



OPINION 6 MODI'S TUMULTUOUS NEW INNINGS

WORLD 8 GROWING CLAMOUR FOR BIDEN TO STEP DOWN

MONEY 10 INDIAN ECONOMY SET FOR STABLE HIGH GROWTH

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HARDIK BIG-STAGE PLAYER: SANJAY MANJREKAR 12 SPORTS



New Criminal Laws kick in



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ending colonial era laws from Monday, three new criminal laws— Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Act (BSA) — will come into effect across the country, replacing the British era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively. The new laws will bring in a modern justice system, incorporating provisions such as Zero FIR, online registration of police complaints, summonses through electronic modes such as SMS and mandatory videography of crime scenes for all heinous crimes. The new laws in India marks a significant shift in priorities,

placing crimes against women, children, and the nation at the forefront. This is in stark contrast to colonial era laws, where concerns like treason and treasury offenses outweighed the needs of ordinary citizens. The Government has held regular meetings with States and Union Territories and they are fully geared up in terms of technology, capacity building and awareness generation to implement the new criminal laws. BNS has 358 sections (instead of 511 sections in the IPC). A total of 20 new crimes have been added and the imprisonment sentence has been increased for 33 of them. The amount of the fine has been increased in 83 crimes and mandatory minimum punishment has been introduced in 23 crimes.

The penalty of community service has been introduced for six crimes and 19 sections have been repealed or removed from the bill. BNSS has 531 sections (in place of 484 sections of CrPC). A total of 177 provisions have been changed in the bill, and nine new sections as well as 39 new sub-sections have been added to it. The new act has added 44 new provisions and clarifications. Timelines have been added to 35 sections and audio-video provision has been added at 35 places. A total of 14 sections have been repealed and removed. BSA has 170 provisions (instead of the original 167 provisions), and a total of 24 provisions have been changed. The new laws have also prioritised the investigations for offences against women and children, ensuring timely completion within two months of recording information. In the new criminal laws, it has become mandatory for forensic experts to visit crime scenes for serious offences and collect evidence. Summons can now be served electronically, expediting legal processes, reducing paperwork, and ensuring efficient communication between all parties involved.



PM Modi ki Mann Se Baat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi resumed his monthly radio programme "Mann ki Baat" on Sunday thanking the countrymen for their unwavering faith in the Constitution and the democratic system and participating in the Lok Sabha election 2024 in which over 65 crore of them voted. The radio programme of Modi had been paused since the last broadcast on February 25 due to the elections. Addressing the nation in his first Mann Ki Baat programme after assuming office for a third term, PM Modi expressed that he missed the conversation with the public since the February broadcast. He thanked people and congratulated the Election Commission and every

person associated with the process as he touched on a host of issues in his 30-minute radio address. The Prime Minister also cheered Indian athletes who will be competing in the Paris Olympics starting next month, and urged people to use "cheer4Bharat" hashtag to motivate them. He said the performance of Indian players in the previous Olympics in Tokyo had won the hearts of every citizen, and the participating athletes have been since whole-heartedly engaged in the preparations for the Paris Olympics. "If we take all the players together, then all of them have participated in nearly 900 international competitions. This is a very big number," he said, adding that Indians will get to witness certain things for the first time.

Virat and Rohit Sharma ride off into the sunset

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

The confetti shimmered like a thousand dreams realized, raining down on Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma as they held aloft the T20 World Cup trophy gleaming under the floodlights of Kensington Oval in Barbados. Virat and Rohit walked up to the microphone to give their victory speeches and a different kind of farewell on a night where billions of emotions were high after the triumph final.



Rohit Sharma embraces Virat Kohli after India's T20 World Cup 2024 win (X/@ICC)

While receiving the medals and awards, Rohit Sharma also announced his retirement officially. While addressing the post match conference Sharma said, "That was my last game as well. Honestly I have enjoyed it since the time I started playing this format. There's no better time to say good bye to this format, winning the World Cup is what I wanted." India's star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja also hung up his boots from T20 Internationals. Kohli has always been the star performer for India from his debut 2012 World Cup.

Over the years his statistics speaks for himself and whenever the team needed him he performed. The 35-year-old batsman has recorded for the most number of 1292 runs in T20 World Cup in 35 matches with overall average 58.72 followed by Rohit Sharma who has second most number of runs in World Cup, 1220 in 47 matches with the average of 34.85. The former Indian Captain known for his match winning knocks in T20 World Cup campaigns, his feat came in big matches like 2014 semi final and final, 2016 Semi Final, and the clash against Pakistan in Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG 2022), to which Virat rated his biggest T20 innings of his career. Rohit whose debut for India was in the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007 under the leadership of MS Dhoni, from being the middle order batsman to being the opening batsman his journey has been remarkable. He appeared in nine World Cup Campaigns (2007-2024).

DSPL-31



ନୂତନ ଭାରତର ନୂତନ ଆଇନ



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ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପାଠିତଙ୍କୁ ସୁନିଶ୍ଚିତ ନ୍ୟାୟ



ମହିଳା ଏବଂ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କ ସୁରକ୍ଷାକୁ ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ



ଭୂତ ନ୍ୟାୟ ପାଇଁ ସଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ମାମଲାର ବିଚାର



ଅନଲାଇନ୍ ଏଫଆଇଆରର ସୁବିଧା



ଡିଜିଟାଲ ପ୍ରମାଣର ବ୍ୟବହାର



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Ratna Bhandar to be opened soon: CM Will demands for coal royalty hike, SCS be fulfilled?

'Stern action in case of irregularity'
NALINI SAHU
 BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday said the State Government is taking necessary steps to open the Ratna Bhandar of the Jagannath Temple in Puri "very soon".

Addressing a special function organised by the BJP here to felicitate newly-elected party MPs and MLAs, he said

an inventory of the precious ornaments and jewellery stored in the Ratna Bhandar would be done when the treasury is opened.

Stating that the ornaments in the Ratna Bhandar would be thoroughly examined, he said stern action would be taken if any irregularities are detected. Action would be taken against those found guilty in case of any lapse and nobody would be spared.

Majhi said no concrete step had been taken by the previous regime to stream-

line rituals at the temple and no fund was made available for effective temple management. In its very first Cabinet meeting, the BJP government has announced a Rs 500-crore corpus fund for efficient management of the Jagannath Temple.

Fulfilling a promise made in the BJP's Sankalp Patra for the last elections, the government took steps for reopening all the four gates of the temple for the convenience of devotees, he said.

Giving a warning to the corrupt, Majhi said that those

who plundered minerals of the State during the previous government would not be allowed to go scot-free.

"Action as per law will be taken against those who looted minerals and took percentage and weakened the State's economy," the CM.

Asserting that the BJP government would work to protect Odia pride and make Odisha the number 1 State in the country, he said Odisha is now included in the Viksit Bharat pledge of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Asks BJD
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJD on Saturday said it is eagerly waiting for the good news including hike in coal royalty to be shared by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and two Deputy CMs after meeting top leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi during their New Delhi visit.

The Chief Minister and two Deputy Chief Ministers, KV Singh Deo and Pravati Parida, are on their first official visit to New Delhi since Wednesday night. During their visit

they met several Union Ministers including Amit Shah and Nirmala Sitharaman and held discussions related to State's issues.

The CM and two DCMs are likely to return to Odisha on Saturday. Before visiting Delhi, they had stated that they will hold discussions to make Odisha a developed State, said BJD MLA Prasanna Acharya here.

"The people of Odisha are eagerly waiting to know what discussion they held with the President, PM and other Central leaders and what commitment they got from the top

leaders," Acharya told mediapersons.

To make Odisha a developed State, the economy needs to be strengthened. During the last 24 years of the BJD Government, the State's economy had also witnessed an upward surge, he pointed out.

"As the double engine Sarkar of BJP has been formed in Odisha and Delhi, we hope that the Central Government in guidance of the State will accept all proposals to make Odisha a developed State," the BJD MLA said.

Raising the coal royalty is-

sue, the BJD leader said, the State has been demanding for hike in coal royalty, which was not revised since 2013. So, there is a hope that the Centre will now enhance the royalty so that the State can earn more funds from coal being explored in the State, he added.

Further, Acharya said political leaders irrespective of party line including BJP have been demanding for Special Category Status for the State, but the Centre had ignored it.

"We hope that Special Category Status will be allotted to Odisha to accelerate the pace of developmental works," the former Minister stated.

Ahuja takes charge as Chief Secretary



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Senior IAS officer Manoj Ahuja assumed charge as the new Chief Secretary of Odisha at the Lok Seva Bhawan here on Sunday. A 1990-batch IAS officer of Odisha cadre, Ahuja took over from outgoing Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena.

As per political analysts, Ahuja will mainly face challenges like removing bureaucratic bloats of the previous government, wiping out the bitter feeling between the Odia and non-Odia officials and fulfilling all the assurances promised by the newly-formed BJP government in its election manifesto.

Ahuja, who has returned to Odisha from Central deputation, will have a herculean task to provide a new identity to the Odisha administration by improving its image and lending a balance between the Odia and non-Odia officials.

Ahuja is now the senior-most IAS officer in the State administration. Apart from his vast experience, he is in the good books of Prime Minister Narendra Modi by working efficiently as a Secretary in the Union Agriculture Ministry. Under such circumstances, it is expected that Ahuja will be able to bring more assistance for the State from the Centre with proper coordination.

Oldest Odisha Police Pigeon Service still active

Acted as most trusted communication system during natural disasters

RAJESH BEHERA
 BHUBANESWAR

The pigeon service in Odisha police has its glory and proved to be a timeless communication heritage despite the advent and adoption of modern technology like BB-PPDR (Broad-Band Public and Disaster Relief Network).

Though the Odisha Police has a cocktail of communication services like landline phones, mobile phones, VHF/UHF/ HF, and satellite phones but it has also preserved the 78 years' old trusted pigeon services during the exigency period.

The Odisha Police Pigeon Service, which is considered as the oldest and probably the only active official pigeon service in the world, continues to keep the tradition of this man-avian camaraderie alive, said IG of Communication Satish Kumar Gajbhiye. The last pigeon messaging service in the world was in Odisha called Orissa Police Carrier Pigeon Service and it was disbanded in 2006 after 60 years of active service and 800 birds. Carrier pigeons had been providing daily communications between Odisha's 400 police stations across the State.



established the pigeon service in 1946.

Initially launched in Koraput, the service expanded to 38 locations, utilising over 1,500 pigeons across districts, sub-divisions, circles, and police stations. The pigeons were last used in the 1999 Super

Cyclone for mail services when all other means of communication were not working, added Gajbhiye.

The pigeons played a crucial role and carried essential messages during two natural disasters- the massive cyclone in 1971 and the unprec-

Odisha to get Rs 1-lakh cr new rly projects in 5 yrs

Says Ashwini Vaishnaw

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha would get new railway projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore in the next five years, said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw while addressing a special ceremony organised to felicitate newly-elected BJP MPs and MLAs in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

"While the amount was a meagre Rs 800 crore some 10 years back, the State is getting over Rs 10,000 crore every year for the last three years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi initially doubled the funding and then increased it by three and four times. The State was allocated a record Rs 10,536 crore for railway infrastructure development for the 2024-25 fiscal and, accordingly, work is being taken up. In the last 10 years, a record 1,826-km railway lines have been laid in



Odisha," he said.

Vaishnaw also spoke about how it was difficult to get land for sanctioned projects during the previous BJD regime. "Since the BJP is in power in the State, the sector will no longer remain neglected and we will be able to speed up the work now with our double-engine government. I also want to give an assurance to get new projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore for Odisha in the next five years," he said.

He further said an electronics manufacturing cluster would be set up in Odisha. "Semiconductor training will also be conducted for the youths of the State," he said.

The Railway Minister also spoke about 135 special trains to be run to Puri from 25 districts in the State for Rath Yatra.

Low pressure Rainfall deficit in State reduced to 27%

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State may continue to experience rainfall till July 6 though the low-pressure area has weakened into a cyclonic circulation over northwest Bay of Bengal adjoining the north Odisha-Gangetic West Bengal coasts.

The Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here on Sunday issued a Yellow warning for heavy rains in Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Kendrapada, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and

Koraput districts in next 24 hours.

Notably, showers induced by this monsoon season's first low-pressure area in the last three days have brought down the rainfall deficit to 27 per cent and accelerated the agricultural activities in the State.

While Malkangiri has received 38-per cent excess rain, Mayurbhanj is the only district recording a large deficit of 60 per cent or less. Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Khordha, Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh, Subarnapur, Boudh, Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Koraput recorded normal rains.

Sambalpur sweetmeat 'Sarsatia' still awaits GI tag

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU
 ■ SAMBALPUR

Food culture of western Odisha has always been special and lip-smacking. The heart of it is Sambalpur, known for Sarsatia, savoured in and outside the country by many people for its unique style of making and sweet taste.

The sweetmeat has been on a GI (Geographical Indication) tag run for several years; however, the process is on hold for lack of a deep study on the delicacy and its history.

According to historians, making the delicacy may seem difficult now, but it used to be a staple food of every family in undivided Sambalpur. Mothers used to soak Sarsatia in milk to feed their children. Moreover, it is a key bhog to serve to the deity during Dassehra. Earlier, as a local culture, every goddess in Sambalpur was served with Sarsatia as bhog.



and outside the district.

Lecturer of Maa Jhadeswari College, Dhama, Siddhartha Panda whose family has been associated with making of Sarsatia for a long time, said, "Residents of Sambalpur have been demanding for the GI status of Sarsatia for the past several years. Many think it's

an ordinary food; its specialty needs to be highlighted. When one discusses the special foods of different regions, Sambalpur is known for Sarsatia. If concerted effort had begun earlier, Sarsatia might already have received the GI tag. There are also very few studies on Sarsatia, for which the GI tag process is tak-

ing time. People need to produce a solid background-information, not only history but also how the food can be stored for some days and its nutritional value can be preserved."

The primary challenge faced by the Sarsatia makers is the unavailability of the Ganjer tree, as it's the primary ingre-

dent for the making of the delicacy. Three generations, including Prabhulal Gupta (56), have been making this crispy dessert. He wakes up early in the morning and makes the batter of rice and a minimal amount of sugar with the twigs of the Ganjer tree soaked at night. The making

of Sarsatia in his shop begins at 6 am and goes on throughout the day.

Prabhu said, "Discussions are on. I have given background information on the delicacy. Let's wait and see how it progresses. I and my entire family are engaged in the preservation of the cultural food. My next generation is also interested to make Sarsatia in coming days. We are dedicated to preserving this tradition. Whoever has learned to make it, must have learned it from Sambalpur."

Commissioner Sambalpur Municipal Corporation Vedbhusan said, "It is in the process. The Ministry of Culture will label Sarsatia with a GI. The background work for the status is underway. The process includes long guidelines with history. We have gathered some documents. Information from outside is also being collected. It's uniqueness and the historical background is being gathered. The progress on the effort won't be visible until acceptance happens. We need historical experts. We have to fulfil all the requirements to get the status. No timeline can be given; our efforts are on."

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BBSR land scam Marik warns of libel suit against Nageswar Rao

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Former Director General of Police (DGP) Sanjeev Marik has said he would file a defamation suit against former IPS officer M Nageswara Rao for dragging his name into the Patrapada land scam in Bhubaneswar.



Marik alleged that Rao is settling an old score with him.

When Rao was the CRPF IG, Marik was ADG (Operations) of Odisha Police. At that time, a Commandant was killed for wrongful deployment of CRPF. Then, Marik wrote a letter to the government seeking action against Rao.

Marik alleged that Rao is trying that revenge on him for



his letter to the government against him.

He said his son has purchased land after verifying the documents and has not bought any government land.

"Nageswara Babu has brought a false allegation against me. I have documents to prove his allegations base-

superannuated from service a month later. The EOW had received the complaint and given an acknowledgement too," Marik claimed.

He questioned as to why Rao did not follow up the complaint. "I got to know from the EOW that the person against whom he had lodged the complaint had deposed before it and the inquiry was closed thereafter," Marik said, adding that perhaps there was no truth in the allegation and the intention was to claim Rs 1 crore after three years against Rs 9 lakh at which the land was purchased.

No reaction has been received from Nageswara Rao over Marik's counter-allegation.

Cops show humanitarian gesture, donate blood

164 units collected from Kendrapada camp

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Showing a humanitarian gesture, the khaki clad personnel of Kendrapada on Friday organised a blood donation camp at the conference hall of Reserve police office with an aim to increase blood units at District Blood Bank.

Reserve Inspector, Prasant Kumar Ranasingh said the blood donation camp was organised under the supervision of Kendrapada SP Siddharth Kataria.

According to SP Kataria,



the CDMO of Kendrapada and the in-charge of district Blood Bank requested him to organise a blood donation camp considering the acute shortage of blood. As a result, he directed his subordinates to organise the camp on Friday aiming to lend their supporting hand for saving

the lives of Thalassemia, anaemia, cancer patients, pregnant women and also accident patients, who badly require blood during emergency situation. The message has been sent to all the police stations to come voluntarily to donate blood, he informed.

SP Kataria, ASP Debashis Dhal, SDPO of Kendrapada Debendra Mallik, Reserve Inspector Ranasingh, ICC of Kendrapada Town police station, Dillip Sahu and other senior officials were present at the camp and donated blood. As many as 164 units of blood were collected.

Hul Diwas Prez, PM pay tribute to Santhal rebellion heroes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the occasion of Hul Diwas on Sunday, President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid respects to the valiant fighters of the Santhal rebellion, honouring their sacrifice and courage in a post on X written in Santhali language.

They commemorated the indomitable spirit of the rebellion leaders like Sidhu and Kanhu, Chand-Bhairav and Phoolo-Jhano, whose heroic deeds are immortalised in history.

"I pay my respectful tribute to all the immortal fighters of the Santhal rebellion on Hul

Diwas. The immortal stories of sacrifices of heroes like Sidhu-Kanhu, Chand-Bhairav and Phoolo-Jhano who fought a historic war against injustice are written in golden letters. The ideals of those revolutionaries will always remain a source of inspiration for all of us countrymen," the first tribal President wrote in X.

The Hul Diwas marks the anniversary of the Santhal rebellion, a significant uprising in 1855-56 by the Santhal tribe against the British colonial rule and exploitative practices. The rebellion, led by Sido and Kanhu Murmu, was one of the earliest resistance movements against colonial oppression in India.

In Kalahandi Woman dies, daughter hurt in accidental firing

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

Hubby detained for questioning
A man's country-made gun allegedly went off accidentally killing his wife and leaving his daughter critically injured at Rampur village under the Thuamal Rampur police station in Kalahandi district on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Jema Dei Majhi while her daughter Bidya is undergoing treatment in a hospital.

Sources said that the woman's husband Bana was

going to forest with the gun when his wife stopped him and took away the gun from him.

However, as Bana tried to snatch the gun from his wife, it went off accidentally, in which Jema and her daughter sustained bullet injuries.

The injured were rushed to a hospital at Bhawanipatna and then shifted to the VIMSAR in Burla. While Jema died on the way, Bidya's condition continued to be critical. Bana has been detained by police following the incident and his gun was seized. Probe is underway to ascertain whether the incident was accidental or deliberate.

MCL dispatches 50MT coal in FY '24-'25 Achievement of record 7.7% growth in shipments

PNS ■ TALCHER

The Mahanadi Coal Fields Limited (MCL) has set a record by dispatching 50 million tonnes of coal in the financial year 2024-25. The company achieved the milestone in 7 days breaking before the previous record. The growth in coal shipments has been 7.7

percent compared to the last financial year. This will help meet the energy demand of the country.

Additionally, the MCL has achieved 15 percent growth in environmentally friendly coal shipments by rail.

In a Press release, Chairman and Managing Director Udayananta Kawle thanked all employees, officers and the entire MCL team for the record success in coal shipments and said that MCL is committed to energy security in the country.

Widow killed over land feud in K'pada

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

A Dalit widow was beaten to death by fellow villagers over a land dispute at Sahaspur village under the Sadar police station in Kendrapada district, said Sadar police station IIC Saroj Sahoo. The deceased was identified as Hemalata Sethy (65) of Sahaspur village.

A longstanding land dispute over the government land was prevailing between the Hemalata's family and Abhiram Mohapatra and his brothers Arjun and Sunakar Mohapatra.

Two days back, a heated altercation had taken place between Hemalata's family and Mohapatra's family members.

On Saturday night, Abhiram and his brothers allegedly attacked Hemalata with iron pipes and also hurled stones at her house. Hemalata was critically injured in the attack and rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital. But the doctors there declared her brought dead. Police reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. Cops have detained two persons and were interrogating them, the IIC said.

Preparatory meeting for Kharif farming in Ganjam

Plan to cultivate a total of 405,750 ha this yr

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

A meeting on preparations for the Kharif cultivation season in Ganjam district was chaired by district Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida here on Friday. A draft cultivation plan was presented by district's Chief Agriculture Officer, Sudhanshu Kumar Nanda.

According to the draft plan, the district aims to cultivate a total of 405,750 hectares (ha) this year. Out of this, 178,900 ha are allocated for paddy, and 126,850 ha for non-paddy

crops. The breakdown of the non-paddy crops includes 36,500 ha for maize, 65,800 ha for pulses such as green gram, black gram, and horse gram, 26,400 ha for oilseeds like groundnut, sesame, and mustard, and 60,600 ha for various vegetables.

Additionally, under the Odisha Millet Mission, 8,000 ha are earmarked for millets. Cotton cultivation has been targeted for 2,500 ha, taking into account the favorable market prices. The Irrigation Department plans to cover a total of 300,658 ha of land with water supply this year.

Seed distribution will be managed through the Direct

Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, providing 46,693 quintals of seeds, including 43,636 quintals of paddy seeds and 3,057 quintals of non-paddy seeds. The district's Chief Agriculture Officer assured sufficient stock of fertilizers in both government and private sale centers.

To prevent black market activities during the sale of seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, block, sub-divisional, and district-level squads will be formed to take strict action against unscrupulous traders.

This year, under the Chief Minister's Agriculture Initiative Scheme, 355 projects have been planned, with a target to increase this to 500. The district

Collector emphasized on expediting the draft work. He also stressed promoting cluster-based cultivation of crops like chili, marigold, orchid, green gram, black gram, sesame, and groundnut, ensuring each cluster includes at least 500 farmers.

Given the favorable environment for cotton and sugarcane cultivation in the district, officers were directed to encourage their expansion. The meeting was attended by district-level officers from the Agriculture and allied departments, who provided valuable insights and suggestions. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from Deputy Horticulture Director Kanda Jena.

Lab to boost biotech research in BU unveiled

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

To advance biotechnology research, a new "Plant Tissue Culture and Transgenic Lab" has been set up in the Post-graduate Department of Biotechnology at Berhampur University. The lab was inaugurated here on Friday by VC Prof Geetanjali Dash, accompanied by Registrar Sachidananda Nayak.

On the occasion, Prof Dash visited various classrooms and laboratories within the department and expressed her satisfaction with the state-of-the-art laboratory facilities. She interacted with the research scholars and MSc students, stressing their crucial role in utilising the available resources to bring glory to the university. Prof Dash emphasized the importance of exploring the new facilities for advancing research and inno-



vation in biotechnology. Registrar Nayak also appreciated the new infrastructure, noting that it is among the best in the State and highly suitable for conducting advanced research

in biotechnology.

All the faculty members attended the event, including Prof Jogeswar Panigrahi, Dr Sushil K Pathak, Dr Manoj Kumar Panda, Dr Saswat S

Mohapatra, Dr Sunil Kumar Behera, Dr Aditya Kumar Panda, and Tapan Kumar Singh Nayak. Research scholars and MSc students of the department were present.

Saina bags silver at World University Chess



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Woman International Master (WIM) Saina Salonika of Odisha clinched the individual silver medal in the World University Mind Sports Chess Games held at Entebbe in Uganda from June 25 to 30. Saina along with Junu Birua of the KISS University represented the Indian University Team. Saina, who studies in the Miranda House College of Delhi University, and Junu scored 6.5 points each.

Saina remained undefeated in the tournament by winning four games and drawing five games. Starting the tournament as the 8th seed, Saina lost the gold medal by a whisker and remained satisfied with the silver medal.

This is 22nd International medal for Saina. Starting the tournament with 2103 rating, Saina gained 48.6 valuable rating points. Both Mokshada and Junu Birua scored 4.5 points and secured 17th and 18th positions, respectively.

Paradip civic body budget of Rs 79.34 cr presented

Grand welcome given to Industries Min and local MLA Swain, MP Tarai

PNS ■ PARADIP

Newly elected MLA and Minister, Sampad Swain, along with Lok Sabha MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai, were grandly welcomed by Paradip Municipality during the presentation of this year's budget of the civic body.

During the council meeting held on Saturday, Paradip Municipality Chairman Basant Biswal presented the budget for the current financial year. The budget was passed with the unanimous support of the council members present. The session saw the attendance of Minister Swain, as well as the newly elected MP, Tarai. Municipal Executive Officer Abhishek Panda formally welcomed them.

The budget outlines a tar-



get income of Rs 40,01,94,268 from various sources, while the total budget passed for the 2024-25 financial year amounts to Rs 79,34,47,615. The approved expenditure for the financial year 2024-25 is Rs 77,20,03,099, with an expected remaining amount of Rs 2,14,44,516 at the end of the year 2023-24.

Prior to the council meeting, the Minister and MP were given a warm welcome in the

premises of the Municipal Administration Building. Chairman Basant Biswal presided over the special ceremony organized for the occasion, and Municipality Executive Officer Abhishek Panda delivered the welcome speech.

In his address, the Minister suggested that the civic body to closely monitor the issues pertaining to the rainy season in Paradip. MP Tarai

emphasized that the municipality should work towards the overall development of Paradip, irrespective of party affiliations.

The event was attended by Vice Chairman Chabilata Rout, Councillors Prabhathi Nayak, Subrata Kumar Pradhan, Pratap Nayak, Kedarnath Jena, Ajit Kumar Sarangi, Manoj Kumar Nayak, Banita Rout, and other leaders.

NHRC seeks fresh report on aid to rape victim

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Jagatsinghpur district Collector and Superintendent of Police to submit a fresh report on payment of compensation to a minor girl rape victim.

The NHRC passed the order taking cognisance of a rejoinder filed by human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy and the responses from the authorities.

Tripathy earlier invited the attention of the commission to an incident wherein a minor girl was allegedly raped by her tuition teacher's father, on September 23, 2023, in a village under the Kujang police station of Jagatsinghpur district.

It is stated that victim and others were taking tuition at a woman teacher's house. In the absence of the teacher, her father used to teach the students. However, taking advantage of his daughter's absence, the accused allegedly raped the Class VI student at regular intervals along with his accomplice.

Later, the district Collector and SP submitted their reports and said the charge-sheet has been already filed against the accused Subash Muduli. But the complainant alleged that the authorities have not paid any compensation to the victim or taken any steps for rehabilitation of the victim.

Following this, the NHRC sought a fresh report from the district administration on the payment of compensation to the victim.

Scribe Chittaranjan to get Kanhei Katha Puraskar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Odia fiction writer Chittaranjan Chiranjit will receive 'Kanhei Katha Puraskar 2024' for his outstanding contribution to Odia short stories and other literary activities.

The award, every year, is given by Kanheilal Das Smruti Sansad, Baleswar, to an Odia fiction writer in memory of Kanheilal, a prominent, upcoming fiction writer of that time, who died prematurely.

This year Chiranjit has been adjudged for the prestigious award by the members of the Sansad, a committee headed by Krushna Kumar Mohanty, working president of the forum.

The award will be conferred on him on July 27 on the occasion of Kanhei Smruti



Utsav. Chiranjit, a focused journalist of the State, has authored 15 books to his credit among which four books are short stories. A post graduate in Economics and masters in Journalism, Chiranjit, who is a resident of Deulpara, Kendrapara district, won several youth awards for novel and short stories, including the Kishori Charan Puraskar, Fakirmohan Galpa Samman and Lekhalekhi Juba Galipika Samman.

Parliament should pass law on quota to exceed 50 per cent cap: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday said Parliament should pass a law to enable reservations to exceed the 50-per cent cap, a day after NDA constituent JD (U) demanded that the quota increase in Bihar be included in the 9th schedule of the Constitution. At a meeting of the Janata Dal-United's national executive here on Saturday, the party expressed concern over a recent Patna High Court verdict striking down the Bihar government's decision to increase the quota for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) to 65 per cent from 50 per cent. In a political resolution passed at the meet, the JD(U) urged the BJP-led Centre to put the state's law under the Constitution's 9th Schedule to rule out its judicial review. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said through-



out the Lok Sabha poll campaign, the opposition party has been saying that all state laws related to reservation for the SCs, STs and all backward classes should be included in the 9th Schedule, as was the case for a Tamil Nadu law in 1994. "It is a good thing that JD(U) has made the same demand in

Patna yesterday. But its ally BJP, both in the state and at the Centre, is completely silent on this matter," Ramesh said. "However, bringing reservation laws beyond the 50 per cent limit into the Ninth Schedule is also not a solution, because according to a 2007 Supreme Court decision, such laws are also subject to judicial

review," the former Union minister said, adding that a Constitution amendment law is required for the purpose. "In such a situation, the only way out is for the Parliament to pass a Constitution Amendment Bill which will enable the reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and All Backward Classes to exceed 50 per cent," he said. Ramesh said the current limit of 50 per cent is not explicitly mandated by the Constitution, but has been decided through various Supreme Court decisions. "This was and remains one of the main guarantees of the Indian National Congress for the Lok Sabha elections." Will the non-biological Prime Minister clear his stand? Our demand is that such a bill should be introduced in the next session of Parliament. JD (U) should not be limited to just passing resolutions," he added.

Doctors' body meets Nadda to discuss NEET-PG postponement concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Representatives of the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association have met Union Health Minister J P Nadda to discuss their concerns over medical education with a focus on the postponement of the NEET-PG exam. At the meeting, FORDA stressed on the importance of promptly announcing the new exam dates and conducting the exams transparently and efficiently even as it focused on the confusion among the NEET PG aspirants due to the postponement of the NEET-PG exam, said a representative from the Association. The NEET-PG, which was scheduled to be held on June 23, was postponed a night before the entrance exam, as a "precautionary measure" in the wake of recent allegations on the integrity of certain competitive exams.

The FORDA delegation included its President Dr Aviral Mathur, General Secretary Dr Sarvesh Pandey, Dr Gautam Sharma (RML), Dr Sarada (LHMC), Dr Bharani, Dr Ayush (VMMC and SJH), and Dr Meet Ghonia (NITRD). Dr Mathur later said that the Union Health Minister has assured the delegation that his ministry and the government are committed to the welfare of students and are determined to improve the current system. The reasons behind the postponement of NEET-PG are being addressed and fresh dates for the exam will be announced soon, the Union Health Minister told the FORDA delegation. The delegation also raised other significant issues pending resolution since before the Lok Sabha elections and Nadda assured them that further meetings would be held to address these matters.

AYUSH Ministry's CSMCARI inks medicine research pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences - Captain Srinivasa Murthy Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CSMCARI), under the Union Ministry of AYUSH, on Sunday inked a pact with the Commissionerate of Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy (CIM&H). The MoU outlines a collaborative framework for testing services, imparting training, and executing a collaborative project on "research studies for the standardisation of selected higher-order medicines." The partnership aims to carry out testing of selected raw drugs and finished products for the standardisation of medicine, said an official from the Union Ayush ministry. It will also provide NABL accreditation training guidance to the laboratory of CIM&H. "This MoU between CCRAS



and CIM&H has set precedence for other states of India also, they can come forward and join hands with CCRAS, MoAyush for various research and development activities," said Rabinarayan Acharya Director General, CCRAS, Chennai. This MoU marks a significant step towards strengthening the collaborative efforts between these premier institutions, and is targeted to enhance the quality and safety of Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic medicines; boost collaborative research initiatives; and capacity building and knowledge exchange, the official added.

More tribals opting for Govt hospitals over traditional healers, reveals study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As India targets malaria elimination by 2030, a study from Northeastern Meghalaya indicates a positive trend: tribal communities increasingly seek treatment at government hospitals instead of traditional healers. This shift, partly due to the belief that timely and effective malaria treatment is available in the public health system, reflects significant progress in the country's malaria control efforts, according to the study published in the journal Malaria. "By recognising these evolving attitudes, policymakers and healthcare providers can better tailor their interventions and communication strategies to more effectively address ongoing needs and concerns as India faces the 'last mile' in malaria elimination," the researchers noted. Malaria in India is predominantly concentrated in the eastern and central parts of the country, particularly in forested and hilly states with tribal populations and limited health



services. These states include Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, as well as the northeastern states of Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. Transmission in these areas is often challenging and persistent due to social and ecological factors, including conflict-affected regions and low community awareness about malaria prevention and control.

However, the study highlighted that patients still incur out-of-pocket expenses for travel, medications, or services unavailable at the PHC (primary health centre) level, leading some to seek private healthcare providers. The lack of awareness and knowledge about preventive measures, such as insecticide-treated bed nets, indoor resid-

ual spraying, and timely healthcare-seeking, can hinder efforts to reduce malaria transmission. To address these issues, the study focused on West Khasi Hills (WKH), West Jaintia Hills (WJH), and South Garo Hills (SGH) in Meghalaya, which had the highest Annual Parasite Index (API) between 2016 and 2019. Data were collected from August 2019 to November 2021 from residents of 23 villages served by four PHCs across these districts. Researchers examined community preferences for treatment and the use of healthcare services, such as visiting public or private health facilities or seeking care from traditional healers. The study found growing acceptance of public health providers, with the majority of participants preferring public healthcare institutions like PHCs for malaria treatment, citing affordability and the availability of free services. In the three districts, participants and healthcare providers noted that frontline health workers were now

equipped with basic rapid diagnostic tests (RDT) for malaria, allowing for prompt identification and timely referral for appropriate treatment. This improved outcomes and reduced the risk of complications. In the SGH district, community members reported a significant decline in seeking traditional healers for malaria treatment due to increased awareness of diagnostic tests, treatments, and services available at PHCs or hospitals. The availability of diagnostic tools used by village ASHA and ANM workers at health sub-centres also encouraged villagers to seek help from these healthcare providers. Recognising these shifting attitudes is crucial for policymakers and healthcare practitioners to tailor interventions and communication strategies more effectively as India approaches the final stages of malaria elimination, said the study's lead author, Carinthia B. Nengngong, from the Indian Institute of Public Health, Shillong.

Family pensioners' issues set for resolution



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh will launch a special campaign for the effective redressal of family pensioners' grievances here on Monday. Presently, around 90,000 cases are being registered on an online Centralised Pension Grievance and Redress System (CPENGRAMS) in a year, a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said on Sunday. Of the total grievances, family pension grievance cases account for about 20-25 per cent, it said. A major segment of family pensioners' grievances is constituted by women pensioners, the statement said.

The majority of the grievances pertain to defence pensioners, railway pensioners and CAPFs pensioners under the Union home ministry, it said, adding that "Bank-related issues also constitute a sizeable number". The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DOPPW), as part of its 100 days action plan will be undertaking a month-long special campaign for effective redressal of family pensioners' grievances during the period July 1-31, 2024 in which 46 ministries/departments will be participating, the statement said. This special campaign seeks a substantial reduction in the pendency of family pension grievances. Secretaries of Departments of Pension and

Pensioners Welfare, Ex-Servicemen's Welfare, Director General, Border Security Force, Controller General of Accounts, Deputy Managing Director of State Bank of India along with nodal public grievance officers of 46 ministries/departments, representatives from all pension disbursing banks and representatives of pensioners welfare associations will participate in this event, it said. The family pension-related grievances to be redressed in the special campaign have been shortlisted from the grievances registered on the CPENGRAMS portal. A total of 1,891 (as of June 15, 2024) family pension-related grievances pertaining to 46 ministries/departments/organisations have been identified for redressal during the campaign period, the statement said. DOPPW will monitor and provide all assistance to the concerned administrative ministry/department/organisation for effective redressal of grievances on a mission-mode approach.

Navy Chief ends Bangladesh visit, eyes new avenues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Navy chief Admiral Dinesh NK Tripathi on Sunday commenced a five-day visit to Bangladesh with an aim to further consolidate the bilateral defence engagement and explore new avenues of cooperation in the maritime domain, navy said here. It is Tripathi's first official visit abroad after he took the reins of the Navy two months ago. The visit comes more than a week after Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited India during which both sides vowed to expand the overall defence and strategic ties. Giving details of the Navy chief's schedule, officials said he will hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart, Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, and other top officials of Bangladesh's military,

including the Army chief and Air Force chief. Tripathi will also review the passing-out parade at the Bangladesh Naval Academy (BNA) in Chittagong on July 4. His engagements in the neighbouring country include an address at Bangladesh's National Defence College in Dhaka and visits to a few key defence facilities. "The visit is aimed to consolidate bilateral defence relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation," the Indian Navy said in a statement. Naval cooperation between India and Bangladesh has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span including operational interactions, bilateral naval exercises and capacity-building programmes. "The visit of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy will further strengthen the strong



bonds of friendship between the navies of both countries," the statement said. Bangladesh has been an important partner under India's Neighbourhood First policy. It is clearly visible in both the defence and maritime domains. The maritime cooperation between the two countries has grown from strength to strength in recent years, with a

significant ramp up on joint efforts towards protection of maritime interests. Both sides have recognised the value of such cooperation and are poised to enhance the efforts even further. More broadly, in all efforts under the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision, Dhaka has been a natural partner and source of support for New Delhi. The visit of the Navy chief is an affirmation of the positive trajectory of the naval relationship as well as an indication that both sides will significantly enhance their bilateral efforts at sea. By working together against shared and common challenges, the two navies would enhance regional security and growth in line with the SAGAR vision as well as set an example of how cooperative efforts can deliver concrete outcomes.

A military official said the cooperation between the two navies has regularly catalysed positive change in the Indian Ocean region. A few years ago, when Bangladesh held the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), the two countries had collaborated to organise the maiden IONS maritime exercise, he said. This exercise has continued to grow in size and scope ever since, and become a source of formalised standard operating procedures (SOPs), sharing of best practices and a means to enhance collective trust and interoperability, the official added. In 2025, the Indian Navy would take over the chairmanship of the IONS and take the lead in establishing higher levels of maritime safety and security within the Indian Ocean, he said.

UP to promote Buddhist pilgrimage tourism

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh rich cultural tapestry includes not just the revered sites associated with Lord Ram but also key locations integral to the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. To cash in on these Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the State, the UP Government recently launched the "Bodhi Yatra 2024" program to attract pilgrims and tourists from across India and the world, drawn by their historical and spiritual importance. At an event held here in the national capital, the UP Tourism Department announced a slew of initiatives to attract domestic and international pilgrims and tourists to the renowned Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the state. It is home to many places once visited by the Buddha and sacred Buddhist stupas, monasteries, shrines and staves, some of which date back to the days of the Buddha himself. He spent much of his life in the region with the spots of his first and last sermons located in the state. The State boasts of six major Buddhist sites: Sankisa, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kapilvastu, Kaushambi, and Kushinagar. Uttar Pradesh's Tourism Minister, Jaiveer Singh, explained that the objective of this journey is to showcase the memories of Lord Buddha's ordinary life journey through the heritage sites of Buddhism in the state. "Throughout the year, this journey aims to familiarize people across India with the significant messages of Buddha," said the Minister as he announced that through various artistic presentations,



the Tourism Department will highlight Uttar Pradesh's contributions to Buddhist art, culture, and the importance and connection of Lord Buddha. Furthermore, an interactive cultural session was also organized during the Bodhi Yatra program, inviting guests from various countries. The program will now be organized periodically in various cities across the country, which will enhance the reach of the pilgrimage, said the Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture Mukesh Kumar Meshram. The conclave featured Ambassadors and other diplomats from Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, Japan, Indonesia, Argentina, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Union Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat echoed similar sentiments, appreciating Uttar Pradesh for spearheading the Buddha Circuit, a visionary project to connect pilgrims with the spiritual journey of Lord Buddha, from birth to enlightenment.

Reasi terror case: NIA searches many locations in J&K



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted searches at multiple locations in the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir in connection with the Reasi terror attack case. The searches led to the seizure of various items showing linkages between the terrorists and overground workers (OGWs), a statement issued by the NIA said. Terrorists had opened fire at a bus carrying 'yatri' from Shiv Khori to Katra on the evening of June 9 in the Pooni area of Reasi district, causing the bus to fall into a nearby gorge, killing nine people, including a child. NIA, which took over the investigation on June 15 on orders from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, searched five locations linked with hybrid terrorists and OGWs, it said. The locations were pointed out by arrested accused Hakam Khan alias Hakim Din, the NIA said. Hakam had provided safe shelter, logistics and food to the terrorists, as per the probe agency's investigations. NIA has started examining the seized material to unravel the terror conspiracy, it added.

India's rise in world of drone technology

ADITI SHARMA ■ NEW DELHI

Imagine the whir of propellers slicing through the air, a symphony of innovation taking flight. This is the sound of India's rise in the world of drone technology, and a key player in this exciting story is the Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO), which is a high tech boot camp for drone whizzes. Here, aspiring pilots learn the ins and outs of drones, from the core essentials of how they work to the rules of the sky. They master safety procedures, practice intricate movements and gain hands-on experience under the watchful eyes of expert instructors. Upon graduation, they receive the coveted Remote Pilot Certificate (RPC), their license

to fly drones commercially. The possibilities with drones are endless, as vast as the sky itself. From capturing stunning aerial photos to streamlining infrastructure checks, drones are revolutionizing everything from agriculture to disaster relief. But to unlock their true potential, we need a skilled workforce. That's where RPTOs come in, bridging the gap between cutting edge tech and human expertise. By providing top notch drone pilot training, they ensure a pool of qualified flyers who can navigate the complexities of drone operation and put these amazing machines to good use across various industries. Leading the charge is the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG), in collabor-



ation with EduRade, a brand owned by RC HobbyTech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. They have launched India's largest RPTO, spanning 18 acre, this state of the art facility has the capaci-

ty to operate nine medium class drones simultaneously, positioning it as a central hub for advancing drone technology and training in India. Dr. Parameswari Krishnan Iyer, of IIT Guwahati, highlighted the importance of this initiative. Their goal is to propel drone technology in India, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a global drone hub by 2030. The RPTO also plays a key role in the "Name Drone Didi" program, empowering women from Self Help Groups (SHGs) to use drones in agriculture. By equipping them with the skills and knowledge, this program not only boosts agricultural productivity but also empowers these women economically.

IIT Guwahati's RPTO has a special focus on providing high quality drone training to the youth in North East India, a region often facing educational and infrastructural hurdles. Graduates of the drone pilot training program at IIT Guwahati have a wide range of career options across various sectors, including agriculture, infrastructure, media, environmental conservation, public safety, and more. The institute also plans to offer advanced programs and certifications in drone technology, further enhancing career prospects for its students. Further, IIT Guwahati is also making strides in modernizing defense operations with tailored training programs for defense personnel.

Bihar Police ready to implement new criminal laws from July 1

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar Police is "fully geared up" in terms of technology, capacity building and awareness generation to implement the three new criminal laws that come into effect across the country from Monday, officials said. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam will replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively. An awareness programme will be held at every police station in Bihar on Monday to highlight the key features of the new criminal laws, they said. "Elaborate preparations have been made to ensure successful implementation and seamless transition to the new system. The state police is fully geared up in terms of technology, capacity building and awareness generation to implement the new criminal laws from July 1," a statement issued by the Bihar Police said. The state police has carried



out training of its 25,000 senior officers ahead of the new laws coming into effect and also on digital policing, it said. Besides, prison, forensic, judicial and prosecution officials across the state have also been trained and sensitised about the new criminal laws. "The state government's comprehensive approach, encompassing training, system integration and administrative support underscores its commitment

to enhancing the criminal justice system. It is a significant step forward in law enforcement and justice administration in Bihar," Sudhanshu Kumar, Additional Director General (ADG) of Bihar Police (Traffic), told PTI. The new laws will bring in a modern justice system, incorporating provisions such as "Zero FIR, online registration of police complaints, summonses through electronic modes such as SMS and mandatory

videography of crime scenes for all heinous crimes, official sources said. Booklets on the new laws have been issued and specific apps developed to make it easy for Bihar Police officers to comprehend the widespread changes in India's criminal justice system, the statement said. "Significant efforts have also been made in the integration and testing of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). All police stations in the state are now connected with CCTNS. All FIRs from July 1 will now be registered online and immediately uploaded on the CCTNS," it said. "Additionally, an app has been developed by the authorities concerned for recording of evidence at crime scenes, search and seizure videography," it said. Forensic capabilities of the state have also been enhanced with adequate sanctioning of mobile forensic vans and qualified scientific staffers for all district police, the statement said.

From being farmer's son to Vice Prez, Venkaiah's journey inspiring: Modi

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released three books on the life of M Venkaiah Naidu and recalled his contributions, including the fight against imposition of Emergency and as Union Minister and Vice President. Recalling that the 50th anniversary of Emergency was observed recently, he said Naidu was even in jail for about 17 months during the fight against Emergency. The Emergency was imposed by the Congress by tarnishing the image of the country's Constitution, he said. The books, including a biography, were released on the eve of Naidu's 75th birthday. Expressing happiness over releasing the biography and two other books, Modi exuded confidence that the books would inspire people and show the right direction for national service. The journey of Naidu, from being a farmer's son to occupying high-ranking positions as Union Minister and Vice President, is filled with many experiences, he said.



Naidu chose to take up the Rural Development ministry in the cabinet of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, despite being a senior in the party, as he wanted to serve the villages, farmers and the poor, he said. During Naidu's tenure as Urban Development Minister as his senior cabinet colleague, several initiatives, including Swachh Bharat Mission and Smart Cities Mission, were started, Modi said. Praising Naidu's oratory, wittiness, alertness and spontaneity, he recalled the latter's comment of 'ek hath me BJP ka jhanda aur doosre hath me NDA ka agenda' (BJP's flag in one hand and NDA's agenda in another

during the Vajpayee regime. During Naidu's tenure as Chairman of Rajya Sabha, the bill to abolish Article 370 was passed with majesty, dignity and honour though the government did not have majority in the upper house, he said. BJP grew as a 'vatvriksh' (banyan tree) that it is today, due to the efforts of lakhs of activists like Naidu, he said. He hoped that the country would emerge as a developed nation in 2047 when Naidu celebrates his 100th birthday. In his response, Naidu thanked the Prime Minister for releasing the books. Appreciating Modi's

endeavour for the country's development, he said skill development is the need of the hour. "Development and welfare must go hand in hand. We should not be tempted by these freebies and then make the people lazy. Yes, we must give them a helping hand. You have been giving free ration to crores of people across the country. That should continue as long as it is required. But, at the same time, skill development is the need of the hour," the former Vice President said. Naidu also favoured promoting Indian languages. The books released by the PM include biography of the former Vice President titled "Venkaiah Naidu - Life in Service," "Celebrating Bharat - The Mission and Message of Shri M Venkaiah Naidu as 13th Vice-President of India", a photo chronicle and a pictorial biography in Telugu titled "Mahaneta - Life and Journey of M. Venkaiah Naidu." Venkaiah Naidu, several other leaders and prominent personalities attended the event in Hyderabad.

Tragic drownings spark calls for enhanced safety measures at Pavana dam

PTI ■ PUNE

The serene surroundings of the Pavana Dam in Lonavala have been marred by a series of tragic drownings, prompting urgent calls for enhanced safety measures in the region. The latest incidents involve the heartbreaking losses of 20-year-old Manish Shankar Sharma in January and 18-year-old Adwait Verma in June, both succumbing to the waters of the reservoir. These unfortunate events are part of a disturbing trend of drownings that have plagued the Pavana Dam area, drawing attention to the need for improved safety protocols. Local authorities, including the police and the irrigation department, have expressed concerns over tourists ignoring warning signs and venturing into dangerous waters. Senior Police Inspector Kishor Dhumal emphasised the importance of preventive



measures, such as increasing police presence, installing metal fencing, deploying more lifeguards, and marking danger zones with visible signs. "Anticipating the influx of tourists during the monsoon, we convene meetings with police Patils from over 20 villages around the dam. We instruct them to prevent tourists from entering the water bodies. We also direct camping sites and resorts to restrain their guests from approaching the water,"

Dhumal told PTI. Police-Patils are village-level personnel, appointed by the concerned collector, who assist the police in maintaining law and order in rural areas. The officer said drownings occur because victims fail to gauge the water's depth. "The responsibility for safety measures lies with the irrigation department. We have suggested several measures, including installing metal fencing around the waterfront, deploying more lifeguards, and providing a patrolling boat equipped with rescue teams," he said. He also emphasised the need to mark danger zones with floating red signs to deter tourists from venturing into hazardous areas. However, challenges remain, including manpower constraints and the vast perimeter of the dam, making it difficult to monitor every inch of the area effectively.

Railways to invest ₹1 lakh crore in Odisha in next 5 years, says Vaishnav

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Sunday said new railway projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore will be implemented in Odisha in the next five years. Vaishnav said this while addressing a felicitation programme organised by Odisha BJP here to felicitate the party's 20 MPs and 78 MLAs elected in recently held Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the state. The Congress government and then the BJD government have neglected the development of the railway sector in Odisha. So, with the formation of a double-engine government of BJP in Odisha and Centre, now, the gap created during the past years, will be met by creating a new record in these five years, he said. Though many mega railway projects have been sanctioned, those were delayed due to delay in land acquisition by the



previous BJD government, said Vaishnav, adding, "Now double engine government is formed and the pace of the railway projects will be accelerated." The Union minister said the allocation to Odisha in the railway budget has been enhanced from Rs 800 crore during the UPA government tenure to over Rs 10,000 crore during Modi government. During the past three consecutive years, more than Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated to the state in the

railway sector, he said. Vaishnav further said that a new railway line of 1,826 km was constructed in Odisha during the last 10 years, which is higher than the total railway network of Sri Lanka (1700 km). He also said that 315 special trains will run to and from Puri during the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath for smooth travel and convenience of the pilgrims. Last year, 222 trains were run during the Rath Yatra. The special trains have been planned from 25 districts of Odisha, he added. Vaishnav, who is also the IT minister, said that an electronic manufacturing cluster and a semi-conductor training centre will be set up in Odisha. Congratulating the newly elected MLAs and MPs, he expressed confidence that the BJP government will continue to serve the people of Odisha for the next 50 years. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and two deputy chief ministers K V Singh Deo and Pravatī Parida are like Lord Jagannath and his siblings Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra who have been given a big responsibility for the development of the state. A lot of first-time MLAs and MPs have been elected in this election and the state for the first time has CM and Deputy CMs belonging to the BJP. With this team, a new Odisha will be built which will help in building a 'Viksit Bharat', Pradhan said. Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram advised the BJP MLAs and MPs to have a mindset of 'nation first, party second and self last'. Oram said the BJP has helped the BJD to form a government in the state to end the Congress government. But, they became 'arrogant and became worse' like the Congress government. So, people have elected the BJP government, he said.

Gold smuggling syndicate at Chennai International airport busted



PTI ■ CHENNAI

In a major intelligence operation, the Customs department at the airport here has busted a syndicate which was involved in smuggling of 267 kg of gold worth Rs 167 crore from Sri Lanka, during the last two months. An intelligence tip-off led to the arrest of a shop-owner, his staff who were allegedly involved in the crime. A press release from Chennai International Airport, Principal Commissioner R Srinivasa Naik said a sales executive of the Airhub shop located at the international terminal was intercepted on suspicious movement and during a personal search by the sleuths of the department, three bundles of gold concealed in his body were recovered. He had received the contraband from a transit passenger, a Sri Lankan national. Further probe revealed that the smugglers hailing from Sri Lanka had rented the Airhub shop and had recruited eight persons to receive gold from transit passengers. These individuals, upon receiving the gold from air passengers, would conceal it in their body and smuggle it out of the airport. "Under this modus operandi, they successfully smuggled 267 kg of gold worth Rs 167 crore in a span of two months," the release said. The Sri Lankan national who had handed over the gold, the owner (of Airhub shop) and staff were arrested and sent to judicial custody. Further investigation was on, the release added.

No livelihood and caught in debt trap, weavers resort to suicide in Telangana's textile hub

PTI ■ KARIMNAGAR (TELANGANA)

The 'recent' suicide of a weaver at Sircilla in Telangana has brought to the fore the alleged lack of work and adequate income in this textile hub, with the issue leading to a war of words between the opposition BRS and the Congress. Kudikyala Nagaraju recently died by suicide as he was unable to repay his debts and this came as a reminder of the tragedy of weavers ending their lives in the past. While it is being claimed 10 weavers have ended their life so far this year, the government has pegged the number at six, even as the BRS attacked the ruling Congress over the matter. Nagaraju (47), a weaver, took his life by consuming acid at Sircilla recently.



"My husband borrowed some amount and failed to repay the lenders. He did not have the livelihood to take care of me and our two sons," Nagaraju's wife Lavanya told PTI. Similar is the story of Adicherla Sai Kumar (25) who committed 'suicide' in April this year as he was unable to repay the money he borrowed. "My brother was working in a powerloom in Sircilla. He had no work for some time due to

the closure of powerlooms in the area. He borrowed money and failed to repay it," said Mahender, sibling of the deceased. Sircilla, located in Telangana's Karimnagar is now home to about 10,000 powerlooms, down from the 27,000 in the past. About 9,000 to 10,000 families are dependent on them for livelihood, CITU's Powerloom Workers Union State President Musha Ramesh said. The workers had orders during the previous government to make sarees and school uniforms which used to be distributed to the poor free of cost. But, the powerloom workers are without work now, he claimed. They resort to taking debts to meet their expenses and face distress when they are unable to repay the loans, Ramesh

said. According to him, 10 weavers took the extreme step in Sircilla district during this year. The 'suicide' of Kudikyala Nagaraju also led to a war of words between BRS Working President K T Rama Rao, who represents Sircilla in the state Assembly, and Telangana Textiles Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao. In an open letter addressed to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Rama Rao accused the government of being responsible for the alleged suicides of weavers due to lack of work. The deaths of weavers are not mere suicides but 'government-induced deaths', he charged. He too claimed that about 10 weavers have ended their lives in recent times due to lack of work and income.

Jaipur Heritage Municipal body turns plastic waste into cash

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The Jaipur Heritage Municipal Corporation has successfully turned single-use plastic seized during its various drives into a lucrative venture by reusing and selling it to cement manufacturing plants. The civic body has taken up an initiative to reuse and sell thousands of tons of single-use plastic seized during its campaign against their use. Instead of destroying the harmful polythene, it has installed Refuse Derived Fuel machines at the Langdiawas and the Mathuradaspora dumping yards to crush the plastic and sell it to cement manufacturing plants and make furniture. The corporation has seized about 6,000 kilograms of single-use plastic during its action in markets in the past three to four months and

generated revenue by selling it to cement plants through, officials said. "Disposal of the seized single-use plastic was a major issue. We assessed that a supply chain exists in the system and installed Refuse Derived Fuel machines at dumping yards to shred the plastic and sell it to cement manufacturing plants. It has also started generating revenue for the corporation," Jaipur Heritage Municipal Corporation Commissioner Abhishek Surana said. He said the plastic could also be used for making roads and the corporation was exploring the opportunity. The civic body's health branch has launched a comprehensive campaign against single-use plastic and enforcements teams have seized more than 6,000 kilograms of plastic. Rs 35 lakh has been earned by fining offenders and a

significant amount has been made by selling the plastic to the cement plants, Surana said. Apart from the polythene taken out of the garbage, seized single-use plastic is also crushed into small pieces. The polythene is taken out from the garbage and dried for two-three days. It is then crushed in the machines for reuse to make benches, chairs, tables and selling to cement plants, the officials said. Since July 1, 2022, the Central Pollution Control Board has enforced a ban on single-use plastic items. The Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board has also imposed a ban, restricting manufacturing, stocking, distribution and sale of single-use plastic items. Later, the civic bodies also declared a ban on single-use plastic and instructed stakeholders to comply.

Cheetahs receive special ointment treatment to prevent deadly infection

PTI ■ SHEOPUR (MP)

In an effort to protect the cheetah population at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, a new initiative has been launched to apply foreign ointment to their fur, an official said. This measure aims to prevent a recurrence of septicemia, a deadly bacterial infection that claimed the lives of three cheetahs last year. The corsorial predators at the Kuno National Park, brought to India as part of a translocation project from South Africa and Namibia, are receiving Anti Ecto Parasite Medicine to combat the threat of septicemia. The ointment, imported from South Africa, is

being applied to all 13 adult cheetahs in the park to ensure their well-being during the rainy season. "We have started applying the 'Anti Ecto Parasite Medicine' (anti maggot) imported from South Africa to the cheetahs by immobilising them with the onset of the rainy season," KNP director Uttam Sharma told PTI over phone on Sunday. Despite facing setbacks in the past year, Kuno National Park remains committed to the conservation and preservation of cheetahs in India. The loss of three cheetahs to septicemia underscored the need for proactive measures to safeguard the remaining population.

"We are going to apply this medicine to the bodies of all 13 adult cheetahs in the KNP, spread over an area of 1,235 sq km including buffer zone in Sheopur district," he said, adding "the effect of the ointment lasts for three to four months". However, he did not share details of the immunisation plan duration and the date it started but confirmed that the KNP lost three cheetahs to septicemia, caused by blood poisoning due to bacterial infection, last year. As the monsoon season progresses, efforts to protect the cheetahs from environmental risks are paramount. The collaboration between wildlife experts, park



officials, and meteorologists aims to ensure the well-being of the cheetahs amidst changing weather conditions. Despite facing challenges in tranquillising the swift creatures for treatment, the dedicated team at KNP is determined to carry out the

immunisation process efficiently. The history-making reintroduction of cheetahs in India aims to revive the species, which was declared extinct in the country back in 1952. The last in the cat family had died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh,

once part of MP, in 1947. Last year's unfortunate incident of cheetah deaths due to septicemia underscored the importance of taking proactive measures to safeguard these magnificent animals. KNP outright denied that the radio collar caused the septicemia the last time around. "It was not the cause of the outbreak. It might have aggravated it," KNP director Sharma said. "Last year, initially many experts doubted the radio collars caused the infection. But later the air was cleared," he said. The fur of African cheetahs grows in June, July- August which is winter in the southern hemisphere. These months are hot, humid and rainy here in

the northern hemisphere, the official said. "So, the hostile weather plus rain caused dampness in the thick fur of the cheetahs. They rubbed their bodies for relief and in the process wounded themselves last year," he added. "No sooner, the blood oozes from the wound, the flies come in the picture and lay eggs in them and then come maggots which killed cheetahs in 48 hours last year," the official recalled. Eight Namibian cheetahs - five female and three male - were released into quarantine enclosures at KNP on September 17, 2022, at a high-profile event in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief guest.

With the monsoon season already underway in Madhya Pradesh, the authorities are leaving no stone unturned to protect the cheetah population from potential health risks. Sheopur has received 78.4 mm of rain against the normal rainfall of 77.6 mm between June 1 and June 30 morning, as per the India Meteorological Department Bhopal centre's forecast in-charge Divya Surendran. She said the rain-bearing system, which hit the state on June 21, has covered the entire Madhya Pradesh by June 28. With the ongoing advancements in conservation practices, KNP is determined to secure a future for cheetahs in India.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Grit and glory

India's T20 World Cup win after a 13-year hiatus is a story of resilience, brilliance and sheer determination

Modi's tumultuous new innings

Like a cricket team facing tough opponents, Team Modi relies on aggressive posturing and self-confidence to maintain its stance



DEEPAK SINHA

The performance of the Modi team in its new innings can be best described using a cricketing analogy.

The new team is woefully short of bench strength and faces a serious quality issue, with some members lacking commitment and motivation to the cause. Despite this, they have come out, much like the Aussies always do in any competition, riding their luck on abrasive aggression, hype and self-belief. It is certainly a technique that has worked well for them against most oppositions, forcing them on the back foot from which they seldom recover. But as we have just witnessed in the ongoing T-20 World Championships with their unexpected departure, bluster doesn't cut much ice with teams that are determined to win and unafraid of battle. Perhaps Team Modi would do well to keep this in mind. The truth is Team Modi is on a very sticky wicket, not unlike those in the Caribbean, with uneven bounce and unpredictable turns. Not surprisingly, they are already three down with not much to show on the board. Amit Shah opened the innings but was LBW on the second ball he faced, the Kashmiri looser, followed by the Manipuri yorker that beat him all up.

On a more serious note, while issues of terror attacks in Kashmir can and will be tackled with relative ease, Manipur is at the opposite end of the spectrum. Not since the Punjab and Kashmir insurgencies initially erupted, with terrible consequences, has the Indian State been found so wanting. The tragedy is that responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely with Modi 2.0 and its rather incongruous decision not to interfere as things went from bad to worse with the Chief Minister having been rendered hors de combat. Manipur today has fallen off the cliff and is in need of urgent surgery. If we are to save this patient, and the integrity and health of the North East hinges on that, then the Army has to be pulled out of the cold storage where it sits and



allowed to do its job, once again. The second wicket to have fallen was to a railway googly, that of the relatively experienced and administratively skilled Ashwini Vaishnav. Sadly, for him, he's got out to a very similar delivery in his last innings as well and just hasn't been able to discern the googly. One can feel sorry for him because it is a tough position that he plays, with stress levels that can only be described as gargantuan. That is also the term that one describes our railways as well, and despite whatever the opposition may say, it is in the ICU and needs urgent attention. Not unlike the Air India story, substantive change is unlikely under the umbrella of one ginormous government-controlled public entity. Before 1950, we had around 55 companies operating railways over 55000kms of track until they were all amalgamated into the Indian Railways. At present with over double that kilometrage of track to expect one single entity to manage operations, nominally in six divisions, is a herculean task that will lead to repeated systems or human



THE TRAGEDY IS THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS RESTS SQUARELY WITH MODI AND ITS RATHER INCONGRUOUS DECISION NOT TO INTERFERE AS THINGS WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE WITH THE CHIEF MINISTER HAVING BEEN RENDERED HORS DE COMBAT

failure with dire consequences. Change is inevitable, the sooner the better if lives matter as all politicians insist, be it complete privatisation or a mix of synchronised public and private enterprise. The third wicket down, that of Dharmendra Pradhan, to a vicious NEET bouncer, has been the most devastating for him and the team as well. He's taken a nasty blow on his helmet that seems to have incapacitated him and has the team teetering on the edge of disaster. Whether he can continue to find a place in the playing eleven or if the team can recover and succeed only time will tell. Whatever the result in the long term, there is no getting away from the fact that the NEET scandal has been a body blow to Team Modi and its emphasis on loyalty to the cause above all else. The fact of the matter is that the problem of leaked question papers has been around forever and rumours are doing the rounds of how influential persons have been able to help their children succeed in such centralised exams, such as the CLAT, through means that

were perceived to be unfair. The numbers involved tended to be insignificant, but all that changed with the centralisation of admissions under the NTA, leading to cheating at an industrial scale, for want of a better word. The damage this has caused to the body politic, especially the upcoming generations, is enormously difficult to fully comprehend. The winners and losers are not divided by ideology, ethnicity, religion or any such measure but by those who have the money and those who don't, and in this game of snakes and ladders the don'ts have no ladders to climb. The impact of what all of this means for the ruling coalition, which cannot avoid responsibility, is not difficult to gauge and we may well see some of that fallout in the forthcoming state elections, which can then only further add to Mr. Modi's troubles. (The columnist, a military veteran and former para-trooper, is presently a Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A WAKE-UP CALL

Madam — India has been witnessing a series of tragic infrastructural failures, the most recent being the collapse of the roof at Terminal 1 in Delhi, which resulted in one death and injured five others. Such incidents are unfortunately common, with the country experiencing multiple train accidents and bridge collapses. Data from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways reveals that 32 bridges have collapsed nationwide between 2020 and 2023. Despite substantial investment in construction, the problem persists. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) reported a record expenditure of ₹2,07,000 crore on national highway construction for the fiscal year 2023-24, marking a 20% increase from ₹1,73,000 crore in 2022-23 and ₹1,72,000 crore in 2021-22.

These figures point to a worrying trend of inadequate construction standards and corruption, leading to significant losses and the need for repeated investments. It is imperative that the government implements stringent measures to tackle these issues, ensuring accountability among contractors and relevant authorities to prevent corruption and guarantee the safety and durability of infrastructure.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

IMPROVE BASIC CIVIC AMENITIES

Madam — The citizens of Delhi recently endured severe heat, followed by heavy monsoon rains that resulted in significant damage and chaos. On June 28, the canopy over the forecourt at Terminal 1 of the Indra Gandhi International Airport collapsed on parked vehicles, leading to one death and six injuries. The intense weather changes left Delhiites in a difficult situation, highlighting the need for better infrastructure and planning. This issue is not isolated to Delhi; cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and others have also suffered during the rainy sea-

Bridge gender inequality



In response to the news report "25% of new hires are married women, nearly 70% of the workforce are women: Foxconn," published on

June 28, I would like to express my views. As India strives to replace China in the global supply chain, incidents like the alleged discrimination against married women at Foxconn's manufacturing plant are highly concerning. Although Foxconn has denied these allegations and stated that 70% of its workforce comprises women, a thorough and impartial investigation is necessary to dispel any doubts. There is a significant disparity in the ratio of men to women in the workforce, and companies like Foxconn can set a positive example by employing more women. This should be encouraged as we work to close this gap. Apple has consistently enforced strict policies with its manufacturing suppliers, and Foxconn should not be an exception. Ensuring gender equality in the workforce is crucial for our progress and competitiveness on the global stage.

Bal Govind | Noida

son due to poor planning and inadequate drainage systems. While substantial funds are often spent on constructing statues and other non-essential projects, basic civic amenities remain neglected. It is crucial for the authorities to prioritize improving these facilities to safeguard the well-being of citizens.

Nagendra K Vempally |Hydernagar

GOVT HOSPITALS IN A DISARRAY

Madam — The 'Indian Public Health Standard' report, produced by the National Health Mission (NHM), reveals a concerning state of government hospitals in India. According to the report, 80 percent of these hospitals lack even basic facilities. This alarming assessment comes from a survey conducted by the government itself, highlighting a severe scarcity of doctors, nurses, and essential equipment in these institutions. The report sheds light on the conditions of government hospitals under the 'National Health Mission' (NHM), a critical initiative encompassing district

hospitals, community health centers, primary health centers, and Ayushman health facilities across the country. The 'Indian Public Health Standard' (IPHS) is a digital platform developed by the government to collect hospital statistics. Among the 40,451 hospitals that participated in the survey, only 8,089 met the IPHS criteria. This indicates that 42% of hospitals scored less than 50% on the IPHS scale, while 15,172 hospitals received ratings ranging from 50% to 80%. The report aims to identify and address the deficiencies in these hospitals, with the central government planning to establish 70,000 government hospitals meeting the IPHS standards within 100 days of the new administration's inception. The goal is to ensure that all government hospitals are equipped with basic infrastructure, equipment, and medical staff, thereby improving patient care.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

PICTALK



Devotees wade through a waterlogged area at Dharm Path in Ayodhya

PTI

Trespassing in the lives of others: The uninvited interference

Human curiosity often leads us into the lives of others, crossing boundaries and delving into matters that are not our own



SANJAY CHANDRA

We have an insatiable appetite to interfere in the lives of others. The desire to take a bite of even the tiniest morsel from another's life also makes us, trespass on conversations of strangers at best, more often gossip about others, and make inappropriate remarks at the worst. We were a batch of seven railway officials from across the globe on training in Japan in 1991. Our program was coordinated by a young Japanese lady, maybe a couple of years older than me.

A few weeks together had made the eight of us share an easy relationship — easy enough for me to ask the lady one day if she was married. She had been married for almost a decade. I was already the father of two little daughters; thus, my next query if she had any children was probably not entirely baseless. I should have stopped once she had replied in the negative. My thirst to trespass into the private life of another individual kicked in as I asked her the reason.

She was quiet for so long, a myriad of emotions flitting across her face, that I was afraid that this one time I had



crossed the line. As I was about to apologise for my impertinence, she responded, "Thank you for an insightful query, which set me thinking. The reason is that both I and my husband are so busy in our daily lives, that we barely spend our waking hours together. There is just no time for making a baby!" It was a lesson learnt about the price of progress on human relations in the more developed countries. We were yet to witness this back home, at least in smaller cities and towns. I also witness incidents in the lives of others in public places. I am certain even others may be looking at my daily life under the microscope. We don't need to be celebrities for

our lives to be trespassed upon. This also sometimes leads to overhearing interesting snatches of conversations. Recently, waiting at the airport for my flight, I observed a father handing over cash to his young daughter to get tea for the family, even before she had had time to put down the bags. The girl good-naturedly asked him to wait. I smiled and commented with an attempt at humour, "All fathers are like that." The family was not amused. I was in a cabin in the COVID ward of a hospital. The cabin was shared by two more patients. One morning, I overheard the lady on the adjoining bed talking to her husband on the phone rather loudly, "I am much better. You

must see the uncle on the next bed. He does not do any exercises, just lying there all the time." The shoe pinched. I was not amused at this blatant trespassing in my life. I have observed that the supposedly well-meaning interference is more prominent during a visit to a convalescing acquaintance and dispensing advice from own morbid experiences.

We cannot forget one such well-meaning advice from a neighbour who did not hesitate to tell us that his father had passed away at my age due to a similar affliction that had kept me bedridden for a rather long time. He may have only been trying to caution us to be more careful. We love to dissect the lives of our friends, and even acquaintances, particularly when they are not around. We usually try to pass off the blatant gossip as honest criticism or well-meaning advice. If only we keep in mind what Wentworth Dillon said, "Words spoken can never be recalled."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

OLDER EMPLOYEES THRIVE UNDER WORK PRESSURE

Younger employees cow down to work pressure while elders manage well



SAKSHI SETHI

As per recent research and studies, younger employees are reporting more struggles at work while older ones are doing better. Also, around 85% of the working parents in the creative, marketing and related industries feel pressure to prioritize work over parenting duties while a greater proportion also feels they must sacrifice family life to achieve their career goals. An individual at the workplace often comes across situations where they have too many tasks that need to be completed within a limited timeframe without adequate breaks or rest periods. Moreover, not receiving sufficient recognition or rewards for hard work or perceived unfair treatment or favoritism creates a stressful and demoralizing work environment making it difficult to make decisions and remember tasks which can lead to anxiety and cause stress due to a variety of psychological, physiological and situational factors. When an individual experiences work pressure, it triggers the body's stress response, known as the fight or flight response which releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which prepare the body to deal with perceived threats. While this response can be beneficial in short bursts, prolonged activation can have negative effects on both physical and mental health resulting in increased heart rates, headaches and fatigue. Also, constant pressure can impair cognitive functions, making it difficult to concentrate, make decisions and remember tasks, which further increases stress.

There is no denying the fact that work pressure is a natural part of most jobs and can sometimes act as a motivator (such as when prompting a student to study before an important exam), helping individuals stay focused and productive but when the pressure becomes excessive or prolonged, it leads to stress, strain, nervous tension or anxiety. Maintaining a healthy balance between pressure and stress at the workplace is crucial for both productivity as well as employee well-being. Organizations must work towards setting clear communication and expectations by ensuring that job roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated; an environment where managers are approachable and available to support their teams are well created and the distribution of the



tasks and responsibilities are even to avoid overburdening of any single employee. Introducing wellness programs such as yoga, meditation or fitness classes along with access to counseling and support services for employees dealing with stress, regularly acknowledging and rewarding employees for their hard work and contributions, and promoting teamwork and collaboration to create a supportive and cohesive work environment, creating a feedback loop where employees can voice concerns about their workload and suggest improvements, implementing strict anti-harassment policies and ensure they are enforced are a few strategies that can help organizations create a work environment where pressure serves as a motivator rather than a stressor.

Apart from organizations working towards employee well-being, it becomes crucial for the individual working at any level to maintain a balance between work pressure and family stress as it can be challenging to maintain overall well-being. Prioritizing what is most important both at work and at home, defining clear boundaries between work and family time focusing on high-priority tasks and letting go of less critical ones, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, engaging in hobbies and activities that are outside of work and staying updated on stress management techniques are a few strategies that can help an individual build resilience and manage work stress more effectively. Remember, when stressed, individuals have a more difficult time creating short-term memories and turning those short-term memories into long-term memories. By understanding the causes of work pressure and implementing effective strategies to manage it, individuals and organizations can reduce stress and create a healthier, more productive work environment.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Venkaiah Garu: Life in service of Bharat



NARENDRA MODI

From his early days in politics to his tenure as Vice-President, Venkaiah Garu's career exemplifies his ability to navigate the complexities with ease and humility



Today, India's former Vice-President and respected statesman M Venkaiah Naidu Garu turns 75. I wish him a long and healthy life and also extend my greetings to all his well-wishers and supporters. This is an occasion to celebrate a leader whose life journey showcases dedication, adaptability and an unwavering commitment to public service. From his early days in the political arena to his tenure as Vice-President, Venkaiah Garu's career exemplifies his unique ability to navigate the complexities of Indian politics with ease and humility. His eloquence, wit and steadfast focus on developmental issues have earned him respect across party lines.

Venkaiah Garu and I have been associated for decades. We have worked together and I have learnt a lot from him. If there is one thing that has remained common in his life, it is the love for people. His brush with activism and politics began in Andhra Pradesh with student politics as a student leader. Considering his talent, oratory and organisational skills, he would have been welcomed in any political party but he preferred to work with the Sangh Parivar. He was associated with the RSS, ABVP and then strengthened the Jana Sangh and the BJP. Almost 50 years ago, a young Venkaiah Garu immersed himself in the anti-Emergency movement. He was imprisoned and, that too, for inviting Loknayak JP to Andhra Pradesh. This commitment to democracy would be seen time and again in his political career. In the mid-1980s, when the great NTR's Government was unceremoniously dismissed by the Congress, he was again at the forefront of the movement to protect democratic principles. Venkaiah Garu has always been comfortable swimming even against the most formidable tides. In 1978, Andhra Pradesh voted for the Congress but he beat the trend and was elected as a young MLA. Five years later, when the NTR



ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD VENKAI AH GARU SPEAK WILL VOUCH FOR HIS ORATORY SKILLS. HE IS CERTAINLY A WORDSMITH BUT HE IS AS MUCH A WORKSMITH

tsunami swept the State, he got elected as a BJP MLA, thus paving the way for the BJP's growth across the State. All those who have heard Venkaiah Garu speak will vouch for his oratory skills. He is certainly a wordsmith but he is as much a worksmith. Since his days as a young MLA, he began to be respected for the rigour he put into legislative affairs and speaking for people of his constituency. No less than a stalwart like NTR noted his talent and even wanted him to join his party but Venkaiah Garu refused to deviate from his core ideology. He went on to play a big role in strengthening the BJP in Andhra Pradesh and even became the AP BJP president. It was in the 1990s that the BJP central leadership took note of Venkaiah Garu's efforts and thus in 1993 began his stint in national politics when he was appointed the party's all-India general secretary. It was truly a remarkable moment for a man, who as a teenager would go around announcing the visits of Atal Ji and Advani Ji, to be working directly with them. As the general secretary, he was focused on how to bring our party to power and ensure that the nation get their first ever BJP Prime Minister. After the move to Delhi, there was no looking back and he rose to become the party's national president. In 2000, when Atal Ji was keen to induct Venkaiah Garu in the Government, Venkaiah Garu instantly conveyed his preference for the Rural Development Ministry. This left everyone, including Atal Ji, puzzled. After all, here was a leader who was

being asked which portfolio he wanted and his first choice was Rural Development. But Venkaiah Garu was clear - he was a Kisan Putra. As Minister, he was closely associated with the conception and rolling out of the 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana'. Years later, when the NDA Government of 2014 assumed office, he handled the crucial portfolios of Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. It was during his tenure that we launched the important Swachh Bharat Mission and important urban development-related schemes. Perhaps, he is one of the only leaders to have worked for both rural and urban development for such an extensive period. When I came to Delhi in 2014, I was an outsider to the national Capital, having worked in Gujarat for the previous decade and a half. In such times, Venkaiah Garu's insights were very handy. He was an effective Parliamentary Affairs Minister - he knew the essence of bipartisanship but at the same time he drew a line when it came to parliamentary norms and rules. In 2017, our alliance nominated him as our vice-presidential candidate. I can never forget one of the speeches he gave when he resigned as Minister and MP. He could not control his tears when he recalled his association with the party and efforts to build it. It gave a glimpse of his deep-rooted commitment and passion. Upon becoming the Vice-President, he undertook various steps that also enhanced the dignity of the office. He was an outstanding Chairperson of the

Rajya Sabha, ensuring that young MPs, women MPs and first-time MPs get the opportunity to speak. When the decision to remove Articles 370 and 35(A) were placed before the Rajya Sabha, Venkaiah Garu was in the Chair. I am sure it was such an emotional moment for him - the young boy who was drawn to Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee's dream of a united India! Apart from work and politics, Venkaiah Garu is a voracious reader and writer. For the people in Delhi, he is known as the person who brought the glorious Telugu culture to the city. His Ugadi and Sankranti programmes are clearly among the most cherished gatherings in town. I have always known Venkaiah Garu as someone who loves food and also hosting people. But, of late, his self-control has also been visible to everyone. His commitment to fitness is seen in how he still plays badminton and enjoys his brisk walk. Even after the vice-presidency, Venkaiah Garu has led an active public life. On the issues that he is passionate about, he calls me and asks me about them. I met him most recently when our Government returned to office for the third term. He was delighted and conveyed his best wishes to me and our team. I wish him again on this milestone. I hope young karyakartas, elected representatives and all those who have a passion to serve, learn from his life and imbibe those values. It is people like him who make our nation better and more vibrant.

(The writer is the Prime Minister of India.)

A reflective moment on India's democratic values and political integrity

From displays of loyalty to controversial gestures, this year's oath-taking ceremony reveals a transformed landscape in Indian politics

Newly elected members of the Lok Sabha taking oath to adhere to the Constitution of India is a solemn occasion. "I, X, having been elected a member of the House of the People do swear in the name of God (solemnly affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India and that I will faithfully discharge the duty upon which I am about to enter", is what they have to tell while taking the oath. It is not known what is the role of the presidents of the parties under whose label they enter the precincts of the House. Agreed, these members were either hand-picked by the bosses of their parties, or they themselves could have kept a



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

gun on the forehead of the proprietors of the parties demanding the latter to nominate them as candidates for the Lok Sabha election. While watching some of these newly elected members taking the oath of office, one was flabbergasted by the fall in the quality of politics and the standard of our parliamentary system. Previously we had titans as members of political and social life but now, the only titans that

we come across are the wrist-watches and clocks made by the House of Tatas. The Dravidian politicians from Tamil Nadu were the butt of jokes as they took the oath of office. After taking the customary oath specified in the Third Schedule of the Constitution, the DMK members sang paeans to their Gods in Chennai. All DMK members except T R Balu raised slogans eulogizing the DMK supreme and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, the future chief minister Udhayanidhi (son of Stalin) and late M Karunanidhi (former chief minister and one of the founders of the DMK) seeking their blessings to serve Tamil Nadu! Sycophancy and servility were at their peak while they were

swearing in as members. There has been criticism against members of the DMK and the AIADMK for their servile nature and lassitude to their leaders which make them laughing stocks. Most DMK members wore Vibhuti and holy Kumkum on their foreheads. It is not uncommon to see MPs and MLAs belonging to the DMK and the AIADMK doing Danda Namaskar, an obeisance to the presiding deity of the party. Though they do not believe in pilgrimage to temples, politicians have made it a point to fall down on the floor once they come face to face with the party head. But whether the sycophancy they exhibit in public is real or not is a major question. One of the elected MPs from Tamil Nadu



who took the oath of office last day was going around astrologers and sorcerers in Kerala to ascertain whether the Karunanidhi clan had performed black magic either on him or his family members. Since his father is a bigwig in the party hierarchy, it was the mother who accompanied the son to liberate him from the evil spirits. That is the rationalism and atheism practised by the followers of Ramasamy

Naicker. While the DMK MPs were happily extolling the K-Clan members, there were reservations in the minds of a section of people about what Thol Thirumavalavan of the VCK, whose antipathy for north Indians is infamous, would do. He is the one who frequently declares that north Indians are not welcome to stay in Tamil Nadu though he has demanded that Rohingya refugees

should be given a place of residence in the State. Thank God Thirumavalavan did not raise the slogan Jai Prabhakaran. Many DMK politicians in Chennai were heard asking why the newly elected MPs did not say Jai to Inbanidhi and Tanmaya (Udhayanidhi's son and daughter). The most disgusting of the lot was made by AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi who shouted "Jai Palestine" while taking oath as a member of the House. This is a cardinal sin capable of throwing shadow over India-Israel ties. People like Owaisi are a blot on this nation as he had the audacity to describe the infamous criminal Mukhtar Ansari as a Shaheed. Owaisi is a living example that one could not

have civility by attending Lincoln's Inn. The day is not far when he or others of his ilk would shout "Jai Pakistan" from the temple of Indian democracy. Organizations like Hamas have no place in the comity of nations and the civilized world. What happened in October 2023 should be condemned in the strongest of words. India has given enough support to the Palestinians and what it got back was just brickbats. The general public should know the truth. Shouting slogans in support of the party president's wife and children from the Speaker's podium while taking the oath of office is not secularism or pluralism. *(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)*

France's exceptionally high-stakes election begins

AP ■ PARIS

Voters across mainland France were casting ballots Sunday in the first round of exceptional parliamentary elections that could put the government in the hands of nationalist, far-right parties for the first time since the Nazi era. The outcome of the two-round elections, which will wrap up July 7, could impact European financial markets, Western support for Ukraine and how France's nuclear arsenal and global military force are managed.

Many French voters are frustrated about inflation and economic concerns, as well as President Emmanuel Macron's leadership, which they see as arrogant and out-of-touch with their lives. Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party has tapped that discontent, notably via online platforms like TikTok, and dominated pre-election opinion polls.

A new coalition on the left, the New Popular Front, also poses a challenge to the pro-business Macron and his centrist alliance Together for the Republic. It includes the French Socialists and Communists and the hard-left France Unbowed party and



Far left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon casts his ballot, Sunday in Paris. France is holding the first round of an early parliamentary election that could bring the country's first far-right government since Nazi occupation during World War II. The second round is on July 7, and the outcome of the vote remains highly uncertain. AP/PTI

vows to reverse a deeply unpopular pension reform law that raised the retirement age from 62 to 64, among other economic reforms.

There are 49.5 million registered voters who will choose 577 members of the National Assembly, France's influential lower house of parliament, dur-

ing the two-round voting. Turnout at midday at the first round stood at 25.9 per cent according to interior ministry figures, higher than the 18.43

per cent at midday during 2022 legislative elections.

Macron voted in Le Touquet, a seaside town in northern France, along with his wife, Brigitte. Le Pen cast her ballot in her party's stronghold in northern France.

The vote takes place during the traditional first week of summer vacation in France, and absentee ballot requests were at least five times higher than in the 2022 elections.

The first polling projections were expected at 8 pm (1800 GMT), when the final polling stations close. Early official results were expected later Sunday night.

Voters at a Paris polling station had issues from immigration to inflation and the rising cost of living on their minds as the country has grown more divided between the far right and far left blocs, with a deeply unpopular and weakened president in the political centre. The blitz campaign was marred by rising hate speech.

"People don't like what has been happening," said Cynthia Justine, a 44-year-old voter. "People feel they've lost a lot in recent years. People are angry. I am angry." She added that with "the rising hate speech," it was necessary

for people to express their frustrations with those holding and seeking power.

"It is important for me because I am a woman and we haven't always had the right to vote," Justine said. "Because I am a Black woman, it's even more important. A lot is at stake on this day." Pierre Leclair, a 78-year-old retiree, said he cast his ballot for the simple reason of "trying to avoid the worst," which for him is "a government that is from the far right, populist, not liberal and not very Republican."

Macron called the early elections after his party was trounced in the European Parliament election earlier in June by the National Rally, which has historic ties to racism and antisemitism and is hostile toward France's Muslim community. It also has historical ties to Russia. Macron's call was an audacious gamble that French voters who were complacent about the European election would be jolted into turning out for moderate forces in national elections to keep the far right out of power.

Instead, pre-election polls suggested that the National Rally is gaining support and has a chance at winning a parliamentary majority. In that scenario,

Macron would be expected to name 28-year-old National Rally President Jordan Bardella as prime minister in an awkward power-sharing system known as "cohabitation." While Macron has said he won't step down before his presidential term expires in 2027, cohabitation would weaken him at home and on the world stage.

The results of the first round will give a picture of overall voter sentiment, but not necessarily of the overall makeup of the next National Assembly. Predictions are difficult because of the complicated voting system, and because parties will work between the two rounds to make alliances in some constituencies or pull out of others. In the past, such tactical maneuvers helped keep far-right candidates from power. But support for Le Pen's party has spread deep and wide.

Bardella, who has no governing experience, says he would use the powers of prime minister to stop Macron from continuing to supply long-range weapons to Ukraine for the war with Russia.

The National Rally has also questioned the right to citizenship for people born in France, and wants to curtail the rights

of French citizens with dual nationality. Critics say this undermines fundamental human rights and is a threat to France's democratic ideals.

Meanwhile, huge public spending promises by the National Rally and especially the left-wing coalition have shaken markets and ignited worries about France's heavy debt, already criticized by EU watchdogs. In the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, polls closed earlier due to a curfew that authorities on the archipelago have extended until July 8. Violence there flared on May 13, leaving nine people dead after two weeks of unrest, due to attempts by Macron's government to amend the French Constitution and change voting lists in New Caledonia, which the Indigenous Kanaks feared would further marginalize them. They have long sought to break free from France.

Voters in France's other overseas territories from Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, French Polynesia and those voting in offices opened by embassies and consular posts across the Americas cast their ballots on Saturday.

Hungary's populist Orbán to take over EU presidency

AP ■ BUDAPEST

When Hungary takes over the helm of the European Union on July 1, many politicians in Brussels will have the same thing on their minds: whether populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will use the role to further his reputation as the bloc's main spoiler. Orbán in recent years has seemed to relish opportunities to block, water down or delay key EU decisions, routinely going against the grain of most other leaders on issues like the war in Ukraine, relations with Russia and China, and efforts to defend democracy and the rule of law.

His public opposition to EU policies and stances has long frustrated his partners in the bloc and pushed him to the

argins of the continent's mainstream. Hungary's motto for its presidency — Make Europe Great Again — raised eyebrows for its resemblance to the famous tagline of former U.S. President Donald Trump. The EU presidency rotates among its member countries, and while the post holds little real power, it does allow countries to put their priorities high on Europe's agenda.

Now, as Hungary resides over the 27-nation bloc for the coming six months, it will likely keep up its anti-EU rhetoric, said Dorka Takácsy, a research fellow at the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy.

But the timeline of its presidency — beginning with a lengthy summer break and a transitional period of forming a new European Parliament

and executive commission — will give Budapest few opportunities to derail the bloc's priorities significantly, she said. "These six months are altogether not that long, which means that ... Hungary cannot do potentially much harm, even according to the critics," Takácsy said.

As Hungary's takeover approached, leaders in Brussels rushed to push through important policy decisions while Belgium was still at the helm. On Tuesday, for example, the EU launched membership talks with candidate countries Ukraine and Moldova.

Orbán has vocally opposed and threatened to block Ukraine's candidacy. His government has also held up EU efforts to supply Ukraine with badly needed funding.

Yet with Ukraine's accession process already initiated, Takácsy said, the most Hungary can do now under its presidency is delay further steps toward its EU membership, a process that in any scenario is likely to take many years. "All the meaningful steps from the European side regarding Ukraine were already done," she said. "(A Hungarian) delay, according to most European leaders, is already calculated and being taken into consideration as if it's something which is most likely going to happen." Orbán has long been accused of dismantling democratic institutions and violating the EU's standards on the rule of law, leading the bloc's legislature in May to call for the presidency to be taken out of Hungary's hands entirely.

Video shows NY officer shooting 13-year-old

AP ■ NEW YORK

Video released late Saturday shows an officer in upstate New York fatally shooting a 13-year-old boy who had been tackled to the ground after he ran from police and pointed a replica handgun at them. The teen was killed late Friday in Utica after officers in the city about 240 miles (400 kilometers) northwest of Manhattan stopped two youths a little after 10 p.m. in connection with an armed robbery investigation, police said.

The youths, both 13, matched the descriptions of the robbery suspects and were in the same area at around the same time the day after, police said. One was also walking in the road, a violation of state traffic law.

The body camera video released by police captures an officer saying he needs to pat them down to ensure they don't have any weapons in their possession. Immediately one of the two — identified by police as Nyah Mway — runs away.

Authorities froze frames of the video where a running Nyah Mway appears to point the gun at the pursuing officers. Police also edited the video to insert a red circle around the weapon to show it to viewers. The officers believed it was a handgun,

police said, but it was later determined to be a replica of a Glock 17 Gen 5 handgun with a detachable magazine.

"During a ground struggle" with the teen, one of the officers fired a single shot that struck the boy in the chest, Williams said. The teen was given "immediate" first aid by the officers and taken to Wynn Hospital, where he died, the chief said.

The replica gun carried by the teen "is in all aspects a realistic appearing firearm with GLOCK markings, signatures, detachable magazine, and serial numbers," Lt. Michael Curley, a police spokesperson, said via email. "However ultimately it fires only pellets or BB's."

A bystander video posted to Facebook shows one of the officers chasing after Nyah Mway and tackling him to the ground. It also shows the officer punching the teen as two other officers arrive. A gunshot rings out as the teen is on the ground and the officers quickly stand up. The officer who fired his gun was identified as Patrick Husnay, a six-year veteran of the agency. Husnay and Officers Bryce Patterson and Andrew Citriniti were placed on administrative leave with pay.

The police body camera video shows a chaotic scene. Nyah Mway points the replica handgun at

the officers while he runs from them. The officers scream "gun!" to each other as they run.

Patterson then tackles and punches Nyah Mway, and as the two are wrestling on the ground, Husnay opens fire.

Officers initially thought Nyah Mway may have shot himself, and Patterson says, "I don't know if he shot me." It is not clear whether he is referring to Nyah Mway or his fellow officer. Patterson was not struck. Bystanders scream at the police throughout the recordings, and at one point an officer yells back: "We're trying to save him right now!"

The other youth was detained in the back of a police vehicle and was not involved in the shooting.

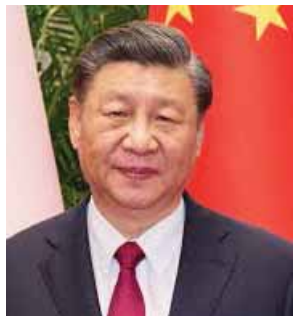
The police department released the body camera videos following a public outcry as the shooting roiled Utica, a city of more than 65,000 located some 240 miles (400 kilometers) northwest of Manhattan. It is home to more than 4,200 people from Myanmar, according to The Center, a non-profit that helps to resettle the refugees. Nyah Mway, who local media reports said was an 8th grader at Donovan Middle School, has been identified as a refugee born in Myanmar and a member of the Karen ethnic minority.

Xi to attend SCO summit in Astana

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the 24th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kazakhstan's capital Astana this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Sunday. He will also pay a state visit to Tajikistan, it said. From July 2 to 6, President Xi will attend the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Astana, the ministry said.

Officials say the situation in Afghanistan, the Ukraine conflict and boosting overall security cooperation among the SCO member countries are expected to figure in the summit. The SCO, comprising India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is an influential economic and security bloc that has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations.



India will be represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) earlier said.

Officials say there is a likelihood of a meeting on the sidelines of the summit between Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is expected to accompany Xi. If it takes place, it will be the first high-level meeting between Indian and Chinese officials after the formation of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's 3.0 government following the recent general elections in India.

Generally, the Indian prime minister participates in the SCO summit, providing an opportunity for Indian and Chinese leaders on the sidelines of the heads of the state meeting of the eight-member bloc. But since Modi has decided to skip it, significance is attached to the likely meeting between Jaishankar and Wang in the light of a four-year-long frozen relations between the two countries over the standoff in Eastern Ladakh.

Relations between the two countries hit a low except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area near Galwan. Since the May 2020 clashes, the two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

Private call of top Democrats fuels more insider anger about Biden's debate

New York (AP) A sense of concern is growing inside the top ranks of the Democratic Party that leaders of Joe Biden's campaign and the Democratic National Committee are not taking seriously enough the impact of the president's troubling debate performance earlier in the week. DNC Chairman Jaime Harrison held a Saturday afternoon call with dozens of committee members across the country, a group of some of the most influential members of the party. He did not acknowledge Biden's weak showing Thursday night or the avalanche of criticism that followed. Multiple committee members on the call, granted anonymity to talk about the private discussion, described feeling like they were being gaslighted — that they were being asked to ignore the dire nature of the party's predicament. The call, they said, may have worsened a widespread sense of panic

among elected officials, donors and other stakeholders.

Instead, the people said, Harrison offered what they described as a rosy assessment of Biden's path forward. The chat function was disabled and there were no questions allowed. Many donors, party strategists and rank-and-file DNC members are publicly and privately saying they want the 81-year-old Biden to step aside to allow the party to select a younger replacement at the Democratic National Convention in August. As of now, though, Biden's closest allies insist he remains well-positioned to compete against Republican Donald Trump and have given no indication they will push him to end his campaign.

Those best positioned to replace him — Vice President Kamala Harris, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer among

them — reiterated their support for Biden after the debate.

Many are anxiously awaiting the first major round of post-debate public polling to determine their next steps.

Polls from CNN and 538/Ipsos conducted soon after the debate found that most debate-watchers thought Trump outperformed Biden. But the two men's favourability ratings remained largely unchanged, just as they did in the aftermath of Trump's conviction on charges in New York that he illegally participated in a hush money scheme to influence the 2016 election. In a subsequent appearance on MSNBC, Harrison downplayed the significance of the conference call, which he said was part of a regularly scheduled communication "to talk about the state of the race" and the upcoming national convention with the DNC's many elected members across the country.

Growing clamour for Biden to step down

He says here to stay to defeat Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Following a disastrous performance at the debate stage in Atlanta, there is a growing clamour within the ruling Democratic party and the mainstream American media for President Joe Biden to step down from the presidential race. However, the 81-year-old president and his campaign have asserted that he is not giving up and is determined to successfully run for the November 5th presidential elections. "Biden is the nominee (of the Democratic party). No switching of the nominee," campaign leadership has asserted.

Biden, the 46th president of the United States, has won the Democratic presidential primary. As of June 29, he had 3,894 delegates as against 1,975 delegates required to win the nomination of the party. These delegates would meet in Chicago from August 19 to 22 to formally nominate the winner of the primaries to run for the November 5 presidential elections.

Biden, seeking a second term in the White House, stumbled and fumbled during the televised presidential debate with his predecessor Donald Trump on Thursday night in Atlanta, setting off alarm bells among top Democrats about whether he can stay atop the gruelling months ahead of the elections on November 5.

The 78-year-old Trump, who is the presumptive Republican Party candidate for the presidential election, clashed right from the start with Biden and by the end of the 90 minutes debate, gave enough fodder for serious editorials and opinions as well as memes on social media.

Over the last 50 hours after the first presidential debate in Atlanta on Thursday night,

wherein his performance was seen far below par against his rival Trump, multiple media outlets, including The New York Times and his own party supporters and key decision makers, are calling him to step down from the race. "Dropping out is Biden's most patriotic option," The Atlantic said Saturday.

"To serve his country, President Biden should leave the race," The New York Times editorial board wrote following the debate. The New York Times wrote, "That is no longer a sufficient rationale for why Mr. Biden should be the Democratic nominee this year." Similar messages are coming from inside the party as well.

However, his inner circle is standing by the side of Biden. A post-debate poll says that 10 per cent of the independent voters have moved towards Biden after the debate, a point that is being made by his team.

"It wasn't my best debate ever as Barack (Obama) pointed out. I understand the concern after the debate," Biden told his fundraisers in New Jersey. "I get it. I didn't have a great night, but I'm going to be fighting harder," he said.

"Research during the debate shows us converting more undecided voters than Trump did, in large part because of his conduct on January 6," Biden said. He argued Trump's lies were the biggest takeaway: "People remember the bad things during his presidency" "I didn't have a great night but neither did he," he said again of Trump.

Several prominent columnists — Paul Krugman, Tom Friedman, Nicholas Kristof, Jonathan Alter, and David Ignatius — argued that the chance of a diminished Biden losing to Trump is too high to risk.

Sunak, wife seek blessings at Neasden Temple

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty sought divine blessings on the last weekend ahead of the July 4 general election at the iconic BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in London, popularly known as Neasden Temple.

The couple were greeted with loud cheers as their convoy drove into the grand temple grounds on Saturday evening and went on to perform puja guided by the priests. After a tour of the grand temple complex and interaction with volunteers and senior community leaders, cricketer fan Sunak began his address to the congregation with a reference to India's victory in the T20 World Cup before speaking about the inspiration he draws from his faith.

"I am Hindu and like all of you, I draw inspiration and comfort



from my faith," said Sunak. "I was proud to be sworn in as a member of parliament on the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Our faith teaches us to do our duty and not fret about the outcome as long as one does it faithfully. That is what I was brought up to believe by my wonderful and

loving parents and that is how I live my life; and that is what I want to pass on to my daughters as they grow up. It is dharma which guides me in my approach to public service," he said. Sunak went on to reference his general practitioner (GP) father

and pharmacist mother's community service and also the "wonderful work" his philanthropist mother-in-law, Sudha Murty, does in India. "My wife is not only the greatest support that any husband could ever have but also someone committed to public service," he added.

As Britain's first Indian heritage Prime Minister, the 44-year-old went on to express his gratitude to the community for their "prayers and love" and pledged to try and continue making them proud.

"You have been with me every step of the way. On the hardest days in this job, I have felt your backing. And I know the pride that there is to have a British Asian Prime Minister and I am determined to never let you down," he said. Alluding to the recent controversy around a far-right Reform UK activist attacking him with a racist slur during the election

campaign, the British Indian leader stressed on the country's multi-faith credentials.

"I'm proud to be the first British Asian Prime Minister, but I'm even prouder that it is not a big deal. The events of the last few days should not make us forget that the United Kingdom is the world's most successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy and we should all be uplifted by that," said Sunak, amid applause.

"With your support, I will create a secure future for our country where Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jains, those of all religions and none, feel equally at home, where everyone has the security they deserve," he said.

On the election pitch for his incumbent Conservative Party, he name-checked some of the Tory candidates contesting from constituencies in and around the temple in north London and reiterated some of

his core policy themes around tax cuts and education. He also drew parallels between the values of his party and the Indian diaspora: "Education, hard work, family, those are my values. Those are your values. Those are Conservative values."

Sunak and Murty had last visited a BAPS temple during his visit to India for the G20 Summit in September, when they offered prayers at the Akshardham Temple in New Delhi.

During their visit to the London temple, they performed abhishek of Shri Nilkanth Varni Maharaj, the teenage form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and concluded their visit by mingling with the crowds.

Sunak was virtually mobbed as he reached out for high-fives with the young children and bent down to touch the feet of the elderly to seek their blessings.

Paramilitary forces attack city under military control in Sudan

AP ■ CAIRO

Fighting raged between Sudan's military and a notorious paramilitary group in a city in a central province, officials said on Sunday, opening another front in a 14-month war that has pushed the African country to the brink of famine.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces began its offensive on Sennar province earlier this week, attacking the village of Jebel Moya before moving to the provincial capital of Singa, where fresh battles have erupted.

RSF fighters in pickup trucks mounting automatic rifles rampaged through Singa, about 350 kilometers (217 miles) southeast of the capital, Khartoum, over the weekend, according to residents and a local rights group. They looted houses, shops in a local market and took over the city's main hospital, they said.

The group claimed in a statement on Saturday it had seized the military's main facility, the 17th Infantry Division Headquarters, in Singa. Local media also reported the RSF managed to breach the military's defence.

However, Brig. Nabil Abdalla, a spokesperson for the Sudanese armed forces, said the military regained control of the facility, and that fighting was still underway Sunday morning. Neither claim could be independently verified.

The paramilitary group has been repeatedly accused of gross rights violations across the country since the war



started in April last year, when simmering tensions between the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in Khartoum and elsewhere. The devastating conflict has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000, according to the United Nations, but rights activists say the toll could be much higher. The Sudan Conflict Monitor, a group of experts and rights activists, said the RSF seizure of Singa will likely have "severe humanitarian consequences" with potential future disruption of large-scale agricultural programmes in the nearby provinces of Blue Nile, White Nile and Jazira, which was once Sudan's breadbasket. According to the UN's International Organisation for Migration, at least 327 house-

holds had to flee from Jebel Moya and Singa to safer areas. "The situation remains tense and unpredictable," it said in a statement. Residents reported widespread looting of homes and shops in Singa by RSF fighters who seized private vehicles, mobile phones, jewellery and other valuable possessions.

"They did like what they did in (the capital) Khartoum and other cities," said Abdel-Rahman al-Taj, a Singa resident who fled Saturday to Blue Nile province. "Many people were killed, wounded or detained."

The Sennar Observatory for Human Rights, a local rights group, said the RSF attacked Singa Educational Hospital, detaining dozens of patients and medical staff as "human shields".

The fighters turned the hospital into a military center in a "clear violation of the international human material law". A physician at the hospital said RSF fighters, some in vehicles, swarmed the facility's courtyard and corridors. "The situation is extremely dangerous," said the physician who spoke on condition of anonymity for his safety. "We are working under gunpoint."

He added that the hospital has received dozens of wounded people over the past three days from Singa and the surrounding areas. The RSF didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The fighting in Sennar comes while attention has been focused on al-Fasher, a major city in the sprawling region of Darfur that the RSF has besieged for months in an attempt to seize it from the military. Al-Fasher is the military's last stronghold in Darfur.

Sudan's conflict has created the world's largest displacement crisis with over 11 million people forced to flee their homes. International experts warned Thursday that about 80 rescue operations, evacuating dozens of people in the northern Piedmont region. Between Montanaro and San Benigno Canaveze, two adults and a 3-month-old girl were rescued after the rising waters of the Orco torrent left them stuck in their car, firefighters said. Several villages were isolated due to overflowing streams, storms and landslides in the Valle D'Aosta region.

The conflict has been marked by widespread reports of rampant sexual violence and other atrocities — especially in Darfur, the site of a genocide in the early 2000s. Rights groups say the atrocities amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

2 dead as storms wreak havoc in Switzerland

Berlin (AP) — Storms in southern Switzerland caused a landslide that left two people dead and one missing, and a bridge over a small river collapsed, police said on Sunday. Storms and heavy rain affected southern and western Switzerland on Saturday and overnight, with the worst-hit areas in the Italian-speaking Ticino canton (state), on the southern side of the Alps. Police said there was a significant landslide in the Fontana area of the Maggia valley, which is near the city of Locarno. They said in a statement that the bodies of two people were recovered and were being identified, while rescuers were searching for another person who remained missing.

Camping sites along the Maggia river were evacuated, and part of the small Visletto road bridge collapsed. Three other valleys in the region were unreachable by road. Further north, the Rhone River burst its banks in several areas of Valais canton, flooding a highway and a railway line. Floods, thunderstorms and landslides also hit various regions in northern Italy. Firefighters said they carried out about 80 rescue operations, evacuating dozens of people in the northern Piedmont region.

Between Montanaro and San Benigno Canaveze, two adults and a 3-month-old girl were rescued after the rising waters of the Orco torrent left them stuck in their car, firefighters said. Several villages were isolated due to overflowing streams, storms and landslides in the Valle D'Aosta region.



A view of the Rhone river, at right, and the Navignone river, following the storms that caused major flooding, in Chippis, Switzerland, on Sunday

Taliban delegation attends meeting led by UN; women excluded

Islamabad (AP) — A Taliban delegation on Sunday attended a United Nations-led meeting in Qatar on Afghanistan after organisers said women would be excluded from the gathering. The two-day meeting is the third UN-sponsored gathering on the Afghan crisis in the Qatari capital of Doha. Zabihullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Taliban government who leads its delegation, wrote on social media platform X that the delegation met with representatives from countries including Russia, India and Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the meeting. The Taliban were not invited to the first meeting, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said they set un-

acceptable conditions for attending the second one in February, including demands that Afghan civil society members be excluded from the talks and that the Taliban be treated as the country's legitimate rulers.

The Taliban seized power in August 2021 as US and NATO forces were in the final weeks of their pullout from the country following two decades of war. No country has officially recognised the Taliban as Afghanistan's government, and the UN has said recognition is almost impossible while bans on female education and employment remain in place. Mujahid on Saturday in the capital, Kabul, told reporters the delegation was going to Doha "to seek understanding

and resolve issues."

"We urge all countries not to abandon the Afghan people in difficult times, and actively participate in Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic strengthening," he said.

He said they would discuss issues including international restrictions imposed on Afghanistan's financial and banking system, challenges in growing the private sector and government actions against drug trafficking.

Earlier, the United Nations' top official in Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, defended the failure to include Afghan women in the meeting in Doha, insisting that demands for women's rights are certain to be raised.

Pak Minister slams Af for not taking action against militants

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has slammed the Afghan Taliban-led government in Kabul for not taking action against militants along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, despite repeated requests made by Islamabad.

Asif made the comments in an interview with BBC Urdu on Saturday in which he also said that Pakistan even offered to grant Rs10 billion to shift the militants towards the western border. "Pakistan hoped for cooperation from the Afghan government, however, the latter was not ready to take action against the militants," Asif was quoted as saying by the Geo News. Pakistan has repeated-

ly called on the Afghan interim government to prevent its soil from being used against it by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups — a claim denied by Kabul.

Asif said that the government even offered to give Rs10 billion to transfer the militants to the western border areas, but it feared the militants could return to the Pakistan border from there as well.

In an interview with the Voice of America last week, Asif said that under 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam', Pakistan could target terrorist hideouts across the border in Afghanistan. He had also dismissed the possibility of negotiations with the TTP. In March, Pakistani air force

jets carried out air strikes against terrorists in the border regions of Khost and Paktika inside the neighbouring country.

Soon after the strike, Asif said that Pakistan wanted to convey to the Afghan interim government in Kabul that "we cannot continue like this."

Islamabad's action came following a deadly attack on Pakistan forces which resulted in the killing of seven soldiers, including a Lieutenant Colonel and a Captain.

There has been an uptick in the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul in 2021, dashing hopes in Islamabad that a friendly government in Afghanistan would help to tackle militancy.

Hurricane Beryl likely to become Category 4 storm

AP ■ SAN JUAN

Hurricane Beryl is forecast to strengthen into a powerful Category 4 storm as it approaches the southeast Caribbean, which began shutting down Sunday amid urgent pleas from government officials for people to take shelter. Hurricane warnings were in effect for Barbados, St Lucia, Grenada, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. "This is a very serious situation developing for the Windward Islands," warned the National Hurricane Centre in Miami, which said that Beryl was "forecast to bring life-threatening winds and storm surge ... as an extremely dangerous hurricane." Beryl strengthened into a Category 3 hurricane on Sunday morning, becoming the first major hurricane east of the Lesser Antilles on record for June, according to Philip

Klotzbach, Colorado State University hurricane researcher. Beryl is now only the third Category 3 hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic in June, following Audrey in 1957 and Alma in 1966, according to hurricane expert Michael Lowry. Beryl was located about 465 miles (750 kilometres) east-southeast of Barbados. It was a Category 2 storm with maximum sustained winds of 100 mph (155 kph) and was moving west at 21 mph (33 kph). Two hurricane hunters were en route to the storm to gather more details about its intensity, according to the National Hurricane Centre.

Beryl is expected to pass just south of Barbados early Monday and then head into the Caribbean Sea as a major hurricane on a path toward Jamaica. It is expected to weaken by mid-week but still remain a hurricane as it heads toward Mexico.

Forecasters warned of life-threatening storm surge of up to 9 feet (3 metres) in areas where Beryl will make landfall, with up to 6 inches (15 centimetres) of rain for Barbados and nearby islands.

Long lines formed at gas stations and grocery stores in Barbados and other islands as people rushed to prepare for a storm that has broken records and rapidly intensified from a tropical storm with 35 mph winds on Friday to a Category 1 hurricane on Saturday.

Warm waters were fueling Beryl, with ocean heat content in the deep Atlantic the highest on record for this time of year, according to Brian McNoldy, University of Miami tropical meteorology researcher. Beryl marks the farthest east that a hurricane has formed in the tropical Atlantic in June, breaking a record set in 1933, according to Philip Klotzbach,

Colorado State University hurricane researcher. If Beryl's winds reach 125 mph, it would be the second earliest such storm in the Atlantic on record, surpassing Audrey in 1957, he said.

In addition, if Beryl reaches a Category 3, it would only be the third storm to do so in the Caribbean prior to August; Dennis and Emily both did so in July of 2005, according to Klotzbach.

"We have to remain vigilant," Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley said in a public address late Saturday. "We do not want to put anybody's life at risk." Thousands of people were in Barbados for Saturday's Twenty20 World Cup final, cricket's biggest event, with Mottley noting that not all fans were able to leave Sunday despite many rushing to change their flights. "Some of them have never

gone through a storm before," she said. "We have plans to take care of them."

Mottley said all businesses should close by Sunday evening and warned the airport would close by nighttime. Kemar Saffrey, president of a Barbadian group that aims to end homelessness, said in a video posted on social media Saturday night that those without homes tend to think they can ride out storms because they've done it before.

"I don't want that to be the approach that they take," he said, warning that Beryl is a dangerous storm and urging Barbadians to direct homeless people to a shelter. Echoing his comments was Wilfred Abrahams, minister of home affairs and information. "I need Barbadians at this point to be their brother's keeper," he said. "Some people are vulnerable."

Two terrorists killed by security forces in northwest Pakistan

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Two terrorists were killed in an encounter with the security forces on Sunday in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said. An operation was carried out after receiving information about the presence of some terrorists in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur tribal district bordering Afghanistan, they said. The terrorists opened fire at the security forces after they attacked the militants' hideout. In the shootout, two terrorists were killed while a Havildar-rank soldier died, they said.

The slain terrorists were wanted by the security forces in the killings of tribal elders and an attack on the security forces. Separately, at least four labourers were abducted by some unknown gunmen in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Saturday, a police official said.

The incident happened in the Tank district when the labourers were working to fix an electric tower. Tank is the most vulnerable district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where terrorists and militants are active against the security forces, police and government officials.

7 killed, dozens hurt as missiles slam town in southern Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Russian missiles slammed into a town in southern Ukraine, killing seven civilians, including children, and wounding dozens more, local authorities reported.

Ukrainian officials published photos of bodies stretched out under picnic blankets in a park in Vilniansk, and deep craters in the blackened earth next to the charred, twisted remains of a building.

Thirty-six people were wounded in Saturday evening's attack, authorities said, and declared a day of mourning Sunday. Vilniansk is in Zaporizhzhia region, less than 30 kilometers

(20 miles) from the local capital and north of the front lines, as Russian forces continue to occupy part of the province.

Local Gov. Ivan Fedorov said that three children were among the dead and nine more were wounded.

In a separate Telegram post hours earlier, Fedorov said that the strike damaged a shop, residential buildings, and an unspecified "critical infrastructure" facility in Vilniansk, which had a population of around 14,300 prior to Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia continues to stretch out Ukrainian forces in several

areas along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front. Moscow has stepped up airstrikes in a bid to drain Ukraine's resources, often targeting energy facilities and other vital infrastructure.

In the aftermath of the Vilniansk attack, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on Kyiv's Western partners to bolster its air defenses and long-range munitions to deter Russian attacks. In Ukraine's war-torn eastern Donetsk region, eight civilians died and 14 more suffered wounds on Saturday and overnight, according to local Gov. Vadym Filashkin, as near-daily shelling continues in

much of the province. Shelling also wounded one civilian and wounded five more over the same period in the southern Kherson region, its governor, Oleksandr Prokudin, reported on Telegram. According to local Governor Oleh Syniehubov, four people were wounded in the Kharkiv province in the northeast, the site of fierce battles in recent months as Russia launched a cross-border push that threatened Ukraine's second-largest city.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday claimed its forces overnight shot down three dozen Ukrainian drones over six regions in Russia's southwest.

Seven persons killed in Karachi road mishap

Karachi (PTI) — Seven persons were killed when an overspeeding coaster lost control and the vehicle overturned after crashing into a pavement in Karachi. The accident occurred in Sindh province on Sunday when a trailer took a U-turn and the coaster, coming from behind, rammed into it and overturned, police said. The driver of the trailer fled while the driver of the coaster was among the injured persons, the Dawn newspaper reported. The crash resulted in the deaths of seven persons, including women and children, the Express Tribune reported. Emergency responders provided immediate medical assistance to the injured. The bodies of the deceased have been transferred to Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) for further legal proce-

dures. Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah expressed grief at the lives lost in the incident. In a statement, he directed the administrations of CHK, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center and SBBB Institute of Trauma to provide the best treatment available to the injured passengers. He also summoned a detailed report from Sindh Inspector General Ghulam Nabi Memon, ordering police to take strict measures to prevent traffic accidents. "The (driving) licences of drivers who speed up (vehicles) even on busy roads should be suspended. Speeding has wrecked joyful homes along with (taking lives of) innocent children," the statement quoted CM Shah as saying.

New study shows how divorce is boosting gender equality in Sweden

Stockholm (The Conversation) — Single mothers are one of the most vulnerable groups in societies around the world. In Sweden, the number of women with these care responsibilities has nearly halved over the past two decades. What has caused this change? Are we seeing a dramatic reversal in the global trend of increasing separations and divorce?

No, union dissolutions in Sweden are still among the highest in the world. What we are witnessing is a change in the logistics of break-ups. Sweden not only holds a leading role in the rate of divorces, it is also world-leading when

it comes to splitting child custody 50:50. Almost half of children with separated parents now split their time equally between the two households. In our new study, published in the journal Social Forces, we wanted to find out to what extent this remarkable change in living arrangements has changed the gender division of care work within the ex-couple. We hypothesised that the effect of such union dissolution may lead to more gender equality than when children went to live only with their mothers.

Ultimately, 50:50 residence requires fathers to take full care responsibility for the child

half of the time — something few partnered fathers do. So it could push parents into a more egalitarian division of care work. As a measure of care work, we examined one of the most stubborn inequalities between women and men in high-income countries today: taking leave from paid work to care for a child. We used administrative register data covering the entire population of Sweden — with measurements of leave-taking of each child's mother and father both before and after divorce.

Our results show that, in Sweden, divorce has led to an increase in fathers' share of days off work for care. We con-

clude that whereas divorces have for decades been slowing the gender revolution in Sweden — with mothers traditionally shouldering all the responsibility — they are now accelerating it.

WORLD LEADERS?

We are not trying to argue that divorce is a good thing. We believe instead that divorces help expose the joint household as a highly gendered environment. Opposite-sex couples in Sweden, and more broadly across the world, tend to fall into a manager-helper dynamics, in which the mother takes on the full administrative and mental workload and

only delegates specific tasks for the father to fulfil. This is a dynamic that over time seems inevitable and impossible to break. But 50:50 living arrangements turn this kind of dynamic on its head. Because it is no longer possible to take on these heavily gendered roles — the mother cannot plan her ex's household and the father cannot wait for it to happen — 50:50 living arrangements seem to show the way to a more gender-equal division of labour in general.

The lesson is that men can and do look after children on their own. If Swedish men can do it, other men's inability cannot

possibly be inevitable. Swedish men are not of a different biological make-up than other men, so it seems like cultural stereotypes are ultimately to blame.

The increases in divorce could change attitudes on a deeper level over time. The more we see men looking after their children, the more normal it will appear. Bosses might stop scoffing at fathers who take time off to stay home with their kids, and mothers may find it easier to trust their partners to take on more childcare and housework.

The Swedish experience may tell where other countries are headed. That said, Sweden is

ahead in many ways. For example, thanks to a generous set of family policies, Swedish fathers now take three months off work as parental leave to stay home with their babies while the mother returns to work — giving a crucial opportunity to bond and grow their confidence when it comes to childcare.

In several family-related changes — including a rise in divorce and fathers being more involved in childcare — Sweden has been the forerunner in trends later observed throughout Europe and North America.

Residency with the father following divorce seems to be

another such development. Although other countries cannot observe the same reversal in the overall effect of divorce on care work just yet, couples practicing 50:50 living arrangements in those countries might have already begun to experience a more gender-equal division of care work following the separation.

And this is good news, not only for women who suddenly proclaim that "for the first time ever ... ex-husbands are doing their fair share" but also for men who no longer have to deal with the pain associated with the feeling of losing their children after a separation.

Indian economy set for stable high growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase and it is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that the country is facing, RBI's monetary policy committee member Shashanka Bhide said on Sunday. Bhide further said with the growth of income that would support domestic demand and additions to production or supply capacity reflected by high levels of investment spending in the last couple of years, domestic economic activity is expected to sustain its momentum. "In terms of growth momentum and inflation

trajectories Indian economy is poised for potentially a stable high growth phase. "It is also in a strong position in the context of significant risks that are also facing us," he told PTI. The current official estimate of GDP growth in 2023-24 is 8.2 per cent, accelerating from 7 per cent in the preceding year. Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India pegged the GDP growth rate for FY25 at 7.2 per cent. Bhide noted that the monsoon rainfall, which is expected to be normal this year, is a significant positive factor for growth as well as bringing down food inflation. While noting that



improvement in global demand conditions are necessary to spur external demand for goods and services, he said. Bhide said while food inflation is at a high level, averaging about 8 per cent during Jan-May 2024, the overall CPI-based inflation has moderated to below 5 per cent during March-May 2024. "The prevailing policy rate combined with the gradual decline in inflation rate does mean higher real interest rates, but continued focus on keeping the inflation aligned with the target in a sustained way is important at this point to support growth as well," he said. In its latest bi-monthly

review earlier this month, the six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) of Reserve Bank of India left the key interest rate (repo rate) unchanged for the eighth time in a row at 6.5 per cent. The RBI has projected Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation at 4.5 per cent for FY25 with 4.9 per cent in Q1 (April-June), 3.8 per cent in Q2, 4.6 per cent in Q3, and 4.5 per cent in Q4. Retail inflation was 4.75 per cent in May. The RBI, which has been mandated to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent (with margin of 2 per cent on either side), mainly factors in CPI while arriving at its monetary policy.

FPIs invest ₹26,565 crore in Indian equities in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After two months of net outflow, foreign investors turned buyers in June, infusing Rs 26,565 crore in Indian equities, driven by political stability and a sharp rebound in markets. Looking ahead, attention will gradually shift towards the budget and Q1 FY25 earnings, which could determine the sustainability of FPI flows, Vipul Bhowar, Director, Listed Investments, Waterfield Advisors, said. According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net infusion of Rs 26,565 crore in equities this month. This came following a net outflow of 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.



Before that, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February, while they took out Rs 25,743 crore in January. The net outflow now stood at Rs 3,200 crore in the month, data with the depositories showed. Geojit Financial Services Chief Investment Strategist V K Vijayakumar said political stability, despite the BJP not getting a majority on its own,

and the sharp rebound in markets aided by steady domestic institutional investors (DIIs) buying and aggressive retail buying, has forced the FPIs to turn buyers in India. However, the FPI buying has been focused on a few specific stocks rather than being widespread across the market or sectors. This is because Indian equities are still considered overvalued by FPIs, Waterfield Advisors'

Bhowar said. They are favouring the financial, auto, capital goods, real estate, and select consumer sectors. "With government stability assured, impressive GDP performance and forecasts, stable consumer price index, ample forex reserves, and robust banking sector health, I anticipate a steady and substantial FPI inflow," Kishay Upadhyay, smallcase Manager & Founder Fidelfolio, said. Additionally, FPIs invested Rs 14,955 crore in the debt market in June. With this, FPIs' investment in the debt market reached Rs 68,624 crore in 2024 so far. India's inclusion in the JP Morgan Bond Index is positive. In the long term, this will reduce the cost of borrowing for the government and the cost of capital for corporates. This is positive for the economy and therefore, for the equity and debt market.

EPFO gross new members addition dips 4 per cent in 2023-24: MoSPI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body EPFO's gross new subscribers addition declined by over 4 per cent to 1.09 crore in 2023-24 compared to a year ago, as per a report by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI). According to the report 'Payroll Reporting in India: An Employment Perspective - January to April, 2024', the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) recorded 1,09,93,119 gross addition of new members in 2023-24 compared to 1,14,98,453 in 2022-23. The gross addition of new members was affected due to the pandemic and declined from 1,10,40,683 in 2019-20 to 85,48,898 in 2020-21. It bounced back to 1,08,65,063 in 2021-22. The Centre as well as states had imposed lockdown restriction in 2020 and 2021 to curb the spread of deadly coronavirus in the country, which had hit economic



activities as well as employment. The data shows that in the last five fiscal years till 2023-24, the gross new members addition by EPFO had not recovered to pre-covid level of 2018-19. The gross addition of new members was 1,39,44,349 in 2018-19. Since April 2018, the ministry has been bringing out the employment related statistics in the formal sector covering the period September 2017 onwards, using information on the number of subscribers who have subscribed under three major schemes, namely Employees' Provident Fund

(EPF), Employees' State Insurance (ESI) and National Pension Scheme (NPS). The numbers of subscribers are from various sources and there are elements of overlap. Therefore, the estimates from various sources are not additive, it stated. The report also showed that the gross addition of members of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) also dipped to 1,67,60,672 in 2023-24 from 1,67,73,023 in 2022-23. However, according to the report, the new addition of subscribers increased under NPS to 9,37,020 in 2023-24 from 8,24,735 in 2022-23.

Aviation market big enough for Akasa Air to succeed: CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As Akasa Air spreads its wings on domestic and international routes, the less-than-two-year-old airline's chief Vinay Dube has said he does not think about competition in encouraging or discouraging terms, as the aviation market is "big enough for us to succeed". The carrier, which took to the skies in August 2022, currently has a fleet of 24 Boeing 737 MAX planes and operates more than 900 flights weekly. While emphasising that the focus is on service excellence and cost leadership, Dube said the airline is looking for network and international expansion. "I don't think about competition and certainly don't think about it in encouraging or discouraging terms. If we focus on ourselves, the market is big enough for us to succeed," he told PTI in a recent interview.

Urja Ganga gas pipeline completion delayed to March 2025, says GAIL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The construction of the Rs 12,940-crore 'Urja Ganga' gas pipeline, India's most ambitious project taking environment-friendly fuel to eastern parts of the country, has been delayed by nine months and will now be completed by March 2025, state-owned GAIL (India) Ltd said. The 3,306-kilometre Jagdishpur-Haldia-Bokaro-Dhamra pipeline was originally targeted for completion by June 2024. But due to "delay in right of use (RoU) availability", the completion schedule has been revised "from June 2024 to March 2025", GAIL said in a stock exchange filing. The bulk of the pipeline has already been constructed, and gas has started to flow in most cities along the route. Traditionally, natural gas was available for use as fuel to generate electricity, make fertiliser or turn into CNG and cooking gas only in the western and northern parts of the country, as pipelines taking the fuel from source to users were limited to these parts. In October 2016, work on laying a pipeline from Jagdishpur in Uttar Pradesh to Haldia in West Bengal, Bokaro in Jharkhand and Dhamra in Odisha began. The line was extended to Guwahati in Assam from Barauni in Bihar, a length of 726 km, to take the fuel to hereto-unconnected states in the eastern region. The Jagdishpur-Haldia-Bokaro-Dhamra Pipeline (JHBDPL), popularly called the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga pipeline, is to supply gas to the eastern states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. GAIL, the firm executing the pipeline, said its board of directors in a meeting on June



28 approved the revision of the completion schedule. The completion schedule for the 240-km Dhamra-Haldia pipeline has also been revised from June 2024 to March 2025, it added. The company on May 10, 2019, stated that it has completed awards of all major contracts worth Rs 10,500 crore for pipeline supply and laying of the integrated 3400-km Jagdishpur-Haldia and Bokaro-Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline (JHBDPL) and Barauni-Guwahati Pipeline (BGPL) pipeline. The government provided 40 per cent viability gap funding amounting to Rs 5,176 crore for execution of JHBDPL. For the Barauni-Guwahati pipeline, a 60 per cent viability gap funding, amounting to Rs 5,559 crore, has been provided by the government. The Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga pipeline will connect all the geographical areas (more than 90) spread over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and further to the northeastern region of India. When the project is fully completed, the northeastern/eastern part of India will become an integral part of the gas-based economy with the twin benefits of the cheapest gas transportation through Urja Ganga and gas pricing reforms.

Mcap of nine of top 10 most valued firms jumps ₹2.89 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,89,699.42 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, in line with a rally in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,822.83 points or 2.36 per cent. The BSE Sensex recorded the best monthly gain in June by climbing 7.14 per cent. The Sensex breached the historic

79,000 mark on Thursday. While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the gainers, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerged as the laggard. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 1,52,264.63 crore to Rs 21,18,951.20 crore. TCS added Rs 34,733.64 crore taking its valuation to Rs



14,12,845.09 crore. The mcap of ICICI Bank soared Rs 30,286.99 crore to Rs 8,44,201.88 crore and that of Bharti Airtel surged Rs 18,267.7 crore to Rs 8,22,530.35 crore. The market valuation of Infosys climbed Rs 14,656.3 crore to Rs 6,50,602.10 crore and that of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 13,808.74 crore to Rs 12,80,865.43 crore. State Bank of India's valuation rallied Rs 11,111.14 crore to Rs 7,57,565.68 crore.

The mcap of Hindustan Unilever went up by Rs 7,953.37 crore to Rs 5,81,570.83 crore and that of ITC climbed Rs 6,616.91 crore to Rs 5,30,475.82 crore. However, the valuation of LIC tumbled Rs 22,042.61 crore to Rs 6,25,573.90 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

Domestic macroeconomic data, global trends to drive markets this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic macroeconomic data announcements, global trends and trading activity of foreign investors would guide market sentiments this week, analysts said. After a record rally, markets may face volatile trends this week amid elevated valuations and investors would also keep a track of global oil benchmark Brent crude and rupee-dollar movement for further cues. "Potential volatility in the stock market is anticipated this week. Elevated valuations remain a concern, with investors now focusing on monsoon progress and its impact on the rural economy. The upcoming Union Budget in July has become the next focal point, with high expectations for growth-oriented policies," said Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investment Ltd. Market sentiment will be gauged by closely monitoring foreign and domestic institutional investors' activity (FII and DII) and crude oil prices, he said. On the global front, the US market has experienced some profit-booking from higher levels. Key economic data, such as the US job openings report, will be released on July 2, 2024, followed by the US ISM Services PMI data on July 3,



2024, he noted. "Additionally, the US Federal Reserve Chairperson Powell's speech is scheduled for July 2, 2024, and the US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be released on July 3, 2024. The movement of dollar index and US bond yields will also be crucial factors to watch," Gour added. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,822.83 points or 2.36 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 509.5 points or 2.16 per cent. The Sensex recorded the best monthly gain in June by climbing 7.14 per cent. The Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark on Thursday, and the Nifty hit the 24,000 level for the first time in intra-day trade. "The outlook for the market will be guided by major domestic and global economic data such as HSBC India Manufacturing PMI, HSBC India Services PMI, S&P Global Manufacturing PMI, Fed speech, initial jobless

claims this week," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd, said. After hitting a fresh all-time high level in early trade on Friday, the BSE 30-share index declined 210.45 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 79,032.73. During the day, it jumped 428.4 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a record peak of 79,671.58. The Nifty went lower by 33.90 points or 0.14 per cent to 24,010.60. During the day, it climbed 129.5 points or 0.53 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 24,174. "We expect this positive momentum to continue at a steady pace with stock-specific action. However, the release of economic data points this week would keep a little volatility in the market. Sector like auto is expected to be in the limelight with release of their monthly sales number," said Siddhartha Khemka, Senior Group VP, Head - Research, Broking & Distribution, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

Sattva Group targets 85 per cent growth in housing sales: MD Bijay

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Sattva Group is bullish on India's housing market and will launch many projects to achieve 85 per cent growth in sales of residential properties to around Rs 6,500 crore this fiscal, a top company official said. In the 2023-24, Bengaluru-based Sattva Group achieved sales bookings of Rs 3,500 crore. "We are very bullish on housing demand. We are targeting to achieve sales of Rs 6,000-6,500 crore this financial year," Sattva Group MD Bijay Agarwal said. He said the company would invest Rs 12,000-14,000 crore over the next three years to build housing, office and hotel projects. The bulk of the investments would be to develop housing projects and office complexes. Sattva Group is one of the leading real estate developers in India with a significant presence in South India. It has completed 140 projects comprising 80 million square feet area in the last 30 years. Around 23 million square feet are under construction, and 65 million square feet are in the pipeline. Agarwal noted that the demand for the residential segment has been very strong



post-COVID pandemic, while the leasing activities in the office market are also back on track. He said the company would enter the Mumbai housing market this year. Shivam Agarwal, VP (Strategic Development) of Sattva Group, said the company is looking for growth opportunities across geography and different verticals of real estate. In the residential segment, Shivam said Sattva Group will launch more than 13 million square feet of area in Bengaluru this fiscal. In Hyderabad, it will launch more than 6 million square feet of housing units this fiscal. "In Mumbai, we intend to launch a project in the latter

half of FY2024-25 of approx 1.3 million sq ft," said Shivam. Furthermore, the company is looking to acquire land parcels for another 1.5 million sq ft in Mumbai. The company's MD highlighted that the group's co-working and co-living joint ventures - Simpliwork Offices and Colive - have been performing well and expanding. "We plan to list our co-working and co-living businesses on stock exchanges in the next 2-3 years by launching public issues," Agarwal said. Sattva Group has more than 50 per cent stake in Simpliwork and Colive. When asked about its plan to launch Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), Bijay said, "We are in the early stage of discussion with Blackstone". He did not give any timeline for the launch of the public issue of REIT to monetise the commercial assets developed jointly by Sattva Group and global investment firm Blackstone. Sattva Group and Blackstone have a joint portfolio of around 32 million square feet, of which 18 million square feet are already completed.



Celebrating Doctor's Day Honouring Dedication and Empathy

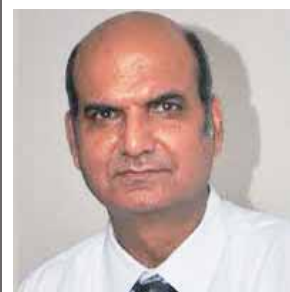
The First Doctor's Day was celebrated in India on July 1, 1991 which happened to be the birth and death anniversary of the most famous physician of India - Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy. It is hence a tribute to his contributions to the health domain in the country. This year's theme, "Celebrating Resilience and Healing Hands," highlights the doctor's exceptional dedication, especially during challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic. Doctor's Day serves as a poignant reminder of the invaluable contributions of doctors worldwide. It is a day to express gratitude, reflect on their profound impact, and reaffirm our commitment to supporting their noble mission of healing and caring for others.

The celebration of Doctor's Day is not merely a formality but a heartfelt expression of gratitude. It acknowledges the sacrifices doctors make—long hours, emotional strain, and personal sacrifices—to ensure the well-being of their patients. Their dedication goes beyond medical expertise; it encompasses compassion, understanding, and a deep sense of responsibility towards those under their care. As we celebrate Doctor's Day, let us pause to acknowledge the significance of their vocation. Their selflessness, expertise, and compassion touch countless lives, leaving an indelible mark on society. Whether in times of crisis or routine care, doctors exemplify the highest ideals of service and humanity.

Happy Doctor's Day!

DOCTORSPEAK

On eve of Doctor's Day, we spoke to medical professionals whose insights underscore the significance of this occasion:



Dr. Rajinder Dhamija, Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Services (IHBAS), Delhi: The Day gives me an opportunity to focus on one of my priority areas. Brain health issues in India, like stroke, epilepsy, headache disorders, Parkinson's disease, and dementia, pose significant challenges due to disparities in healthcare access and infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Limited awareness, delayed diagnosis, and social stigma worsen the burden on affected individuals and families. Addressing these challenges requires enhanced healthcare resources, improved public awareness, and measures to combat socioeconomic barriers to care.



Dr. Ashwini Anil Kumar Sirapanasetty, Obstetrics & Gynaecologist Surgeon: The medical field stands as a crucial pillar of society, much like the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches of government, and the media. Doctors shape society by playing a vital role in every phase of our lives, from childbirth onwards. An assurance from a doctor boosts the morale of a patient to live a longer life and also to heal from an grave injury



Dr. Prashant Mehta, Senior Consultant and Program Director (Lymphoid Neoplasms and Cellular therapy) Department of Medical Oncology Amrita Institute of Medical sciences, Faridabad: My desire for our nation is improved access to healthcare for everyone, high-quality indigenous research/drug development, optimized communication, transparency, and teamwork between medical teams and patients and their families. Doctors aren't infallible gods but compassionate humans dedicated to easing human sufferings.



Dr. Jyoti Kapoor, Founder / Director, Manasthali Wellness: Doctors are healers of hope. Consulting a mental health expert is crucial when facing mental health issues as they possess the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective support and treatment.



INDIA'S TELESURGERY MILESTONES

Driven by robotic technology, this cutting-edge system is all set to transform global surgery by enabling remote interventions that improve access to specialised care and boost international collaboration. Recently, the national capital witnessed the launch of a historic moment in the sector, reports ARCHANA JYOTI

On June 10, 2024, a historic moment unfolded at the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre (RGCIRC) in Delhi. Led by Dr Sudhir Rawal, a pioneering figure in robotic surgery, the team at RGCIRC performed India's first telesurgery in cancer care. The procedure, a Radical Cysto-Prostatectomy with Bilateral Lymph Nodes Removal, was conducted using the SSI Mantra Robot developed by SS Innovations, a developer of India's first indigenous surgical robotic system.



Dr Sudhir Rawal conducting telesurgery

The surgery was executed from the SSI Office in Gurugram, while the patient remained at RGCIRC in Delhi. Despite the distance, the surgical team completed the complex procedure in one hour and forty-five minutes, marking a significant advancement in telesurgery capabilities. The successful telesurgery at RGCIRC highlighted the potential of advanced robotic technologies to enhance precision and quality in surgical interventions. Telesurgery not only overcomes geographical constraints but also reduces the need for patients to travel long distances for specialized medical care, Dr Rawal elaborated. This approach promises to democratize access to high-quality surgical procedures, particularly benefiting patients in remote areas with limited healthcare infrastructure, said Dr Sudhir Srivastava, founder, Chairman and CEO, of SS Innovations. Pioneer in in

robotic cardiac surgery and the brain behind the SSI Mantra System, Srivastava is popularly known as the Father of Surgical Robotics in India.

SS Innovations further advanced the field with the launch of SSI Mantra 3, the latest iteration of its indigenous surgical robotic system. Equipped with 5 slimmer robotic arms and an immersive 3D HD headset, it offers surgeons unparalleled precision and control during procedures. The system's cost-effectiveness aims to make advanced robotic surgery accessible to healthcare institutions across India and beyond, aligning with the 'Make in India' initiative. Alongside, it has achieved a historic feat in Indian medical science by completing the nation's maiden human trial in telesurgery, signifying a monumental leap in surgical robotics.

Dr. Fredric Moll, Father of Surgical Robotics as Board Member and Vice Chairman said at an event held here to launch the innovation, "SSI Mantra 3 integrates cutting-

edge advancements in robotic surgery, offering surgeons unparalleled precision and control for improved patient outcomes. It reinforces India's position as a hub for technological innovation in healthcare."

Moll has been a pivotal force in advancing robotic surgery and contributed significantly to the development of robots. Recently, SSI reached Nepal too, deploying India-made Robots to its healthcare system. Dr. Mylswamy Annaduari, Ex-Director of ISRO Satellite Centre also known as 'Moon Man of India' said: "The system represents the convergence of medical science in India and extends Indian innovation to surgeons worldwide. It is an affordable innovation, precisely what India needed. India is racing ahead in medical science, and it is also racing to assist the entire world."

Dr Naresh Trehan, Chairman and Managing Director of Medanta, The Medcity, was equally vocal in appreciating the technology as he said: "I

would like to take this opportunity to commend Dr Srivastava for his dedication in achieving the rapid development of the third version of the SSI Mantra 3. This remarkable accomplishment is a testament to his commitment and vision. We are eagerly looking forward to incorporating the Mantra 3 system in our hospitals, enhancing our medical capabilities and patient care." Addressing the launch of SSI Mantra and the breakthrough in telesurgery, Prof. Dr. Somashekhar SP, Chairman-Medical Advisory Board, Aster DM Healthcare- GCC & India, echoed similar views. "SSI has created the best technology robot at an affordable rate for the global market, all made in India. It is for the benefit of all. Any technology that doesn't evolve with time will perish, and this is why we have version after version."

For those who are not yet aware of this breakthrough technology, SSI Mantra 3 allows for smaller fingertip-sized incisions, leading to less pain, minimal blood loss, reduced scarring, faster recovery, and shorter hospital stays. This most advanced surgical robotic system with its cost-effectiveness will make advanced robotic surgery more accessible to hospitals, doctors, and the ultimate beneficiary, patients. The SSI Mantra 3 ensures unparalleled precision and efficiency across a wide range of multispecialty and the full spectrum of robotic cardiac surgery procedure, say experts. The minimally invasive approach aim to

BENEFITS OF TELESURGERY

Accessibility: Enables remote or underserved areas to access specialized surgical care. **Expertise:** Allows surgical expertise to be delivered globally, benefiting patients without local specialists. **Cost Efficiency:** Reduces travel costs and time for patients, making care more accessible. **Precision and Safety:** Offers precise control and high-definition imaging, improving surgical outcomes.

Care: Facilitates real-time collaboration among surgeons and healthcare professionals worldwide. **Infection Control:** Reduces physical contact, lowering the risk of infectious disease transmission. **Education:** Enhances surgical training and education globally. **Global Reach:** Overcomes geographical barriers, expanding access to specialized procedures.

CHALLENGES OF TELESURGERY

Technical Issues: Relies heavily on internet connectivity and robotic systems, vulnerable to disruptions. **Latency:** Delay in signal transmission can impact surgical precision. **Security:** Raises concerns about cybersecurity and patient data protection. **Regulatory Complexity:** Varies across countries, affecting licensing and legal frameworks. **Cost:** Implementation and maintenance can be expensive, limiting access in

some regions. **Training:** Requires specialized training for effective use, resource-intensive. **Patient Acceptance:** Some patients may be hesitant due to the lack of physical presence. **Ethical Considerations:** Informed consent, patient autonomy, and maintaining patient-centered care are critical. **Limited Applications:** Not all procedures are suitable, depending on complexity and technical feasibility.

ensure reduced trauma to patients, resulting in less pain, less blood loss, and faster recovery times. Despite these advancements, challenges such as latency in global networking, regulatory considerations, and initial costs of robotic systems continue to influence the adoption of telesurgery. However, ongoing developments in networking

technologies, including trials of 5G networks to minimize latency, hold promise for overcoming these barriers. Navigating these challenges requires ongoing technological advancement, regulatory alignment, robust cybersecurity measures, comprehensive training programs, and a commitment to patient-centered care and ethical standards

Monsoon Mayhem? Health Hacks to Stay Safe

As we were gasping for fresh air amid intense heat waves, torrential rains descended upon us, bringing a mix of relief and new challenges including health issues due to increased humidity, stagnant water, and the proliferation of vectors and pathogens. In a conversation with health experts, ARCHANA JYOTI gathered essential tips to help keep health problems at bay during monsoon season

Stay Water-Wise

Waterborne wobbles like typhoid and cholera love a good monsoon bash. Avoid their party by:

- **Boiling it up:** Always boil your drinking water or stick to bottled brands.
- **Ditching the street treats:** Roadside foods like chaat may look tempting but it's best to play it safe with home-cooked meals.
- **Washing up:** Clean your fruits and veggies like they owe you money!
- **Stagnant Water? Not on My Watch!** Mosquitoes aren't just annoying; they're like mini-monsters bringing malaria and dengue to the block

party.

- **Dry it up:** Kick those old tires and flower pots that collect water.
- **Repel the party crashers:** Mosquito repellent is your new best friend—apply it generously.
- **Sleep safe:** Mosquito nets might not be the latest fashion, but they're the best bedfellows during the monsoon.

Keep Skin Dry
Fungal infections thrive on moisture.

- **Stay dry:** Change out of wet clothes as soon as possible and keep your skin dry.
- **Powder power:** Use

antifungal powders to keep the baddies at bay.

- **Bye-bye barefoot:** Flip-flops might be cool, but closed shoes keep you safe from leptospirosis lurking in those puddles.

Boost Your Immunity
Fight off those sniffles and sneezes with a diet as colorful as a rainbow.

- **Eat the rainbow:** Fill up on fruits and veggies—think greens, reds, and yellows.
- **Supplement sense:** If your diet's missing something, a vitamin supplement can be your rainy-day insurance.
- **Soup it up:** Hot soups and broths are perfect for staying warm and healthy.



Long Sleeves Are In!
When mosquitoes are strutting around, less skin is more.

- **Cover up:** Long sleeves

and pants aren't just for fashion—they're for fending off bites.

- **Stick to light colors:** Mosquitoes are like little

fashion critics—they prefer dark colors. So, go light and bright!

- **Stay in the Loop with the Latest Buzz:** Knowledge is power when it comes to staying healthy.
- **Weather watch:** Keep an eye on weather reports and health advisories.
- **App happy:** Download apps that track mosquito activity and rain patterns.
- **Ventilate to Victory!** A stuffy room is a playground for mold and respiratory irritants.
- **Let the air flow:** Keep windows open when it's not pouring to let fresh air in.
- **Dehumidify your digs:**

Use a dehumidifier to keep moisture levels down.

- **Say No to Stagnation:** Don't let the rain keep you on the couch.
- **Indoor exercises:** Yoga, pilates, and home workouts are your go-to for staying fit.
- **Dance it out:** When in doubt, have a mini dance party!
- **The Wet Weather Wizard's Toolkit:** Keep these essentials at hand to navigate the monsoon madness like a pro:
- **Umbrella and raincoat:** Your best shields against the downpour.
- **First-aid kit:** Stock it with

antiseptics, bandages, and meds for common ailments.

- **Water purifier:** A compact one for those unexpected water quality issues.
- **Laugh in the Face of the Monsoon!** Remember, a good sense of humor is the best medicine.
- **Keep it light:** Share a joke, enjoy a comedy, and keep your spirits high.
- **Stay positive:** A little rain can't stop your parade! By following these tips, you'll be able to enjoy the monsoon season without the health hiccups. So grab your raincoat, and a hot cup of tea, and let the monsoon magic begin!

FROM DHONI, TENDULKAR TO GAVASKAR ALL HAIL INDIA'S T20 WORLD CUP TRIUMPH

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The who's who of Indian cricket fraternity, including Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar, hailed the title triumph in the T20 World Cup, saying it will inspire the country's "starry-eyed children to move one step closer to their dreams".

India's first T20 world champion skipper Dhoni led the chorus of former and current cricketers, hailing Rohit Sharma's men for regaining the trophy after 17 long years after beating South Africa by seven runs in a pulsating final in Barbados on Saturday.

Former skipper Dhoni, who led India to their maiden title win in 2007 in South Africa, praised the team for maintaining their calm during the adverse situations in the game.

"WORLD CUP CHAMPIONS 2024. My heart rate was up, well done on being calm, having the self belief and doing what u guys did," (sic) Dhoni wrote on Instagram.

"From all the Indians back home and everywhere in the world a big thank you for bringing the World Cup Home. CONGRATULATIONS. Arre eee thanks for the priceless birthday gift," said Dhoni, who will turn 43 early next month.

The legendary Tendulkar took to social media to express his delight on India's achievement, saying the



country has now got a 'fourth star', following two 50-over World Cup wins in 1983 and 2011 as well as the historic triumph in the inaugural 2007 World T20.

"Every star added to the Team India jersey inspires our nation's starry-eyed children to move one step closer to their dreams. India gets the 4th star, our second in

T20WC," he wrote on 'X'. Tendulkar, who was a member of the Indian team which suffered a first-round exit in the 2007 50-overs World Cup, said life has come a full circle.

"Life comes full circle for Indian cricket in the West Indies. From our lows in the 2007 ODI World Cup to becoming a cricketing

powerhouse and winning the T20WC in 2024," he said.

"Very happy for my friend Rahul Dravid, who missed out in the 2011 World Cup win but his contribution to this T20 World Cup victory has been immense. I am so so happy for him."

Hailing Rohit's captaincy and the contributions of the other squad members, Tendulkar

said, "What can one say about Rohit Sharma? Superb captaincy! To put the 2023 ODI World Cup loss behind and to keep all our players motivated towards the T20 World Cup is commendable."

"Jasprit Bumrah's Player of the Tournament award as well as Virat Kohli's Player of the Match award are both well-deserved. They were just

superb when it mattered," he added.

"Along with Rahul, Paras Mhambrey and Vikram Rathour also made their international debuts in 1996. It was wonderful to see Team India excel under the guidance of this class of '96."

"A total team effort. Hearty congratulations to all the players, coaches, support

staff, and BCCI," Tendulkar continued.

Gavaskar said that winning the trophy is like finally scoring a hundred.

"It is a great win after such a long time. Earlier, I kept saying that India was getting 90s but not getting centuries because they were reaching semi-finals and finals. Now, they have got a century and what a wonderful century this is," the former India captain told PTI.

From VVS Laxman to Anil Kumble, Sourav Ganguly to Gautam Gambhir, everyone praised the stupendous achievement in unison.

"Congratulations Team India on becoming the T20 World Champions. Been the best team in the tournament remaining unbeaten throughout," VVS Laxman, current head of the National Cricket Academy wrote on X.

"Great composure and character shown by the team to win this from the situation we were in with 5 overs remaining. Every player deserves credit for giving it their all and rising to the occasion and wonderfully led by Rohit," he added.

"We are champions!" rejoiced ace spinner and 2011 World Cup winner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Former India captain and head coach Anil Kumble wrote, "Congratulations team India! Wonderful victory."

"YEH MERA INDIA. WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS. SO PROUD OF YOU GUYS. (This is my India. We are the champions, so proud of you guys.)," wrote former spinner

Harbhajan Singh. An ambassador for the T20 World Cup in the Americas, Yuvraj Singh individually praised all the key members of the side.

"You did it boys ! @hardikpandya7 your a hero ! @jaspritbumrah93 what an over to bring India back in the game ! Extremely ecstatic for @ImRo45 great captaincy under pressure ! @imVkohli #Rahul Dravid and the whole team indyavssa #ICCT20WorldCup2024," he wrote.

"Well played @akshar2026 @lamShivamDube. Koi reh to nahi gaya ! Oh @surya_14kumar what a catch under pressure," Yuvraj added, wondering if he mistakenly did not leave out anyone.

Hero of two T20 World Cup finals and India's would be coach Gautam Gambhir wrote, "CHAMPIONS!"

Having earlier explained his standout moments of the game when it was under progress, legendary Sachin Tendulkar wrote, "Chak De India!!!"

Former India captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly also congratulated the side.

"Heartiest congratulations to Rohit sharma and his team .. What a game to win .. May be a World Cup in 11 (13 yrs but the talent the country has ,they will win many more .." (Sic)

"Bumrah is absolutely magic .. Well done Virat,axar ,Hardik and every one .. Rahul Dravid and the support staff .. What a proud moment," (sic) Ganguly added.

Toni Kroos retirement delayed amid Germany's adventure at Euro 2024



AP ■ DORTMUND

Toni Kroos gets another game before he retires. Germany's Euro 2024 title challenge looks more real than ever.

One of the most decorated players in modern soccer with six Champions League titles and a World Cup, Kroos wasn't flashy as Germany beat Denmark 2-0 on Saturday, but he was a calm, assured presence holding the midfield together.

Kroos already won the Champions League with Real Madrid this season. Now he's three games away from one final trophy and could face his Madrid teammate, Spain's Dani Carvajal, in his next game.

Some fans already have their eyes on the final in the German capital and sang about heading to Berlin as Germany saw out the win.

Just like another Real Madrid great, Zinedine Zidane in 2006, Kroos is ending his storied career at a major tournament in Germany.

He came out of international retirement in February for one last tournament. Each game Germany plays in the knockout stage could be the last of his career.

Germany weathered a thunderstorm, hail and stubborn Danish resistance Saturday to ensure the 34-year-old midfielder will play again. Germany faces either Spain or Georgia in the quarterfinals July 5.

Zidane reached the 2006 World Cup final with France, only to headbutt an opponent, get a red card and lose to Italy. Kroos and Germany can still dream of a win on home soil and a first major trophy since Kroos and his teammates lifted the 2014 World Cup.

Until the Denmark game, Germany had not won a major tournament knockout game since Euro 2016. The win continues the sense that Germany is finally turning things around under coach Julian Nagelsmann after years of disappointment.

He took over last year with a mission to deliver a host-nation success story at Euro 2024, and has already signed an extension for the 2026 World Cup.

For now, it stings, just gut-wrenching: SA skipper Markram on World Cup heartbreak

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

Devastated South African skipper Aiden Markram is hopeful that at some point he would be able to see the good in his team's T20 World Cup campaign but for now, all he feels is a "sting" which, he hopes, will ensure a "fire in the belly for next time".

South Africa needed 30 off 30 balls in a chase of 176 against India but fell short by seven runs despite Heinrich Klaasen's awe-inspiring 27-ball 52 in the see-saw summit clash here on Saturday.

India had Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya's death bowling and a blinder of a catch by Suryakumar Yadav to thank for the close win after the peerless Virat Kohli set up the match for them with a brilliant 76-run knock.

"It's not the first game of cricket that's been lost with a team needing 30 of 30 - it's more that India was allowed to bowl well, they're allowed to field well, they're allowed to go from that position to a position of strength," the 29-year-old Markram said in the post-match press conference.

"...Right now to pinpoint something is quite tough but we'll reflect over the next few days, over the next few weeks, try and find areas that we could have maybe improved in during today's game, but also to highlight the things that went really well for us," he added.

The pain aside, Markram is proud of his teammates, who



managed to get rid of the chokers' tag to an extent by making their first World Cup final.

"I think one thing that I will definitely say is how proud we are. Not just of today, the game itself, but the competition as a whole, the build-up to get here. "So, in hindsight, the things will still feel really good about this competition. But like I mentioned, just for the time being, it stings a bit, but it's good for it to sting. It gives you that little bit of fire in the belly

for next time that you're here," he said.

Markram admitted that Klaasen will find it tough to make peace with the result after such a "special effort".

"We've seen him do it many, many times around the world and to deliver it in a stage like this is a really special effort. So, it's going to be tough for him, that's what I say when I mean we reflect back.

"There's going to be lots of things to be happy about," he said.

While the Indian players had happy tears in their eyes, the Proteas broke down in the realisation that another major title had slipped through their hands, only this time at the final hurdle.

"It's just gut wrenching, that's really what it is. Each player has been on a different individual journey to get to this first final. Ultimately you become really tight as a group and you want good things to happen to this group because you know they're great people," he said.

"...When you get really close like that, especially the nature of how the game went, obviously adds to the emotions and it's one of those things but yeah, we can channel it moving forward but I think next couple of days you let it be.

"...You let yourself feel the way you want to feel and then really start reflecting in a positive manner."

Despite the disappointment and heartbreak, Markram did not forget to applaud India's brilliance and composure in the final.

"It's tournament cricket, it's tough cricket, it's not easy to win trophies and you've got to take your hats off to a team like India for lifting the trophy. A lot of hard work goes into it.

"But yeah, we'd like to think we're one step closer and hopefully moving forward we can get that first win and it can be a snowball effect of quite a few to come," he said.

Told crowd to behave because Hardik is big-stage player: Sanjay Manjrekar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

When Sanjay Manjrekar schooled the Wankhede crowd to "behave" after they booed the newly-appointed Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya, all he wanted the public to realise that their boorish behaviour targeting a "big stage player", was unfair.

Pandya was jeered at every venue after he was handed captaincy by MI, signalling a controversial end to the successful and popular Rohit Sharma's tenure at the helm.

The whole episode had a deep-level impact on Pandya. Manjrekar, while conducting the toss at the Wankhede during a home match of MI, did interject but it only led to a meme-fest by the insensitive social media trolls.

Pandya played a major part in India's second T20 World Cup trophy with 144 runs and 11 wickets, and Manjrekar now stands vindicated.

"What a turnaround for Hardik Pandya. In IPL, there were people jeering him and booing him and I told them to behave because this is a big-stage player," Manjrekar told 'ESPNCricinfo'.

The former India player and noted pundit always knew that Pandya would hold his nerve in pressure situations as he brought his team back in the game with the wicket of the dangerous Heinrich Klaasen and then closed out



the game with a mindblowing final over. "We have seen that umpteen times, wickets of Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller and right at the end, Rabada, so he was a champion and no surprise, to see him flourish on the big stage," Manjrekar said.

Manjrekar reminded Indian fans that even in their humiliating defeat against England in Adelaide, back in the 2022 edition, the colourful Baroda man was a face-saver and a calm presence under pressure.

"Even in that semifinal against England, he came in and gave India some hope with 60 off 33. So that's what he is all about.

"You felt safe when he came to bowl in the last over, he was not going to lose his nerves, he was going to bowl sensibly," he concluded.

Sindhu focussed on perfecting her skills to bag third Olympic medal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu is physically and mentally in best shape but realises she needs to be "much more smarter" in her pursuit of a third medal at the Games.

Sindhu had claimed a silver and bronze medal at the last two Olympics at Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo and will be heading into Paris with the aim of becoming the first Indian to win three Olympic medals.

"It is challenging, it's not easy but, at the same time, it's not impossible," Sindhu said during an interaction conducted by Sports Authority of India, the Indian Olympic Association and the Badminton Association of India.

"Going into the third Olympics, I need to be smarter. I have a lot of

experience on my side and I need to be much more smarter and I hope I can change the colour, and of course, get another medal for the country."

Sindhu is currently training at the Hermann-Neuberger Sportschule in Saarbrücken, Germany after her proposal was cleared by the sports ministry. She will be heading to Paris directly from there when the Games begin on July 26.

"... Physically and mentally I am right there, I just have to be smarter and my coach Agus (Dwi Santoso) has been taking care of that, my trainer has been taking care of my physical part.

"I am working on all the strokes, whether it is defense, or attack or netplay, it is important to be perfect in all things.

"So I'm not focussing on just one stroke or technique,

because you never know what it is going to be, there are players who are smart enough to change and move to plan B. "So you need to be prepared for it and I am focusing on practicing each and everything to make everything perfect -- each stroke, all techniques."

Asked why she picked Germany as her training base ahead of the Games, Sindhu said: "Prakash (Padukone) sir, and we all discussed and thought, it will be a good place, it is near to Paris, it is in between nowhere, so I am much more focussed.

"I have taken few sparring partners and have a team and currently training here has been very peaceful. I can focus even more before the Olympics."

Sindhu has spent most time on the court in the run-up to the Olympics but she hasn't been consistent enough or



beating the top players. The Indian, though, did manage a runner-up finish at Malaysia Masters super 500.

"It took me some time to come back (from injury) and I feel that now I'm doing well. Coming to the finals is not an

easy thing. And, finishing matches, not finishing matches, it depends on how we play.

"Sometimes nothing might work out," she said referring to the loss in Malaysian Masters final.

"I feel that there's been a lot of improvement and I know that I can do much better and I'm confident that I'm getting there. I need to keep believing in myself and keep working much harder.

"I feel the Olympics is

something where it will be very different. I don't want to compare with others but looking at my form, I'm in great shape and it's just that you have to play very differently with every player.

"It's a different style of play. I think the strategy will be very different whether it is Chen Yu Fei or An Seyoung. It also depends on the draws, with whom I play. Looking forward to going to the Olympics. So, yeah, hoping for the best."

Sindhu, who trained under Pullela Gopichand for many years, moved from Hyderabad to Bengaluru after trying out four different coaches in 12 months.

The ace shuttler feels the level of competition now is very high. "I've played two Olympics and this will be my third and every time the game keeps changing, every Olympics there are different players. "So it is going to be

very challenging and really hard because one is we know each other's game and two is the game has completely changed and I think there are a lot of players who would be looking at your game, how you're playing, what are they doing, what needs to be done.

"So there are a lot of tactics and techniques which will go into this and also physically and mentally you need to be much more stronger, much smarter." Talking about her mentor Padukone, Sindhu said he has been helping her out by pointing out flaws.

"Prakash sir has been seeing my matches and he's been telling me a few things if I'm making mistakes. He observes a lot.

"When he sat behind me in the last All England and French Open, his inputs were quite simple. He just always told me that you know just play freely and just give your best."