to your hobby, taking learning classes, or developing a side hustle could be beneficial. Even though these endeavours may seem modest, they can have a significant impact on your overall health and happiness.

Passion is essential for everyone to lead a fulfilling life, not just a select few. The sense of purpose and the excitement it brings are necessary for keeping our minds and hearts youthful and vibrant. So, if you have a strong passion for something, prioritise and dedicate time to it. You will achieve success by wholeheartedly embracing your pursuits. Indeed, the lengthy voyage can be quite exhausting. The rewards, however, of living a life fueled by passion are immeasurable. Ultimately, it all boils down to passion. Develop it, nourish it, and believe that it will guide you to a happy and prosperous life.

(The writer is a motivator; views are personal)

Kenyan uproar against IMF-backed Ruto tax bill



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Amid calls for his resignation, Kenyan President Ruto faces mounting pressure to address the root causes of economic instability and social unrest

Kenya's President William Ruto has finally withdrawn the Finance Bill 2024 following widespread protests triggered by Bloody Tuesday, when police fatally shot numerous austerity protesters in Nairobi this week. According to media reports, the bill, influenced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), proposed significant tax increases amidst soaring food and fuel prices, high unemployment, and perceived governmental corruption and extravagance. The World Bank and IMF are sending conflicting messages to Kenya regarding taxation. While the World Bank cautions that Kenya's unpredictable tax policies are deterring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the IMF has praised the government's proposed tax increases in the Finance Bill 2024, suggesting they will significantly expand the tax base.

Last year, the IMF and the World Bank convened their annual joint meeting in Marrakech, marking their return to African soil after nearly five decades. The last occasion these two Bretton Woods institutions convened on African soil was in 1973, during the IMF-World Bank meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. At that time, Kenya's President Jomo Kenyatta (1897-1978) implored the attendees to swiftly address the 'monetary sickness of inflation and instability that has plagued the world.' In recent years, the tragic and grim situation has worsened significantly, with an increase in conflicts reported across the continent. Long-time exploiters like France, along with their alliances, are now confronting significant and formidable challenges. Amid critiques from organisations like Oxfam, who denounced these neo-liberal financial institutions' persistent austerity measures and debt policies, the meeting accentuated the enduring economic challenges facing developing countries. Despite promises of social spending safeguards, exemplified in recent IMF agreements with countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka, critics argue that these measures perpetuate cycles of dependency and inequality. Amidst global protests demanding alternatives to neoliberal orthodoxy, as Vijay Prasad asserted, the meeting in Morocco underscored a deepening disillusionment with the IMF and World Bank's capacity to address the fundamental economic disparities they perpetuate. It is crucial to remember that these financial institutions are neither charitable nor humanitarian; they operate with the primary goal of profit and the consolidation of their political agendas. Kenya serves as yet another glaring example.

During my conversation with Tom Jalio, a journalist working for The Star, a daily newspaper in Kenya, he said, "President Ruto inherited a highly indebted country, and his attempts to curb borrowing with internal solutions have been seen as overly aggressive. Using his parliamentary majority to push through contentious tax bills for two consecutive years, President Ruto now faces mounting public opposition. Despite heavy security measures, the public outcry against these policies erupted in what President Ruto labelled as treasonous acts—a response that fails to acknowledge the genuine patriotism underlying the protests. As Kenyan literature might suggest, when the detachment of President Ruto affects an entire nation, dismissing dissent as criminality falls



short of addressing the root concerns."

However, protests initially aimed at the Finance Bill have evolved into a broader uprising challenging not just Ruto's administration but the entire 60-year-old post-independence establishment supported by US and NATO powers. Millions nationwide, spanning 37 counties and crossing tribal lines, participated in demonstrations led largely by youth demanding rejection of the bill and Ruto's resignation. The protests culminated tragically with reports of 53 deaths and hundreds injured, with 30 fatalities occurring in Githurai and 23 more across Nairobi and other regions, all due to police use of live ammunition as documented by the Police Reforms Working Group.

Recent events in Kenya have witnessed severe repression reminiscent of historical atrocities. Tuesday's violence, where security forces under President William Ruto's command fired on protesters, echoes the brutal 1969 Kisumu massacre ordered by President Jomo Kenyatta, highlighting a pattern of state violence against dissent. Ruto's swift shift from threatening violence against protesters to withdrawing the Finance Bill 2024 reflects intense public outcry and tragic losses during demonstrations, initially labelled as treasonous. Despite withdrawing the bill, economic pressures persist. The proposed austerity measures, influenced by the IMF, aim to tackle fiscal challenges but face widespread opposition due to potential impacts on healthcare, education, and social services. Ruto's manoeuvres to navigate these challenges, including dialogue with youth and stakeholders, stress Kenya's complex political and economic terrain. Opposition led by figures like Raila Odinga, supported by

unions, engages in political manoeuvring amid broader socioeconomic tensions, reflecting ongoing struggles over economic policies and governance.

According to Onyango K'Onyango, a journalist working for one of Kenya's top newspapers, The Nation, he told this writer, "Our Constitution allows for the right to picket and assemble. As one of the most progressive Constitutions in Africa and perhaps the world at large, freedom of expression and association is guaranteed. It was an ill-advised move for the police to use live bullets on peaceful protesters. Whatever happened is unfortunate, but I blame the police for using excessive force and the government for failing to listen to issues raised by our Gen-Z." A chest-thumping government and Parliament is dangerous to a progressive democracy like ours. Arrogance exhibited by pro-government lawmakers and those who surround the president is the cause of all this mayhem. This is the time to embrace a reconciliatory tone, and the president should firmly deal with corruption in his administration. He should order a lifestyle audit and lead by example. The controversial bill should be returned to Parliament accompanied by a memorandum. This is what Kenyans want to hear, not rushing to term their peaceful protest as treasonous and deploying the military."

In Nairobi, escalating tensions between the youth and the government, exacerbated by recent violent incidents, reflect deep-seated bitterness. In my conversation with a freelance journalist, Andrew Mutungwa highlights key grievances: outrage over fatal shootings during protests, President Ruto's divisive portrayal of protesters as criminals undermining their right to assemble peacefully, and a perceived arro-

gance from leadership intensifying feelings of neglect among youth. Mutungwa urges the president to address these issues promptly, calling for action against corruption, criticising wasteful governance practices, and highlighting economic hardships as drivers of widespread discontent and ongoing protests. He warns of potential political instability if grievances are not addressed and acknowledges external influences supporting youth activism, advocating for dialogue and reforms to resolve Kenya's underlying issues. Meanwhile, Erick Gangu, a human rights activist, provides a nuanced perspective on the unfolding events in Kenya. He asserts that the current unrest is primarily an internal affair without external financial or other support, contrary to speculations about foreign influence.

Gangu criticises President Ruto's recent statement as emotionally charged and inappropriate for a figure expected to embody national unity, emphasising that declarations of treason fall under the jurisdiction of the judiciary, not the executive branch. He highlights concerns about pre-demonstration arrests, including doctors and journalists, and condemns these actions as unconstitutional. Despite early attempts in 1993 to establish a dedicated anti-corruption squad within the police, its impact was short-lived as the unit disbanded. The milestone formation of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA) in 1997 was cut short by a 2000 High Court ruling deeming its statutory framework unconstitutional, leading to dissolution. Kenya's ongoing struggle against corruption necessitates sustained institutional reforms and public vigilance for effective resolution.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)



RECENT EVENTS IN KENYA HAVE WITNESSED SEVERE REPRESSION REMINISCENT OF HISTORICAL ATROCITIES. TUESDAY'S VIOLENCE, WHERE SECURITY FORCES UNDER PRESIDENT WILLIAM RUTO'S COMMAND FIRED ON PROTESTERS, ECHOES THE BRUTAL 1969 KISUMU MASSACRE

Gold ETFs: The modern, convenient safe haven for young investors

Gold Exchange-Traded Funds provide gold's stability without the hassles of physical ownership, while offering the flexibility of stocks

Gold has always been a traditional safe haven particularly in uncertain situations of geo-political tensions, financial and economic turmoil. Many generations have taken advantage of investing in the security of gold. However, even this traditional investment has witnessed considerable changes with the advent of financial innovation.

The newer generation can now take benefit of security provided by gold which is more convenient, cost effective and eliminates the hassles of physical ownership by investing in Gold Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs). An ETF is an exchange traded passive fund that tracks any index, or a commodity. In this case, a Gold ETF invests in gold bul-



HIMA BINDU KOTA

lion and tracks the physical gold price. One Gold ETF unit is equal to 1 gram of gold and is backed by physical gold of highest purity, making it a dematerialised form of physical gold.

This gives Gold ETFs twin advantage of security of gold investment in combination with flexibility of the stock market, as they are traded on stock exchanges like stocks of any listed companies and can

be traded continuously at market prices. Upon redemption of a Gold ETF, investors receive cash equivalent instead of possession of physical gold.

To take maximum advantage of flexibility and security that a Gold ETF has to offer, it is advisable to take some safeguards to achieve maximum returns. The first lookout for an investor is to choose a Gold ETF with lower expense ratio. Expense ratio is the yearly management fee charged by the fund houses, which is usually a percentage of the fund's assets under management (AUM) and is used by the fund house to cover their administrative, advertising and various other operational costs. A lower expense ratio is significant as it would eat less into the

investors' returns and result in higher net returns for them, maintaining the cost-advantage of Gold ETFs when compared to storage costs and making charges of physical gold. The second precaution for investors is to examine the tracking error.

Tracking error measures how closely the fund mirrors the underlying index or the commodity and how different is its performance from that of the benchmark. A low tracking error signifies how effectively the fund reflects the performance of the underlying asset and a high tracking error indicates a higher deviation. Tracking error is an extremely critical performance metric for investors due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it displays consistency of performance. A



lower tracking error guarantees reliable tracking of the actual price changes of physical gold. Secondly, low tracking error resonates the efficiency of the fund management. This metric can be used by investors to identify the Gold ETFs that have better performance and provide higher returns. Thirdly, lower tracking errors indicate lower costs incurred by the fund managers, thereby leaving higher returns for investors to enjoy.

Having many benefits, one cannot stress enough on the importance of tracking error. It is known that higher expense ratio and management fees can lead to deviation of the performance of Gold ETFs from the underlying assets, i.e., physical gold. In addition, investors should also be aware of the cash holdings of a Gold ETF. Higher cash holdings again lead to deviation in their performances.

Since ETFs are similar to stocks, liquidity is an important metric. Higher the liquidity of a Gold ETF, lower is the performance deviation. Regular rebalancing the portfolios is an important aspect of any fund, and in doing so Gold ETFs incur costs associated with sales/purchase of physical gold. This again contributes

to tracking error. Thirdly, like stocks and commodities, Gold ETFs are subject to market volatility. Since the underlying asset – physical gold – can be volatile due to geo-political conditions, economic and financial factors. Finally, while buying Gold ETFs, one should not forget to factor in the capital gains tax. Long-term capital gains, if held for more than 3 years, are taxed at 20 percent.

The investors, however can take the benefit of indexation. Short-term capital gains as usual are added to income and taxed at applicable tax slab rate. So, it would be prudent to understand the implications of taxation before investing in Gold ETFs. For young and modern investors, investing in Gold ETFs is a modern and

efficient way to invest in gold. For them, Gold ETFs provide a winning combination of traditional security of gold with the benefits of stock market investing. Using an approach of regular and disciplined investing through systematic investment plans (SIPs), young investors can take the advantage of rupee cost averaging and alleviate the impact of market volatility. With varied benefits and much needed flexibility, Gold ETFs can definitely substitute physical gold investment in one's portfolio. Young generation should take advantage of this modern approach to gold investing with a long-term perspective.

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal)

France's polls may push Macron to cooperate with far right

AP ■ PARIS
 Voting is underway in mainland France on Sunday in pivotal runoff elections that could hand a historic victory to Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and its inward-looking, anti-immigrant vision — or produce a hung parliament and political deadlock. French President Emmanuel Macron took a huge gamble in dissolving parliament and calling for the elections after his centrists were trounced in European elections on June 9. The snap elections in this nuclear-armed nation will influence the war in Ukraine, global diplomacy and Europe's economic stability, and they're almost certain to undercut Macron for the remaining three years of his presidency. The first round on June 30 saw the largest gains ever for the anti-immigration, nationalist

National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen. A bit over 49 million people are registered to vote in the elections, which will determine which party controls the 577-member National Assembly. France's influential lower house of parliament, and who will be prime minister. If support is further eroded for Macron's weak centrist majority, he will be forced to share power with parties opposed to most of his pro-business, pro-European Union policies. Voters at a Paris polling station were acutely aware of the far-reaching consequences for France and beyond. "The individual freedoms, tolerance and respect for others is what at stake today," said Thomas Bertrand, a 45-year-old voter who works in advertising. Racism and antisemitism have marred the electoral campaign, along with Russian cybercam-

paigns, and more than 50 candidates reported being physically attacked — highly unusual for France. The government is deploying 30,000 police on voting day. The heightened tensions come while France is celebrating a very special summer: Paris is about to host exceptionally ambitious Olympic Games, the national soccer team reached the semifinal of the Euro 2024 championship, and the Tour de France is racing around the country alongside the Olympic torch. As of noon local time, turnout was at 26.63 per cent, according to France's Interior Ministry, slightly higher than the 25.90 per cent reported at the same time during the first round last Sunday. During the first round, the nearly 67 per cent turnout was the highest since 1997, ending nearly three decades of deepening voter apathy for legislative

elections and, for a growing number of French people, politics in general. Macron cast his ballot in the seaside resort town of La Touquet, along with his wife Brigitte. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal voted earlier in the Paris suburb of Vanves. Le Pen is not voting, because her district in northern France is not holding a second round after she won the seat outright last week. Across France, 76 other candidates secured seats in the first round, including 39 from her National Rally and 32 from the leftist New Popular Front alliance. Two candidates from Macron's centrists list also won their seats in the first round. The elections wrap up Sunday at 8 pm (1800 GMT) in mainland France and on the island of Corsica. Initial polling projections are expected Sunday night, with early official results expected late Sunday and early Monday.

UK PM heads to Scotland, Ireland, Wales as 're-set' with 4 nations

AP ■ LONDON
 British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is heading off Sunday to the four corners of the UK as part of an "immediate reset" with governments in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Starmer, who said he has a "mandate to do politics differently" after his party's landslide victory, will meet Scottish First Minister John Swinney in Edinburgh in an effort to "turn disagreement into cooperation." "That begins today with an immediate reset of my government's approach to working with the first and deputy first ministers," he said. "Meaningful co-operation centered on respect will be key to delivering change across our United Kingdom." While each of the devolved nations in the UK elects members to the House of Commons in London, they

also have their own regional parliaments. Starmer's Labour Party trounced Swinney's Scottish National Party for seats in Parliament. But the SNP, which has pushed for Scottish independence, still holds a majority at Holyrood, the Scottish parliament. The trip to build better working relations across the UK is part of Starmer's broader mission to work toward serving people as he tackles of mountain problems. The Labour government inherited a wobbly economy that left Britons struggling to pay bills after global economic woes and fiscal missteps. It also faces a public that is disenchanted after 14 years of chaotic Conservative rule and fiscal austerity that hollowed out public services, including the revered National Health Service, which Starmer declared broken.

Starmer said he wants to transfer power from the bureaucratic halls of government in London to leaders who know what's best for their communities. After his brief tour, he'll return to England, where he plans to meet with regional mayors, saying in his first news conference on Saturday that he would engage with politicians regardless of their party. "There's no monopoly on good ideas," he said "I'm not a tribal political." On Tuesday, Starmer will jet off to Washington for a NATO meeting. Meanwhile, his top diplomat, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, was due in Poland and Sweden Sunday after visiting Germany on Saturday for his first trip abroad to strengthen ties with European partners. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said on the social media plat-

form X that the UK was an indispensable part of Europe and they were working with the British government to see how it could move closer to the European Union. Lammy reiterated Starmer's pledge not to rejoin the EU single market after British voters in 2016 voted to break from the political and economic union. "Let us put the Brexit years behind us," Lammy told The Observer. "We are not going to rejoin the single market and the customs union but there is much that we can do together." Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said Sunday on Sky News that the UK should look for ways to improve trade with the EU and that removing some trade barriers was sensible. But he said the Labour government was not open to the free movement of people that was required as a member of the union.

Israeli protesters block highways as war marks 9 months

AP ■ TEL AVIV
 Marking nine months since the war in Gaza started, Israeli protesters blocked highways across the country Sunday, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down and pushing for a ceasefire that could bring back the hostages held by Hamas. The demonstrations come as international mediators have renewed efforts to broker a deal. Hamas over the weekend appeared to have dropped a key demand for an Israeli commitment to end the war, according to Egyptian and Hamas officials who spoke to The Associated Press. The war, triggered by the Palestinian militant group following a cross-border attack on October 7, saw 1,200 people killed and 250 others taken hostage. A retaliatory Israeli air and ground offensive has killed over 38,000 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Sunday's "Day of Disruption"



Palestinians look at the aftermath of the Israeli airstrike on a U.N.-run school that killed dozens of people in the Nusseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Saturday. AP/PTI

started at 6:29 AM, the moment that Hamas militants launched the first rockets toward Israel in October. Protesters blocked main roads and demonstrated outside of the homes of members of Israel's parliament. Near the border with Gaza, Israeli protestors released 1,500 black and yellow balloons to symbolize those who were killed and abducted. Hannah Golan said she came to protest the "devastating abandon-

ment of our communities by our government." She added: "It's nine months today, to this black day, and still nobody in our government takes responsibility." About 120 hostages remain captive after more than 100 hostages were released as part of a November cease-fire deal. Israel has already concluded that more than 40 of the remaining hostages are dead, and fears spread the number may grow as the war drags on. The Israeli prime minister had previously said while he was open to pausing the war as part of a hostage deal, Israel would press on until it reached its goals of destroying Hamas' military and governing capabilities and bringing home all those held captive by Hamas. Meanwhile, fighting in Gaza continued, with nine Palestinians reported dead from Israeli strikes overnight and into the early hours of Sunday. Six Palestinians were killed in central Gaza after a strike hit a house in the town of Zawaida, according to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Another Israeli airstrike early Sunday hit

a house west of Gaza City, killing another 3 people, the strip's Hamas-linked civil defense said. The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday an Israeli airstrike killed at least 16 people and wounded at least 50 others in a school-turned-shelter in the Nusseirat refugee camp. The Israeli military said they were targeting Hamas militants and had taken "numerous steps" to reduce civilian casualties. Also Sunday morning, the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said it launched dozens of projectiles toward northern Israel in the north, targeting areas more than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border, deeper than most launches. A 28-year-old Israeli man was seriously wounded in Kfar Zeitim, a small town near the city of Tiberias, Israel's national rescue service reported. The barrage came after the Israeli military said in a statement an airstrike targeted a car and killed an engineer in Hezbollah's air defense unit Saturday. Hezbollah confirmed

Biden to decide soon on continuing presidential race

AP ■ WASHINGTON
 President Joe Biden could make a decision within days whether to remain a candidate for reelection, said Hawaii's governor who participated in a recent meeting with Biden and other Democratic governors and whose family has known the president for years. And if Biden decides not to run, Hawaii Gov. Josh Green told The Associated Press on Saturday that he believes the president will designate Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him on the ticket. "I think the president stays in this race unless he feels that it is not winnable, or he feels that he has to hear other voices in his inner circle that he shouldn't run," Green said. "If the president felt that he wasn't up to it and truly not up to it, he would step down." "We'll probably know in the next couple of days how the president feels about all this," he said. Biden has repeatedly insisted that he will remain in the race against his likely Republican opponent, former President Donald Trump. But questions about Biden's mental acuity have swirled since his disastrous debate performance last month. As some of his fellow Democrats have encouraged Biden to exit the campaign, the president has pointed to support from other elected officials in the party, particularly governors. Green, who was a physician on Hawaii's Big Island before he was elected governor, said everyone has parents or grandparents who have moments that aren't that great or pauses in their ability to express themselves clearly. But, he added, they aren't discarded because of their experience, wisdom and their role in the family. "That's why I'm standing by the president until he tells me otherwise," said Green. Green said the timeline of a few days for a decision anticipates pressure that might be placed on Biden after members of Congress return this week to Capitol Hill. "I really, honestly think that he has to make the decision. And it should not come

from another governor. It should not come from anyone but the closest, closest advisers to him and his own heart," Green said. Green was quick to point out that Trump is only three years younger than Biden and both will have bad days going forward. But he argued that temperament is more important than age. "For God's sake, these two guys have to hold the nuclear codes," Green said. "I don't want someone who tweets in the middle of the night and rages at other countries. That is not good. That's not the problem we have with President Biden." If Biden were to leave the campaign, Green said the president should be allowed to say who he thinks should replace him on the ticket. "I think it's very clear that the Democratic Party would be ecstatic overall to have the president designate his vice president if it came to that," Green said. Harris "is a powerful person, she is also a thought-leading woman, she's an African American who was (California's) attorney general," Green said. "There are no credentials that are better than what the current vice president has." Green, whose wife's uncle was Biden's college roommate, also provided insight into last week's meeting that governors had with the president. During the meeting, Green asked Biden about his health. Biden responded by saying everything was fine except for his brain. Green told the AP that the president was joking, and that context was lost when leaked by other people. "It was absolutely a joke, and in order to make a self-deprecating joke, you have to have intact cognitive function, period," Green said. He also discounted any assertion that advisers crafted the meeting to have governors supportive of Biden speak first to quell any dissent. Instead, he said it was a very candid, unscripted conversation with 25 governors with differing opinions.

Sojan Joseph: Nurse from Kerala & now UK's new MP

London (PTI) Sojan Joseph, a mental health nurse in the National Health Service (NHS) who migrated from Kerala 22 years ago, is among the new crop of Labour members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons in the UK general election. Joseph, 49, connected with the voters at the doorstep with his pledge to ensure more mental health services in his constituency and succeeded in making a dent in the Conservative stronghold of Ashford in Kent, south-eastern England. In defeating Tory stalwart and former minister Damian Green, Joseph also dealt a blow to the anti-immigration rhetoric of the right-wing candidates in a seat where the far-right Reform UK came in third place after the Tories. "I am humbled with the trust you all placed in me and fully aware of the responsibilities that come with it. I will work hard for everyone in Ashford, Hawkinge and villages," said Joseph in his acceptance speech on Friday. Being a local councillor and a BAMÉ (black, Asian and minority ethnic) Officer would have prepared the medical professional for this new parliamentary challenge. But it is his over two decades' long NHS career as a mental health nurse that he feels gives him the empathy required for his new job in Parliament. Also, his connect with the local communities of Ashford, where he has been living with his wife and three children for over 15 years, is his additional motivation. "I take great pride in calling Ashford, and Willesborough, my home. I have taken part in a number of fundraising activities over the years, including running marathons for various charities and a dragon boat race for the local hospital charity," said Joseph, who has undertaken several international marathons for charity. "I firmly believe in an inclusive society that works towards achieving the full potential for every individual in the community," he adds.

European allies brace for Trump comeback at NATO summit

AP ■ WASHINGTON
 Growing skepticism about President Joe Biden's reelection chances has European leaders heading to the NATO summit in Washington confronting the prospect that the military alliance's most prominent critic, Donald Trump, may return to power over its mightiest military. NATO — made up of 32 European and North American allies committed to defending each other from armed attack — will stress strength through solidarity as it celebrates its 75th anniversary during the summit starting Tuesday. Event host Biden, who pulled allies into a global network to help Ukraine fight off Russia's invasion, has called the alliance the most unified it has ever been. But behind the scenes, a dominant topic will be preparing for possible division, as the power of far-right forces unfriendly to NATO grows in the US and other countries including France, raising concerns about how strong support will stay for

the alliance and the military aid that its members send to Ukraine. At the presidential debate, Biden asked Trump: "You're going to stay in NATO or you're going to pull out of NATO?" Trump tilted his head in a shrug. Biden's poor debate performance set off a frenzy about whether the 81-year-old president is fit for office or should step aside as the Democratic presidential candidate. Even before the debate, European governments were deep in consultations on what they could do to ensure that NATO, Western support for Ukraine and the security of individual NATO countries will endure should Trump win back the presidency in November and temper US contributions. Some Americans and Europeans call it "Trump-proofing" NATO — or "future-proofing" it when the political advances of other far-right political blocs in Europe are factored in. This week's summit, held in the city where the mutual-defence alliance was founded in

1949, was once expected to be a celebration of NATO's endurance. Now, a European official said, it looks "gloomy." There are two reasons for the gloom: Russian advances on the battlefield in the months that Trump-allied congressional Republicans delayed US arms and funding to Ukraine. And the possibility of far-right governments unfriendly to NATO coming to power. The official spoke to reporters last week on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations among governments. Rachel Rizzo, a senior fellow on NATO with nonpartisan think tank the Atlantic Council, says she has a blunt message for Europeans: "Freaking out about a second Trump term helps no one." For allies at the summit, she said, the key will be resisting the temptation to dwell on the details of unprecedented events in US politics and put their heads down on readying Western military aid for Ukraine and preparing for any lessening of US support. Trump,

who before and after his presidency has spoken admiringly of Russian President Vladimir Putin and harshly of NATO, often focuses his complaints on the US share of the alliance's costs. Biden himself warned nearly 30 years ago about already-steady criticism of Europeans not carrying their weight in NATO. The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union lulled the West into thinking the Russian threat had been neutralized, leading to military spending cuts. Now, NATO allies are bolstering their forces against any wider aggression by Putin, and a record 23 nations in NATO are meeting defense-spending goals. Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, says Trump in a second term would work to get the US out of NATO. Congress passed legislation last year making that harder, but a president could simply stop collaborating in some or all of NATO's missions. Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to an email seeking

comment. Elections in France, likewise, appear set to bring a NATO-adverse far-right party under Marine Le Pen into greater power. Far-right forces also are gaining in Germany. Some European officials and analysts say that's simply the rise and fall of voter allegiance in democracies, which NATO has dealt with before. They point to Poland, where a right-wing party lost power last year and whose people have been among NATO's most ardent supporters. They also note Italy, where right-wing populist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has won praise as an ally. In part in response to the United States' political upheaval, Europeans say they want to "institutionalize" support for Ukraine within NATO, lessening the dependence on the US. European allies also failed to get enough weapons to Ukraine during the delay in a US foreign aid package, outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged in a visit to Washington last month.

Tokyo's incumbent Governor Koike projected to win third term, exit poll results show

AP ■ TOKYO
 Tokyo's incumbent governor, Yuriko Koike, is projected to win her reelection as head of Japan's influential capital for a third four-year term, according to exit poll results by Japan's NHK national television. The vote on Sunday was also seen as a test for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's governing party, which supports the first woman to lead the Tokyo city government. Tokyo, a city of 13.5 million people with outsized political and cultural power and a budget equalling some nations, is one of Japan's most influential political posts. A record 55 candidates challenged Koike, and one of the top contenders was also a woman — a liberal-leaning former lawmaker who uses only her first name, Renho, and was backed by opposition parties. Minutes after the exit poll

projecting her victory, Koike showed up at her campaign headquarters in Tokyo and celebrated by thanking the voters who chose her. "I believe the voters gave me a mandate for my accomplishment in the past eight years," Koike said. She pledged to push for more reforms and support for Tokyo residents. "I'm fully aware of my heavy responsibility," she said. "I will tackle my third term with all my body and soul." A win by Koike is a relief for Kishida's conservative governing party, which she has long been affiliated with. Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, Komeito, unofficially backed her campaign. Renho, running as an independent but supported by the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Japanese Communist Party,

criticised Koike's connection with Kishida's party, which has been hit by a widespread slush fund scandal. A victory for Renho would have been a major setback for Kishida's chances in the party's leadership vote in September. While the two high-profile women gathered national attention, Shinji Ishimaru, a former mayor of Akitakata town in Hiroshima, was seen to have gained popularity among young voters. The main issues in the campaign included measures for the economy, disaster resilience for Tokyo and low birth numbers. When Japan's national fertility rate fell to a record low 1.2 babies per woman last year, Tokyo's 0.99 rate was the lowest for the country. Koike's policies focused on providing subsidies for married parents expecting babies and those raising children. Renho called

for increased support for young people to address their concerns about jobs and financial stability, arguing that would help improve prospects for marrying and having families. Another focus of attention was a controversial redevelopment of Tokyo's beloved park area, Jingu Gaien, which Koike approved but later faced criticisms over its lack of transparency and suspected environmental impact. Koike, a stylish and media savvy former TV newscaster, was first elected to parliament in 1992 at age 40. She served in a number of key Cabinet posts, including environment and defence ministers, as part of the long-reigning Liberal Democratic Party. Renho, known for voicing sharp questions in parliament, was born to a Japanese mother and Taiwanese father and doesn't use her family name.

Rafah in ruins: Ghost town 2 months after Israeli operation

AP ■ RAFAH
 Two months ago, before Israeli troops invaded Rafah, the city sheltered most of Gaza's more than 2 million people. Today it is a dust-covered ghost town. Abandoned, bullet-ridden apartment buildings have blasted out walls and shattered windows. Bedrooms and kitchens are visible from roads dotted with rubble piles that tower over the Israeli military vehicles passing by. Very few civilians remain. Israel says it has nearly defeated Hamas forces in Rafah — an area identified earlier this year as the militant group's last stronghold in Gaza. The Israeli military invited reporters into Rafah on Wednesday, the first time international media visited Gaza's southernmost city since it was invaded May 6.

Israel has barred international journalists from entering Gaza independently since the Hamas attack on October 7 that sparked the war. Before invading Rafah, Israel said Hamas' four remaining battalions had retreated there, an area of about 25 square miles (65 square kilometers) that borders Egypt. Israel says hundreds of militants have been killed in its Rafah offensive. Scores of women and children have also died from Israeli airstrikes and ground operations. The military says it has been necessary to operate with such intensity because Hamas turned civilian areas into treacherous traps. Eight soldiers were killed last month by a single blast. "Some of these tunnels are booby-trapped," the military's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said during Wednesday's tour as he stood

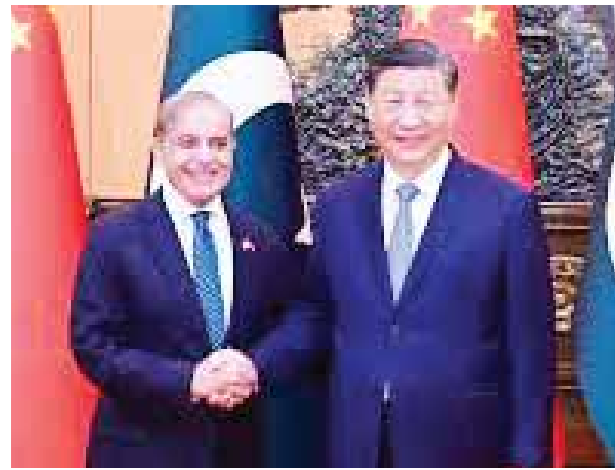
over a shaft that led underground. "Hamas built everything in a civilian neighbourhood among houses, among mosques, among the population, in order to create its terror ecosystem." An estimated 1.4 million Palestinians crammed into Rafah after fleeing fighting elsewhere in Gaza. The UN estimates that around 50,000 remain in Rafah, which had a pre-war population of about 275,000. Most have moved to a nearby Israel-declared "humanitarian area" where conditions are grave. Many are clustering in squalid tent camps along the beach with scant access to clean water, food, bathrooms and medical care. Efforts to bring aid into southern Gaza have stalled. Israel's incursion into Rafah closed down one of two major crossings into the south of Gaza.

New era of Pakistan-China cooperation has dawned: Shehbaz

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said a new era of Pakistan-China cooperation in the information technology (IT), communication, mining, and energy sectors has dawned and will lead to economic development and deepening of the time-tested bilateral relationship. Sharif's remarks came as he chaired a review meeting in Islamabad on Saturday on the implementation of agreements and MOUs reached during his recent visit to China, Radio Pakistan reported. The prime minister said that the promotion of Pakistan-China cooperation in these fields will lead to economic development, strengthening of regional ties, and deepening of the relations between the two countries. Referring to the time-tested Pak-China friendship, he said that China had always supported Pakistan in difficult times. "China has emerged as the strongest economic power and Pakistan can emulate its development," he added. The 72-year-old Pakistan

Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader said that no disruption will be tolerated in the implementation of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during his visit to China, announcing to personally monitor the implementation of these agreements and MoUs. The prime minister was also briefed about a delegation of Chinese shoemaking companies recently visiting Pakistan to shift their manufacturing units to the cash-strapped country and that the Chinese companies have the potential to invest USD 5-8 billion in this sector. Regarding the agriculture sector, he was apprised that 12 leading companies of China will participate in the Food and Agri Expo to be held in Pakistan this year. Sharif also reviewed the progress regarding sending 1,000 students from Pakistan to China on government scholarships for advanced training in the agriculture sector. He directed that students from all four provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan-



occupied Kashmir (PoK), should be sent to China on the basis of merit, while students from backward areas of Balochistan should be given special priority in the programme. Sharif instructed to start sending students for modern agricultural training in China from the next academic semester. Besides, the meeting was told that over 100 Chinese companies are in contact with Pakistani companies for business and investment. The meeting was also briefed about the progress on the technical training of 3,00,000 students by Huawei, a one-stop operation to facilitate business, smart governance and smart city. The prime minister was also apprised of the progress made by China on various communication, infrastructure, and electricity projects in Gwadar. Sharif advised expediting measures for the development of

Gwadar Seaport, Gwadar Airport, and Gwadar Industrial Zone to make Gwadar the hub of trade corridor in the region. He also instructed to speed up the negotiations with Chinese solar panels and equipment manufacturing companies to move their factories to Pakistan. The 72-year-old leader embarked on his first visit to China after he took over as prime minister for the second time after his PML-N party-led coalition government assumed power in March. Addressing the Pakistan-China Business Forum last month, Sharif assured all-out facilitation to Chinese investors and the security of Chinese individuals, projects, and investments in Pakistan. He said his government had taken various measures to ensure fool-proof security to protect the lives of Chinese workers in Pakistan. Five Chinese nationals and a Pakistan driver were killed in a suicide attack in Dasu in March. Pakistan paid USD 2.58 million as compensation to the families of those killed in the attack.

'Imran Khan conspiring in prison to spread anarchy'

Islamabad, Jul 7 (PTI) Jailed former premier Imran Khan was hatching plots inside the prison to create another "political chaos" in Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's advisor on political and public affairs has claimed. Speaking on Geo News programme 'Naya Pakistan', former interior minister Rana Sanaullah said that 71-year-old founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was not permitted by the court to hold meetings at the high-security Adiala Jail. Khan, who faces over 200 cases and has been convicted in a few of them, has been in jail since August last year. Sanaullah, who is the Prime Minister's Adviser on Political and Public Affairs, claimed that the PTI founder is not allowed to make such plans to create chaos while sitting in jail. He claimed that evidence available with authorities concerned

solidifies the claims of such planning underway in the jail. The PM's aide, however, said that the government has no audio or video evidence of the planning "but those who are responsible and performing duties there have them". Sanaullah's statement came after the leaders of the former ruling party said they were denied permission to meet the party's incarcerated founder in Adiala Jail despite waiting for a few hours outside the facility earlier this week. Commenting on the planned rally by Khan's party in Islamabad, the PML-N senior leader said that the PTI's decision to hold a power show in Muharram - the first month of the Islamic calendar which starts from Monday - was inappropriate. PTI on Saturday postponed its rally in the suburbs of Islamabad after revocation of its permis-

sion by the authorities, citing security concerns. The party was set to organise its power show at Tarnol at 6 pm for which it had secured a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Islamabad deputy commissioner. However, the city administration on Friday cancelled the permission saying the NOC issued by the deputy commissioner was reviewed afresh in the wake of security concerns. Earlier in the day, Khan's party filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking contempt proceedings against the Islamabad district administration and police for cancelling the NOC. It stated that the party had approached the IHC for permission for the rally and during the hearing of its petition, the court was told by the administration that permission had been granted for the rally.

Ukrainian drone triggers warehouse explosions

AP ■ KYIV

A village in western Russia's border region was evacuated on Sunday following a series of explosions after a Ukrainian drone set fire to a nearby warehouse, local officials said. Social media footage appeared to show rising clouds of black smoke in the Voronezh region while loud explosions could be heard in succession. Governor Aleksandr Gusev said that falling wreckage triggered the "detonation of explosive objects". No casualties were reported, but residents of a nearby village in the Podgorensky district were evacuated, he said. Roads were also closed with emergency services, military and government officials working at the scene. Russia's Ministry of Defence did not address the strike in

their morning briefing, but said that air defence systems had destroyed a Ukrainian drone over the Belgorod region. Authorities in Russia's Krasnodar province on Saturday said a fire at an oil depot had also been caused by falling drone debris. Russia's emergency services said the blaze was extinguished Sunday morning. The strikes come after a Ukrainian military spokesperson told The Associated Press Thursday that Kyiv's troops had retreated from a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, a strategically important town in Ukraine's Donetsk region that has been reduced to rubble under a monthlong Russian assault. Russian forces have for months tried to grind out gains in Ukraine's industrial east, in an apparent attempt to lock its defenders into a war

of attrition. In a joint investigation published on Friday, independent Russian news outlets Meduza and Mediazona reported that Moscow's forces were losing between 200 and 250 soldiers in Ukraine each day. Military analysts say Chasiv Yar's fall could also compromise critical Ukrainian supply routes and put nearby cities in jeopardy, bringing Russia closer to its stated aim of seizing the entire Donetsk region. Russia sent overnight into Sunday two ballistic missiles and 13 Shahed drones, Ukrainian air force officials said. All were shot down but the officials did not elaborate on the impact of the missiles. Elsewhere in Ukraine, 14 people died after a bus collided with a cargo vehicle, leaving a single survivor, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said Saturday evening. The victims included a 6-year-old child.

Erdogan renews push to restore ties with Syria

Istanbul (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated his willingness to restore ties with Syria and extended an "invitation" Sunday to bring back relations to "how they were in the past". Over 12 years ago, diplomatic ties between Ankara and Damascus were cut off when protests turned into a civil war in Syria. Turkey supported armed opposition groups in the northwest that aimed to oust Syrian President Bashar Assad from power. Before that, Erdogan and Assad enjoyed close ties, even vacationing together with their families in southern Turkey in 2008. Last week, both indicated their readiness to end tensions and normalise diplomatic relations. "Yesterday, we were not enemies with Syria. We met with Assad as a family," Erdogan told journalists Sunday on a flight from Berlin, where he watched Turkey play the Netherlands in the quarter-final of the European Championship's soccer tournament. "We talk about

mediation everywhere, so why not with the one on our border?" Erdogan added in comments reported by the state-run Anadolu news agency. This comes as the Turkish government has been facing increased pressure to repatriate millions of Syrian refugees amid a steep economic downturn and rising anti-refugee sentiment. A week ago anti-Syrian riots broke out in Kayseri, central Turkey, following reports that a Syrian refugee had allegedly sexually harassed a 7-year-old Syrian girl. Residents of Melikgazi overturned cars and set shops ablaze, calling on Syrians to leave the country. Last year, the Turkish and Syrian foreign ministers met in Moscow alongside counterparts from Russia and Iran, marking the highest-level contact between Ankara and Damascus since the start of the Syrian war. But those talks and a previous meeting involving the two countries' defense ministers did not bear fruit.

SL says won't ban foreign research ships from its ports from next year

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has decided to lift from next year a ban on the visit of foreign research ships imposed after strong security concerns raised by India and the US following frequent docking requests from hi-tech Chinese surveillance vessels, the Japanese media reported. The change in position was conveyed by visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry to the NHK World Japan. With the increased movement of Chinese research vessels in the Indian Ocean, New Delhi had expressed concern that those might be spy ships and urged Colombo not to allow such vessels to dock at its ports. After India raised concern, Sri Lanka banned the entry of foreign research vessels from docking at its port in January. Earlier this year, it had made an exception for a Chinese vessel but said the ban would con-

tinue otherwise. Sabry said his government cannot have different rules for different countries and only block China. He added that his country will not take sides in a dispute between others, the NHK World Japan said in a report on Friday. The moratorium is till January next year. Sri Lanka will then no longer ban foreign research ships from its ports next year, Sabry said. Two Chinese spy ships were allowed to dock in Sri Lanka ports within 14 months through November 2023, with one called for replenishment and the other for research. Chinese research ship Shi Yan 6 arrived in Sri Lanka in October 2023 and docked at Colombo port, for what Beijing cited as "geophysical scientific research" in collaboration with the island nation's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA). The US had expressed concern

to Sri Lanka before the arrival of Shi Yan 6. In August 2022, Chinese navy vessel Yuan Wang 5 docked at Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka for replenishment. Cash-strapped Sri Lanka considers both India and China equally important partners in its task to restructure its external debt. The island nation was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis in 2022, the worst since its independence from Britain in 1948, due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves. Meanwhile, Sabry also expressed gratitude for Japan's plan to provide a ship equipped with sonar, which, he said, will give Sri Lanka "an opportunity to do its own survey and collect its own data, and commercially exploit it". Sabry emphasised that Sri Lanka has untapped maritime resources, and research is essential, but it has to be done in a transparent manner, the NHK report added.

Argentine Prez heads to CPAC, snubbing Lula, escalating political feud

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Given the choice between a far-right convention to bash his enemies and a presidential summit to discuss regional trade policy, Argentine President Javier Milei preferred the stadium packed with cheering fans. The libertarian leader was in Brazil on Sunday, preparing to headline the country's version of CPAC, the conservative political action conference, alongside former President Javier Bolsonaro in Brazil's southern city of Balneario Camboriu. In skipping the Mercosur trade bloc summit in Paraguay and sidling up to Bolsonaro just days after federal police indicted the right-wing populist in a scheme to embezzle Saudi diamonds, Milei delivered another harsh rebuke to Brazil's left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, escalating a risky feud with his country's biggest trading partner. It was the latest example of Milei's provocative foreign policy, courting the global spotlight through friendships with hard-right allies rather than following diplomatic convention. Bolsonaro opened the Brazilian CPAC Saturday with a fiery speech declaring his desire to see former U.S. President Donald Trump return to the White House next year. He and Milei were spotted together later that night, watching Uruguay kick Brazil out of the 2024 Copa America in a room full of aides and drained wine glasses. Since the irascible Milei rode to power last December on a promise to fix Argentina's worst economic crisis in two decades, relations between the long-time allies and commodity powerhouses have rapidly deteriorated. Milei has branded Lula a "communist" and refused to deal with him. Lula has given Milei the cold shoul-

der and demanded an apology. The ideological enemies crossed paths for the first time at the Group of Seven summit last month in Italy, where their efforts to avoid each other as much as physically possible grabbed local headlines. Experts say that mingling on the sidelines of the South American trade bloc meeting on Monday would have offered Milei a low-stakes opportunity to defuse tensions with Brazil, which buys nearly a sixth of Argentina's exports, supplies most of Argentina's auto industry and backs its neighbor's bids to get badly needed aid from International Monetary Fund. Instead, Milei has doubled down on a foreign policy gamble that experts have criticised as misguided. Bolsonaro in particular, under police investigation for his alleged attempt to subvert the 2022 election result, is seen as a political liability. "He seems to be shooting himself in the foot," Michael Shifter, a scholar of Latin America at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, said of Milei. "It's shocking and counterproductive for him to thumb his nose at Lula in this way because there could be a lot of cost for Argentina, that could affect his ability to carry out his policies." The president's ideologically driven strategy set off a political storm earlier this year in Spain, the second-largest foreign investor in Argentina, as Milei shunned meetings with the socialist government of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and instead gave a speech bashing socialism at a far-right rally organised by the country's Vox Party. The snub spiraled into a diplomatic crisis between the historic allies when Milei called Sanchez's wife corrupt and Spain pulled its ambassador from Buenos Aires.

Iran detains lawyer who criticised 2022 crackdown

Dubai (AP) — An outspoken Iranian lawyer who has publicly criticised how the government handled the 2022 protests has been arrested, state media reported on Sunday. The unrest at the time followed the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini who was detained by the police for allegedly not properly wearing her mandatory hijab. Her death triggered massive protests that quickly escalated into calls to overthrow Iran's four-decade-old Islamic theocracy. The judiciary's Mizan news agency said Sunday that Mohsen Borhani had been previously sentenced but did not give further details on his case or jail time issued. Borhani, also a university professor, became popular on social media for his critical views of the Iranian government during the 2022 demonstrations.

Prachanda should resign immediately, demands former ally CPN-UML

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' should resign immediately and pave the way for formation of a national consensus government, former coalition partner Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) said on Sunday. The CPN-UML demand came as Prime Minister Prachanda is preparing to face a vote of confidence in the Parliament on July 12 in view of the withdrawal of support by some allies. Prachanda, 69, has announced that he would not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers belonging to the CPN-UML and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament. A parliamentary party meeting

of the CPN-UML led by chairman KP Sharma Oli at the Federal Parliament building on Sunday asked Prime Minister Prachanda to resign promptly and facilitate the formation of a new government, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported. "The government finds itself in a clear minority after various parties, including the UML, withdrew their support," said UML's Chief Whip Mahesh Bartaula. "However, he has not stepped down, which is seen as unfair. Therefore, the meeting has requested that the prime minister resign immediately and pave the way for forming a national consensus government," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper. The CPN-UML, the largest party in the ruling coalition,



withdrew support to Prachanda-led government last week after inking a power-sharing deal with the largest party - Nepali Congress - to oust the former guerrilla leader. Days later, three ministers from another ally - Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) - on Friday withdrew support to 'Prachanda'. The JSP has six more members in the House of Representatives

(HoR). Nepali Congress, the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives, has 89 seats at present, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Their combined strength of 167 is sufficient for a majority of 138 seats in the lower house. Prachanda's party has 32 seats. In a letter addressed to the federal parliament on Friday, Prachanda said that after one of the members of the ruling alliance withdrew the support to the government, he will seek a vote of confidence on July 12 under Article 100 (2) of the constitution of Nepal. Prachanda requires 138 votes for the government to win the vote of confidence in the House. Nepal has had 13 governments in the last 16 years, indicating the fragile nature of the Himalayan nation's political system.

EC to announce SL prez poll date by July end

Colombo (PTI) — Sri Lanka's election commission on Sunday said that it will announce the date for the next presidential poll before the end of this month. Election Commission Chairman R M A L Ratnayake said the electoral body would be legally empowered after July 17 to announce the date for the election. The Election Commission in May said the presidential election would be conducted between September 17 and October 16. Ratnayake said the commission is currently in the process of putting final touches to the 2024 electoral register which will be the basis for the election. Over 17 million would be eligible to vote in the election as per the revised list, officials said. His comments came ahead of a court case scheduled for Monday on holding the election.

'Freedom!' chants rent the air at Venezuelan opp rallies

AP ■ BARINAS (VENEZUELA)

The chant is concise, but it could not be more meaningful for millions of Venezuelans in 2024: "Freedom!" Members of the country's political opposition shout it with tears in their eyes, or red angry faces, or with hopeful ear-to-ear smiles. They shout it with Venezuelan flags in their hands or holding their children. They shout it sporting a soccer jersey or wearing a political party's T-shirt. The calls for "libertad" have been a staple of the opposition's events ahead of the highly anticipated July 28 presidential election. With the official start of campaigns this week, they were deafening during a massive rally Saturday in the western Venezuelan state of Barinas, the home state of the late fiery President Hugo Chavez. Students, state employees, retirees, agriculture workers

and business owners were among the thousands gathered in support of Edmundo González Urrutia, the only candidate with a real chance of ending President Nicolás Maduro's quest for a third term. Their chants, collectively, represent long-sought freedom from the 25-year rule of self-described socialist governments. Individually, people are seeking wide-ranging freedoms, including the freedom to post government criticisms on social media without fearing repercussions. "I want economic freedom, freedom of purchasing power, freedom of a living wage," Virginia Linares, 41, said with teary eyes. "We feel locked in, we feel like something is being taken away from us because a salary that is not decent is a salary that overshadows us as people, we do not achieve the things we want, our dreams." Public employees these days earn a monthly minimum

wage of about USD 3.60 plus USD 130 in bonuses, while private-sector workers make on average USD 210 a month. Neither monthly pay is enough for a family to buy a basic basket of goods, which costs about USD 380. Linares lost her beauty supply store in 2017 as a result of the social, economic and political crisis that has marked the entirety of Maduro's 11-year presidency. Her business is now online only, and her concerns over the country's economic conditions have increased now that her 17-year-old son has finished high school and is thinking about his future. The July 28 election is shaping up to be the biggest challenge that Venezuela's ruling party has faced since Chavez became president in 1999. The party wants to maintain its absolute control for six more years, but its base, including in Barinas, is divided and disenchanted over the

crisis. The state had long been a bastion of the late president's movement, Chavismo. His brothers, Argenis Chavez and Adán Chavez, and father, Hugo de los Reyes Chavez, all served stints as governor from 1998 to 2021. The opposition ended the Chávezes reign and has since used that victory as motivation for its base. Chávez, elected in 1998, promised to improve the lives of Venezuela's poorest using the country's oil. He expanded social services, including housing and education thanks to the country's oil bonanza, which generated revenues estimated at some USD 981 billion between 1999 and 2011 as oil prices soared. But corruption, a decline in oil production and economic policies led to a crisis that became evident in 2012. Before Chávez's death of cancer in 2013, he picked Maduro as his successor. Maduro and his United Socialist Party of Venezuela

have fended off challenges by barring rivals from elections and painting them as out-of-touch elitists in league with foreign powers. This time, their government control led to a court ruling blocking the candidacy of opposition powerhouse Maria Corina Machado, who won the October primary of the Unitary Platform coalition with more than 90% of support. She has thrown her support behind González, a former ambassador who's never held public office. At opposition rallies, including Saturday's, people say they will undoubtedly vote for González but also acknowledge that it is Machado who they see as leader. Venezuela's crisis has motivated more than 7.7 million people to migrate. When González asked the crowd to raise their hand if one of their relatives had migrated, people were quick to react. He

promised them to create conditions so that their loved ones can return. Miguel Herrera, a school handyman, is worried that his teenage daughters might end up migrating in a few years if Maduro is reelected. He thinks that just as Barinas ushered the opposition into the governor's office, voters across the country can get González elected later this month. His chants for freedom Saturday were for a change that would give his children the freedom to choose to stay in Venezuela. He also wants his rights to quality health care and other public services to be respected. "I don't want my daughters to go somewhere else, at all," said Herrera, who voted for Maduro in the past two elections. "Politicians made promises and they didn't deliver and people began to wake up until they opened their eyes. We need change."

India, UK to hold next round of talks on proposed trade agreement this month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
With the new government taking charge in Britain, senior officials of India and the UK will hold the next round of talks this month for the proposed free trade agreement to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations, an official said. The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. The official said the two sides are in touch, and the next round would start this month only. Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides. The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA. There are pending issues in both the goods and services sectors. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for



its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance).

also on the record saying that he wants to finish the job on the FTA and plans to visit India within the first month of being elected. According to the think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Initiative), the agreement is nearly finalised and with a few minor adjustments like curtailing the number of visas for Indian professionals, the Labour Party is likely to give its approval. It has suggested that India should focus on two issues - Carbon Border Adjustment Measure (CBAM) and non-traditional subjects like labour, environment, gender, and intellectual property rights — in the pact. Historically, India has resisted incorporating these topics into FTAs as they often require domestic policy changes. The GTRI report has stated that even if the UK agrees to eliminate tariffs on sectors like textiles, Indian exports might still need to meet stringent UK sustainability requirements, and this could adversely affect Indian exports, especially in labour-intensive sectors.

FM wraps up consultations, FY25 Budget to be presented on July 23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has concluded consultations with various stakeholders, including representatives of industry and social sectors, as part of the budget preparation exercise. Sitharaman will present her seventh Budget on July 23. This would be the first full budget of Modi 3.0 which is going to set the path for Vikshit Bharat (developed India) by 2047. Last month, President Droupadi Murmu, while delivering her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, had said that many historic steps and major economic decisions will be taken in the upcoming budget session. In her first address to the joint sitting of Parliament since the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha, the President said, "This budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision." "Along with major economic and social decisions, many historic steps will also be seen in this budget," she said. The Finance Ministry in a statement said the pre-budget consultations for Union



Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary; Finance Secretary and Secretary Expenditure, T V Somanathan; Economic Affairs Secretary, Ajay Seth, DIPAM Secretary, Tuhin K Pandey, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi and Revenue Secretary, Sanjay Malhotra among others. In the course of the consultations, Sitharaman expressed gratitude to the participants for sharing valuable suggestions and assured experts and representatives that their suggestions would be carefully examined and considered while preparing the Union Budget 2024-25.

FPIs inject ₹7,900 cr in equities in first week of July

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Foreign investors infused over Rs 7,900 crore in Indian equities in the first week of the month amid a healthy economic and earnings growth momentum. With this, total FPI investment in equities reached Rs 1.16 lakh crore so far this month, data with the depositories showed. Going forward, the Union Budget and Q1 FY25 earnings could determine the sustainability of FPI flows, experts said. According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net inflow of Rs 7,962 crore in equities so far this month (till July 5). This came following an inflow of Rs 26,565 crore in equities in June, driven by political stability and a sharp rebound in markets. Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

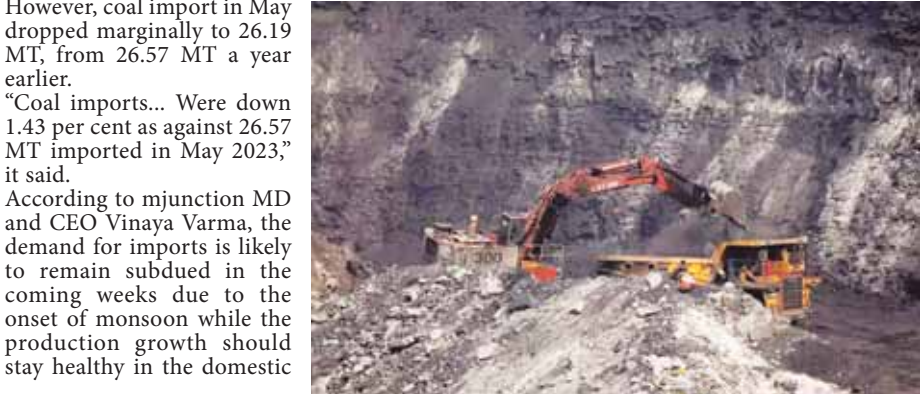
73 per cent Indians read ingredient lists, nutritional value of snacks: Report



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
As many as 73 per cent Indians prefer to read ingredient lists and nutritional value before purchasing any snack, reveals a new survey, highlighting the majority of Indians' growing inclination towards healthy snacking. Based on a survey of over 6,000 people across India, the Healthy Snacking Report 2024, released on Sunday, aims to examine the ever-evolving consumption trends in India. "Seventy three per cent of those surveyed prefer to read labels for ingredient lists and nutritional value before making a purchase. Of this, 93 per cent expressed a desire to transition to healthier options, highlighting a correlation between label reading and conscious choices while pushing for transparency," read the report. The report was released against the backdrop of an increasing number of cases regarding food adulteration that have come to the fore, be it in spices, confectionaries or fast-moving goods. This, according to the report, has triggered a wave of conscious consumption, with shoppers checking food

India's coal import rises 5 per cent to 52 MT in April-May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's coal import rose 5.3 per cent to 52.29 million tonnes (MT) in the first two months of the ongoing fiscal as against the year-ago period. The country's coal import was 49.62 MT in April and May in FY24, according to data compiled by mjunction services ltd — a B2B e-commerce platform from a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL. However, coal import in May dropped marginally to 26.19 MT, from 26.57 MT a year earlier. "Coal imports... Were down 1.43 per cent as against 26.57 MT imported in May 2023," it said. According to mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma, the demand for imports is likely to remain subdued in the coming weeks due to the onset of monsoon while the production growth should stay healthy in the domestic



market. Also, coking coal prices are expected to move up in the seaborne market due to supply tightness and this may impact buyers' interest in the country. Of the total imports in May, non-coking coal imports stood at 17.53 MT, against 18.10 MT imported in May last year. Coking coal import volume was 5.03 MT, against 5.10 TMT imported in May 2023. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output. After taking charge as coal and mines minister, G Kishan Reddy had said India should increase domestic production of the fossil fuel and reduce coal imports. Reddy had said that 10 years ago there was coal shortage in the country which resulted in electricity shortage. But in the last 10 years there has been sufficient power availability, he said.

FMCG makers expect single-digit revenue growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Fast-moving consumer goods companies expect single-digit volume growth along with expansion in margins during the April-June quarter of this fiscal, helped by a revival in rural demand and a stable urban market. Listed FMCG companies such as Dabur, Marico and Adani Wilmar in their latest quarterly updates have reported a "gradual improvement" in demand trends in the April-June quarter, which was on the expected lines. Home-grown FMCG maker Dabur expects to register mid to high single-digit growth in its consolidated revenue, supported by mid-single-digit volume growth in the domestic market. Marico said its consolidated revenue grew in high single digits in the June quarter, while the domestic business posted a "modest uptick in underlying volume growth" on a sequential basis. Adani Wilmar, which sells edible oils and has some play in the food products under Fortune brands, has also reported an overall 13 per



cent volume growth in the June quarter. Its food and FMCG business volumes grew by 23 per cent year-on-year, said Adani Wilmar. About margins, the makers expect expansion on a year-on-year basis helped by factors such as benign commodity prices and cost-saving initiatives. "Commodity prices were stable during the quarter," said Dabur, adding, "Gross margins are likely to witness some expansion on account of rollover price increases and cost-saving initiatives." Marico, which owns brands

such as Saffola, Parachute, Hair & Care, Nihar and Livon, among others, also expects gross margin to expand on a year-on-year basis. Among key inputs, copra prices stayed firm in line with forecasts, while edible oil and crude oil derivatives remained range-bound. "Operating profit is expected to grow slightly ahead of revenue leading to a marginal inching up of operating margin on a year-on-year basis," it said. About rural market sales, Dabur said in the June quarter "Dabur saw sequential improvement in demand trends with growth picking up from those regions." "With a forecast of a normal monsoon and continued focus by the government on macroeconomic growth, we expect the improvement to accelerate in the coming months," said Dabur which owns brands such as Dabur Chyawanprash, Dabur Honey, Dabur PudinaHara, Dabur Lal Tail, Dabur Amla, Dabur Red Paste, Real and Vatika. According to Abneesh Roy — Executive Director

Proposals invited on Quantum Standardisation, Testing Labs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Department of Telecom has invited research proposals on 'Quantum Standardisation and Testing Labs' from Indian academic institutions or research and development institutions, an official release said on Sunday. The goal is to drive research and development in quantum technologies, ensuring the interoperability, reliability, and security of quantum communication systems. These labs will serve as innovation hubs, uniting quantum technology developers, testing equipment manufacturers, and academic researchers to explore and harness the full potential of quantum technologies for the benefit of all citizens. "The initiative aligns with the Prime Minister's vision for 'Jai Anushandhan', aiming to support research and development in telecom products and technologies that directly enhance the lives of Indian citizens," the release said.

7 proposals on table for Sebi expert group for short-term measures to tame F&O frenzy

PTI ■ KOLKATA
The Sebi-appointed expert group on exchange-traded derivatives started discussions on seven proposals to address regulatory issues and protect small investors from risks in index and stock option trading, sources said. The panel members would recommend short-term strategies to bolster investor protection and improve risk metrics in this market segment, they said. "The expert group would deliberate in detail the pros and cons of each of the seven proposals to protect small investors engaged in futures and options (F&O) trading. We know that nine out of ten small investors lose money in F&O. The recommendations of this



group will be considered by the Secondary Market Advisory Committee for a final decision," a source close to the development told PTI. Options are financial contracts that give a holder a right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an underlying asset at a specified price within a contract period. The proposals included rationalisation or limiting weekly options, rationalisation of strike prices of the underlying assets and removal of calendar spread benefits on the expiry day, according to the sources. The other four proposals were an upfront collection of option premiums from buyers of options, intra-day monitoring of position limits, an increase in lot sizes and a hike in margin

requirements near contract expiry. Both the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch recently said the capital markets regulator has anecdotal evidence of people borrowing money to place speculative bets in the derivatives segment and

ruled that household savings are going into such risky bets. The regulator has also noted that option volume surges near the expiry of the weekly contracts. Currently, all five working days of a week have at least one expiry of NSE or BSE indices. According to Sebi data, the overall derivative turnover was Rs 210 lakh crore in FY'18, which jumped to Rs 500 lakh crore in FY24, she said, adding that individual investors in index options jumped to 41 per cent in FY'24 from 2 per cent in FY'18. The rapid rise in F&O trade volumes in recent years could pose several challenges as retail investors who are not following proper risk management could be impacted by sudden market movements, a Reserve Bank

report stated. The equity derivatives segment has been witnessing growing participation from retail investors in recent years, increasing by 42.8 per cent from 65 lakh in 2022-23 to 95.7 lakh in 2023-24. Trading volumes in the derivatives segment have seen exponential growth over the years in notional terms, while the trading volumes measured by the premium turnover have witnessed a linear growth pattern, said the RBI's bi-annual Financial Stability Report (FSR). The expert group will scrutinise the weekly options in detail as these are most attractive to retail investors who can participate with low capital, the sources said. Rationalisation of strike prices is another area of

interest to prevent small investors from incurring losses, they said. "Retail investors tend to buy options cheaply, hoping for very high returns, and go far from 'At the Money' options leading to losing their premium paid," one of the sources explained. 'At the Money' (ATM) describes a situation when the strike price of an option is equal to the underlying asset's current market price. The expert group will also look into options for increasing lot sizes, the sources said. The lot sizes of index F&O were reduced by the National Stock Exchange after BSE relaunched its derivative products a year back. NSE, the world's largest derivative exchange in terms of contracts traded, had reduced Nifty lot sizes to 25 from 50 and BankNifty to 15 from 25. Bharat Chamber of Commerce senior vice president and SKP Securities Ltd MD Naresh Pachisia said, "SEBI's intent is in the right direction because when retail participation in options goes unprotected, it shifts from the useful wealth creation to additive speculation, which is harmful to their financial health. Therefore, the regulator taking steps to prevent this is useful." He also added, "However, at the same time, they need to ensure that long-term investors' ability to hedge their portfolios, using options, is not affected. An impactful investor education/awareness campaign could be useful."



CANCER CARE HOPE BEYOND DIAGNOSIS

Navigating a serious health diagnosis, like cancer, is emotionally demanding. Talking with your doctor or a counselor and reaching out support groups is essential to overcome the complexities of the cancer journey. **ARCHANA JYOTI** speaks with doctors to tell you more

For many individuals facing cancer, the emotional toll can be as daunting as the physical aspects of the disease. From the moment of diagnosis, feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty often dominate one's thoughts. Concerns about treatment outcomes, potential side effects, and the impact on daily life can intensify these emotions. Needless to say, mental health plays a crucial role throughout the cancer journey. Research consistently shows that psychological well-being influences not only the quality of life but also the effectiveness of treatment and overall health outcomes. Support from family, friends, and healthcare providers is pivotal in managing these challenges. "Counseling, therapy, and support groups offer safe spaces for individuals to express their emotions, address fears, and seek guidance on coping strategies. These interventions not only provide emotional support but also equip patients with tools to navigate the ups and downs of their cancer experience," assert oncologists and psychologists. Infact, integrating mental health care into oncology settings is increasingly recognised as essential for comprehensive patient care. Studies show that when mental health services are embedded within cancer treatment teams, patients experience better outcomes. Integrated care ensures that mental health professionals collaborate closely with oncologists to address both physical and emotional needs, enhancing overall well-being and treatment adherence. For survivors too, the journey continues beyond treatment completion. Adjusting to life after cancer involves navigating survivorship challenges, managing lingering emotional effects, and rebuilding physical and emotional strength. Support networks, survivorship programs, and ongoing mental health care play crucial roles in this phase, promoting long-term recovery and quality of life. Dr Aditi Aggarwal, who serves as the Associate Director of Radiation Oncology at Max Institute of Cancer Care, highlights the increasing incidence of cancer globally. She acknowledges that scientific advances have significantly improved the effectiveness of cancer treatments, leading to higher cure rates. However,

Dr. Aggarwal also underscores the importance of mental well-being alongside physical health in the context of cancer care. She points out that a cancer diagnosis brings with it a multitude of challenges, including uncertainty, loss of control, disruption of daily life, and emotional turmoil. Patients may experience anger, altered body image, and conflicts in relationships, which often remain unaddressed as medical treatment takes precedence. "Each individual's experience is unique, but with comprehensive support and compassionate care, navigating emotional well-being through cancer becomes a journey of healing, strength, and renewed purpose," chips in Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director of Haematology, Paediatric Haematology Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant at Fortis Gurgaon. He says matter-of-factly: "When you first learn that you have cancer, it's normal to feel as if your life is out of control. This could be because: you wonder if you're going to live. Your normal routine is disrupted by doctor visits and treatments. People use medical terms that you don't understand, you feel like you can't do the things you enjoy and you feel helpless and lonely." A study from University of Pittsburgh researchers too finds that when mental health treatment is integrated into oncology care, patients are less likely to end up in the hospital. The study, published in "The Lancet," builds on previous research that shows a strong link between poor mental health and higher health care utilizations. The Pitt researchers had developed a treatment model in which cancer patients received mental health care from a therapist or social worker who was part of their oncology treatment team. This group was then compared to another set of patients who were referred out for therapy. Those who received the integrated mental health treatment were significantly less likely to visit the ER or be hospitalized. The group that got integrated mental health treatment received cognitive behavioral therapy: they focused on relaxation techniques and changing core beliefs about themselves or their environments. This group reported lower rates of depression, fatigue, and pain when compared to patients who only received therapy referrals. Researcher Steel says cancer

centers should consider introducing this integrated model since unplanned medical care is more costly to both patients and health systems. Another area where health care should focus is on patient's commonly experiencing changes in mood during or after cancer treatment, says Dr Bhargava. Says Dr. Arijit Bishnu, Associate Consultant, Hemato-Oncology and BMT,HCG EKO Cancer Centre, Kolkata, "Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be profoundly overwhelming, stirring fear of the unknown, apprehension about treatment and its side effects, and anxiety about the future. This emotional strain can be as taxing as the physical challenges posed by cancer itself. Conditions such as depression and anxiety not only degrade quality-of-life, they are associated with decreased rates of survival, possibly by impacting a patient's ability to follow through with treatment. Elaborating on strategies for

COUNSELING, THERAPY, AND SUPPORT GROUPS OFFER SAFE SPACES FOR INDIVIDUALS TO EXPRESS THEIR EMOTIONS, ADDRESS FEARS, AND SEEK GUIDANCE ON COPING STRATEGIES. THESE INTERVENTIONS NOT ONLY PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT BUT ALSO EQUIP PATIENTS WITH TOOLS TO NAVIGATE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THEIR CANCER EXPERIENCE

navigating emotional well-being, Dr Bishnu adds, "Joining support groups allows patients to connect with others going through similar experiences. Sharing stories, tips, and encouragement can reduce feelings of isolation and provide emotional support." Practices such as meditation, yoga, and deep-breathing exercises can help manage stress and anxiety. These techniques promote relaxation and improve overall mental well-being, he asserts. "Exercise can release endorphins, which are natural mood lifters." Understanding the disease, treatment options, and potential side effects can reduce fear and anxiety. Knowledge empowers patients, making them feel more in control of their situation. Leaning on loved ones for emotional support is vital. Open communication about fears and needs can strengthen relationships and provide a robust support network. Personalized care plans that consider the patient's emotional state, the type of cancer, and the treatment regimen are essential. To help address psychosocial needs, cancer centres must employ clinicians such as psychiatrists and counsellors specializing in psychosocial care for people with cancer. Dr. Aggarwal too advocates for the integration of counseling or simply having open discussions about the disease, patients' fears, anxieties, and thoughts from the outset of diagnosis. She believes that this proactive approach helps patients and their families better understand and cope with the situation, fostering acceptance and resilience throughout the treatment journey. However, Dr. Aggarwal rues that current practices often fail to adequately address these psychological aspects. She stresses on the urgent need for integrating mental health services and counselors into cancer treatment protocols. In the nutshell, doctors advise the parents that if diagnosed with the disease, however serious it may be, just remember that: You are not alone; many people experience emotional distress during cancer treatment; Seeking help is a sign of strength; There are resources and strategies available to support your mental health journey.

CANCER CARE COMPASSION The concept of "healing touch" goes beyond physical care and encompasses holistic support that addresses the emotional, psychological, and even spiritual needs of cancer patients. Here are some ways in which a healing touch can be beneficial for cancer patients: **Emotional Support:** Dealing with cancer can evoke a range of emotions, including fear, sadness, anger, and confusion. Compassionate care providers, counselors, and support groups can offer a safe space for patients to express these emotions, helping them to cope effectively. **Psychological Counseling:** Professional counseling can provide cancer patients with strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. Therapists trained in oncology support can help patients navigate their emotions, improve their coping mechanisms, and enhance their overall mental well-being. **Spiritual Care:** For many patients, their spiritual beliefs and practices play a significant role in their healing journey. Spiritual caregivers or chaplains can offer comfort, provide spiritual guidance, and help patients find meaning and purpose during their illness. **Complementary Therapies:** Techniques such as massage therapy, acupuncture, and yoga can complement medical treatments by promoting relaxation, reducing pain and fatigue, and improving overall quality of life. **Supportive Relationships:** Family members, friends, and caregivers play a crucial role in providing emotional support to cancer patients. Their presence, understanding, and encouragement can make a significant difference in the patient's emotional resilience. **Educational Support:** Empowering patients with knowledge about their diagnosis, treatment options, and possible side effects can alleviate fears and anxieties. **Holistic Care:** Integrating mental health services into oncology care ensures that patients receive comprehensive support tailored to their individual needs. This approach not only addresses physical symptoms but also prioritizes emotional and psychological well-being.

HEALTH ROUNDUP

Every 3rd Indian has fatty liver, metabolic disorders: Dr Jitendra



Dr Jitendra Singh launches Indo-French Liver And Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN) at ILBS recently. Photo: PIB

There is an urgent need to develop simple, low-cost diagnostic tests for the detection of different stages of fatty liver and their progression to severe, full-blown diseases. The approaches and algorithms should suit the Indian context, low-priced, and have a point of care, said Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh who is himself a Diabetologist. Every third Indian has fatty liver, which predates Type 2 Diabetes and other metabolic disorders, said Dr Singh after launching an Indo-French Liver and Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN) a virtual node to prevent and cure metabolic liver diseases at Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) in Delhi recently.

First Indian guidelines for managing dyslipidemia released

The Cardiological Society of India (CSI) has unveiled the country's inaugural guidelines for managing dyslipidemia, a significant risk factor for cardiovascular and peripheral artery diseases. Dyslipidemia, marked by high total cholesterol, elevated LDL-cholesterol (bad cholesterol), high triglycerides, and low HDL-cholesterol (good cholesterol), poses unique challenges in India due to genetic factors such as familial hypercholesterolemia. Dr. Ashwani Mehta, Senior Consultant Cardiologist at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, and co-author of the guidelines, emphasised the importance of early identification and treatment through family screening: "Genetic causes of dyslipidemia, like familial hypercholesterolemia, are more prevalent in India. It is crucial to identify and treat these cases early through cascade screening of family members." The guidelines also recommend assessing lipoprotein (a) levels, particularly as they are more prevalent in India compared to the Western world. Dr S Ramakrishnan, Professor of Cardiology at AIIMS, Delhi, and co-author of the guidelines, highlighted treatment strategies: "High LDL-C and non-HDL-C can be managed with statins and non-statin drugs. For patients not reaching treatment goals, injectable therapies like PCSK9 inhibitors or Inclisiran are recommended." Dr. JPS. Sawhney, Chairman of the Department of Cardiology at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital and Chairman of the guidelines, stressed aggressive targets for high-risk patients: "Patients with a history of heart attacks, strokes, or chronic kidney disease should aim for LDL-C levels below 55 mg/dL or non-HDL levels below 85 mg/dL." The guidelines also underscore lifestyle modifications as foundational in dyslipidemia management. Dr. Sawhney further recommended dietary changes and regular exercise: "Reducing sugar and carbohydrate intake is crucial in India, where dietary habits contribute significantly to blockages. Yoga and regular exercise also offer cardioprotective benefits and are culturally relevant." These guidelines aim to standardize and optimize dyslipidemia management in India, addressing both the genetic predispositions and lifestyle factors that impact cardiovascular health, said the doctors.

Rare Medical Cases Highlight Doctors' Success

ARCHANA JYOTI talks about two rare medical cases from diverse corners of India: one in a private hospital and the other in a specialised government paediatric facility. Both were successfully managed by dedicated medical teams, driven by the profound hope of patients and families

CASE 1
Facial Nerve Schwannoma at Fortis Vasant Kunj, Delhi
At Fortis Hospital in Vasant Kunj in Delhi, a 39-year-old woman from Kenya arrived with troubling symptoms: complete paralysis on her right side, accompanied by severe hearing and vision loss. Diagnostic tests revealed an extremely rare facial nerve Schwannoma, a tennis ball-sized tumor nestled intricately within the delicate facial nerve. Led by Dr. Anurag Gupta, a seasoned Neurosurgeon, and Dr. Yogesh Jain, an expert in ENT and Skull Base surgery, the team embarked on a daunting 15-hour operation. Their goal: to remove the tumor without compromising vital facial functions. The procedure was meticulous, requiring careful navigation around sensitive nerve structures. Dr. Gupta highlighted the complexity and risks associated with the surgery, emphasising that timely

Facial nerve schwannomas are rare, slow-growing tumours, accounting for less than 1% of all temporal bone tumours. They grow on the seventh cranial nerve, which is the facial nerve. These tumours are benign and grow slowly. According to doctors, they have afflicted fewer than 200,000 people worldwide and affect 1 in 50,000 people in India. intervention was critical to preventing further neurological deterioration. The successful outcome allowed the patient to be discharged after 12 days in stable condition, with improvements in vision, mobility, and overall health. Facial nerve schwannomas are

extremely rare, accounting for less than 1 per cent of all temporal bone tumours, and typically grow slowly. "This case underscored the importance of specialized care and timely intervention in managing such complex medical conditions," said Dr Gupta.

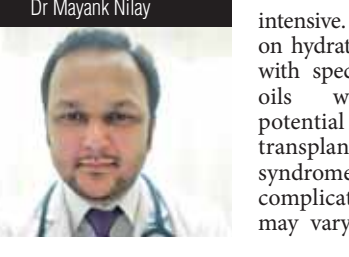


Dr Anurag Gupta (L) with the patient and her relative

CASE 2
Neonatal Sclerosing Cholangitis (NISCH Syndrome) at PGICH Noida, UP
Meanwhile, around 50 km away at PGICH Noida in a starkly contrasting medical setting, a two-month-old infant from Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh presented with a puzzling combination of symptoms: severe skin ichthyosis and signs of liver involvement, a rare occurrence in medical literature. After thorough genetic testing, the medical team, led by Dr. Mayank Nilay and Dr. Rani Manisha, and Dr. Varun Venkatraghavan, specialists from Medical Genetics and Pediatric Gastro Medicine, diagnosed the child with an

extremely rare genetic disorder, Neonatal Ichthyosis-Sclerosing Cholangitis (NISCH Syndrome), caused by a genetic mutation. The syndrome is characterised by scalp hypotrichosis (sparse and coarse hair), scarring alopecia (inflammatory condition causing hair loss), ichthyosis (dry and itchy skin) and sclerosing cholangitis (inflammation of liver ducts). Treatment was multidisciplinary and intensive. The team focused on hydrating the infant's skin with specialized creams and oils while considering potential future liver transplantation due to the syndrome's progressive liver complications. "The course may vary with remission of

liver symptoms while some children may also require liver transplantation. Skin ichthyosis is managed by hydration of the skin (topical application of creams and emollient oils), retinoids and sunlight exposure," Dr Nilay said. Given the rarity of the condition, close monitoring and continuous care were pivotal in managing the child's complex medical needs. "The case underscores the need for greater awareness about rare genetic disorders in India. There are children with genetic disorders who remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to lack of knowledge and resources. Any baby with multiple organ issues needs to be seen immediately," said Dr Nilay.



Dr Mayank Nilay

EXPECTING INDIA TO WIN BOTH CT AND WTC FINAL UNDER ROHIT'S CAPTAINCY: BCCI SECRETARY SHAH



Zimbabwe will look to exploit home conditions against India: Spinner Masakadza

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Having hurt the Shubman Gill-led India hard in the opening T20I in Harare, Zimbabwe spinner Wellington Masakadza said the tourists should take the home side lightly at their own risk, and added that they will exploit the home conditions to the maximum to win the five-match series.

A new-look India team suffered a 13-run loss to an inexperienced yet spirited Zimbabwe side in an upset of massive proportion. India, who were recently crowned champions in the T20 World Cup albeit with a different set of players, were expected to blow away the Zimbabwean challenge when they restricted the home side to 115 for nine.

But Zimbabwe wrote their own script, reducing India to 28 for four in the Powerplay and then eventually bowling them out for 102 in 19.5 overs. It was India's first loss in T20Is in 2024 and first against Zimbabwe in eight years. Masakadza, who finished with figures of 1/15 in three overs, said: "We are trying to use our own conditions as much as we can against this Indian side. It's a second-string Indian side, but there are a lot of good players in there. So, we are looking forward to this series," Masakadza said in an interview with PTI Videos facilitated by broadcasters Sony Sports Network. "We've had a few plans in place. We needed them to work and obviously, we are trying to use our own conditions as much as we can against this Indian side." Masakadza, who dismissed tail-ender Avesh Khan on Saturday, said he was eyeing captain Shubman Gill's wicket now. "I'll be looking to take Shubman Gill's big wicket and some of the right-handers,

year, will be held after eight years (since 2017 in UK), and even though the draft schedule has been submitted to the ICC, the BCCI hasn't yet given its green light to it. It is understood BCCI will again push for the 'Hybrid Model' like 2023 ODI Asia Cup where India played all its matches, including the ones against Pakistan, in Sri Lanka. Shah's message, in a way, has put to rest speculations about whether Rohit would quit leadership role in other formats.

Till Rohit calls it quits, India will once again have split captaincy with Rohit leading in ODIs and Tests while Hardik Pandya is expected to take charge of the T20 outfit. Rohit had also led India to the finals of the WTC and ODI World Cup last year, where India lost the summit clash after winning 10 straight games. Shah dedicated India's T20



World Cup triumph to the three cricketers, who quit the format after the title victory and outgoing coach Rahul Dravid. "I want to dedicate this victory to coach Rahul Dravid, captain Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja. "This was our third final in the last year. We lost the WTC final in June, 2023. In November, 2023 we won hearts after 10 wins but couldn't win the Cup. I had said in Rajkot that we will win the heart and also the Cup on June 24 and install our national flag, and our captain installed the Indian flag," the secretary said. Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja are expected to comeback for the ODI series against Sri Lanka slated for August. India will play six ODIs - three against Sri Lanka in an away series and three at home against England in early February before the Champions Trophy.

Uruguay beats Brazil 4-2 on penalties after scoreless draw, advances to Copa America semifinals

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Manuel Ugarte scored the decisive goal in the fifth round of the shootout and Uruguay advanced to the Copa America semifinals with a 4-2 penalty kick victory after the teams played a scoreless draw.

Uruguay and Brazil played a bruising, choppy match with plenty of rough stuff, but little of the impressive soccer for which both South American powerhouses are known. Uruguay's Nahitan Nández was sent off after a red card in the 74th minute for a dangerous tackle on Rodrygo, but Brazil still couldn't break through its 10-man opponent in the ensuing 21 minutes.

"I prefer offensive football, but in this match, we created more opportunities and we defended well," Bielsa said through an interpreter. "We did the things necessary to succeed at this level."

Uruguay led 3-1 after three rounds of the shootout when goalkeeper Sergio Rochet stopped Eder Militão and Douglas Luiz hit the post. Alisson Becker saved José María Giménez's shot in the fourth round to keep Brazil alive, but Ugarte banged home the clincher.

"If you ask me if I'm happy that we only created three goal-scoring opportunities, then no," Bielsa said. "But our opponent only had two goal-scoring opportunities. We had to work hard to create our opportunities ... But that was satisfactory to us."

After the third penalty shootout in four Copa America quarterfinal matches, Uruguay advanced to face Colombia in the semifinals on Wednesday night in Charlotte, North Carolina. Colombia routed Panama 5-0 earlier Saturday, extending its unbeaten streak to 27 consecutive matches.

"We believe we're in good shape to play against any opponent," Bielsa said.

Defending champion Argentina faces Canada in the other semifinal Tuesday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The final is July 14 in Miami



Gardens. Brazil played without Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior, who watched from the stands under suspension after accumulating two yellow cards. The Seleção already are without Neymar, who hasn't played since tearing a knee ligament last fall during Brazil's loss to Uruguay in a World Cup qualifier.

That victory was Uruguay's first over Brazil in 13 meetings since 2001, but Bielsa's group has now beaten Brazil in back-to-back matches for the first time since 1992. Endrick made his first career start in

place of Vinicius Junior, but the 17-year-old phenomenon headed to Real Madrid later this month couldn't shake Brazil from its offensive funk. Except for a 4-1 win over overmatched Paraguay, Brazil scored one combined goal and earned just one victory in its other three Copa America matches - and the Seleção is headed home despite never trailing in the tournament.

"There were positives in every match," coach Dorival Júnior said through an interpreter. "It's only natural after a match like this one that something we'd consider positive is ruled out. I'm

aware of that. We didn't perform at a high technical level, but I don't throw out any of the matches. There was dedication, fighting spirit. It was always a courageous team. I believe we had more positives than negatives. The fact we didn't seize (the opportunity) despite outnumbering (Uruguay) will be analyzed."

Uruguay advanced to the Copa America semifinals for the first time since winning the tournament in 2011, and it knocked Brazil out for the first time in four tries since 1995. Both teams played cautiously and contentiously from the start. During a stoppage in the 17th minute, Ronald Araújo shoulder-checked Endrick to the ground from behind while the teenager complained about an earlier non-call. Raphinha responded by knocking down Araújo, but order was restored.

Araújo, the oft-injured Barcelona defender, left the game with an apparent injury to his right leg in the 31st minute. Bielsa later called it a muscle injury.

After 35 minutes with few scoring opportunities, the teams traded their best chances 35 seconds apart. Right after Darwin Núñez botched an unobstructed header deep in Brazil's box, Raphinha was stopped at close range by Rochet.

Akanji enduring 'deep emptiness' after penalty failure consigns Swiss to painful loss at Euro 2024



AP ■ DUSSELDORF

That was the instruction on England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford's water bottle as he prepared to face Manuel Akanji for Switzerland's first kick in the penalty shootout at the European Championship. Pickford dived left. And he saved the penalty.

Cue jubilation for England and agony for Akanji, with his being the only failure in the shootout as Switzerland missed another chance to advance to the semifinals of a major tournament for the first time.

After Switzerland's 5-3 loss in the shootout, a disconsolate Akanji was embraced by his Manchester City teammates John Stones and Phil Foden. "No words of solace can help him," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "Deep emptiness, deep sadness."

Switzerland midfielder Remo Freuler was in tears. So was goalkeeper Yann Sommer. History had been in the grasp of the most talented Switzerland squad in a generation, perhaps ever. Leading 1-0 after Breel Embolo's 75th-minute tap-in, the Swiss moved to within 10 minutes of beating England in

Munich. With Schar a regular with Newcastle and with Embolo such a danger up front after regaining his fitness. "It's hard to accept because I think we deserved to go to the semifinal with this team," Switzerland forward Dan Ndoye. "We had the quality to go further. It hurts, it hurts to lose on penalties like that. It's cruel." Switzerland, a country better associated with winter sports, had no place competing with England deep in a major tournament, Yakin said. "Even in this game, some said we were the favorites but we will never be the favorites," he said. "It can be in certain moments that we look like one, but the market value of other teams compared to us is massive."

Yet, Switzerland's defense, marshalled superbly by Akanji, was surprisingly comfortable against an England strike force containing superstars like Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka and Foden, and Yakin's team had the better of both the second half and extra time. That was the case even though Xhaka, Switzerland's midfield general, was held back by a leg injury that almost ruled him out of the game. "It was a miracle he could even play," Yakin said. Yakin wouldn't be drawn on his future, having been linked to jobs in Saudi Arabia. He has been in charge of the Swiss since August 2021 and proved himself to be a fine tactician, bouncing back well from the humiliation of losing 6-1 to Portugal in the last 16 of the 2022 World Cup. "Unfortunately now my contract has come to an end, but that doesn't mean that there won't be a continuation," Yakin said. "My priority is the national team."

Netherlands into Euro 2024 semifinal against England after beating Turkey

AP ■ BERLIN

The Netherlands dug deep to come from behind and beat Turkey 2-1 on Saturday and book its place in the European Championship semifinals.

An own goal from Mert Muldur in the 76th minute, only six after Stefan De Vrij canceled Samet Akaydin's first-half header for Turkey, was enough for the Dutch in the last of the quarterfinals. "It was really a battle today," De Vrij said. "The Turkish team they have a big heart, a lot of quality. In the end we did well and we deserved the win."

The Netherlands turned the game around after after 1.97-meter-tall (6-foot-5) striker Wout Weghorst made his entrance for the second half. "He's always fighting up front, helping the team. And we started to keep the ball, create chances," De Vrij said. "Then we scored two goals and the whole team fought until the end."

The Netherlands will face England in the second semifinal in Dortmund on Wednesday, Spain faces France in the first on Tuesday. "The players showed tonight a big heart," Dutch coach Ronald Koeman said. "We had to suffer but finally it's a great success."

Turkey was without defender Merih Demiral, who was suspended for two matches by UEFA for making a nationalistic hand gesture after scoring in Tuesday's 2-1 win over Austria. The gesture is used by Turkish nationalists and associated with an ultra-nationalist group. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was at the



game after he changed his plans because of the diplomatic row with Germany over Demiral's gesture. German interior minister Nancy Faeser had said Demiral used his celebration "as a platform for racism" and federal minister Cem Özdemir, a German politician of Turkish descent, said the gesture "stands for terror, fascism." Many Turkish fans made the gesture on their way to Berlin's Olympiastadion, and again during Turkey's national anthem before the game.

The Dutch made a better start, but Turkey's defenders dug in to limit the impact of Cody Gakpo, Xavi Simons and Memphis Depay. Turkey lined up with five at the back without the ball, as it had in the win against Austria, and gradually improved.

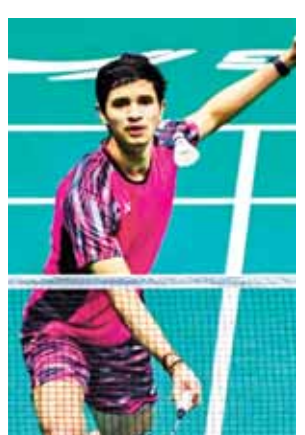
Akaydin rewarded a period of Turkish pressure by scoring in

the 35th. Arda Guler delivered a butter-soft cross for the defender to head in off the underside of the crossbar. It set off wild celebrations among Turkey's coaching staff and fans. Guler was swamped in the coaching area with hugs, while fans in the west end of the stadium set off flares. Most stayed standing after the goal.

Turkish supporters greatly outnumbered their orange-clad counterparts in a city that's home to a large community of people with Turkish roots. Most are descendants of Turkish "guest workers" who arrived in what was West Germany to help rebuild the post-war economy. Germany is home to some 3 million Turks or people with Turkish roots, making them the country's largest ethnic minority, and the team has enjoyed fevered support at Euro 2024.

Koeman, who won Euro '88 as a player with the Netherlands, reacted to his team's half time deficit by sending on big forward Weghorst, whose presence gave the Dutch wingers a target.

Guler hit the post with a free kick, but it was an isolated effort during a period of intense Dutch pressure that finally paid off in the 70th when De Vrij was left free to head in Depay's cross. Suddenly the Dutch supporters could be heard again, and they were cheering again shortly afterward when Gakpo forced the own goal from Muldur by getting in front of the defender to Denzel Dumfries' low cross. "We didn't start the second half very well and fell behind," Turkey captain Hakan Calhanoglu said. "After their second goal, we turned to long balls."



Rajawat loses in semifinals of Canada Open

PTI ■ CALGARY

India's campaign at the Canada Open Super 500 badminton tournament ended after Priyanshu Rajawat suffered a straight-game loss to France's Alex Lanier in the men's singles semifinals here.

World No. 39 Rajawat went down 17-21 10-21 to Lanier, ranked 37th, in 45 minutes at the Markin MacPhail Centre. The Indian had defeated Lanier at the Madrid Spain Masters qualification round last year in their only meeting. Rajawat, who had stunned Anders Antonsen of Denmark in the quarterfinals, made a positive start, opening up a 3-0 early lead but Lanier was quick to establish a 7-4 lead.

The two fought hard and Rajawat did grab the lead a few times but he couldn't sustain the pressure on his opponent, who reeled off five straight points at 15-16 to eventually close out the opening game. Rajawat's game completely fell apart after the change of sides as Lanier zoomed to 8-2 and then 14-3, which proved decisive as the French shut the door on the Indian.